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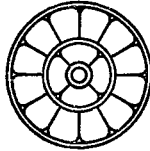
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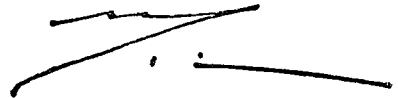


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXVI

No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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SRI AUROBINDO AND THE SUPERMIND'S DESCENT

A WRITTEN QUESTION AND THE MOTHER'S ORAL ANSWER

Q: Here is a quotation from you, which appeared in 1954 in an article by the Associate Editor of Mother India: "Even in 1938 I used to see the Supermind descending into Sri Aurobindo. What he could not do at that time was to fix it here."

An article in February 1968 by the Editor has understood this to mean that in 1938 the Supramental Force, which had already settled in Sri Aurobindo's inner being, made its first appearance in his body but could not yet be fixed down in it, so as to make it stay there.

Could one know from you what exactly the truth is?

A: The Supermind was established in Sri Aurobindo but it had not transformed his body. To put it precisely, he did not have a supramentalised body — and that is why he could undergo death.

The Supramental Force was there up to the subtle-physical, and when he left his body this Force made a halo of light around it, visible for two days.

1970

THE MOTHER'S REMINISCENCES OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE reminiscences will be short.

I came to India to meet Sri Aurobindo. I remained in India to live with Sri Aurobindo. When he left his body, I continued to live here in order to do his work which is, by serving the Truth and enlightening mankind, to hasten the rule of the Divine's Love upon earth.

21-2-1968

THE LUMINOUS BODY

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO APROPOS OF A BIBLICAL PASSAGE

I READ the Bible — very assiduously at one time When I have looked at it, it has always given me a sense of imprecision in the thought-substance, in spite of the vividness of the expression and that makes it very difficult to be sure about these things. This passage about the body, for instance — although St. Paul had remarkable mystic experiences and, certainly, much profound spiritual knowledge (profound rather than wide, I think) — I would not swear to it that he is referring to the supramentalised body (*physical body*). Perhaps to the supramentalised body or to some other luminous body in its own space and substance, which he found sometimes as if enveloping him and abolishing this body of death which he felt the material envelope to be. This verse like many others is capable of several interpretations and might refer to a quite supra-physical experience. The idea of a transformation of the body occurs in different traditions, but I have never been quite sure that it meant the change in this very matter. There was a yogi some time ago in this region who taught it, but he hoped when the change was complete, to disappear in light. The Vaishnavas speak of a divine body which will replace this one when there is the complete siddhi. But, again, is this a divine physical or supraphysical body? At the same time there is no obstacle in the way of supposing that all these ideas, intuitions, experiences point to, if they do not exactly denote, the physical transformation.

(*On Yoga*, p. 1237, Centenary Edition)

AN UNPUBLISHED POEM BY SRI AUROBINDO

VOICE OF THE SUMMITS

VOICE of the Summits, leap from thy peaks of ineffable splendour,
Wisdom's javelin cast, leonine cry of the Vast.
Voice of the Summits, arrow of gold from a bow-string of silence!
Leap down into my heart, blazing and clangorous dart!
Here where I struggle alone unheeded of men and unaided,
Here by the darkness duntrod low in the midnight of God.

I have come down from the heights and the outskirts of Heaven
Into the gulfs of God's sleep, into the inconscient Deep,
All I had won that the mind can win of the Word and the wordless
Knowledge sun-bright forever and the spiritual crown of endeavour,
Share in the thoughts of the cosmic Self and its order to Nature,
Cup of its nectar of bliss, dreams on the breast of its peace.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MOTHER ABOUT THE RETURN OF SRI AUROBINDO

At the beginning of May 1952, during one of my visits to the Ashram from Bombay, I met the Mother in her room at the Playground. It was on the eve of my departure. What she had said at the end of 1950 about Sri Aurobindo coming back in a supramental body had been in my mind pretty often in the period after it, acutely missing him as I had done — missing him not only as a most compassionate and illuminating Guru but also as a most delightfully enlightening critic of literature and a correspondent most patient, understanding, intimate and voluminous. So, just before taking my leave, I expressed my hope to have Sri Aurobindo back with us in the near future. I spoke too of my concern over world-factors threatening the Divine's work. The Mother, with great sympathy and kindness in her eyes but with a quiet steady voice, replied:

“The return of Sri Aurobindo very soon is not likely. His going was connected with world-conditions. If world-conditions had been such as could so soon change and be suitable for his presence amongst us, his going itself would have been unnecessary.

“Also, the return cannot be in a startling miraculous manner. That would not be consistent with Sri Aurobindo's method and our work. A more probable way of return would be: the present occasional visions of Sri Aurobindo which some people see — the almost material appearance he makes now to some people at certain times — may increase; the manifestation may be more frequent and more general, until one day a permanent reappearance takes place.

“One can't fix the precise time of his return. It may even be five hundred years later. I can't say anything, since the knowledge has not come to me. I only say things when I get them. This much I have said: Sri Aurobindo will be the first to have the supramental body.

“People keep asking me: ‘When Sri Aurobindo comes back in a supramental body, will he need to eat or drink or do other usual things?’ All these questions are silly.

“Sri Aurobindo's leaving the body makes no essential difference. Sri Aurobindo is after all a certain consciousness, the divine consciousness, and this consciousness was there even before the earth came. The question of his ‘absence’ has little meaning.

“A world war may destroy civilisation, but it won't destroy the Divine's work. Sri Aurobindo once told me that he had so arranged things that nothing would interfere with his work.”

AMAL KIRAN

SRI AUROBINDO THE PHILOSOPHER AND PROPHET

By

ABBÉ JULES MONCHANIN

(Abbé Jules Monchanin distinguished himself by several studies in Oriental thought. Henri de Lubac, a fellow Roman Catholic and a friend of Teilhard de Chardin, calls Monchanin "a profound expert on Eastern spiritualities". Monchanin was also interested in Teilhard's privately circulated writings and criticised their author wherever they were too censorious of Indian mysticism by an over-schematic classification of approaches and ends. Several aspects, however, of Teilhardism he warmly appreciated and, in April 1956, gave a series of talks on him in Pondicherry. Four years earlier — that is, in 1952 — he wrote a long article La Pensée de Shri Aurobindo in the periodical Église Vivante, Paris, No. 4, pp. 312-36. It has its good points, some fairly outstanding, but is inaccurate in a number of respects. What is notable on the whole is the admiration Monchanin evinces for the various sides of Sri Aurobindo.)

He begins by saying: "The thought of Sri Aurobindo has won a large hearing in India and even in Europe" — and, at the close of the biographical section, says: "The personality of Sri Aurobindo is so rich and diverse that we cannot embrace it in one look. By way of approach to it we may consider five aspects which together make up this personality or, more exactly, are its complementary parts: the man of action, the poet, the mystic, the philosopher and the prophet. But we should never isolate one of these personalities from all the others, for Sri Aurobindo is always, to some degree, at the same time man of action, poet, mystic, gnostic and announcer of a humanity to come."

Monchanin's section on Sri Aurobindo the Philosopher is the best as well as the longest. Although not free from errors here and there, it makes rather impressive, if at times a trifle heavy, reading and opens many fascinating doors upon its subject from the direction of both Western and Eastern Philosophy. The short section on the Prophet in Sri Aurobindo goes very well with it and may even be said to round it off. We are publishing a translation of both, with some corrective footnotes of our own in addition to a few informative ones by Monchanin himself. A long Note by us at the end seeks to set right the utter wrong-headedness which Monchanin, in consonance with the current European (and Indian) theory, shows about the Rig-veda as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo.)

The Philosopher

I

IN order to understand in all its amplitude the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, it should be examined in itself and set in relation to the "problematique" of the West, and

especially to the diverse Indian philosophical currents of which it represents one of the confluences. It will suffice here to give a brief glimpse of this philosophy and to connect it with Vedism, Sankhya, Yoga, Tantra and Vedanta.

Sri Aurobindo was sometimes accused of sacrificing the transcendence of the Absolute to its immanence; in fact he does not exclude transcendence, he even sees in it the deepest aspect of the Divine Essence but he repels the doctrine of Maya. For him the world is not an illusion, it is real, of the very reality of God whose manifestation it represents. God is both Being and Becoming; in Himself He is Pure Being, nothing but Being, *Sanmātra*. This austere Monism of Shankara fits Him, but He is at the same time, and not less really, Becoming and here Sri Aurobindo is opposed to Shankara. The divine beatitude, Ananda, consists in this purity of essence, but does not exclude an additional joy which is born from an exuberance in the multiplicity of forms and beings.

In order to explain the genesis of Becoming, this cross of all the Vedantic philosophies, Sri Aurobindo has resort to the notion of Shakti and Lila. Shakti represents a potentiality of emanation, let us not say a creative power, for, no more in Sri Aurobindo than in the other Indian systems is there a creation in the proper sense of the word; everything comes from God, dwells in Him, and remains indistinguishable from Him in its depth. There is no otherness, no ontological difference of level between the divine forms and the divine essence; consequently there is no room for an opposition, for a rupture, but there is continuity. This primordial potentiality of emanation of the multiple starting from the One is called Shakti, and has a semi-mythic semi-cosmological colouration; it appears as the Mother. Thus also in the gnostic system of Valentin each male eon was doubled with a feminine eon which, emanating from him, represented his phenomenal aspect, was homogeneous and consubstantial with him, always ready to immerge herself in him; similarly the Shakti is considered as consubstantial with the divine essence and is yet distinguishable from it, at least to our eyes, just as energy is distinguishable from its source.

A mode or an attribute of the substance from which it originates, this Shakti manifests itself by an activity of play, *lila*. The motive of creation is at the bottom aesthetic; no urgency obliges the divine essence of the Self-beyond-forms to manifest through theophanies. It is a finality without a goal, an activity of pure play, not an internal necessity through which the divine essence expands, so to speak, into a Cosmos and returns without abolishment to its source which is at the same time its term. There is here a *Lilā-Vibhūti*, an irradiation of the glory of the divine game. God is like an eternal child who plays eternally on the shore of the sea of Being for no other reason than the sheer pleasure of the game.

All the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, his psychology, his mysticism will tend to describe this emanation of the multiple from the One and the reaction of the play of the Shakti, and then the return of that multiple to the One under the same guidance.

We remember that Bergson, in his communication on Intuition to the Congress of Philosophy at Bologna in 1911, a communication repeated in his volume *La Pensée et*

le Mowant, defined Intuition as an effort of sympathy to penetrate into the very heart of things and beings, an instant of coincidence of subject with object.

Each great philosophy has only an essential theme to express, but this original intuition is so simple that it is inexpressible and the whole effort of the system will only tend to translate it less and less awkwardly, without ever rejoining its perfect simplicity.

Bergson himself applied this method to Spinoza. The generating intuition of Spinoza's entire system was the coincidence of the point of departure with the point of arrival of Plotinus's metaphysical curve. Plotinus described in his *Enneads* the surging of the multiple from the One, its exodus, then its long journey back, its peripetia compared with that of Ulysses, to the simplicity of the One. For Spinoza, says Bergson, the point of departure and the point of arrival are one and the same point situated in the instant of the Eternal. The Becoming is the becoming of the Become, and the temporal is but a figuration of the immutable Eternal.

It would undoubtedly be very bold to apply, when one is not Bergson, this method of research to a thought such as Sri Aurobindo's, which somehow evokes on the one hand the vision *sub specie aeternitatis* of Spinoza and on the other the curve of two-branched Becoming according to Plotinus: the descending branch of the multiple from the One and the re-ascending branch of the Becoming towards the One.

Shall we say that the generating intuition of Sri Aurobindo is also the coincidence of the point of departure with the point of arrival: vision of unity in diversity according to the so-called *Vishistādvaita*? In a differentiated unity or more exactly in the unity of the diversified as such the Becoming is not foreign to the Unity, it constitutes its manifestation and, like the law of external expansion and internal re-gathering, the law of exodus and return.

Let us describe more closely the two branches of this curve of the Becoming suspended from the Eternal. This advent, in the core of the divine essence, of its own metamorphoses is first realised under the form of a cosmic consciousness, the Divine becomes God for Himself. A centre of Universal Consciousness is constituted and as a consciousness implies some object to refer itself to, the Universal Self implies the universe; the advent of the world is contemporaneous with the advent of Prajapati. The world being an organised totality presupposes a plurality of consciousnesses, therefore a fragmentation of the Universal Consciousness, a multiplication of the Consciousness of the Lord, the Ishwara. These multiple consciousnesses remain orientated, one towards the others, and soldered together by their substantial basis which is the same in all. This substantial basis is the *Antaryamin* that is the Divine as the Self of the I, the thou, the him, as the single Consciousness of all the particular consciousnesses. Nevertheless, each determinate consciousness opposes itself on the surface to the other consciousnesses, acquires the sense of its apparent autonomy and says "I", Ahankara.

There is thus in the very plurality and the very finitude of the consciousnesses a radical possibility of isolation, of segregation and of refusal; from there the origin of evil.

Sri Aurobindo does not establish a radical opposition in the Cartesian manner between Matter and Spirit, he does not situate like the Manichaeans the origin of evil in Matter but rather in finitude. There is evil as soon as there is forgetfulness; as soon as a particular consciousness erects its particularity into a universal law; as soon as, disowning the divine centre which is more than itself, it tends to make itself a centre. By a series of successive thickenings, Spirit becomes Matter, and the three gunas of the classical cosmology of Sankhya well expressed this kind of law of a progressive fall. These three gunas are : Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. Sattwa, transparency, corresponds to matter in contact with Spirit, magnetised and transfigured by it, that is to say, situated at the level of a consciousness docile to the divine call which comes to it from its origin and from its end, and from the presence within it of its internal regulator, the Antaryamin. Rajas, turbulent and passionate power of matter, category of the will-to-power, of domination and even destruction, well represents the vital appetite. Each life tends to persevere and to increase its being at the expense of other living beings; it is war of all against all inscribed in the finitude of a famished organism. The third guna, Tamas, tenebrous power, correctly characterises the descending evolution on the level of matter inanimate, opaque and without communication. It seems that at this degree of the fall, there is no more hope, forgetfulness has fossilised, the divine light sparkles no longer, stifled as it is in this thick darkness.

Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is not pessimistic; the descending curve of the Becoming has significance only in relation to the ascending curve which follows it and which it prepares unknowingly. There is a re-climbing from matter to the Divine through life, consciousness, thought and spiritual experience.

If the descending curve evoked a kind of original fall similar to that of the Gnosis where an element which escaped from the Pleroma sank into a kind of Kenoma,¹ this impression disappears as soon as one considers the return of the multiple towards the One. In reality, there has not been a fall from plenitude, matter itself was unknowingly an element constitutive of this cosmos, bearer of light, factor of consciousness, of thought and of spiritual experience.

One could characterise by five words the idea that Sri Aurobindo conceives of the ascending evolution: energism, panzoism, panpsychism, pannoëtism, pantheism.²

Energism, contrary to the conception of matter which was most common in the West till the arrival of contemporary Physics, but in conformity with the classical Indian cosmology of Sankhya, asserts that matter far from being inert is on the contrary an unquenchable source of activity always renewed. Spirit, the Purusha, is immobile, quiescent; matter is an unceasing agitation.

¹ Pleroma, world of plenitude, Kenoma, world of voidness, in the Gnosis of Valentin.

² Editor's Note If one took this series by itself and understood pantheism in its common connotation ("All is God"), one would have to add a sixth word. panentheism. For, to Sri Aurobindo, the transcendent Divinity is not excluded by the concept of the world as divine. The essential divineness of the world does not exhaust the nature of God but is one part of it. hence panentheism or "All is in God".

According to panzoism, in opposition to appearances, matter is already orientated towards life, one could even say that it is life latent or virtual.

By panpsychism one understands that all life is latent consciousness just as each material particle is latent life; the origin of consciousness does not, any more than the origin of life, pose a radically new problem. The transition happens in a continuous and flowing manner under the double urgency of an internal push and a descent of the divine force, of the Shakti, to the very depth of matter and into the intermediary regions of life.

The comparison of the evolutionism of Sri Aurobindo to that of the West suggests two remarks: first, Sri Aurobindo, inversely to Bergson in his *Évolution Créatrice*, almost never refers explicitly to the data of positive science. Still he does not despise them; *The Life Divine* carries a rapid allusion to panspermism, the hypothesis of Swarte Arrhenius on the vital seeding of Earth from germs come from other planets and encapsuled, so to speak, in order to resist the injurious ultra-violet rays. His theory had only an ephemeral vogue and it is very remarkable that it has not escaped Sri Aurobindo. He also refers to the researches of his compatriot Jagadish Chandra Bose on the functional analogy between plants and animals. The scientific approach¹ underlying the evolutionism of *The Life Divine* is rather that of the 19th century than that of the 20th. Continuities carry priority over discontinuities, while since Planck the stress in atomic physics is put on discrete unities, "the quanta", and in biology the stress is put on the sudden mutations of de Vries.

Just as all life is latent consciousness, all consciousness is virtual thought: that is pannoëtism.

The pantheist affirmation postulates that all consciousness is divine. Super-elevation of its mode of activity allows it an intuition of what is hidden in it, the Antaryamin, the Self more My Own than Me, the Divine of whom it is but an apparition, a modality, a theophany.

We must insist on an aspect which is, for the ordinary reader, one of the most obscure in the psychology of Sri Aurobindo, the utilisation of the subliminal or subconscious,² the mental, the Overmind and the Supermind.

This notion of the subliminal must have come to Sri Aurobindo through occidental channels though it had not been unknown to Indian philosophers, particularly the Vijnanin Buddhists.³ The subconscious appeared in Sri Aurobindo nearer the form

¹ Editor's Note: The French has something missing here: we have tried to fill the gap. However, what is expressed in the sentence is rather exaggerated. Sri Aurobindo is aware of the science Monchanin speaks of. See his early essay, *Evolution* (1915)

² Editor's Note: The equating of the subliminal to the subconscious does not represent Sri Aurobindo fully. Sri Aurobindo in his more explicit exposition distinguishes the two.

³ For the notion of subconscious in Buddhist psychology, see the communication of Dr. Filliozat to the International Congress of Philosophy at Amsterdam in 1948.

Editor's Note: Sri Aurobindo's psychological knowledge is not from reading, theorising or even introspection. It is from Yogic discovery and direct enlightenment.

it wore in William James and Myers than that which it takes after the methodic exploration of Freud, Adler and Jung.

What is really new in the subliminal of Sri Aurobindo is that it is not only refuse but remains connected to the superconscient, capable of receiving from it illumination and super-elevation.

The French word *mental* renders rather badly what the English *Mind*, as also the Sanskrit *Manas*, expresses better. This *manas* includes both the operations of the senses and the discursive intelligence which works upon their data.

For Sri Aurobindo as for Bergson, the intellect is very closely tied to life, an instrument for its service. Logic reflects less the eternal verities than it explains the permanent demands of our vital insertion in the world. Above the mental, there is a higher mental, an Overmind which corresponds to the faculty of intuition.¹ The intuition of Sri Aurobindo goes in fact beyond the Bergsonian intuition; it is less tied than this to the activity of reflection. It presents four distinctive characteristics: it is vision of the Real; aspiration or opening to a truth of a higher order; seizure of the Real and this seizure tells more than a vision, it is not only a knowledge of the mirror, it is existential contact; lastly, it is discrimination of the Real from the false.

The Western philosophers who have exalted intuition nonetheless ask of logic the service of discriminating the real intuition from the pseudo-intuition, for there are false intuitions, and the recent history of mathematics shows striking illustrations of them. It is intuition that discovers, says for instance Edouard Leroy, the great intellectual disciple of Bergson, but it is logic that verifies.

This verifying role of logic is not retained by Sri Aurobindo; at the level of intuition logic is dismissed as a useless servant. And it is the function of a higher intuition to correct a less complete intuition's partial mistake.

The Supermind or superconsciousness has its seat beyond the intuitive zone itself; it is a spiritual state indescribable for one who has not had the experience of it and it is said to contain together with the full clarity of consciousness of the Self the consciousness of all others, each and everyone; it must also contain the perception of the connections between all consciousnesses, that of the universe itself as external seat and law of consciousnesses; lastly and mainly, it contains the consciousness of the Divine as source and term of all particular consciousnesses and, even more, as situated infinitely beyond them.

In that state the consciousness, without losing its otherness in relation to all the rest nor its finitude, does not feel separation any more, feels inward to all consciousnesses, and all consciousnesses as inward to itself. It is a vision of the most vigorous Unity in the vastest diversity.

¹ Editor's Note For Sri Aurobindo, the Overmind is superior to the plane of Intuition: it is a more massive, comprehensive, cosmically competent knowledge. Monchanin seems to go partly by an older classification of Sri Aurobindo's when the term "Overmind" was not yet coined in distinction from "Supermind".

The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is a confluence of the principal currents of the traditional Indian Thought, to which he gives a new form. Let us list them: Vedism, Upanishads, Sankhya, Yoga, Tantra, Yoga-Vashistha and Vedanta.

1. *Vedism*: Sri Aurobindo studied and meditated upon the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads before approaching the direct reading of the Vedic Hymns. So he gives more than once the impression of reading the Rig-veda in the light of the Upanishads and the Gita, rather than the Upanishads [and the Gita] in the light of the Rig-veda.

He himself translated or rather transposed a group of Vedic hymns to Fire, Agni; his general interpretation of Vedism is far from tallying with the one generally current among the erudite, both Indians and Westerners.

Louis Renou expresses himself thus: "A contemporary Indian mystic, Sri Aurobindo, considers that the secret of the Veda is of a psychological order. The battle, he says, is represented between the powers of Light and Truth, and the powers of Darkness. That is our own life. The elements of the external sacrifice are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and of self-offering. With images of physical Nature the poets sing the hymns of their spiritual progress. Understood thus, the Rig-veda ceases to be an obscure, confused and barbarous hymnal, it becomes the song of humanity aspiring to climb upward; these songs are the episodes of the lyrical beauty of the soul in its immortal ascension. One could not better disguise the barbarous to make of it the docile instrument of the modern mystic need. Shall one henceforth deliberately rejuvenate the Vedic thought after having exaggeratedly aged it previously?"

It is difficult not to subscribe to this severe but just judgment.¹ The paraphrases of Sri Aurobindo sometimes make us think, on another plane, of the free translation of the Bible by Claudel. We know that Claudel does not bother much with Greek and Hebrew, but lets himself go in his inspiration and be seized by images emanating, some from the inspired text, some from his own lyricism. Sri Aurobindo surely does not ignore Sanskrit, but he does not burden himself, either, with trench work. Sure as he is of re-finding the inspiration of the ancient Rishis, who, the first ones, heard the immemorial and superhuman text uttering itself, he prolongs their accents for the man of today.

The austere methods of erudition which multiplies research-jobs are not special to the West; in India too the great Vedic scholars subject themselves to hard discipline. Let us cite the name of Dandekar of Poona, to whom we owe the Vedic bibliography completing the Vedic bibliography of Renou. There is Narahari, author of a beautiful series on the pre-Upanishadic Atman; last, Vishvabandhu Shastri who compiles a big Vedic Concordance.

¹ See Editor's Note at the end of the article for a comment on this position and on the remarks that follow.

For Sri Aurobindo the Veda contained and even overleaped all systems to come: Upanishads, Sankhya, Yoga and the other classical darshanas. Those systems in their rigidity are even less rich in spiritual vitality than the pregnant poetry of the Rig-veda. Tantrism, which developed mainly rather late, from the sixth century, accompanying and prolonging the Puranas, is far from representing a degeneration, as most European critics say; it manifests the spiritual renewal adapted to the Kali Yuga, an effort to render the Divine close and, so to speak, tangible.

Within the Veda and the Vedanta, Sri Aurobindo uses with the sovereign liberty of a poet mythical figures in which he sees, above all, cosmic and psychological symbols. Thus his *Savitri* is an internal transposition of a story of the Mahabharata.¹

2. *Sankhya*: It is one of the systems most constantly present in nearly all the currents of Indian thought. Even Shankara, who fights violently against it in its claim to be a final truth, accepts it as a provisional truth of the plane of phenomena. Sankhya has indeed constructed a remarkable cosmology which adapts itself easily to Yoga and could be an adjunct to Vedanta as a preamble.

The three gunas of Sankhya, the dualist opposition of Prakriti and Purusha find themselves integrated in the descending and ascending paths of the mystic voyage of individual consciousnesses, as Sri Aurobindo retraces them.

3. *Yoga*: Sri Aurobindo speaks of purna yoga or integral yoga, which includes in its elements karma yoga, bhakti yoga and raja yoga;² but it is karma yoga which is the least subordinated to the two others in the course of things. This path of disinterested action without any consideration of reward either in this life or in any life to come, of pure service to humanity,³ originates in the Bhagavad Gita. In this pre-eminence of karma yoga over other forms of yoga, Sri Aurobindo agrees with Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi.

Pratyabhijnā: This path of the recognition by the soul of its own essence offers also remarkable analogy with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. This Kashmiri Shaivism maintains even at the supreme stage of total liberation a certain difference between the soul and Sada-Shiva, eternal essence of God.

The soul, beclouded by a power of obscuration, is capable of recognising under the influence of grace its true nature, its basic identity with the eternal Shiva. This recognition engenders a union of love between Shiva and the soul, the soul is blended with Shiva as water with water, or as milk with milk, or as the wave with the sea.

4. *Tantrism*: We know that Tantrism, either in the Shaivite form or in the

¹ Monchanin's footnote elsewhere in the article after calling *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo's "great work in course of publication". "Sri Aurobindo transposes to the metaphysical and spiritual plane — that of an epic of the creation of a new humanity — an episode of the Mahabharata which is a sort of Indian parallel to the myth of Orpheus in the Underworld. Savitri disputes with Yama, god of death, the soul of her husband."

² Editor's Note: Jnana yoga rather than raja yoga should be mentioned here.

³ Editor's Note. Both the Bhagavad Gita and Sri Aurobindo make it clear that karma yoga is done fundamentally for the service of the Divine and not of humanity, though humanity is bound to be benefited by it. If this were not so, it would not be *yoga* — a union of the soul with the Supreme.

Buddhist form, presents itself as a pan-Indian phenomenon, which has covered a very vast portion of the thought, of the spirituality of India, especially after Shankara, even though its origins are much more ancient, and that most likely it goes back to an epoch very much anterior to the first documents of it we possess.

Tantrism is essentially an attempt to experience the Divine by abridging processes, simplifying methods which set into play the organism itself. The practices of Yoga are situated upon different levels of the respiratory and nervous system, chakras, which are supposed to be known not by internal observation but by introspection. Tantrism includes also particular mantras, figures or diagrams used as guiding marks and supports for meditation; mainly it calls, in a large measure, upon forces coming from the universal Shakti, the cosmic Mother, who becomes the principal divinity or at least the form in which it is most spontaneously represented, even though one knows that in itself it goes beyond all forms.

Under its idealist aspect, Tantrism satisfies, understandably, a poet avid of images and a mystic avid of rapid realisation; even more so a prophet who wants to transmit his message under a concrete form, easily seizable by those very people who have not yet reached the plane of "Supermind" or even of "Overmind".

5. *Yoga-Vashistha*: It seems there is also a certain analogy between the Yoga-Vashistha and the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo. Here and there, the Yoga-Vashistha calls upon a cosmic imagination realising forms, but it is clear that the social and gnostic aim of Sri Aurobindo is absent from this old and long poem whose substance was given to us by Atreya in an impetuous thesis.

6. *Vedanta*: All Indian thought refers itself necessarily to Vedanta, Sri Aurobindo too is a Vedantin. But there are several types of Vedantins. In order to explain the passage of the Absolute to the relative, of the One to the multiple, of the Formless to forms, of the Divine to phenomena, one must inevitably choose between the two horns of the dilemma, Parinama-Vada or Vivarta-Vada, the doctrine of real transformation or that of illusory appearance.

To some, the world is indeed a real transformation of the Absolute who is both One and multiple, these are the Parinama-Vadins; insensitive to the logical objection that there is contradiction between the immutability of Being and the movement of Becoming, between the infinity of the Absolute and the finitude of particular beings, they think they can simultaneously attribute to the Absolute the opposite characters of Nirguna and Saguna, of the absence and presence of distinct and multiple attributes.

The Vivarta-Vadins, on the contrary, refuse this contradiction and rather than introducing "bheda", ontological fissures, in the Absolute they prefer to sacrifice the very datum of the problem of the universe by accepting a-cosmism, the non-existence of the universe, which would be but an illusion due to the superimposition of non-being, *asat*, upon being, *sat*. To Shankara, for instance, in the last analysis, the Absolute alone is. The world, to the extent that it is considered as distinct from the Absolute either with a distinction of essence or with a distinction only of modality, is not;

it is the product of cosmic illusion, of that irrational power of obscuration and aberration which tradition calls Maya.

The path of Shankara is a Mayavada, a path in which Maya plays an axial role. He defines Maya as expressible neither in terms of being nor in terms of non-being. It is ambiguity itself and this ambiguity remains as long as consciousness keeps even a suspicion of differentiation between itself and the other consciousnesses, or between itself and the Absolute. Maya appears not as an entity, but as a problem, a trial of knowledge that eliminates itself.

On the plane of definitive truth, there is no *other* consciousness, there is no longer *my* finite consciousness, no longer a Maya, there is only a reality which is one block of being, consciousness, bliss, sachchidananda. Between these two branches of Vedanta, hostile to each other for centuries, there is no reconciliation; we can only choose one and reject the other.¹

It has sometimes been claimed that the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo did not contradict but integrated that of Shankara. In fact he does not exclude him altogether. Shankara's vision of the Absolute is kept as an essential moment of his total vision; nevertheless he opposes himself to him in two essential points: what is for Shankara Paramartha, the final truth, is for Sri Aurobindo the last-but-one truth, in other words an integrating element of the total truth. Pure Advaita, the Absolute without distinctions in the perfect purity and transparence of its essence, is to be still overpassed.

In the second place, what is for Shankara the ultimate state, that is to say the very knowledge of this Absolute in its very absolutism, is for Sri Aurobindo antepenultimate, an essential and integrating element, but an element only, of the ultimate state. Sri Aurobindo is technically a Vishistadvaitin, an adherent to the doctrine of differentiated-non-duality, one would even say more precisely, as Kuppaswami Shastri

¹ On the irreducible opposition between the advaita of Shankara and the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, see the communication of J. R. Malkani on Mayavada at the Philosophical Congress of Calcutta in 1950. He considers the alleged motive of creation — *lila* — as an anthropomorphism, sees only a subterfuge in the gratuitous postulate of a logic of the infinite contradictory to the logic of the finite, declares that to set parallel the experience of the object and the experience of the I results in degrading the I to the level of the object, thinks lastly that this so-called going beyond Shankara places itself in fact on the hither-side of his metaphysics.

For the opinion of the disciples of Sri Aurobindo, see the communication of Dr. Indra Sen at the same Congress: the Absolute reconciles — according to the logic of the infinite — the two opposed types of experience to which correspond the doctrines of Suddhadvaita and Vishistadvaita (pure non-duality and differentiated non-duality).

Editor's Note: According to Sri Aurobindo, the basic cause of the alleged contradiction between the One and the Many is a confusion of two kinds of oneness. He says "Brahman is one, not numerically, but in essence. Numerical oneness would either exclude multiplicity or would be pluralistic and divisible oneness with the Many as its parts. That is not the unity of Brahman, which can neither be diminished, increased, nor divided. For That is identical, not single. It is identical always and everywhere in Time and Space, as well as identical beyond Time and Space. Numerical oneness and multiplicity are equally valid terms of its essential unity." (*Isha Upanishad*, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1924, Analysis, Second Movement, pp. 26, 27).

defines the differentiated monism of Ramanuja, an adherent to the doctrine of the monism of differentiation as such.

It seems that one could sum up all the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo in verse 12 of the Isha Upanishad which he has used as a motto. He himself translates it thus: "In a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Birth alone."

Being and Becoming are the two phases of the same Absolute which surmounts all contradiction and rejoices in being both One in the unity of Its essence and multiple in the achievement of Its inner theophany. It loses Itself in the universe in order to rediscover Itself in the ultimate phases of consciousness: divine lila which emits and resolves the total curve of the manifestations of the Self to the self.

The Prophet

Sri Aurobindo is not only a gnostic thinker desirous of contemplating the Absolute, the Cosmos and the interrelation of all the consciousnesses, the sum of correlations that weave the universe and constitute it; he is also a prophet, a man who takes upon himself a universal mission, or rather who is convinced of receiving it from the cosmic Shakti.

Karl Marx said that up to the present the philosophers have interpreted the world and that now one should change it. Nietzsche exhorted his contemporaries not to get lost in the back-worlds but to stay faithful to the sense of the earth.

Like Marx and like Nietzsche but without rejecting the Absolute, on the contrary taking root more deeply in It, Sri Aurobindo wants also to keep the sense of the earth and transform the world. He hopes for a new era in which a few at first, and numerous consciousnesses afterwards, and finally the whole of humanity, will reach the higher plane of the "Overmind" and the "Supermind", in which intuition will prevail over reasoning, the forces of union, of peace and of love over the forces of segregation, selfishness and hostility. As in the Gnosis and as in the Socratic philosophy, it is Knowledge which liberates, but a Knowledge which one has realised, made one's own, which one has incorporated to the very depth of one's consciousness and even one's organism through discipline, a total mastery which submits the body to the spirit, and opens the spirit to the illuminations from Above.

It would be vain to try to describe the state of this humanity or rather of this superhumanity to come that Sri Aurobindo expects. It seems one could say that there will be no longer any separation between the consciousnesses, without their being confused or fused in the great Whole. While preserving their ontological otherness, they will communicate with one another, they will become transparent and internal to one another. It will be — or it would be — the state of perfect reciprocity of all the consciousnesses; one would even call it the state of circumincession, or inherence of all the consciousnesses in each one. This state supposes as its source and its term and its *point d'appui* the consciousness of the underlying unity of all in the Antaryamin, in the

Ishwara, and still beyond this the transcendent perception of the divinity in the purity of its essence without attributes. This state is rather similar to the one the Christians call the beatific vision; but Sri Aurobindo expects it in this very world.

It is perhaps the point in which his vision puts most to the test our hope; not that we find it too beautiful, nothing is too beautiful in a world which springs from God and goes back to Him without merging in Him; rather, we might find it somehow too easy. It seems to us that there is here some temptation of facility, like a glory of resurrection which the death on the cross has not preceded. A state of theopathy which would not have been prepared by a sinking in the obscure night of the senses and the spirit. The essential tragedy of Destiny, of Life, seems eluded.¹

What will become of the thought and the work of Sri Aurobindo? Will they one day be extinguished from the sky of India, leaving in it a long phosphorescent trail, or will they remain as one of its constants? Will his work mark one of the essential steps of humanity towards a superhuman destiny, or will it be forgotten as an illusion too beautiful to be true?

Speaking of a prophet, I can only repeat the judgment of the Sanhedrist Gamaliel: "If this thought and this work come from God, the opposition of men will be vain; if they come but from man, they will pass with man."

EDITOR'S NOTE ON SRI AUROBINDO AND THE VEDA

Abbé Jules Monchanin, walking in the steps of Indologists like Louis Renou, subscribes to the theory that the Veda is, as the mediaeval Indian commentator Sayana held, a manual of ritual practices and that in it natural phenomena are invested with life and worshipped as superhuman powers and that its terms are to be taken literally as part of a primitive hymnal. The mentality behind it is considered as being grossly down-to-earth and concerned with purely physical objects, events and relationships.

Monchanin suggests that Sri Aurobindo, when he interpreted the Veda spiritually and symbolically, indulged in loose amateurish fancy, unmindful of historical data and scholarly linguistics. Monchanin does not realise that here was a master of languages. Sri Aurobindo was expert in Greek and Latin, intimate with French, sufficiently familiar with Italian and German, besides being a supreme specialist in English. He was acquainted with several modern Indian tongues, including Tamil. His knowledge of Sanskrit was consummate and was further enlightened by his direct Yogic experience of all that the Sanskrit scriptures of India express of the highest and widest spirituality. Further, his was a most sensitive literary sensorium, capable of insight into the fountainheads of inspiration as well as alert to the various layers of being from

¹ Nevertheless, some letters from Sri Aurobindo to Dilip Kumar Roy recently published in *Mother India* describe a state of sinking into darknesses, and the sorrow of the Sage already liberated who wants to tear the world away from the evil forces.

which utterance could spring. And the conclusions at which he has arrived about the matter and manner of the Veda are set forth after a scrupulous review of old and current theories and follow a clear chain of philological, historical and psychological arguments.

Sri Aurobindo demands, as a background to the Upanishads and to the later developments of Indian religion and philosophy, an Age of the Mysteries such as preceded in European antiquity the emergence of systematic and discursive thought. The Veda is to him the full articulate scripture of an epoch resembling the one whose failing remnants survived in Greece in practices like the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries. In the Age of the Mysteries, "the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols that protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated."¹ According to Sri Aurobindo the Veda is composed on a double plane of esoteric and exoteric.

On general grounds what we may term the psychologico-historical argument is the strongest in Sri Aurobindo's favour. He² writes: "Such profound and ultimate thoughts, such systems of subtle and elaborate psychology as are found in the substance of the Upanishads, do not spring out of a previous void. The human mind in its progress marches from knowledge to knowledge or it renews and enlarges previous knowledge that has been obscured and overlaid, or it seizes on old imperfect clues and is led by them to new discoveries. The thought of the Upanishads supposes great origins anterior to itself, and these in the ordinary theories are lacking. The hypothesis, invented to fill the gap, that these ideas were borrowed by barbarous Aryan invaders from civilised Dravidians is a conjecture supported only by other conjectures. It is indeed coming to be doubted whether the whole story of an Aryan invasion through the Punjab is not a myth of the philologists³.... Much indeed of the forms and symbols of thought which we find in the Upanishads, much of the substance of the Brahmanas supposes a period in India in which thought took the form or the veil of secret teachings such as those of the Greek Mysteries."

The Upanishads are at present regarded as a movement breaking away from Vedism. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan,⁴ they evince "a protest against the externalism of the Vedic practices and an indifference to the sacredness of the Veda". True, a ritualistic cult based on the Veda, a ceremonial of religious Works as distinguished from what the Upanishads came to consider spiritual Knowledge, is an object of strong revulsion in the Upanishadic period. But does not Radhakrishnan⁵ himself

¹ *The Secret of the Veda* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, Ed. 1971), p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, pp 3-4.

³ Editor's Note. Even fifty-two years after this was penned, the well-known American archaeologist, George F. Dales, familiar with excavations in the Indus Valley, could write in the *Scientific American* (May 1966, p. 95) about the supposed Aryan invaders: "They have not yet been identified archaeologically."

⁴ *Indian Philosophy* (Indian Edition, 1941), p. 144.

⁵ *Ibid.*

tell us that the Upanishads “adopt a double attitude towards Vedic authority”? Here surely is a puzzle. Why should Radhakrishnan¹ have to go on to say that in places the Upanishads “concede the scriptural origin of the Veda”?

The fact is that these Upanishads, which condemn the form popularly taken by Vedism and which are said to have borrowed their spirituality from “Dravidian” sources, profess again and again to bring out the truth of the Riks, the Mantras, the Verses of the Vedic Rishis. As M.P. Pandit² reminds us, “They quite often quote the Riks as seals of approval for their own findings.” As examples³ we may pick out: “This is said by the Riks” from the Mundaka Upanishad (III. 2.10.) — “That is said by the Rishi” from the Aitareya (IV.5) — “So also says the Verse” from the Prashna (1.10) — and “Seeing this the Rishi said ...” from the Brihadaranayaka (II.5.18).

A fact even more directly significant is the clear Upanishadic echoes of Rig-vedic religious figures. Thus the Isha has an appeal to Surya, the Sun, as a god of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest Truth. Sri Aurobindo⁴ points out: “This, too, is his function in the sacred Vedic formula of the Gayatri which was for thousands of years repeated by every Brahmin in his daily meditation; and we may note that this formula is a verse from the Rig-veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Vishwamitra” (III. 62.10) — and in it “the Sun in its highest light ... is called upon ... to impel our thoughts”.⁵ Actually, as Sri Aurobindo⁶ has shown, the very verses of the Isha about Surya are a recasting of an invocation in the Rig-veda. The Isha (15-16) cries: “The face of the Truth is covered with a golden lid; O Pushan (Fosterer), that remove for the vision of the law of the Truth. O Pushan, O sole Kavi (Seer), O Yama (Ordainer), O illumining Sun, O power of Prajapati (Father of beings), marshal and gather together thy rays; I see the Light which is that fairest form of thee; he who is this Purusha, He am I.” Sri Aurobindo asks us to mark how the seer of the Upanishad translates into his own later style, keeping the central symbol of the Sun but without any secrecy in sense, a mystic thought or experience in a passage of the Rig-veda. “Pushan”, “Kavi”, “Yama”, “Prajapati” are also Rig-vedic names though not present in that passage itself. The earlier formulation (V. 62. 1) runs: “There is a Truth covered by a Truth, where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; the ten hundreds stood together, there was That One. I saw the best of the bodies of the Gods.” The basic parallelism is unmistakable.

Sri Aurobindo⁷ has taken the trouble to elucidate it. The “golden lid” is meant to be the same as the inferior covering of truth, *ritam*, spoken of in the Vedic verse; “the best of the bodies of the Gods” is equivalent to “that fairest form” of the Sun, it is the supreme Light which is other and greater than all outer light; the great formula of the

¹ *Ibid*, p. 149

² *Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishads* (Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1966), p 110.

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Op. cit*, p 5

⁵ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1946), Foreword, p. XXIV.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. XXV. ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. XXV-VI.

Upanishad, "He am I", corresponds to "That One", *tad ekam*, of the Rig-vedic verse; the standing together of the ten hundreds (the rays of the Sun, says Sayana, and that is evidently the meaning) is reproduced in the prayer to the Sun: "marshal and gather together thy rays" so that the supreme form may be seen. "The Sun in both the passages, as constantly in the Veda and frequently in the Upanishad, is the Godhead of the supreme Truth and Knowledge and his rays are the light emanating from that supreme Truth and Knowledge. It is clear from this instance — and there are others — that the seer of the Upanishad had a truer sense of the meaning of the ancient Veda than the mediaeval ritualistic commentator with his gigantic learning, much truer than the modern and very different mind of the European scholars."

Unlike the opinions of that commentator and these scholars, Sri Aurobindo's view of a double plane of esoteric and exoteric is not single-tracked but allows the co-existence of several approaches while stressing one of them. He¹ writes: "The ritual system recognised by Sayana may, in its externalities, stand; the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may, in its general conceptions, be accepted; but behind them there is the true and still hidden secret of the Veda — the secret words, *ninyā vachāmsi*, which were spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge." Indeed, Rishi Vamadeva himself, who in the fourth Mandala (3.16) uses these two vocables, follows up with: *kāvyaṇi kavaye nivachanā* — "seer-wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the seer."

The very name given to Vamadeva and his likes — Kavī — which subsequently came to mean any poet but has the connotation of "seer" in the Veda is quite evidently connected with messages from a divine source, for the Rishis are described in the Veda itself as *kavayah satyaśrutah*, "seers and hearers of the Truth".

Pointers to the esoteric plane are not only in this phrase and in that sentence of Vamadeva's, but also in what Rishi Dirghatamas has to tell us in the very first Mandala. In I.164.46 we have one of the most spiritual declarations of India: "The Existent is One, but the sages express It variously; they say Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni ..." The same hymn (I.164.39) openly speaks of the Riks as "existing in a supreme ether, imperishable and immutable, in which all the Gods are seated", and Dirghatamas adds: "one who knows not That, what shall he do with the Rik?" (The answer, of course, is: "He will make the mess which Monchanin, following Renou's lead, approves and encourages.")

Thus it is not only in the tenth and final Mandala, which is later in time and is acknowledged to have philosophical contents, that we have direct links with the explicit spirituality of the Upanishadic and post-Upanishadic eras. From the earliest Vedic utterances we get support for Sri Aurobindo's vision of the oldest Indian book of worship. And in the last Mandala itself (X.71) "the Vedic Word is described as that which is supreme, the topmost height of speech, the best and the most faultless.... But all cannot enter into its secret meaning. Those who do not know the inner sense are as men who seeing see not, hearing hear not, only to one here and there the Word

¹ *The Secret of the Veda*, p 6

desiring him like a beautifully robed wife to a husband lays open her body [X 71.4]. Others unable to drink steadily of the milk of the Word, the Vedic Cow, move with it as with one that gives no milk, to him the Word is a tree without flowers or fruits. This is quite clear and precise; it results from it beyond doubt that even then while the Rig Veda was being written the Riks were regarded as having a secret sense which was not open to all.”¹

Sri Aurobindo² continues: “The tradition then was there and it was prolonged after the Vedic times. Yaska speaks of several schools of interpretation of the Veda. There was a sacrificial or ritualistic interpretation, the historical or rather mythological explanation, an explanation by the grammarians and etymologists, by the logicians, a spiritual interpretation. Yaska himself declares that there is a triple knowledge and therefore a triple meaning of the Vedic hymns, a sacrificial or ritualistic knowledge [*ādhi-yajñika*], a knowledge of the gods [*ādhi-daiivika*] and finally a spiritual knowledge [*ādhyātmika*]; but the last is the true sense and when one gets it the others drop or are cut away. He says further that ‘the Rishis saw the truth, the true law of things, directly by an inner vision’; afterwards the knowledge and the inner sense of the Veda were almost lost and the Rishis who still knew had to save it by handing it down through initiation to disciples and at a last stage outward and mental means had to be used for finding the sense such as Nirukta and other Vedangas. But even then, he says, ‘the true sense of the Veda can be recovered directly by meditation and tapasya’, those who can use these means need no outward aids for this knowledge. This also is sufficiently clear and positive.”

Modern scholarship, which dates the Rigveda to c. 1500 B.C., computes that Yaska compiled his *Nirukta* in the period c. 700-400 B.C. His status as an authority is therefore fairly ancient even by the rather over-short modern chronology. Nor is it Yaska alone who has pressed the adhyatmic view. In the 13th century A.D., a hundred years before Sayana, Anandatirtha, more popularly known as Madhwacharya, wrote in a spiritual vein on the first 40 hymns.³ Sayana himself yields evidence of a spiritual, philosophical or psychological interpretation. “He mentions, for instance, but not to admit it, an old interpretation of Vritra as the Coverer who holds back from man the objects of his desire and aspirations. For Sayana Vritra is either simply the enemy or the physical cloud-demon who holds back the waters and has to be pierced by the Rain-giver.”⁴ After Sayana we have Raghavendra Swami amplifying Madhwacharya and even quoting an ancient Puranic text which declares the Vedas to have three meanings — *trayorthāḥ sarvavedaṣu*.⁵ In our own time Swami Dayananda, founder of the Arya Samaj, made a remarkable attempt to re-establish the Veda as a living religious scripture.

So Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the Veda cannot be looked askance at as quite unna-

¹ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Foreword, p. X.

² *Ibid.*, pp. XI-XII.

³ *Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishads*, p. 27.

⁴ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 19 ⁵ *Mystic Approach..*, pp 27-28.

tural or quite new-fangled. It differs from the earlier ones, which are affined to it in principle, by its thoroughness, its flexibility and its insight. He has used penetrative scholarship of the highest order as well as the “meditation and tapasya” recommended by Yaska to reach it.

And it is not only a number of learned commentators who have anticipated Sri Aurobindo in their own inadequate ways. He¹ has noted about the hymns: “In the fixed tradition of thousands of years they have been revered as the origin and standard of all that can be held as authoritative and true in Brahmana and Upanishad, in Tantra and Purana, in the doctrines of the great philosophical schools and in the teachings of famous saints and sages. The name borne by them was Veda, the knowledge, — the received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable.”

Then Sri Aurobindo² notes a supreme irony: “But if we accept the current interpretations, whether Sayana’s or the modern theory, the whole of this sublime and sacred reputation is a colossal fiction. The hymns are, on the contrary, nothing more than the naïve superstitious fancies of untaught and materialistic barbarians concerned only with the most external gains and enjoyments and ignorant of all but the most elementary moral notions or religious aspirations.”

Surely here is a strange state of affairs but the Veda itself must bear the responsibility for it. And Sri Aurobindo does not ignore whatever lends itself to gross interpretations: references to food, wine, gold, children, servants, cows, horses, travel, forts, enemies, war, plunder on the one hand, and night, dawn, fire, water, rivers, hills, forests on the other. By his double outlook — esoteric and exoteric — he does full justice to the paradox that is the Veda. He is also aware that³, even in the past, side by side with the extreme veneration accorded to this manual of Mantras a censorious eye was turned upon it by mystics for its earthy-seeming concerns. Not only the Upanishads but the Gita too criticises the champions of Vedism, saying⁴ that all their flowery teachings were devoted solely to material wealth, power and enjoyment. Yet, with apparent inconsistency, the Gita,⁵ like the Upanishads, does not hesitate to regard the Veda always as divine knowledge. Nothing except Sri Aurobindo’s double outlook can have validity. Those who deny the esotericism fly in the face of all indications in its favour and, when despite Sri Aurobindo’s masterly treatment of these clues they cling to their pet prejudices, one despairs of academic qualifications.

Sri Aurobindo has no difficulty in demonstrating that in some cases of reference to external objects the Veda has dropped definite hints of their symbolic usage. “Cows” occurs very frequently. There is no doubt that the Vedic word *gau* means both “cow” and “ray” (or “light”). In the Vedic hymns to the Dawn “Sayana himself is obliged ... to interpret the word sometimes as cows, sometimes as rays, — careless as usual of consistency ...”⁶ Sri Aurobindo adds that twice the Veda removes the veil of the image entirely. In the one instance a synonym for “rays” is used and the word “gau” comes in as a simile, indicating the true Vedic content of this word: *prati bhadrā adriḥṣata gavām*

¹ *The Secret of the Veda*, p 3

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁴ II. 42.

⁵ XV. 15

⁶ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 119.

sargā na raśmayah (IV. 52.5) — “her happy rays come into sight like cows released into movement.”¹ Still more conclusive is the verse: *saṁ te gāvas tama ā vartayanti, jyotir yachchhanti* (VII. 79.2) — “Thy cows (rays) remove the darkness and extend the Light.”² Similarly, the Veda discloses the true sense of *ghṛita* meaning ghee or clarified butter. This word can also mean light, from the root *ghṛi* to shine. In a Vedic expression like *dhīyam ghṛitāchum* the thought is compared to pure clarified butter and we can only speak of “luminous thought”,³ just as *ghṛitapruṣā manasā*, “a mind pouring ghee”, has to be translated “a mind pouring light”.⁴ Again, when the Rishi asks Agni (Fire-God) to “hearken to the anthem our thoughts strain out pure to the godhead like pure clarified butter” (VI.10.2), we have in the comparison the clue to the symbol of *ghṛita* in the sacrifice.⁵ *Ghṛita* is “the light-offering”, the labour of the clarity of an enlightened or illumined mind.

Perhaps the easiest way to rout Renou and his tribe of modern expositors, on whom Monchanin leans so confidently, is to employ the argument Sri Aurobindo brings to bear on the nature of the Panis, a certain type of enemy of the aspirants to Aryanism, the cult of Light. The general term for the enemies of Aryanism is Dasa-Dasyu and, as not only Sri Aurobindo but even Western authorities like A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith⁶ inform us, the Panis are also designated as Dasas and Dasyus in some passages. Hence what Sri Aurobindo says in connection with the Panis must hold throughout the Rig-veda, and Sri Aurobindo himself intends it to hold when he⁷ writes apropos of the Panis: “It is either an uncritical or a disingenuous method to take isolated passages and give them a particular sense which will do well enough there only while ignoring the numerous other passages in which that sense is patently inapplicable.” The situation which arises when we take as a whole all the references in the Veda to the Dasa-Dasyus and adopt the conclusion which issues from all the passages thus taken together — the total situation may be formulated with indications from Western scholarship itself. Macdonell and Keith⁸ state: “Dasyu, a word of somewhat doubtful origin, is in many passages of the Rig-veda clearly applied to superhuman enemies ... Dasa, like Dasyu, sometimes denotes enemies of a demoniac character in the Rigveda.” About the Panis the same savants⁹ say: “In some passages the Panis definitely appear as mythological figures, demons who withhold the cows or waters of heaven.” With this fact established from non-Aurobindonian expositors about the anti-Aryans, we may quote Sri Aurobindo¹⁰ on what the Panis must turn out to be throughout the Veda in consequence of the comprehensive method he has proposed:

¹ *Ibid.*, p 121 ² *Ibid*

³ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p XX

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. XX-XXI. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁶ *The Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (London, 1912), I, pp 471, 472.

⁷ *The Secret of the Veda*, pp. 215-16.

⁸ *Op cit.*, I, pp. 347, 356

⁹ *Ibid*, I, pp. 471, 472.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 216.

“When we follow this method we find that in many of these passages the idea of the Panis as human beings is absolutely impossible and that they are powers either of physical or of spiritual darkness; in others that they cannot at all be powers of physical darkness, but may well be either human enemies of the god-seekers and sacrificers or else enemies of the spiritual Light; in yet others that they cannot be either human enemies or enemies of the physical Light, but are certainly the enemies of the spiritual Light, the Truth and the Thought. From these data there can be only one conclusion, that they are always and only enemies of the spiritual Light.”

Perhaps sympathisers with Monchanin’s stricture on the Aurobindonian attitude may try to make a dent in the latter by asking: “Are there not any passages where the Dasa-Dasyus are definitely something else than demons?” — and then by citing Macdonnel and Keith’s opinion¹ about their being human: “this may be regarded as certain in those passages where the Dasyu is opposed to the Aryan, who defeats him with the aid of the gods.” But surely if a Dasyu or Dasa is a demon-enemy, he is hostile both to the gods and to the Aryan who worships the gods and is favoured by them: it can make little difference to the enemy’s essential character whether the gods fight him directly in the inner occult world or through the aid they give to the soul of the worshipper fighting him there.

No, Sri Aurobindo’s case is unassailable. And we may well conclude with him:² “The whole Rig-veda is a triumph-chant of the powers of Light, and their ascent by the force and vision of the Truth to its possession in its source and seat where it is free from the attack of the falsehood.”

¹ *Op. cit.*, I, p. 347

² *Op. cit.*, p. 223

LONGINGS FOR THE MOTHER

(Continued from the issue of November 1974)

(10)

Mother, we read again Your 'Notes on the Way'

I

MOTHER, you have left us a testament, a large and an intimate testament and we now read it with a keen desire. You have spoken there of yourself, of the deepest mystery of your inner aspirations and longings, of marvellous contacts and communions, of great transformations and transmutations, of enormous risks and hazards and a great deal more. And we read all this, feel high elations, get terribly startled and are extremely sad that we never realised what all that meant when we previously read it. We did not take all that seriously. We felt we did not understand that well. Your 'Notes on the Way' document is indeed a great testament, an eye-opener to us today.

In 1965, when you started speaking to us of these profound yogic mysteries of your inner working, you said under the date of October 7, 1964, "Things have clearly taken a turn for the better, not from the ordinary point of view but from the higher. But the material consequences are still there — all the difficulties are as though aggravated. Only, the power of the consciousness is greater — clearer, more precise; and also the action upon those that are of good will; they make quite considerable progress. But the material difficulties are as though aggravated, that is to say, it is ... to see if we can stand the test!"¹ Further you said, "Not long ago (since yesterday), something has cleared in the atmosphere. But the way is still long — long, long. I feel it is very long. One must last — hold on, above all that is the impression — one must have endurance. These are the two absolutely indispensable things: endurance, and a faith that nothing can shake, even an apparently complete negation, even if you suffer, even if you are miserable (I mean to say in the body), even if you are tired — must endure, must last. That is it."²

Thus we were told of 'the yoga of the body', also called 'the yoga of the cells' or 'the physical yoga' and we began to visualise what it might possibly be. Not having any experience of it ourselves, we could hardly appreciate it. 'Endurance' and 'faith' are always needed, but their place in 'the yoga of the body' we could hardly know. And that this yoga is a 'long, long' thing was yet more difficult to appreciate.

The note of the 'material difficulties' and 'the test', of the 'suffering' and the 'misery' of the body are already there in the first utterance itself, but we never took that seriously.

You explained also: "The most material consciousness, the most material mind is accustomed to act, to make an effort, to advance through whippings; other-

wise, it is *tamas*. And then, so far as it imagines, it imagines always difficulty — always the obstacle, always the opposition, — and that slows down the movement terribly. Very concrete, very tangible and *often repeated* experiences are needed to convince it that behind all its difficulties there is a Grace, behind all its failures there is the Victory, behind all its pains and sufferings, all these contradictions there is Ananda. Of all efforts it is this one which has to be repeated most often; all the while you are obliged to stop or remove, to convert a pessimism, a doubt, or an imagination altogether defeatist.”³

You further explained:

“Naturally, when something comes down from above, that makes, well ... a crash, like that (*gesture of fleeting*), then all is silent, all stops and awaits. But ... I understand well why the Truth, the Truth-Consciousness does not express itself more constantly, because the difference between its Power and the power of Matter is so great that the power of Matter is as it were cancelled — but then that does not mean Transformation, that means crushing. That is what they used to do in ancient times — they crushed all this material consciousness under the weight of a Power against which nothing can struggle, which nothing can oppose. And then one had the impression: ‘There you are! It has been done.’ But it has not been done, not at all! for, the rest, down below, remained as before, without changing.

“Now, it is being given its full possibility to change; well, for that, you must allow it full play and not interpose a Power that crushes it — this I understand very well. But that consciousness has the obstinacy of the imbecile. How many times during a suffering for example, when the suffering is there, acute and one has the impression that it is going to be unbearable, there is just a little inner movement (within the cells) of Call — the cells send their S.O.S. — everything stops, the suffering disappears and often (now more and more) it is replaced by a feeling of blissful well-being.”⁴

Here is, we now realise a little, ‘the material consciousness’ ‘the consciousness of the body and cells’, ‘the material mind’, ‘the physical mind’, which is all subject to external pressures, come into being that way and is full of a sense of difficulties, fears and defeats, cannot now easily turn to the Divine, open itself to that influence and enjoy blissfulness. *Tamas* is its very constitution and it must through long endurance and patient action be transformed in its nature. It has not to be suppressed and crushed, but transformed, i.e., it should in its nature consciously now turn to the Divine and imbibe His influence and Force rather than remain unconscious, all subject to external pressures and always suffering whatever is imposed on it, having no power to be itself capable of throwing off external impacts whatever.

You remind us also of Sri Aurobindo’s word in this connection, viz., “Endure and you will conquer Bear, bear and you will vanquish.”

We ponder over all this, try to feel what you were living through, what you were attempting and what possible benefits for all human nature were intended. All tremendous, original, most creative, most difficult, yet a perfectly possible and necessary development of spiritual life. A surely victorious move, however prolonged the action needed!

And we wish you, Mother, as we used to do at times before, but now with some understanding and appreciation:

“Victoire à la Douce Mere.”

(“Victory to our Sweet Mother.”)

2

You have, Mother, while admitting us to your experience, also tried to initiate us into this profound yoga of the body. You have evidently wished us to do it. We wish we did, but now we will.

You told us:

“... as you descend into that domain, the domain of cells, even the very constitution of the cells seems as if less heavy. This sort of heaviness of Matter disappears — it begins again to be fluid, vibrant. That would tend to prove that heaviness, thickness, inertia, immobility, is a thing *added*, it is not a quality essential to ... it is the false Matter, that which we think and feel, but not Matter itself, as it is.”⁵

“The best one can do is not to take sides, not to have preconceived ideas or principles — Oh! the moral principles, the set rules of conduct, what one must do and what one must not and the preconceived ideas from the moral point of view, from the point of view of progress and all the social and mental conventions ... no worse obstacle than that. There are people, I know people who lost decades in surmounting *one* such mental construction! ... If one can be like that, open — truly open in simplicity, the simplicity that knows that it is ignorant — like that (*gesture upward of self-abandon*), ready to receive whatever comes. Then something can happen.

“And naturally the thirst for progress, the thirst for knowledge, the thirst for transformation and, above all, the thirst for Love and Truth if one keeps that, one goes quicker. Truly a thirst, a need, a need.

“All the rest has no importance, it is *that* one has need of.

“To stick to something one believed that one knows, to stick to something that one feels, to stick to something that one loves, to stick to one’s habits, to stick to one’s so-called needs, to stick to the world as it is, it is that which binds you. You must undo all that, one thing after another. Undo all the ties. And it has been told thousands of times and people continue to do the same thing... Even they who are most eloquent and preach that to others do s-t-i-c-k. They stick to their way of seeing, their way of feeling, their habit of progress, which seems for them the only one.

“No more bonds — free, free, free. Always ready to change everything, except one thing: to aspire, this thirst.”⁶

Further you told us:

“... every second all the cells must be (*gesture of offering upwards*) in adoration, in aspiration — adoration, aspiration ... nothing else. Then after a time there is also delight, then that ends by blissful trust. When this trust is established all will be well.

But ... it is easy to say, it is much more difficult to do. Only for the moment I am convinced that this is the only means, there is no other.”⁷

In this connection, we recall what you have called the A B C of the transformation of the body. You have said: “... would you be able to tell exactly, at every meal, the amount of food and the kind of food your body needed? — simply that, nothing more than that: how much should be taken and when it should be taken You know nothing about it, there’s just a vague idea like that, a sort of imagination or guesswork or deduction or ... all sorts of things which have nothing to do with knowledge. But that exact knowledge: ‘It is this I must take, I must take so much of it’, — and then it is finished. ‘It is this my body needs.’ Well, that can be done. There’s a time when one knows it very well. But it asks for years of labour, and above all years of work And to know also how to determine for one’s body, exactly, the amount of physical effort, of material activity, the amount of expenditure of energy, the amount of recuperation of energy, the proportion between what is received and what is given, the utilisation of energies to re-establish a state of equilibrium which has been broken, to make the cells which are lagging behind progress, to build the conditions for a possibility of higher progress, etc It is a formidable task⁸ ... are you conscious of your physical cells and their different characteristics, their activity, the degree of their receptivity, of what is in a healthy condition and what is not? Can you say with certainty when you are tired, why you are tired? Can you, when there’s something wrong somewhere, can you say: ‘It is because of this I am suffering’? ... Well, this is the A B C of the transformation of the body.”⁹

Surely, we haven’t a clear awareness of the body and its needs. We do not even know when we are really hungry and when we need to eat, much less know precisely what we need to eat, how much we need to eat and when we need to eat. Or when we are tired or what exactly the cause of a suffering is.

We wish and we aspire that we may become clearly aware of our body and its vicissitudes. It will be splendid to know one’s body so well and use it rightly, properly and effectively and over a long vista of life.

Mother, grant that this happens.

And then we should become aware of our cells themselves and then be able to deal with them yogically in aspiration, rejection, surrender, self-opening and so on as we do at the levels of the vital and the mind. Then surely a descent into the cells would be a possible venture and they could enjoy adoration of the Divine and exercise a real aspiration and a real self-opening.

When we read these ‘Notes on the Way’ earlier, we did try to put ourselves into our best sympathetic contact with you and your inner work. But now we feel seriously called to it. We are sure you are promoting it most energetically and this is the work that is to be carried forward to its completion. We are poor Adhars, but we aspire, we seek to serve you, will do your Will.

Mother, make us fit instruments of your sublime work and we look forward to its progress and final success.

We are, Mother, your little children, very ignorant, very weak.

(To be continued)

INDRA SEN

References

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, February 1965, p. 77.

² *Ibid*, ³ *Ibid*, pp. 79-81. ⁴ *Ibid*, p. 81. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85. ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

⁷ *Ibid*, August 1965 p. 103. ⁸ *Ibid*, November 1973, pp. 73-75. ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

WE have wandered long enough,
 Entranced, bewitched by glamour
 And the tinsel of this world;
 Desperately humanity longs for peace.
 Arise, realise the True Self ...
 Which is in the hearts of all.
 Within this heart is another Heart,
 The fountain of the DIVINE SELF:
 In this eternal Rose Garden
 The Soul forever yearns for Union,
 Like a grain of sand in the desert,
 Or a drop of water in the Ocean.
 Here the DIVINE plays and sings
 The eternal song of Creation:
 Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss —
 This is the shoreless sea,
 Where we are sons of God.
 Hasten while time there is still
 And drink from the cup of immortality —
 For to-morrow is the reflection of nothingness
 Where all things evaporate and empty
 Only to return for a new beginning.
 “Now,” says the Mother of Love and Wisdom.

ARVIND DEVALIA

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of November 1974)

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

(n)

ON 17 January 1954 Teilhard¹ writes to Bruno de Solages:

“...The ‘sin’ of Rome (in spite of its blessings bestowed haphazardly upon Technique and Science) is not to believe in a future, in an achievement (for Heaven) of Man upon Earth. This I know because for the past sixty years I have stifled in this sub-humanised atmosphere. And I know it also because, in 1948, in Rome itself, the Father General himself said it to me with a perfect candour.

“Far from discouraging or embittering me — a strange thing — this evidence that *the ‘Anti-Christ’ can only be vanquished by a Trans-Christ* both calms and excites me. Something magnificent is in sight. And one cannot escape (both humanly and Christianly) from falling upon that very position. From this point of view, the Church’s present resistances to the movement seem to me simply a little ridiculous. The movement is already carrying it away.”

Here we can be in no doubt of what Teilhard means by “Trans-Christ”. It indicates a Christianity transcending the one the Church seeks to perpetuate. The latter is found by Teilhard to be an obscurantism which not only represses and chokes his own finest self but also fails to appreciate the true human condition and discourages its

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, 1974), p 434: “ le ‘péché’ de Rome (malgré ses bénédictions prodiguées au hasard sur la Technique et la Science) est de ne pas croire à un avenir, à un achèvement (pour le Ciel) de l’Homme sur Terre. Cela je le sais, parce que depuis soixante ans j’étouffe dans cette atmosphère sous-humanisée. Et je sais aussi parce que, en 1948, à Rome même, le Père général lui-même, avec une parfaite candeur, me l’a dit

“Loin de me décourager, ni de me rendre amer — chose curieuse — cette évidence que l’*‘Ante-Christ’* ne peut être vaincu que par un *Trans-Christ* me calme et m’excite à la fois. Quelque chose de magnifique est en vue. Et on ne peut pas éviter (à la foi humainement et chrétiennement) de tomber sur cette position-là. De ce point de vue, les résistances présentes de l’Eglise au mouvement me paraissent simplement un peu ridicules. Le mouvement l’entraîne déjà ”

legitimate aspiration towards the attainment of the Ultra-human, the great evolutionary future fulfilling life and establishing the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth. Teilhard goes to the extent of stigmatising religious Rome as Anti-Christ, a hostile force to be subdued, a retrograde frame of mind which would yet not be ultimately of any avail in face of the general drive of evolution and would itself be converted to the fundamentally transposed and modernised Christianity *à la* Teilhard — Teilhard the scientific “Neo-Humanist” no less than the Jesuit “Hyper-Catholic.”

Again to de Solages he¹ writes on 2 January 1955, the last year of his life: “... I am considering to take up again (in a way more concentrated and more centred? ...) my *Weltanschauung* in an essay on ‘The Christic’, — unpublishable, of course, — but it might eventually help the birth of the ‘trans-Christian’ God we are waiting for. Toynbee is right, I think, when he writes that, unsuspectingly, we have already come out of ‘the Christian era’. But where he is mistaken (in my opinion) is when he qualifies our epoch as ‘ex-Christian’ — It is ‘trans-Christian’ (I repeat) that he should have said. — I am more and more convinced that the Church will only start again upon its conquering march when (taking up once more the great theological effort of the first five centuries) it will set itself to rethink (to ultra-think) the existing relationship, no longer between Christ and the Trinity, — but between Christ and a Universe become fantastically immense and organic (at least a trillion galaxies each almost certainly containing Life and Thought . . .). Christianity can only survive (and super-live), I feel, by sub-distinguishing in the ‘human nature’ of the Incarnate Word a ‘terrestrial’ nature and a *cosmic* nature. Otherwise, our Faith and our Charity no longer cover the Phenomenon ...”

Teilhard makes five emphatic points, from which the true sense of the “trans-Christian” may be caught. First, Christianity as it has been held by the Church is utterly out of date: the era of its credibility is over for good. But, unlike Toynbee who sees no future for Christianity, Teilhard discerns in it, behind the dead form Rome still clings to, a living essence capable of re-birth, possible to activate in a new form. This is the second point. The third is that the renovated religion, passing as it does clean beyond the present unrealistic old-world vision, is to be termed “trans-Christian”. This means that no mere touching up of the existing orthodoxy will do. A

¹ *Ibid*, pp. 449-50 “ je médite de reprendre (en plus concentré et plus centré? .) ma *Weltanschauung* dans un Essai sur ‘Le Christique’, — impubliable, naturellement, — mais qui peut éventuellement aider à la naissance du Dieu ‘trans-chrétien’ que nous attendons. Toynbee a raison, je crois, quand il écrit que, sans nous en douter, nous sommes déjà sortis de ‘l’ère chrétienne’. Mais là où il se trompe (à mon avis) c’est quand il qualifie notre époque d’‘ex-chrétienne’. — C’est ‘trans-chrétienne’ (je répète) qu’il aurait dû dire. — Je suis plus en plus convaincu que l’Eglise ne reprendre sa marche conquérante que lorsque (reprenant le grand effort théologique des cinq premiers siècles) elle s’attachera à repenser (à ultra-penser) les rapports existant, non plus entre le Christ et la Trinité, — mais entre le Christ et un Univers devenu fantastiquement immense et organique (un trillion au moins de galaxies contenant presque sûrement chacune de la Vie et de la Pensée . . .). Le Christianisme ne peut survivre (et super-vivre), je le sens, qu’en subdistinguant dans la ‘nature humaine’ du Verbe Incarné une nature ‘terrestre’ et une nature *cosmique* Autrement, notre Foi et notre Charité ne couvrent plus le Phénomène ”

total change is requisite, without which the Church will disappear. Its life today is stagnant: to live at all it has to "super-live": else there is no hope of its survival. And here comes the fourth point. The super-living has to be the rethinking of a certain central factor in Christianity. Teilhard equates rethinking with ultra-thinking: that is to say, there should not be a wholesale replacement of what is associated with Christ but what is associated must be carried far beyond its accepted version and seen in a wholly novel light. To be precise, Christ's relationship with the Universe demands to be formulated differently.

Fifthly and finally, we are given the lines of the different formulation. It is intimately bound up with the modern view of the cosmos, a view that cannot help revolutionising all our religious approaches in a manner that could never have been anticipated in its true urgency. We are faced by a cosmic All, infinitely large, innumerable diverse, organically unified and developing an increasing synthesis of complexity and consciousness — a trillion galaxies in constant evolution and bound to contain conditions conducive to the appearance of a vitality and mentality similar to ours. A Christ whose role has been taken as confined to suffering for and saving an erring humanity on a tiny planet is outmoded in the presence of the phenomenal reality as laid bare by science. In the nature of this Christ we have to see, besides a specifically terrestrial component, a component which would not only cover the needs of the cosmos but also be physically and organically co-extensive with all space-time. This component would make for Teilhard's famous Cosmic Christ who would include the terrestrial Christ of past orthodoxy yet entirely alter our notion of his essential character and fit him fundamentally to an evolutionary universe. The Cosmic Christ of Teilhard, unlike the traditional God of Christianity, is, first and foremost, the God of evolution on a universal scale and therefore a "trans-Christian" God. Such a God is the only one whom modern man can worship under the aspect of Christianity, and without Him the coming age will necessarily be, as Toynbee phrases it, "ex-Christian". Such a God will trans-Christianise not only our "faith" but also our "charity", our self-giving in love. Charity would no longer be confined to binding up our neighbours' wounds and consoling our fellows in distress. It would gain a meaning that would make all collaborative research and all unifying world-work the most important activity of self-giving in love, since these would expedite the universe's evolutionary aim: collective self-convergence. Charity has to be "veritably propulsive of the universe."¹

Teilhard² touches centrally on the same theme in a letter to André Ravier on 14 January 1955: "... I would like to take advantage of the winter to write up 'ad usum

¹ *Ibid*, p. 443, Lettre à de Solages, 3 août, 1954: "Une 'Charité' véritablement motrice de l'Univers."

² *Ibid*, p. 452: "... je voudrais profiter de l'hiver pour rédiger 'ad usum privatum' une sorte de résumé (final?) de mes idées (et de mes aspirations) concernant 'le Christique' la rencontre 'implosive' du Chrétien et de l'Évolutif.— Comme je l'écrivais encore dernièrement à Mgr de Solages, il me semble que nous revivons, de 1500 ans de distance, les grandes luttes de l'Arianisme, — avec cette différence qu'il ne s'agit plus aujourd'hui de préciser les rapports entre le Christique et le Trinitaire, —

privatum' a sort of resumé (final? ...) of my ideas (and of my aspirations) concerning 'the Christic': the 'implosive' meeting between the Christian and the evolutive. — As I wrote only lately to Mgr. de Solages, it seems to me that we are living again, at a distance of 1500 years, the great fight of Arianism; — with this difference that it is no longer a question today to make precise the relation between the Christic and the Trinitarian, — but between Christ and a Universe suddenly become fantastically great, formidably organic, and more than probably *poly-human* (n thinking planets, — perhaps millions...). — And to express myself brutally (but expressively) I cannot see any noble and constructive issue to the situation outside of the *sub-distinction* for the theologians of a new Nicaea to work out in the human nature of Christ, between a *terrestrial* nature and a *cosmic* nature. — What do you think of it? ... In any case, one thing seems evident, more and more so: and it is that only a trans- (or ultra-) Christianised Christianity is henceforth capable of satisfying our increased powers and demands of adoration!"

Once more we have an unmistakable stress laid on changing Christianity to meet the exigences of an evolutionary view of the world. Teilhard makes no bones about Christianity in its present form being a complete failure, though not lacking in promise of self-renewal. This promise can only be fulfilled if Christ is endowed with a cosmic nature that would make him a far different and a far greater divinity than Roman Catholicism has conceived. This divinity would be capable of giving a supreme sense to the process of evolution by which a multi-aspected yet unitary cosmos carries on the development of life and mind in countless parts of its immensity — a development moving in the direction of a collective super-mankind. The Cosmic Christ cannot but trans-Christianise Christianity out of all recognition even while starting from the historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth and remaining within the cadre of the traditional dogmas. All these dogmas would wear a non-traditional face and the doctrines based on them undergo a metamorphosis.

Our next quotation is from a letter to de Solages on 16 February 1955. At the same time it sustains our thesis and introduces a note corrective of a certain exaggeration in the matter of Teilhard's faithfulness to the Church. The passage¹

mais entre le Christ et un Univers soudainement devenu fantastiquement grand, formidablement organique, et plus que probablement *poly-human* (n planètes pensantes, — peut-être des millions . .). — Et, pour m'exprimer brutalement (mais expressivement) je ne vois pas de noble et constructive issue à la situation en dehors de la *sub-distinction* à opérer par les théologiens d'un nouveau Nicée, dans la nature humaine du Christ, entre une nature *terrestre* et une nature *cosmique*. — Qu'en pensez-vous? Dans tous les cas, une chose me paraît évidente, de plus en plus; et c'est que seul un Christianisme trans- (ou ultra-) christianisé est capable désormais de satisfaire nos puissances et exigences accrues d'adoration!"

¹ *Ibid*, p 460 "Vous terminez votre discours sur le Progressisme par le texte 'Cherchez le royaume de Dieu, et le reste vous sera donné par *surcroît*.' Avez-vous songé que ce texte (comme celui: 'Rendez à César .') est présentement la difficulté majeure rencontrée par une foule d'esprits dans l'Évangile, — et qu'il représente (comme la pluralité des 'Humanités' dans le cosmos) un de ces points appelant d'urgence l'émergence dogmatique et mystique d'un 'Trans-Chrétien'? L'achèvement de

runs: "You end your discourse on Progressivism with the text: 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be *added* unto you.' Have you thought that this text (like the one: 'Render unto Caesar ...') is at present the major difficulty encountered by a throng of minds within the Church — and that it represents (like the plurality of 'Mankinds' in the Cosmos) one of those points urgently calling for the dogmatic and mystic emergence of the 'Trans-Christian'? ... The achievement of the Earth is not a simple addition but an essential co-condition for the Parousia. And, in this new perspective, Christ is neither distorted nor diminished, but verily 'resuscitated'. This is what I find impossible not to see and admit. Otherwise I would leave (I and many others) the Church, — immediately: because my need to adore and love would stifle in it."

Teilhard hits out once again at the Church's stress on the Supernatural to the neglect of earth's evolutionary concerns — the division of the Kingdom of God from terrestrial achievement, the things that are God's from those that are Caesar's. Perhaps the best comment here would be some lines¹ from an earlier letter (17 January 1954) to the same correspondent: "I am hurt and wounded ... in noticing that for Rome Work is still regarded, at bottom, as a Punishment, and Research (however blessed verbally) as an accessory, an addition and a fashion; — while, in both cases (Work and Research), it is a question of functions essential to the World's Christification (O this 'supernatural' — one should say this 'Extra-natural' — dehumanising —! ... who will deliver us from this theological poison which paralyses us in all our movements?)... Christianity, as I will not stop crying out to the end, is essential as a sequel to 'hominisation', to the extent that it is alone capable of rendering 'Cosmogénèse' ultimately loving and lovable. — But it cannot any longer continue without integrating most quickly into its Faith in Heaven a real Faith in Earth ..."

The burden of Teilhard's song is Rome's refusal to make the Supernatural go hand in hand with the Ultra-human, the religious aspiration with the evolutionary vision — a refusal of the Cosmic Christ or, as Teilhard² often puts it, "Christ the Evolver". This refusal companions the other which limits Christ within the earth's history and will not see the near-certainty of "hominisation" in numberless planets of

la Terre n'est pas un simple surcroît, mais une co-condition essentielle de la Parousie. Et, dans cette nouvelle perspective, le Christ n'est ni déformé, ni diminué, mais vraiment 'ressuscité'. Voilà ce qu'il m'est impossible de ne pas voir et admettre. Autrement je quitterais (moi et bien d'autres) l'Eglise, — immédiatement — parce que mon besoin d'adorer et d'aimer y étoufferait . . ."

¹ *Ibid.*, pp 433-4. " je suis heurté et blessé . . en contestant que pour Rome le Travail est encore regardé, au fond, comme une Punition, et la Recherche (si verbalement bénie soit-elle) comme un accessoire, un surcroît et une mode, — alors que, dans les deux cas (Travail et Recherche) il s'agit de fonctions essentielles à la Christification du Monde (ô ce 'surnaturel' — il faudrait dire cet 'Extra-naturel' — dés-humanisant —! . . qui nous délivrera de ce poison théologique qui nous paralyse dans tous nos mouvements!) . . Le Christianisme, je ne cesserai pas de le crier jusqu'à la fin, est essentiel à la suite de l' 'hominisation', dans la mesure où il est le seul capable de rendre 'la Cosmogénèse' ultimement aimante et aimable. — Mais il ne peut plus continuer sans intégrer au plus vite dans sa Foi au Ciel une réelle Foi en Terre . ."

² *E.g. Ibid.*, p. 412. "le Christ universel (ou 'évoluteur') . ."

the infinite universe of science and will not recognise what Teilhard¹ calls “the Christ of all the Galaxies”. Evolution everywhere: that is Teilhard’s message — and evolution on earth beyond the present human stage is the *sine qua non* for the arrival of God’s Kingdom: without it Christ cannot reappear to gather the world together into his divinity: the logical natural basis for the supernatural advent would be missing. To get rid of the obstacle in the way of the double reason for accepting his Cosmic Christ, Teilhard wants to develop Roman Catholicism beyond itself. The situation to be coped with is thus focused by him² elsewhere: “Decidedly, there is something that no longer turns round in the Christian Weltanschauung called orthodox at the moment.” In short, the “Trans-Christian” has to be effected, both as an intellectually formulated dogma and as a mode of mysticism by which our whole consciousness would move towards realising the state of collective maturation necessary for that culminating cosmic event, the Parousia.

The capital importance of the “Trans-Christian” to Teilhard’s personal life springs into relief towards the end of our passage. Perhaps nowhere else in his writings does he show his cosmo-Christic vision to be such a decisive factor for a parting of the ways. He declares himself ready to quit the Catholic fold unless this vision can find living room. He checks himself from cutting himself loose because, to his mind, the revelation originally basic to the Church is such that his new perspective not only is permissible but also has the possibility of being accepted by the Church at some time or other. If, however, the Church took up a position more anti-Teilhard than merely checking him from propagating his message — if it insisted on his retracting it — he would free himself at once from the Vatican. All this proves his adherence to have never been unconditional. The close of our passage is like Luther’s “Here I stand, I can no other.” Vigorously and forthrightly it stipulates the sole terms under which Teilhard can remain loyal. The usual talk of his not ever dreaming of a rupture makes too much play of his frequent assertions of attachment to the historic Church. Our quotation helps us to remember all the more the occasion nearly twenty years earlier, in June 1934, when he³ wrote from China to Léontine Zanta: “...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.”

In connection with that occasion when a severing of relations with Rome was prevented just by Teilhard’s having been far away from Europe, we culled from Robert Speaight⁴ a letter of Teilhard’s where he says: “Some people feel happy in the *visible* Church, but for my part I think I shall be happy to die in order to be free of it — and

¹ *Ibid*, p. 445. “... un Christ cosmique (un Christ de toutes les Galaxies . . .)”

² *Ibid.*, p. 445 “Décidément, il y a quelque chose qui ne tourne plus rond dans la Weltanschauung chrétienne qualifiée d’orthodoxe en ce moment.”

³ *Letters to Léontine Zanta* (Collins, London, 1969), pp. 110-11

⁴ *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biography* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 140

to find our Lord outside of it” Actually this communication is found in *Intimate Letters* and dated 10 January 1926.¹ *Intimate Letters* also gives us the same death-wish, now expressed by means of two famous words of St. Paul, in a letter² to the same correspondent, Valensin, on 17 December 1922: “As I was telling you of it, I believe, some other time, I am inwardly caught between two divergent forces which are, one the ever more ‘brutal’ view that there is no other issue to life than our Lord, — and the other, the perhaps ever more accentuated feeling of what there is of the heavy, narrow, and obsolete in the present Church. — That sometimes makes me think: ‘Cupio dissolvi’ [“I desire dissolution’], to escape from this tearing apart.”

Nor could the urge to liberate himself from the Church’s heaviness, narrowness and obsolescence and enter the true light of his Lord in an afterlife have been a mood of merely two moments in the 1920’s. It must have been a background presence throughout his life, for his relations with the Church never changed: if anything, they grew worse. On 22 August 1947 he was commanded to confine himself to pure science, not venture into religion or philosophy, and at the beginning of the next year this order was repeated,³ along with a warning that otherwise very serious measures might be taken against him. De Lubac⁴ also tells us that in 1949 Teilhard was more suspected than ever by Rome, that Valensin in the autumn of 1950 was deeply concerned about the storm gathering over his friend’s head and that already on 10 January 1949 Teilhard had written: “... since I am back from China, I can clearly notice that I am becoming more and more clear-cut and adamant on a few dividing positions; and that cannot change any more.”

We may add as further confirmation the fact that two days before his death Teilhard expressed his disillusionment with the Company of Jesus to which he belonged. In a letter⁵ to André Ravier, a fellow-Jesuit, on 23 March 1955 he confessed: “I owe a lot to the Company: but I would hesitate a lot before inviting anybody to enter it. — Let the counsellors beware!” This, at his life’s end, gives a final echo to a downright disillusioned statement in his earlier period, ten years after the “Cupio

¹ *Lettres Intimes*, p. 132 “Il y en a qui se sentent heureux dans l’Eglise visible, — moi, il me semble que je serai heureux de mourir pour en être débarrassé, c’est à dire pour trouver Dieu N[otre] S[eigneur] en dehors d’elle.”

² *Ibid.*, p. 90 “Comme je vous le disais, je crois, une autre fois, je suis pris intérieurement entre deux forces divergentes qui sont, l’une la vue toujours plus ‘brutale’ qu’il n’y a pas d’autre issue à la vie que N [otre] S[eigneur], — et l’autre le sentiment toujours plus accentué, peut-être, de ce qu’il y a de lourd, étroit, et caduc dans l’Eglise actuelle. — Cela me fait penser parfois. ‘cupio dissolvi’, pour échapper à ce trallement. —”

³ *Ibid.*, p. 384, bottom.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 8 of Avertissement and p. 383, note 5 “Déjà le 10-1-194 T écrivait ‘Depuis que je suis rentré de Chine, je distingue clairement que je deviens de plus en plus ferme et intrançaisant sur quelques points de divergence; et cela ne peut plus changer.’ Our “translation” is really the original, written by Teilhard in English, and is taken from *Letters to Two Friends 1926-1952* (Collins, The Fontana Library of Theology & Philosophy, London, 1972,) p. 192.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 463: “Je dois énormément à la Cie. mais j’hésiterais fort avant d’inviter qui que ce soit à y entrer — Caveant consules! ”

dissolvi". A letter¹ to Valensin of 20 October 1932 said: "*In reality*, I don't dare and have never dared to push anyone to make himself Christian. The weight is becoming too heavy to carry."

(*To be continued*)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Ibid*, p. 235. "*En réalité*, je n'ose et n'ai jamais osé pousser personne à se faire chrétien. Le poids devient trop lourd à porter "

LONGED-FOR HOME

O LONGED-FOR home, O distant dazzling height
 So far-off, dreamed-of, deeply sought;
 O crowning citadel atop the glaciated valleys of the Night.
 The twisted tracks that lead to aspiration's promised peaks
 Beset the weary traveller with slip and fall
 And labour long unending, as of Time,
 Or drop their dire and shadow-dense disguise
 Revealing straight and sunlit ways to tread,
 But where is home when all is plod and plod?
 When can the climber rest, his labour done?
 Where is the summit-home, the promised throne?
 Where is the bliss-brimmed rock that heaven made of clay,
 The light-hewn city, sanctuary at end of weary day?
 Where is the breeze whose shining air I breathed in sleep?
 The coursing sun-winds shooting through my tissue's deep?
 Each summit was a golden prison for my soul.
 There is no final pause; to climb — the only goal.

VIKAS

THREE EVOLUTIONARY SKETCHES

I

WHEN during the Ice Age, Magician
Nature fished out of her hat the warm-
blooded mammal, holding the new
species up by its furry nape
to the single-handed applause
of the Infinite, the Dinosaur
shook its head in cold-
blooded scepticism at the new-
fangled way of reproducing one's
kind inwardly; laid its Age-
old egg; and disapproving,
passed on.

2

Shaking out of her long
green sleeves the busy Primate,
the Lady Magician waved, over
its head itching with life
and crawling desires, a new
vibration; whereon with wonder
the simian gaze and the ten fingers
struck fire from stone kindling
fear in his kin and a light
in his kind, rising erect to see
the new flame reflected in Manu's
eye.

3

Smiling secretly at the start
of her next Act, the Magician
unfurled her scarf of all
radiances into the endless
air, opening the sight of one
or two on its invisibly
chanting Harmonies; as the spheres
chimed in unison fixing
inward their vision, a uni-
verse spoke the Word
of her smile; and a God-
Child laughed in her lap.

SEYRIL,
Peace Auroville

SEVEN LIVES

A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

(Continued from the issue of November 1974)

CHAPTER VII: PART 4

EDWARD awoke finally of his own accord shortly before noon, and it was fortunate that no one else was present, because for several minutes he found himself immersed in a state approaching amnesia. He had difficulty remembering his name or what he was doing in this little room so full of books and papers, with its small latticed windows and its view of manicured lawns. Somewhere in his dreams he had been Hiranyamaya again and his home had been a cave, and at other moments he had been Shankaradev and the white essence of his love and his sacrifice had been spreading out over a tawny Deccan landscape in summer, as he lay dying among its trampled and blood-stained grass tufts. But this? Yes, of course, he had done something here too. His immediate memory started to form again through the obscurity. He had come here to be a 'modern' man, to live as man lived in the twentieth century and discover what twentieth century man was born to discover. And yes ... at last he had finished his work. But then what was there left to live for in this most confining, least expressive of lives? Then he remembered that too — remembered that the Lord of the white lion who lived within him had himself come to earth at this time. And surely he, Edward Everton, would want to know what the Divine One had come for? For when the master of one's soul is engaged in some endeavour it behoves his soul-children to know what it is, does it not? Yes . indeed, yes.

The full import of the present having returned to him at last, he realized that he had certain immediate arrangements to make. But he was given no further time to think the matter out, for the door opened and the doctor's head poked in through the crack.

"Ah, my dear fellow, we've been a bit concerned about you, seeing that we usually have you about by nine. How do you feel? Working late last night, were you?"

"Yes," Edward replied with his usual, unvarying courtesy. "I'm really extremely sorry to have disturbed everybody. I haven't slept so late in over thirty years. I suppose I did work much too late — but there was something I just had to finish and I must confess I'm tired."

The doctor had come in and was standing by the bed looking down at Edward who now appeared haggard with exhaustion. "More tired than you should ever allow yourself to get at this age," he said. "I think I'd better be keeping an eye on you for a day or two, and meanwhile — complete rest."

"Certainly, doctor, it will be a pleasure. There's nothing I feel more like having at this moment than rest. As a matter of fact, when you came in I was just thinking of

speaking to the President about it. A short holiday, perhaps, if he wouldn't mind." He fell back on the pillow and closed his eyes.

The doctor was alarmed. He took Everton's wrist in his hand and felt his pulse, which was sluggish, and at the same time touched his body, which was unusually cold despite the midsummer heat.

Within an hour President Malthus had granted his favourite faculty member an indefinite period of leave to recoup his health. He even offered to pay his fare to any health resort he chose to name, but Edward was in no mood to go anywhere. He was quite content to remain on the spacious campus of the university and enjoy the comfortable and familiar seclusion of his own room. He had only one request — could he please be provided with a box of matches? Mr. Malthus, who had come to see him in his room, proffered him his own from a pocket of his coat, accompanied by a quizzical expression.

"Oh, nothing to worry about," Edward said looking at him and smiling. "I'm not going to suddenly turn arsonist or take up smoking. I would like to burn some personal papers, that's all."

Malthus was not to be so easily pacified. "Now, now, Professor Everton, what might you be up to? Haven't you heard that there is a stricture against any famous man burning his papers, however personal? Wouldn't the world be interested to know, for instance, that such-and-such eminent scientist wrote love poetry in his spare time?"

"You have me there. I admit it would make fascinating copy, and I would have enjoyed obliging if such had been the case. But what I wish to expunge from the record is nothing so flavourful. It's lying there on the table and it's ... well, let's say it's a theory that went astray. Just a small fire would suffice, there in my fireplace — a fire of purification to destroy a falsehood, if you like," Edward answered, smiling again and spreading out his hands disarmingly.

"Oh, all right," the President conceded. "Have it your way, Edward. But heaven knows what priceless products of your genius you will be consigning irreparably to the flames — may posterity forgive you, is all I can say."

"It will, indeed it will. Posterity is capable of creating quite enough of a mess for itself as things stand, without any contributions from myself."

And so it was that the exposition of the theory and practical application of atomic fission was postponed for another twenty-five years; for much of the work that was to be done by teams, and moreover teams of competing nations, and that had already been completed by a single man, was destroyed during a meagre half hour in that September afternoon of 1914.

For many months thereafter, the university saw little of Edward Everton even though he remained in its midst. He stopped meeting any of his students and stayed for the greater part confined to his room. He seemed suddenly and inexplicably to have lost all interest in living and the university doctor's and his fellow professors' concern for him did not find cause to decrease with the passing of time.

As for Edward, he himself had only one consuming interest left, which was to

re-establish contact with the Divine One he had come to adore and worship so many lives and millennia ago. Now in his morning meditations he wept often, not only for his divine master's presence but also for release from a life that no longer seemed purposeful to him. The Divine Being himself was not tardy to answer his child's prayer. One morning in early November he entered Edward's field of consciousness as unobtrusively as the most casual caller and spoke to him through his own inner voice.

"Don't be disturbed," was the Great One's message. "There is still something left for you to learn. Be patient and calm and resume your work. I will send you my papers as soon as I can find a means and I believe you will be satisfied."

His words ceased but his august presence, which filled Edward with such a rare ecstasy that he was all but rendered speechless for the rest of the day, lingered and lingered — indeed never altogether faded, so deep were its roots in Edward's own being.

The next day, Edward resumed a few of his classes, and the university doctor breathed a sigh of relief to see his patient's cheerful demeanor and sprightly gait — a transformation that seemed almost miraculous to all who knew him. Even President Malthus came to Edward's room that evening to express his pleasure.

"Delighted to have you in harness again after all this time, Everton," he said, clasping his professor's hand. "We had really begun to worry about you. I can't tell you how pleased and relieved I am to see you back as good as new."

"I'm rather relieved myself," Edward answered, "I needn't hide from you that I went through a bad spell — nothing anyone could help me with, I'm afraid. But I'm sure I'll be all right now."

"Well, Everton, I know you're a reticent man, but if there's anything you would ever like to share or talk over with me, I would do everything in my power to understand —"

Edward smiled at the man in front of him and the same blinding inner love poured out from him that had been gifted to him so long ago by the goddess. Malthus, stolid though he was, felt a sudden rush of tears well to his eyes and hurriedly turned his gaze away. "Of course, I know you would," Edward was saying softly. "But this was something I could only settle inside myself. Perhaps I could tell you about it some time when it's no longer quite so fresh, if you know what I mean?"

The President nodded, squeezed Edward's hand and left without saying anything, for he was too overcome for speech.

Within a week, Edward had resumed all his former duties. He was still teaching Physics, but with a detachment that had formerly been absent, and a sense that he was no longer intimately concerned with the subject, as he had been before. Indeed, sometimes he treated the accepted scientific method and approach with such a wry humour it could only be supposed that for some unknown reason he no longer took them seriously. Nor would he make any definitive statements. It was as though he had come to regard the whole field of science as a mere conglomeration of hypotheses that one ought to treat with nothing more ponderous than a bemused smile. Naturally this

puzzled his students, but Edward was careful to see that his new outlook did not express itself strongly enough to disarrange their established scientific beliefs. After all, he told himself, he was in no mood at this age to take on the whole structure of modern, materialistic thought single-handed, and be labelled a crank for his pains. Let him indulge its mechanistic foibles then, for he was no King Shankaradev here, but simply an experimental scientist who had sprinted ahead of his time at his own bidding and his own cost. Only the Divine One of the cave and the white lion could now give him the direction and forward impulse for his life, and he waited as patiently for his words as he had been admonished to do.

Two years later, they started to arrive as an unheralded contribution from a European well-wisher to the philosophy department. And of course it was seemingly only by chance that Edward came across them lying in an envelope on a table in the faculty reading room while he had been looking for something quite different. But the moment he took out the sheets, he knew — these were what he had been waiting for all these years. These were the food and drink for his famished heart. Quickly, he gathered up the priceless bundle and hurried to his room while marvelling at the capricious methods of the gods. What if he had never come across the papers .? And then immediately he had to smile at himself. “Never come across the papers” when Silent Daughter had arranged and watched over their delivery to him herself? Really, the human mind was capable only of idiocies, he chided himself. He waited for the long, uninterrupted hours of free time in the afternoon to examine his treasure, and then he lost himself in it to the exclusion of all else.

He first discovered with something of a start that the Master of the white lion had a human name as he had himself. Names always seemed a little surprising when one’s recollections spanned the normal barriers of time. To Hiranyamaya the donor of his most precious boon had simply been a presence of the Divine One himself without specific appellation. But now the earth had singled him out with the workings of her tongue as she singled out all things, and had invented a name for him — Sri Aurobindo. Then with the sharpest stab of pain Edward realized Sri Aurobindo had taken birth in Hiranyamaya’s and Shankaradev’s own worshipful land; and he was about to curse the fate of Edward Everton aloud when Silent Daughter slid gracefully into his consciousness and curbed his outburst.

“No, beloved one,” she whispered. “Restrain your frustration and know that all the gods together could not separate your soul from the land of its own deepest love. But sometimes it is decreed that a soul must wander to taste new fruits and visit new shores, or reveal new continents to itself. So had it been decreed for you, for the modern, material world could not be allowed to pass by you unnoticed. But no exile can exist forever, and your home shall always await you when the task is done. Remember, always remember that the soul’s kinships know nothing of time, nor ever will.”

Soothed and appeased, Edward took up the issues of the *Arya*, masthead of Sri Aurobindo’s first publications, and began to read. He read and reread all that afternoon, and each successive afternoon for months to come. What entered into him as he

did so were not only the words on the page but the universes that existed behind, not to speak of the Master of the white lion himself, who took Edward in his embrace as he had not done for several millennia and rewarded him for his patient devotion as only a god can reward — unstintingly and overwhelmingly.

A year later and sporadically thereafter fresh issues of the *Arya* kept arriving and Edward's inner horizons kept widening to receive them. Once again the same relief encompassed him that he had felt when in his vision he had watched the god of joy burst through the pinprick of matter's grey wall and flood the material universe. Especially great was that relief when he learnt from his divine overlord that it was intended for man to evolve still further beyond his present state. Indeed surely there could be no other plausible course or expectation except that of oblivion itself, for man's present condition appeared to Edward not only unsatisfactory but ultimately untenable. But now he felt the satisfaction of knowing that the mental development of man marked only a step to some further stage as yet unimaginable to the human mind, to some further, perhaps definitive transformation of the elemental barbarism which existed in humanity as an animal species even into the twentieth century. There were indications too that the time was coming when Silent Daughter's arch-enemy, indeed the arch-enemy of all living things, the Dark Lord himself — might finally have to come to terms with immortality. The prospect dazzled Edward, yet at the same time revived in his memory every war-cry that had ever burst from his soul, and every wound he had ever sustained in the many wars of his recurring lives. For hadn't every conflict in which he had engaged really been a preparation, a step to the confrontation that was to come? Certainly — and how good it was to know now that he hadn't fought in vain, nor Silent Daughter entered the fray for nothing. At last the time was destined to come when the earth would slip away from the Dark One's cloak and in the full brilliance of a new day the white lion would rise to claim her, rampant upon her fields of gold.

The last issues of the *Arya* that Edward was to receive came late in 1919. He knew that these were not all that would be written, that many further marvels were yet to flow from the master's pen. But something told him within that what he had waited to learn needed no further elaboration. His moment of escape from the bonds of this life, to which he had looked forward so little even in the beginning, had come.

The next morning, during his hours of meditation, he called silently upon his inward image of his ancient Master and asked for confirmation. The divine being made no gesture but simply said, "You have learned what was required of you to know. Now only one thing is necessary — total peace." Upon these words, Edward felt all thought melt away from him, even all form and movement, until he was suspended in a great and limitless silence. Even his own identity he gratefully allowed to drift into some unrecoverable oblivion, together with all that had passed in this life, a life that had often seemed such a disagreeable burden upon his soul, though he had suffered no material or psychological hardship.

He returned to his physical surroundings only some hours later, but he returned

having lost even his innermost will to continue with his present existence. To his colleagues he appeared suddenly and inexplicably ill and tired, and he did indeed take to an invalid's routine within a week. Yet physically he suffered from no identifiable symptoms and he was once again merely treated for tiredness due to overexertion. The end came in February of 1920 when in the early hours of the morning without any pathological indications he quietly drew out of his body and fled to the welcoming arms of Silent Daughter. Behind him he left only the undistinguished frame of an old professor and the ashes of the work he had done and destroyed.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

NATURE REVISIONED

TEARS fall rushing gently.
 The moment is of Gratitude
 For that inexpressible
 Instantaneous melting flash
 When in redeeming silence
 Of wonder all things vanish
 Leaving bare the cosmic vastness.
 A sphere of sun-like purity
 Radiates from on high
 Penetrating the inmost depths of being,
 Reveals the ever-present heavenward Divine
 In a now almost transparent sheath
 Illuminating the one with the All.

SHARON

NIGHT AND DAWN

THE POETRY OF PETER HEEHS

THE alternation of periods of illumination with periods of darkness in which “experiences” cease and conscious contact with any deeper or higher consciousness is lost is a phenomenon well-known to spiritual seekers of all traditions not excluding the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. Indeed, this alternating movement would seem to be especially pronounced in this Yoga where the demand that the being develop in an integral fashion makes for frequent periods during which those parts of the being most open to the Force are obliged, as it were, to stop and wait for those parts incapable of such rapid progress to catch up. In these periods of assimilation the Force works, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, “behind the veil” and until that “veil” has been sufficiently thinned so as to be no longer quite opaque (a work of no short order), the sadhak’s subjective experience is of a more or less complete and painful lapse of consciousness.

Peter Heehs, a young American sadhak who has been at the Ashram since 1971, has chronicled his experience of this phenomenon in a collection of poems entitled *Night and Dawn*.^{*} It is an uneven work containing some excellent poetry, some pieces which are decidedly unsuccessful, and a good deal of material which falls somewhere in between these extremes. But lest this appear a harsh judgement of the work, let me say that the presence therein of even a few really excellent poems (and there are more than a few) seems to me to make this volume something rather extraordinary in terms of the present standard of Ashram English poetry, at least in so far as I am familiar with it.

Perhaps the most satisfying quality of Heehs’s poems is their honesty: there can be no doubt whatever that each of these pieces is as true a rendering as the poet could give of a poignant personal experience. And this quality is all the more admirable since so many of the poems deal not with beautiful moments of psychic consciousness, but with those terrible moments when the mental will, aspiring to truth but still impotent, stands helpless, awake or in dream, before the stirrings of the unchastened vital. These are experiences through which every sadhak must pass and the feeling of solidarity with one’s fellow-seekers that these poems engender is, for me, extremely moving. Heehs himself feels this sense of spiritual fellowship (at least during one of the dawns) and gives it beautiful expression in “I Cannot Tell”:

I cannot ever tell my love for you,
My friends, beautiful comrades on the way.

^{*} Published by the Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry — August 1974. Price Rs. 12.00

Though silence turn to pain, I cannot say
 Things which, if uttered, might cease to be true.
 I cannot tell your loveliness of limb,
 Where strength and sweetness meet in glad embrace,
 Your alluring godlike radiance of face,
 Or your childlike laughter warm as a morning hymn.
 On you is laid the Mother's glowing stamp,
 And earnest of the rich transforming flow
 That even now, though we in blinders go
 And notice nothing in our daily tramp,
 Is pouring swiftly down and secretly
 Is watering in us the gnostic tree.

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The book is divided into three sections each of which is introduced by a line from the Rigveda. "Night and Dawn, two sisters of different forms but of one mind, suckle the same divine child", reads the epigraph of the first section; "The seven mighty rivers increase the blissful flame ... the gods gave body to Agni in his birth", the second; while "He discovered at his birth the source of the abundance of the father" introduces the final section. The alternations of Night and Dawn constitute the continuing theme of the work, but, as the epigraph suggests, there is a definite evolution from one section to the next: though the poems are undated, they are evidently arranged in an essentially chronological order and the evolving treatment of the theme reflects the poet's progress on the path of his sadhana.

More or less violent swings from dawn to night and from night to dawn characterize the first section. Here the lapses into darkness are such that, while in their grip, the reality of all previous experience of the light is called into doubt. The poet wards off despair by clinging to the knowledge of the light's inevitable return, but the struggle against the darkness's denial is no easy one, for the saving knowledge is still only mental knowledge and it is held by sheer force of will rather than by a natural and easy adherence of the whole being:

Not night nor day,
 Not dark nor light.
 A sullen, grey,
 And painless blight.

And was there ever something called the Dawn,
 Something that made my love more than desire,
 Made truth a thing a child could seize upon,
 And life a flame that reached for something higher?

I will not fight,
 I will not cry,
 Although the night
 Possess the sky.

For still the light will sparkle from afar!
 Even if clouds should cover for a while;
 Still will my eyes be fastened to the star
 That keeps Day's secret through the Night's denial.

This is also the period of the most painfully direct confrontation with the sex impulse and none who have fought this difficult fight will fail to appreciate the poet's candor in describing its rigors.

In the second section we are in more comfortable space. Earlier the poet had understood the necessity of the periods of night, had even prayed that the descent might run its course, but the understanding and the prayer had been things of the mind. One sensed throughout the first section the extreme dividedness of the parts of the being and while many of the poems recorded "dawn" experiences and few were without some note of faith and hope, the energy balance (one recalls Milton's Satan) was strongly in favor of the lower members and the memorable poems were full of pain. But now the poet has grasped more securely the secret of the sacrifice:

This then is the key: to give the wine,
 To offer back the flow into the flow,
 Without the slightest start of self to throw
 Everything at the feet of the Divine.

And the nights no less than the dawns provide fuel for the sacrificial flame:

I give to you life's incapacity
 And mind's obstinate stupidity
 And what in me is twisted and perverse,
 My parts of animality and worse.
 I give to you my parts of happiness,
 Delight in all things lovely, and the bliss
 That needs no object. Everything I place
 Upon the altar and await your grace,
 Without demand or expectation, free.
 As your reception makes me, I will be.

A certain light, the beginnings of equality, have begun their slow growth in the mind, but their hold is tenuous: while its ability to overwhelm the mind is reduced,

the vital remains largely unregenerate and danger still lurks, especially in sleep experience:

But every night takes back the waking's gain.
 It rifles through my store of energy
 And leaves a dull and nerveless poverty
 Or binds me back to the whirling wheel of pain.
 The old desires and weaknesses remain ...

This then is the status described in the second section: considerable progress has been made, substantial gains recorded: the goal, though still a distant vista, has been glimpsed and the way to the goal clearly perceived. But the path winds through enemy territory and ceaseless vigilance is still demanded. True peace and ease remain prospects of no immediate future.

Upon cursory reading, the poems of the third section might seem to record a decline of consciousness rather than the advance which the epigraph to the section appears to herald. For the joyous dawn experiences, abundant in both preceding sections, are completely absent here. But, in fact, the consciousness revealed through these poems is something, or someone, much greater than that which spoke in the earlier pieces. The poet is still aware, perhaps more intensely aware than ever, of the limitations of his nature, especially, it would seem, of the dull, mechanical working of the physical mind; but though a deep sadness pervades many of these poems, there is through all of them, engendered, I believe, primarily by the classical meters in which they are written, which rhythms Heehs handles with considerable sureness, a note of stillness, a feeling of gathered strength that contrasts strongly with the agitated vibration one often felt in the poems of sections one and two, those dealing with the dawns no less than those dealing with the night. Some part of the poet's consciousness is now centered behind or above the *gunas*' ceaseless tossing, and the significance once attributed to the ups and downs of experience is rapidly fading. Thus centered, awaiting the Mother's transforming touch, and with a prayer that he may grow fit to be "Court-poet of the Solar Dynasty", Peter Heehs concludes *Night and Dawn*.

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As I have said and tried in the preceding pages to demonstrate, the consciousness behind these poems seems to me entirely sympathetic: it is honest, sincere, courageous; it speaks to us of experience that, in one form or another, all who tread this path must share, and in so doing reminds me of our essential unity. What I have not previously mentioned, but which, regrettably, is no less true, is that in no small number of these poems this entirely sympathetic consciousness must make itself felt in spite of some awfully antipathetic verse. It is not, indeed, until the third section of the work that Heehs's poems begin to succeed *as poems* with any consistency, not, that is to say,

until the third section that we find in more than occasional lines, or still rarer whole poems, a conjunction of imagery and rhythm capable of adequately expressing the inner consciousness of the piece. Far more often one searches in vain for meaningful links between theme and form, or blushes at the absolutely shameless things that the poet will do for the sake of completing a rhyme. These lines from "Rhythms of Night" amply illustrate both unfortunate tendencies:

Unafraid passing under the hex
That is nailed to the gateway of sin,
I will wade through foul rivers of sex

That pass through the bodies of men
(Men who think themselves judges of crime),
Back to the festering fen

Where desire takes birth from the slime.
I will penetrate deeper still,
Crawl down alleyways smeared with grime

And plunge down the clammy and chill
Dark shaft of the ultimate well,
To come face to face with the will

That moves the machinery of hell.

I trust it is abundantly clear, however, that the various defects of *Night and Dawn* seem to me, on balance, rather minor, incidental matters, somewhat distracting, but rarely sufficiently so to constitute a real threat to my experience and enjoyment of the poems. Peter Heehs is a serious poet on the basis of whose first book we have every reason to expect outstanding work in the future.

He writes in "Envoi":

Accept, O Lord, these pale songs of my youth,
First babblings of obscure lips that aspire
To utter the unveiled Name of truth,
To canalise its pure prophetic fire.

I should not be surprised to find with his next offering of poems that this aspiration has been answered.

MICHAEL ZELNIK

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sea Sonnets by *Jesse Roarke*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2. Pp. 101.

BEFORE launching on a review of a collection of sonnets the reviewer has to draw a deep breath; for, he has to brace himself up for a voyage of four crowded centuries. Towering figures like Dante and Petrarch and the English sonneteers like Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Keats loom up to appal him with their immortal sonnets. This is, undoubtedly, the one single form that has endured through all the tides of fashion and fluctuations of taste and continues to challenge the skill and power of the poets down to our own day.

Poets and critics have laid down very astringent and exacting tests for a successful sonnet Wordsworth wrote,

In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground.

And he composed them that souls

Who have felt the weight of too much liberty
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

And Keats observed of the sonnet-movement,

Swelling loudly
Up to its climax, and then dying proudly.

For Rossetti, 'A sonnet is a moment's monument' even though literature abounds in sonnet sequences.

Sri Aurobindo clinches the issue with these remarks, "In a sonnet, thought should be set to thought, line added to line in a sort of architectural sequence, or else there should be a progression like the pressing of waves to the shore, with the finality of arrival swift in a closing couplet or deliberate as in the Miltonic form" (*Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, 3rd Series, p. 202). In his poem 'Ahana' while scoffing at the materialist's account of creation he writes,

Gases and glands and the genes and the nerves and the brain cells have done it,
Brooded out drama and epic, structured the climb of the sonnet.

Sea Sonnets comprises a sequence of a hundred sonnets during seven years which were spent by the author in voyages and in every sonnet two themes are run in double harness each vivifying and tincturing the other. The first part, not necessarily restricted to the octave, gives us the absorbed experience of the wide sea-scape encompassing

the voyager and in the other is enshrined its counterpart, the soul-scape. The poet himself says in one of the sonnets,

The ocean calls its counterpart my blood,
 To finish what is never finished at all,
 Deeper and larger realizations mine;
 So in the all-recurrent heightening flood
 Expanding endlessly to meet the call
 I sail, and drink the fresh sky-winds condign.

At times when two fuse into each other the poet achieves a packed utterance of many-layered depths, as, for instance, in the final couplet of the first sonnet,

May the onward roll
 Be loosening freshening, filling to my soul.

What makes these sonnets refreshing and elevating is the poet's complete freedom from that solipsism and infernal conceitedness which shelters under the umbrella of modernism. Every single poem flows with a sure-footed rhythm and bears the stamp of his own voice with an imagery that is precise, evocative and everywhere carries a universal imaginative appeal. All local and minutely particularized imagery will stultify the poet's expression of his spiritual vision of the future. The poet commands an individual tone; for, he celebrates the sea-scape and the soul-scape mostly in images of calm and quiet. The storm and stress of a painful inner struggle are absent. Both the outer and the inner sea are swelling serenely and harmoniously. These sonnets mark a particular stage of the poet's spiritual development when he has achieved sufficient purity in his outer nature to enable the bud of the soul to out-flower without any cankers blighting it.

The diction, too, matches the theme of the soul's widening horizons with its exalted and lucid power. Here is a description of the sea which applies also to the quiet tone of the verse,

The roll is measured, smooth and slow and deep,
 Well underway for taking land-hearts home ...

And the home is the divine soul where,

I, relieved of purpose and dead goal,
 Commune in celebration with my soul.

With each great sonneteer the sonnet has pushed itself in a new dimension and a new field to run its course upon. Mr. Roarke's *Sea Sonnets* celebrate a spiritual voyage

which marks it off from other religious and spiritual longings and aspirations in this that his is not a path of negation or withdrawal of the Purusha from Prakriti into its pure and featureless being but of integral perfection brought about by the growth of the pure flame of the soul and its becoming the leader of the pilgrim-sacrifice, to use a cryptic phrase of the Veda. The soul here is not a prisoner crying for liberation but already free and looking forward with full certitude to greater realizations. Even the flux of the outer life is received with a calm assurance as the infallible and rightly-directed working of the omniscient divine shakti busy with the superhuman task of a divinised human perfection in every detail and the ensemble.

The book is very beautifully printed and one can easily tuck it in the pocket and sit under a tree and sip its nectar and feel grateful to the poet for affording one some luminous moments in a world where we feel ourselves to be, like Arnold,

on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Stephen Spender ends one of his sonnets with these lines,

at corners of day
Road drills explore new areas of pain,
Nor summer nor light may reach down here to play.
The city builds its horror in my brain,
This writing is my only wings away.

And Mr. Roarke closes his ninety-sixth sonnet with this couplet,

Transcendence more and more and light bringing along
Down with its power and bliss and love and song.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

Sri Aurobindo and The Future of Man — A Study in Synthesis: by *Sanat K. Banerji*, M.A., I.F.S. (Retd.). Published by the Sri Aurobindo Society. Pp. 208. Price Rs. 20/-.

Multum in parvo. Or as we say in Hindi *gagar men sagar*. In the small compass of these few pages a whole history of civilisation have been covered, man's aspiration, his present status and his future destiny have been traced out. The psychology of man, his basic problems and their solution as enunciated by Sri Aurobindo have been presented in a clear, precise and modern idiom.

The author has done his job thoroughly and formulated his thesis in a language direct and economical.

Even though it is Sri Aurobindo's point of view that he has been putting forth, the copious quotations that are woven into the book make for a somewhat uneven continuity in the exposition. One feels a kind of hampered movement. For often the quotations that were a felicitous part of the original books do not give here a natural effect in the stream of the matter even though connected with the context.

Those chapters or passages are excellent and extremely enjoyable where there are no quotations or the least number of quotations. The author is at his best when he moves on his own, the flow of the exposition shows no undulations or wrinkles. The reading becomes rapid and absorbing, running on smooth rails.

Going through the book one can feel that the author has a firm understanding of and a strong grip over the subject and is well qualified to present Sri Aurobindo's views authentically and forcefully.

The book provides variegated succinct historical information and a large and whole idea of Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future. It covers a far-flung span of the subject in a small space. Meticulous research work and, indeed, painstaking effort have gone into the production of this instructive and lucid book.

An exhaustive addendum running up to as many as 10 pages and giving complete information about the references used in the book is set at the end and is very helpful for those who want to pursue a fuller study of the subject or other connected subjects.

The book is beautifully printed and hardboard-bound, using quality material. There is Sri Aurobindo's picture on the coloured binding-cover.

In these days of scarcity and costs rocketing sky-high, it is quite natural that the prices of books go up, yet one would have wished the book had been more moderately priced.

Here is a significant contribution to Aurobindonian literature.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

Tryst with the Divine by *K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar*. Published by the Mother's Centre, Visakhapatnam-12. Pages 48. Price Rs. 5.

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party from the world of waywardness to the land of nectar.

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Read the book if you want to know how exquisitely and imaginatively the author describes his pilgrimage to the Ashram, what he experiences there and how he meets the Divine, the Mother, and feels fulfilled.

You will derive serene enjoyment and find ample food for intelligent but soulful thought. These pithy reflections will arouse a calm and elevated thinking and occasion absorbed feelings.

There is a Postscript giving a short account of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, the Ashram and Auroville. Printing and get-up are good.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

The One the Many & The Voice of the Soul — *Poems by Vithaldas M. Mehta & Mohanlal M. Mehta.* Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Pp. 120. Price Rs. 4.

This is a book in which two different works by two brothers are bound in one volume. The first portion is a good attempt at poetising sincerely felt spiritual and other ideas. The second, mostly in prose poetry, contains psychic inspiration and has definite experiences behind it.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

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“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of November 1974)

THE SCHOOLS OF TOMORROW

THE schools of tomorrow must do all in their power to brighten the life of each student and give the right moulding to those who belong to the future. Children cannot be transformed overnight. The best can be brought out only by self-regulation, self-discipline and self-education. True discipline is self-discipline. These are primary things in yogic education.

“First enlighten yourself” (*ātma dīpobhave*), exhorts the great saying of the Buddha, and then try to light up the unlit minds. Reaching the summit and directing the course of events from that height has always been the salient feature of India — therein lies India’s Indianness.

The educational strategy of the Ashram is to allow the students to evolve according to their natural bent — catch the thread of the past evolution and take a leap forward. Six to eighteen is the age when children should have the greatest freedom to explore the outer as well as the inner worlds. But there are parents who want to build their sons and daughters according to their old ideas and traditions.

The father of an adolescent believed in standard education and hoped that his son would climb to great heights. As his son was very bright, he reasoned that the Ashram would give him help in acquiring a foreign scholarship if his son showed an inclination.

It came to his father as a shock when his son, having left the school, gave himself up to self-education. On his father’s earnest persuasion to rejoin the school, what the boy said indicates his mental make up:

“However high the promise, I cannot even think of going abroad, leaving the Ashram. It is impossible for me to breathe in any other atmosphere.”

In this context I take the fancy to quote a few lines from Kahlil Gibran:

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow.

Another shock awaited the father, for the Mother asked his son to become a

teacher. Was the Mother not aware of his evolutionary destiny or was there simply a shortage of teachers?

The Mother says in an assuring tone to all in general:

“I have never asked any of those who were educated here to give lessons unless I saw that it would be for him the best means of disciplining himself, of learning in the best way what he has to teach and to attain an inner perfection which he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this occasion for disciplining himself, which is exceptionally hard.” (*Bulletin*, August 1961)

Finding in his son a wonderful combination of youthful vigour and spiritual fervour his father recalls what a blunder it would have been if his son had been thrown into the whirl of ordinary life.

I am tempted to bring two students on the scene regarding their dream of the future, one a second-year Japanese High School student and the other, a student of the Higher Course of our Centre. The Japanese student was invited to address a conference on Asian Development. He said:

“High school days are probably the most memorable period in our lives, full of hopes and expectations.

“We high school students often dream of the future of Japan and also of what we ourselves will be in the future. Already, I am half way through my high school life. When I recall that my days in high school so far have coincided with the period of great growth and great change in Japan, I as a youth feel happy to be living in such a period.

“Being faced with the measures taken by America in defence of the dollar, Japan is now in a state of unrest and the future is literally unpredictable. Let us stop taking such a narrow view.”

“What is your dream about the future?” I put a simple question to a teenager of our Higher Course

“To train myself in such a way that my life might grow like a flower to be offered to the Divine,” he said in a humble yet decisive tone.

“No ambition to rise in life?” my doubting mind enquired.

“Does success in life depend on obtaining a place or position in the world?” There was a ring of sincerity in what he said.

“What is your favourite reading?”

“Sri Aurobindo’s literature. I shall be very happy if my future work keeps me in touch with his books.”

“How do you find your educational life in the environment of the Ashram?” I seized the opportunity to put the key question in my mind.

“Very satisfactory,” he spoke with an air of confidence.

“What keeps you satisfied?” I contended.

“We had the fortune to be initiated into a system of education which promises

perfection in life.” It became difficult to conceal my joy on hearing the words from one of our students.

“What do you understand by perfection?” I argued.

“No part of life is neglected. There is no stress on any aspect to the exclusion of another. An equal opportunity is given to each of us to evolve in the way each prefers,” he said without a pause.

“How do you spend your off-time?”

He gave me a surprised look and continued, “Where is off-time for us? Our time is so well regulated from morning to evening that there hardly arises any occasion to engage ourselves in other things and we are happy like this.”

“Happy? All the time doing something? There arises no sense of pressure?”

“No pressure at all, rather we feel very happy. There lies the beauty. Life flows here smoothly like the flow of a river lulled by the refreshing breeze of the Mother’s Grace.”

“Some of the teachers in the Higher Course are men of high qualifications and qualities. What do you say? Do you feel satisfied with their way of teaching — I mean their teaching technique?” I put him a very delicate question.

“Their dealings are very friendly, I must admit. The man in charge of the Higher Course is very sharp-minded. Put to him any question and he will give an answer unimaginable to us. He will refer you not only to books but to the exact place where to find the answer. He is not only sympathetic but liberal in his views and has a sense of humour.”

“You have exhausted all your adjectives in praise of him? What is your view of the one on whom rests the whole responsibility of our institution?”

The young man was bubbling with youthfulness. To every question he had a ready answer:

“How can I pass judgment on my own teachers? Won’t I be making a fool of myself?”

“Why should you feel shy to express your candid opinion? Where is the harm in uttering a word of gratitude to him who has helped to make your future bright?”

My argument made his face light up with a smile. Looking at me he said: “You mean K? He is very helpful. He helps us to know our needs, our capacities, our ambitions and thus helps us to grow all the time. For every question of ours he has a convincing answer. He is the best speaker in the Ashram. All this I say without the least hesitation.”

“You were going to say something about your Professor of History?”

“His books read like a novel. His deep love for the country appears to be embodied in his words. They throb with life.”

“What is your view about our student teachers? I mean teachers who are the products of our centre?”

“M is an ideal teacher.”

“What is your criterion of an ideal teacher?”

“He who has the power to sweep you away by the force of his personality. Personality — that compels and does not demand respect. All depends on how a teacher addresses a student, establishes some sort of affinity with him, understands his problems and helps him to find the way out. A good student need not be a good teacher, a good writer may not be a good professor. Teaching is an art. Needless to say, all the teachers here try sincerely to bring out the best in us. For yoga and education here go side by side.”

To bring an end to the topic I put a rather serious question but it was a pleasure to find that he made easy of everything.

“I think your student life is free from problems?”

“Who is there in this world free from problems? I have my own way of finding the solution.”

“Wouldn’t you like to share your experience with others?” I pleaded.

“Instead of getting agitated over a problem, sit down quietly. Calm your mind and then open *Words of the Mother* and the solution is there. This method has proved to me very helpful.”

This boy has been here from the age of twelve and is now in the Higher Course. How clear is he in his thinking! How solid are his foundations!

I approached an ex-student with a question. “Our complicated life lends itself ill to the realisation of Sri Aurobindo’s ideal? What do you say?”

“We don’t believe in drawing yoga or Sri Aurobindo’s ideal to the public gaze. That’s why you feel like that. My teacher injected a new life into my veins. I am fully satisfied with my educational life in the Ashram.”

“Can you tell me what gives you satisfaction?”

“The system of education. If one establishes some sort of inner relation with the teacher, that gives the joy of learning and true satisfaction.”

“I learn that you won the first prize in an essay competition of Rs. 250/ from Mysore State. What was the subject?”

“‘Youth — The cause of the present unrest and the remedy.’”

“Who is the teacher that gave life to your unfulfilled dreams?”

“The one who had his education under the direct guidance of the Mother. How can you call it the fulfilment of my dream? It is just a beginning.”

How true! All in the Ashram is yet a preparation for the great beginning.

A teacher from Orissa said to someone on 15 August 1974:

“Out of my monthly salary, I keep apart some money to buy new clothes for my children at the end of the year. This time I spent the money in attending the Annual Conference of the Society. I am returning with the satisfaction that I am carrying for them the message of a new life.”

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

THIRTIETH SEMINAR

21st April 1974

IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

(Continued from the issue of October 1974)

SPEECH BY MAURICE SHUKLA

HUMANITY is passing today through one of those momentous periods of crisis in which a transition from one established order to a higher one is being prepared. Periods of radical change in human history have invariably been periods of crisis. But the nature of the present crisis is different from the previous ones, since it is one in which, as Sri Aurobindo says, is concealed the choice of humanity's destiny. The cause of the present crisis, which has propagated itself in all the fields of human life, is not in the external economic or political system — the oil crisis, corruption, unemployment, financial insecurity, inflation, etc. — but lies much deeper. It is a crisis of consciousness pressing for an evolutionary leap from the old established order and the old life-style into the New Order and the New Life of the Future. It is a critical period of decision which if not heeded would end in the ruin of the present civilisation. The significant messages of the Mother ring back to our ears — “Are you ready?”, “The choice is imperative: Truth or the abyss” — and if such an impending catastrophe is to be avoided, it is the individual alone, that is to say you and me, that can take this leap and, saving humanity from the dark abyss, lift it upwards into the refulgent heights of an earthly empyrean, and make the God-plan a living manifest reality.

The progressive self-unfolding of a luminous Divine Consciousness in the world is the meaning of this ceaselessly evolving existence. The involution of a superconscient Spirit in inconscient Matter and a subsequent gradual evolution of the secret Spirit out of inconscient Matter is “the key-word of the earth's riddle”. For the joy of self-discovery, the supreme spirit or the Brahman plunged itself into dark ‘caverns measureless to man’ and set out on a thrilling adventure by which it would regain its pristine state of Unity, Consciousness and Bliss.

The universe and the individual are the two essential formations through which the supreme Brahman descends into involution and through which again it ascends to its full self-revelation in evolution. But both the universe and the individual are

necessary to each other in this ascent. "Universe," says Sri Aurobindo, "seeks in infinite extension the divine totality it feels itself to be but cannot entirely realise; for in extension existence drives at a pluralistic sum of itself which can neither be the primal nor the final unit, but only a recurring decimal without end or beginning. Therefore it creates in itself a self-conscious concentration of the All through which it can aspire. In the conscious individual Prakriti turns back to perceive the Purusha, World seeks after Self; God having entirely become Nature, Nature seeks to become progressively God."¹

On the other hand, the individual also is impelled to realise himself by means of the universe. Not only is the universe "his foundation, his means, his field, the stuff of the divine Work; but also ... he must necessarily universalise and impersonalise himself in order to manifest the divine All which is his reality."²

There is something very peculiar in the upward ascent of the evolving individual. As he moves upward there emerges an increasing complexity in his personality, but it is always coupled with an ever-widening order and harmony. With the struggling emergence of Life from Matter and Mind from Life there is an increasing effort at self-consciousness and self-mastery.

Man, though oblivious of the true nature of Reality, has nevertheless persisted in his restless endeavour, groping through as it were, to find a stable permanent Reality behind the ever-changing flux of existence. Dissatisfied with materialism and impressed by the recent discoveries of evolutionary processes, the modern scientific mind posited Life and not Matter as the one underlying fundamental Reality. But the apparent blindness and unintelligence of the evolutionary developments disqualified Life from being the ultimate, self-possessed, luminous, all-knowing Reality. The scientists then discovered that there lay a greater Power than Matter and Life — a guiding Force and Consciousness vaguely termed "Mind" or "Intelligence" — that transcended the mechanical blind movements of its predecessors. Mind was thus probed but in spite of its greater light and greater ordered freedom it has not been found to be the ultimate Reality. Humanity has arrived thus far. It is at this critical juncture that, in order to proceed further on the evolutionary scale, it is compelled to find and possess a more luminous and psychologically satisfying Power as its guide on the path ahead. But it has become so accustomed to the processes of the Mind and working with Reason as the supreme guide that it is almost impossible for it to reconcile itself to the idea that there exists a state of being deep inside each individual which harmonises all contraries and clashing dualities and which removes all present limitations and shortcomings by bestowing on him a supernormal consciousness. That the entities Matter, Life and Mind could be parts of a greater harmonious totality and unity, is a proposition that it cannot accept with ease. But psychological experience shows that there is a range of consciousness which far exceeds the surface mental-egoistic consciousness in which man is so miserably engrossed today.

It is by individual effort alone that the liberation from this evolutionary deadlock

¹ *The Life Divine* (American Edition, 1949), p. 45.

² *Ibid*

can be initially made possible. The individual is the expression and finite concentration of the all-pervading and infinitely extended Consciousness through which an effective manifestation and action of that Higher Power is made possible.

But if the individual is to become an effective centre of divine action, he must strive to transcend his limitations of mind and ego. However, to condemn the ego as an unnecessary freakish accident, an abscess on the face of evolution, would not be justified. The creation of a strong sense of separative existence in the midst of the indeterminate diffusion of the subconscious universal Nature was not merely an evolutionary off-shoot but an inevitable, indispensable, evolutionary necessity. Without it the individual would not have been able to disengage himself from the overpowering pressure of the lower subconscious Nature. The emergence of the ego marks the individualisation or personalisation of the conscious being out of indeterminate Nature in evolution. It is the lynch-pin of the wheel of Nature which gives coherence and consistency to what might otherwise appear as a flux of floating impressions. Because of the formation of this separative being the truly conscious stage in evolution could begin.

But the ego and the Mind are limited transitional instruments for the individual in his quest for self-fulfilment. The ego cannot give a living permanent sense of unity and harmony; what it is capable of giving is a semblance of a superficial unity. So the egoistic consciousness in the lower Ignorance has to be exceeded and the true self in the Higher Knowledge realised if the divine design is to be faithfully executed. But where to look for that Higher Knowledge and that eternal status of the true self? "Knowledge," says Sri Aurobindo, "is there concealed in the Ignorance itself; it has rather to be unveiled than acquired."¹

(To be continued)

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

¹ *Ibid*

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