

# MOTHER INDIA

*Kalya*

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

MARCH 1974

Price : Re 1-25

Posting Date for MOTHER INDIA :

JAN. to OCT. issues : 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>

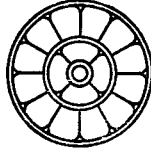
NOV.-DEC. (JOINT) issue : 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> DEC.

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Subscription rates: Annual Rs. 12.00, £ 1.25, \$ 3.00  
Single copy Re. 1.25 in India.

All correspondence to be addressed to:  
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2, India.  
Editor's Phone: 782

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

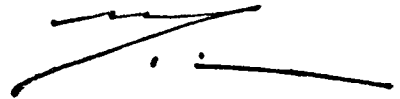


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXVI

No. 3

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."*

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Editor: K. D. SETHNA  
 Managing Editor: K. R. PODDAR  
 Published by: P. COUNUMA  
 SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERRY-2  
 Printed by: AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI  
 at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry-2  
 PRINTED IN INDIA

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

# THE MOTHER AND OURSELVES

## I

### A Canadian Question

*It is written in A Practical Guide to Integral Yoga<sup>1</sup> on page 179:*

*The physical nearness to the Mother is indispensable for the fullness of the sadhana on the physical plane. Transformation of the physical and external being is not possible otherwise.*

*My question is: How are we to interpret these words in the light of the Mother's recent passing? Does this mean that a full transformation is no longer possible to the aspirant? Or has discipleship on the material level in the path of the Integral Yoga come to an end?*

### Answer

## I

OBVIOUSLY, the immediate programme of a physical transformation is postponed — not cancelled.

But what we have been given is not less of a miracle. The Mother has prepared for us her new body in the inner world, in the subtle physical which is as living and tangible as her physical body even though not as concrete. In one of her last Notes<sup>2</sup> she refers to this new transformed body and she describes it as presented to her vision. That body she has built up in her long arduous labours, built up in a complete form and left with us and with humanity.

This new body of hers, prepared behind the material curtain, she sought to infuse into the material form, even press into it or force into it this new element; but Matter and man's physical nature were not yet ready: Earth still considered it as an intrusion, as something foreign. The material casing broke down in consequence — perhaps not broke down, rather broke through: but that must be another story.

But it is there living and glorious in its beauty and power and is still at work within us, and around us in the world, incessantly, towards the final consummation of its material embodiment.

What is expected of us is to see this golden Mother within us and try to become, as she always wanted, her golden children, within and without.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1970

<sup>2</sup> "Notes on the Way" *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* — August 1972 (Notes on 25-3-72)

Sri Aurobindo speaks of an inner mind, an inner vital, an inner physical. Only the other day the passage was read out at the playground-meditation.<sup>1</sup> The golden body, the new body, is formed out of an inner mind, an inner vital and an inner physical, renewed and reshaped. We can show our love for her, requite the debt that we owe to her Grace by admitting her Presence into our physical being and allowing her to do the work she has undertaken to do.

## 2

For us now it is time to make amends for the lapses of the past — there were lapses, indeed, grievous lapses. So long her physical body was our protection; we did not suffer the full consequences of our Karma because her body acted as a buffer: it broke the force of the impact of the Karma and reduced its evil effects to a minimum. Her body bore our burden and relieved us of the misery otherwise due to us. Mankind, the world even, do not know the saving Grace that her material frame brought to them. They would have gone down to destruction and dissolution but for the presence of the Divine Body.

The world has survived, mankind has an assured future, that is the work done by her body. It aimed at a little more, to show us something of the concrete form of the future, but evidently that was not to be, because something from us also, from the world and mankind, some helping hand in the labour was needed — we remember her ringing words: “*Si l’humanité consentait à être spiritualisée*”<sup>2</sup> — well, that is the minimum, that minimum was also not granted to her body. Her body was made so easily available to all without any trouble and effort on our part that we lost all sense of the precious things brought to us, brought to our very door. We did not know how to make use of it and have the true benefit out of it. Many a time she did say something to us to that effect regretfully, we wasted a treasure like the pampered prodigal son.

It is regrettable but she has left no cause for our regret. She has left with us the true source of her protective power, her living Consciousness concretised in the earth’s atmosphere, in the personal atmosphere of each one of us. We have only to open our grateful eyes and see it. The ladder has been taken away, but she has come nearer to us and a little uplift will re-place us within her arms.

Since we have no longer the support of her body on which we depended almost exclusively, we are compelled to seek the true support, the support of her consciousness, the inner reality — her inner presence, her living Person within — which her body represented, whose acquaintance we were not careful enough to cultivate. Now we are thrown upon the only alternative available. The way will be arduous; we could have much more easily mounted up the ladder of consciousness with the aid of her body, almost playfully like children. Now a little of austerity will be needed to go on our own, the austerity will be needed to bring our external life and physical conscious-

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo: *Letters on Yoga* Centenary ed, Vol 22, pp 307-08.

<sup>2</sup> “If only mankind consented to be spiritualised”

ness in line with her own consciousness, to prepare them, to make them ready. Her material body offered an unconditional help and protection, now all that will be conditional — conditional upon our willing cooperation, our happy and conscious collaboration — of course the Grace will be always there. Once she asked us point-blank, for the crisis was upon us — “Are you ready”? Almost unthinkingly, in a gesture of bravado and gallantry, many answered, “Yes, we are.” But we were not in fact.

The task then for us and for the world is to make ourselves ready, that is to say, make our physical being and consciousness free of the old reactions, instilling into them the consciousness that she is, with which she still embraces us — so that when the next call comes, although the call is always there, we may answer with truth on our lips — “We are ready.”

## II

### The Mother Abides

#### I

If it is a ‘pralaya’, even a ‘mahapralaya’, all is not lost, all is not washed away. Something remains, untouched, deathless, the divine part in you, the Mother’s part in you, the consciousness incarnate and articulate.

Indeed it was your soul that she salvaged out of the inconscience and established in you as a living reality. That was her first and primary task and she has fulfilled it. It was there always, true; but it was a far-off, very distant and almost inactive point of light, an unknown and an uncharted star not yet come into the ken of human measure and potency. She has brought it nearer home and established it in our living and dynamic consciousness. She has buoyed it up from the unconscious depths, or brought it down from vague, ethereal, nebulous regions, gradually developed it and nourished it and given it a firm dwelling in our inner regions. She moulded it into a personality with a name and a form. If we do not recognise it often or always, it is because the outer shell of the senses has not yet been fully opened to it. But it is still there as our inner ruler and guide in spite of and through all obscurities and aberrations.

Exactly the next step, the second part of her work was to build around this soul, the inner being, a body, a material vehicle to express it. To give a concrete divine shape to this sole reality was her labour at this point. The soul was there, but a god has to come and inhabit it, this godhead, that is to say, a Power, a form of the Mother’s own personality has to be brought down and the soul integrated into it. Apparently it was left off at that point and not completed.

The purpose and aim being not an individual realisation or even a realisation in a few individuals, but an achievement of the human race which means a large or a significant part of it, the effort has had to be directed to that end. The level of the human

consciousness had to be lifted up to an extent that it might be capable of holding and embodying the inflatus that was coming into it for the change. Otherwise an individual representing the human level and forming part of the material consciousness would not be able to do it. Not only the earth-consciousness but the material constitution of the earth has to be transfigured. For the human body to pass through and complete the stages of transformation must have parallel echoes in other individuals — not necessarily the whole of humanity, but, as I said, presumably a sizeable part of it. Otherwise the purpose of the change, a global, collective change will not be fulfilled. An isolated individual supramentalised body upon earth would be a freak of Nature, a forced miracle as it were, an anomalous object in Nature, and a humanity even at its topmost rung would not find any relation or kinship with it.

So, the earth-nature has to be prepared for that end in view, first of all the earth-consciousness in the physical substance and then the raw substance itself. This has to be done as our immediate and urgent business of life.

2

I said the earth-consciousness was not quite ready yet for the final transformation of the Mother's body, that is to say, the material substance of the body. Therefore it could not accommodate the incoming transforming force — and it broke: in breaking it must have broken through, through the hard dense outermost crust of matter — with what results, time will show.

As for us who survive, let us begin from the beginning. Let us start from scratch as it were. We remember the Mother's own story, what she did for herself when she came to Sri Aurobindo. She effaced altogether her old personality, her achievements and accomplishments, made a clean slate of her consciousness and laid herself at the feet of Sri Aurobindo like a new-born babe, innocent of the past. Let us also in the same way face the day with our baby-soul in front, for that little being is the Mother's Presence in us, still aglow with her consciousness.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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## INDIA'S PRIME MINISTER, MRS. INDIRA GANDHI, VISITS THE ASHRAM

ON February 17, 1974, which marked exactly the third month of the passing of the Mother, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, in the course of her tour of the South, came to pay her respects to the Mother's Samadhi and, according to her own expressed wish, take her lunch in the Ashram's Dining Room.

Her helicopter, which had taken off from Madras, touched down at Lawspet in Pondicherry at noon. Mr. K. Kamaraj had accompanied her. She was received at Lawspet by the Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, Mr. Chhedi Lal, and some other prominent figures of the town.

A fleet of cars sped towards the Ashram along roads lined on either side by enthusiastic admirers of the Prime Minister. All the cars were hooded except Mrs. Gandhi's. Hers was open, and she stood erect in it under the scorching sun, only her sari over her head. Right and left she smiled to her people, accompanying the smile with a grateful namaskar to their love for her.

As I watched her from the roadside, my mind went back to the last visit of her celebrated father, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as he too had gone by, standing straight in his open car to the deafening cheers of the crowd. I remembered how my heart had leapt towards him, just as now it leapt to his distinguished daughter — both father and daughter true children of India, patriots first and politicians after, and both of them drawn in admiration and affection towards the Mother.

Nehru had met the Mother on each of his three visits. On one of them Mrs. Gandhi, along with Mr. Kamaraj and Mr. Lal Bahadur Sastri, had come with him and had the Mother's darshan. Two other darshans she had in the years that followed — one of them just before her overwhelming victory at the polls and the other some time later. On the last occasion the Prime Minister of India had refused the chair offered to her in the Mother's room and had sat down on the floor at the Mother's feet, choosing to be just one more child of the Light and Love that had become incarnate on earth and that had adopted the India of Sri Krishna and Sri Aurobindo as her soul's country and the centre of her world-wide work with Sri Aurobindo whom she always addressed as "Lord".

At the Ashram gate the Prime Minister was received by Nolini Kanta Gupta, the oldest disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and by Surendra Mohan Ghose who had been Sri Aurobindo's trusted representative for years in the political field and a close friend of Pandit Nehru as well as of Mrs. Gandhi. A few paces away, in the Ashram's Reception Room, a small group was waiting to be introduced to the Prime Minister. After the introductions, she was led, in the company of Mr. Kamaraj and the Lt. Governor, to the Samadhi. There, taking her shoes off, she went round the Samadhi behind Nolini. Mr. Kamaraj did the same. Then she laid, among the varicoloured flowers upon the Samadhi, her own bouquet.

After this gesture to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, she left her companions and, except for her security officers, went alone with Nolini and Surendra Mohan to the Hall where stood the couch on which the Mother's body had lain in state for two days. After some moments of silence she came into the front verandah. She was asked if she would like to freshen herself after the tiring journey. She said she would. Thereupon, Champaklal and Kumud, two of the Mother's constant attendants, invited her to come upstairs to the first floor.

When she had finished freshening up, Champaklal and Kumud prepared to lead her downstairs again. But instead of going down she walked rapidly towards the staircase mounting up to the Mother's room on the second floor. Reaching there before her, Champaklal threw open the door and requested her to enter. She held back and asked him to go in first. This he did and welcomed her into the room where the Mother's sacred presence still charged the atmosphere. The Prime Minister paid her homage to the Mother's chair and then silently descended to the ground floor.

Nolini was waiting with some presents for her: a sari, a handkerchief and a small wood-carved elephant. He said to Mrs. Gandhi, "This is a sari of Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary. Mother distributed such saris to all her daughters. She always counted you as a daughter. The handkerchief is one that Mother herself has used. And here is a very nice animal. It has been made by an Ashram girl. Mother has explained its symbolism. The elephant stands for Material Success and Prosperity." The Prime Minister thanked Nolini for the gifts and handed them to the security officers to keep.

On her way out Charupada met her near the Book-sales Room and presented her with specimens of all the Ashram products. Giving them to her men, she walked to the waiting car and started for the Ashram Dining Room. This time the car had its hood up. In the Dining Room a long table had been made ready for her and for a few guests of honour as well as for some Ashramites. Smaller tables had been set for several other people who also had been invited. Among the guests of honour was Monsieur Edgar Faure, formerly Prime Minister of France, at present President of the French National Assembly and Chairman of Unesco's International Commission for Education. He was on a visit to Pondicherry to survey the working of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and the Auroville schools.

The Prime Minister had previously insisted that she would do what the Ashramites did — that is, take her plate to the counter where the Dining Room workers would fill it with food. She had also wanted that no special cooking should be done for her: the food should represent the Ashram's daily fare. Everything took place according to her wishes.

After the lunch, which Mrs. Gandhi declared to have been "delicious", she walked to the Dining Room gate, smiling to both sides of her and making namaskar to all. She got into her car and went to her waiting helicopter. The helicopter took off for Karikal. After delivering a speech there to a mammoth crowd she returned to

Pondicherry and gave a speech at Lawspet to over a lakh of people. Mr. Kamaraj also spoke. Then both of them helicoptered to Madras.

This was the end of the historic visit of India's Prime Minister. All of us are deeply thankful to her and will not forget her natural dignity, dynamism, graciousness and modesty.

K. D. SETHNA

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## LIGHT AND DARKNESS

THE light pursues the darkness,  
 Darkness follows light;  
 Some transitory sweetness  
 Between the day and the night.

Is the one in search of the other?  
 Or have they a mutual hate?  
 For the one will readily smother  
 What the other comes to create.

O where is the darkness hidden,  
 During the lustrous day?  
 And why is the sun forbidden  
 In the dolorous night to stay?

Is there no plane of oneness,  
 Beyond disparity,  
 Where the light absorbs the darkness  
 In eternal unity?

SAILEN

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1974)

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

November 28, 1956

*“When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge. Reason was the helper; Reason is the bar.*

*“When we have passed beyond willings, then we shall have Power. Effort was the helper; Effort is the bar.*

*“When we have passed beyond enjoyings, then we shall have Bliss. Desire was the helper; Desire is the bar.*

*“When we have passed beyond individualising, then we shall be real Persons. Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar.*

*“When we have passed beyond humanity, then we shall be the Man. The Animal was the helper; the Animal is the bar.”*

(Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glmpses*)

It is the same principle expressed in all the activities or aspects of the being.... It is obvious that in order to come out of the state of the original inconscience desire was indispensable, for without desire there would have been no awakening to activity. But once one is *born* into consciousness, this very desire which helped to come out of the inconscience, prevents the liberating oneself from the bars of matter and the rising to a higher consciousness.

It is the same thing for the ego, the self. In order to pass to a higher plane, first one must exist; and to exist one must become a conscious, separate individual, and to become a separate conscious individual the ego is indispensable, otherwise one remains mixed up with all that lies around. But once the individuality is formed, if one wants to rise to a higher step and live a spiritual life, if one wants even to become

simply a higher type of man, the limitations of the ego are the worst obstacles, and the ego must be surpassed in order to enter the true consciousness.

And, indeed, for the ordinary elementary life of man, all the qualities belonging to the animal nature, specially those of the body, were indispensable, otherwise man would not have existed. But when man has become a conscious mental being, all that binds him to his animal origin becomes necessarily a hindrance to progress and to the liberation of the being.

So, for everyone (except for those who are born free, and that evidently is very rare), for everyone this state of reason, effort, desire, individualisation and solid physical balance in accordance with the ordinary mode of living is indispensable to begin with, until the time one becomes a conscious being, when one must give up all these things in order to become a spiritual being.

Now, has anybody a question to ask on the subject?

*Sweet Mother, when can one say that one is conscious?*

That is always a relative question. One is never altogether unconscious and one is never completely conscious. It is a progressive state.

But a moment comes when instead of doing things automatically, pushed by a consciousness and force of which one is quite unaware — a moment comes when one can observe what goes on in oneself, study one's movements, find their causes, and at the same time begin to exercise a control, first over what goes on within one, then on the influence flung from outside which makes one act, in the beginning altogether unconsciously and almost involuntarily, but gradually more and more consciously; and the will can wake up and react. Then at that moment, the moment there is a conscious will capable of reacting, one may say: "I have become conscious." That does not mean that it is a total and perfect consciousness, it means that it is a beginning: for example, when one is able to observe all the reactions in one's being and to have a certain control over them, to let those act which one approves and to control, stop, set aside those one does not approve.

Also, one must become aware within of something like a goal or a reason for existence or an ideal one wants to realise; something other than the mere instinct which pushes you to live without your knowing why or how. At that moment one may say one is conscious, but that doesn't mean one is perfectly conscious. And, besides, that perfection is so progressive that I believe nobody can say he is perfectly conscious; he is on the way to becoming perfectly conscious, but he is not yet so

*Sweet Mother, what kind of a state is that in which one has passed beyond all enjoyings?*

Well, it is exactly a desireless state in which one lives (as Sri Aurobindo explains later) in an Ananda which has no cause, which does not depend on any circumstances,

inner or outer, which is a permanent state, independent of the circumstances of life, causeless. One is in Ananda because one is in Ananda. And in fact it is simply because one has become aware of the divine Reality.

But one cannot feel the Ananda unless one has become desireless. If one has desires, all that one feels is just pleasures and enjoyments, but that is not Ananda. Ananda has an altogether different nature and can only manifest in the being when the desires are abolished. So long as one has desires, one cannot feel the Ananda; even were a force of Ananda to descend, it would be immediately falsified by the presence of desires.

(Silence)

(*The Mother opens a sheet of paper.*) Here I have a question referring to what we said last time about effort, personal effort.

The question is this:

*“In the inner life, why does a time come when one can no longer make a conscious effort and, if one enforces it, parts of the nature revolt or else everything in the being seems to become petrified; effort becomes the mechanical repetition of past movements. What should be done at such times?”*

This has been observed very well.

What has not been mentioned here is the nature of the effort, for it is a certain kind of effort which brings about the state described here, a state of revolt or a sort of — yes, petrification, truly, something that becomes absolutely insensible and no longer responds at all to this effort. This happens when the effort is almost exclusively mental and also quite arbitrary, in the sense that it does not take into account the state of the rest of the being; it has its own idea, its own will, and without any consideration for the rest of the being, it enforces this will upon all the parts of the being. It is usually this that brings about the revolt or the petrification. And the only thing to do is to make the mind quiet. And this is the moment to make a movement of self-giving, full of peace, quietude, confidence. If one makes this movement of self-giving, of full surrender to the divine Will, all the tension arising from the effort, an effort which could be called premature or inconsiderate — all the tension arising from this effort gives way. There is a relaxation in the being. And just the progress one could not make by this purely mental effort usually comes about almost automatically, through the very fact that one is relaxed in a confidence and a self-giving to the divine Will.

And, then, this is what follows:

*“At other times, one has the impression of making no effort, but only feeling the presence of a consciousness due to which in several circumstances of daily life a means*

*of progress is found. One asks oneself then what effort is and what its value. What we call effort — is it not too mental a movement ?”*

That is exactly what I have just explained, which shows that the observation is quite right.

It is an arbitrary decision of the mind and, being arbitrary and not in conformity with the truth of things, naturally it brings about these wrong reactions. That does not imply that no effort must ever be made but the effort also must be spontaneous. So too I said to you once that for the meditation to be effective, it must be a spontaneous meditation which takes hold of you rather than your making an effort to have it, well, effort, that sort of tension of will in the being, must also be a spontaneous thing, and not the result of a more or less inopportune mental decision.

*(Silence)*

Any other question? No? No one has anything to say?

*Mother, when one wants to go beyond the mind, if one lets go the mind acting (incorrect text<sup>1</sup>) and the influence from above does not come immediately, then during that time what should one do? One becomes like an idiot.*

If one lets the mind act? Why? I don't understand your question. You said at the beginning “When one has gone beyond the mind” ...

*In order to go beyond the mind...*

Oh! to go beyond the mind, let the mind act?... Yes, that is the theory: to go beyond desire, one must let the desires be realised, and to...

*(A child) He said “let go the mind acting”, Sweet Mother.*

Let go? Oh! but one can't “let go the mind acting”, that's not English!

*To stop the action of the mind.*

Ah, now we have it! that's how you should have put it. So? To stop the action of the mind, is that it? The means of doing it?

*I am asking.*

<sup>1</sup> The text, incorrectly spoken here by a child, and also the text of the following ten lines, has been slightly modified to give the approximate equivalent of the French (Translator's note)

Naturally! But that is already quite difficult. So what are you asking?

*When one stops the reasoning, if something new from on high doesn't come immediately, then during that period sometimes...*

One acts like an idiot! (*Laughter*) Then it is better not to stop the reason before going beyond that state!

*I mean, in the conditions of life as it is, is it possible to be...*

To be unreasonable? Unfortunately that happens very often!

Is it possible to disregard reason?... It is possible only when you have passed beyond mental activity. It is possible only when you have achieved a surrender, a total giving of yourself. It is possible only when you no longer have any desires. So long as you have desires, have an ego and your own self-will, you cannot give up reason, because, as I just said a moment ago, you would become quite unbalanced and perhaps insane. Hence reason must be the master until one has gone beyond the state in which it is useful. And, as I said, as long as there is an ego and as long as there are desires and so long as there are impulses and so long as there are passions and preferences and so long as there are attractions and repulsions, etc., as long as all these things are there, reason is *altogether* useful.

I shall add further that there is another quite indispensable condition in order not to have recourse to reason any more; that is to open no door, no part of the being to the suggestions of the adverse forces. For if you are not completely liberated from the habit of responding to adverse suggestions and still you give up your reason, you give up also reason itself, that is, common sense. And you begin to act incoherently, which may end up by your becoming quite unbalanced. Well, to become liberated from suggestions and adverse influences, you must be exclusively under the influence of the Divine.

Now you see the problem; it is a little difficult. It means that unless you are in the presence of a completely illumined and transformed being, it is always better to advise people to act according to their reason. It is perhaps a limitation—it is in fact a great limitation—but it is also a control and it prevents you from becoming one of those half-idiots of whom there are far too many in the world.

Reason is a very respectable person. Like all respectable people it has its limitations and its fixed opinions, but that does not prevent it from being very useful. And it prevents you, on the other hand, from making a fool of yourself. You would do lots of things if you did not have reason, things which would lead you straight to your ruin and could have altogether unfortunate consequences, for your best means of discernment until you have attained higher levels is reason. When one no longer listens to reason, one can be led into all sorts of absurdities. Naturally, it is not the ideal or the summit, it is only a sort of control and a guide for a good way of living, it keeps



you from extravagances, excesses, inordinate passions and above all from those impulsive actions which may lead you to the abyss. *Voilà*.

One must be very sure of oneself, quite free from the ego and perfectly surrendered to the divine Will, to be able to do without reason quite safely.

*Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between true and false reasons!*

Ah! But no, you are playing with words. That word, as you use it here, has altogether another meaning, altogether; they are two very different things. Reason is a faculty of discernment. You are speaking of the reasons you give yourself for doing one thing or another — those are excuses the mind gives itself; but the meaning of the word reason there is quite different, it is not the same word at all, though it is pronounced and written in the same way. You can look it up in your dictionary, it will give you two completely different definitions of the word reason. The reasons one gives oneself — that is, the excuses or explanations one gives oneself — are always tinged with egoism and a need to delude oneself that one is indeed a reasonable being. Ninety-nine and a half times out of a hundred this is the means of convincing oneself that one is very good, what one does is very good, what one feels is very good, what one thinks is very good; it is in order to give yourself the impression that you are truly quite satisfactory. So, whatever you do, if you begin to reflect a little, you will tell yourself: “But certainly, I did that because it was like that, there’s a good reason; I felt like that, but that was because of this, that’s an excellent reason for it” — and so on. But that has nothing to do with being reasonable; on the contrary. It is an excellent means of deceiving oneself and keeping oneself from progressing. It is justifying oneself in one’s own eyes.

Moreover, these are always reasons which whitewash you and blacken others; that is a means of keeping one’s conscience very comfortable, isn’t it? What happens to you is the fault of circumstances; if you have made a mistake, it is others’ fault; if you have a bad reaction, it is others who are responsible, etc.; you come forth white as snow from the judgment of your mind.

Is that all?

## TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1973)

*(These talks are from the notebooks of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others after the accident to his right leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were: Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becharlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others )*

JUNE 30, 1940

P: Russia has penetrated thirty miles further into Rumanian territory.

SRI AUROBINDO: Thirty miles beyond Bessarabia? Or thirty miles into Bessarabia? She had said she would cover the first zone; it may be that. If she occupies more than Bessarabia, then it becomes interesting.

P: Hungary and Bulgaria are also pushing their claims

SRI AUROBINDO: Hitler and Mussolini have asked them to wait for the present.

S: Why are the English people being evacuated from Hongkong?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because Japan is going to blockade the coast; in that case it will be very distressing for them.

N: China will be put in a very difficult position then.

SRI AUROBINDO. There is Russia. She helps China with all that is necessary.

N: Why is Russia against Japan?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because she doesn't want Japanese supremacy in China and, besides, Japan is her traditional enemy.

N (*after a while*): The Gandhi-Viceroy meeting is another failure.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): Yes.

S: Is any proclamation issued?

N: No; since Gandhi is talking of leaving Delhi, one infers that the meeting is a failure.

SRI AUROBINDO: If the Viceroy wants to give only three more seats in his Council, he can't expect anybody to agree.

EVENING

Radio news: Gandhi had telephoned Azad to come to Delhi and the Working Committee meeting was called on Wednesday, 3rd July.

This was the last item in the news written down from the radio.

SRI AUROBINDO (*as P was reading the news*): The last item is interesting. Seems to be encouraging. I hope both the parties will have some common sense.

P: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO (*when S arrived*): Gandhi is staying on. He has called Azad and the Working Committee. There may be some hope. Something more than three seats perhaps. (*Laughter*)

S: Better to end this stalemate now. They have been sitting idle for so many months.

P: Gandhi also may now pressure the Working Committee. Since they have given up non-violence for defence, they have a good opportunity for training.

SRI AUROBINDO: Gandhi after thirty years doesn't find a single satyagrahi as his follower.

N: Azad seems to be more moderate and would like some compromise.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. But Nehru is stiff. (*After some time*) The Pétain Government is adopting the Fascist method of giving news — ambiguous and insufficient. They say that Reynaud had a motor accident but the doctors are not able to decide what is wrong. Motorcaritis? He was himself driving the car and for some unknown reason dashed against a tree. They don't say who was with him and where he is.

N: Why don't the doctors know whether it is a fracture or not? If it were a matter of some disease, I could understand the uncertainty.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is why I say motorcaritis! (*Laughter*) You remember Daladier also had some accident. It was an attempt at assassination by some communists.

JULY 1, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO: The Governor has stopped mobilisation because of the general confusion everywhere. Nogue's army does not want to surrender and in Syria the army is dissatisfied. They want to continue the fight and an invasion of Indo-China by Japan is imminent.

P: Applying the Monroe Doctrine?

SRI AUROBINDO: But you can't dispossess them of their colonies by that Doctrine. America too has her colonies.

P: America may not like it.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is another matter. It is apparent that the Pétain Government is breaking up the French Empire.

N: Why have they stopped mobilisation?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because of the general confusion. Moreover, they have no money — they have to depend on Indo-China.

P: It seems the Indo-China Bank is refusing the money from the Bank of France.

SRI AUROBINDO: Because nobody knows what the state of France will be.

N: I hope Bonvain won't join the Pétain Government.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even if he does, he will be removed and the British will occupy Pondy and he knows that.

P: Some astrologer of Gujerat says that by the end of August the War will be over and England will win.

C: This August?

P: Yes.

S: Not likely. If the invasion of England begins it is not going to be over so soon, or if Hitler is defeated still England will have to conquer back the European territories.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is only possible if apart from the repulsion of Germany by England, the Italian fleet is destroyed so that a complete blockade of the whole continent can be effected and, as a result of general starvation, Hitler may be assassinated. (*Pause*)

N: Meherbaba has gone again into one year's silence. No communication at all except regarding urgent telegrams.

S: He has asked all his followers to fast for one day in a week or to take only water and milk; and to abstain from lust and greed and inculcate love. He says that chaos is necessary for the uplifting of humanity and the higher manifestation. He has a big role to play. He is always charged with a mission for himself. His philosophy is difficult to understand. Some say that he believes in one Atman everywhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then why does he want the higher manifestation?

S: Then again he says the world is Maya, illusion.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then it is an illusory higher manifestation he wants?

S: No, there is illusion only from the phenomenal point of view.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why doesn't he say so then?

#### EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: The Viceroy hasn't given any new proposal, it seems. Still Gandhi is calling Azad and the Working Committee to meet at Delhi. How is that? Has he been in telephonic communication with Azad or does Azad take a different view and want the Working Committee to meet?

P: Maybe the Viceroy wants a quick reply. (*After a while*) Gabriel Monod-Herzen says that Mandel has been freed by Pétain. Perhaps he has threatened him with imprisonment if he continues any subversive activity in the future.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mandel is not a man to be frightened by his threats. He himself told Pétain either to make a public apology or to detain him.

(*To be continued*)

## ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1973)

(This is the concluding part of a paper read by Dr. Angelo Morretta at the International Symposium, New Delhi, December 5-7, 1972.)

As a modern Indian who had acquired his youthful culture in the West, Sri Aurobindo learnt from the Western tradition to appreciate the problem of the difference between East and West. The most important lesson, however, was that of coming to know his uttermost limits. Even from the very beginning, in the philosophy of its earliest thinkers, the West has tended towards the attainment of historical and social liberty. India, on the other hand, has aimed at spiritual liberation. There is no natural discrepancy between liberty and liberation. Socrates said: "Know thyself." Sri Aurobindo (as Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhva had said previously) proclaimed: "Realise thyself." This is to say that philosophy stands at the cross-roads between knowledge and realisation. Man's real fulfilment, however, resides in the complete union between knowledge and realisation. That the saint may in the meantime philosophise and enjoy the delights of an aesthetic contemplation of the truth is accepted in both Indian and Western ways of thought. Both Shankara and St. Augustine teach us this lesson in a superlative way.

After returning from the West at the age of twenty-one, Sri Aurobindo might have become a "progressive" in the most common sense of the word, given the economic conditions in his country. Many other Indians who had imbibed European illuminism did so. Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, having resumed contact with the foundations of Indian thought, became a fiery participant in the national political field, the most orthodox interpreter of Indian culture in the spiritual field. His Indian nationalism became sublimated in the sphere of universal values which later, in his vision of the *Supermind*, were to become values of permanent significance for mankind of the future, mankind transformed by the light of the *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. In this way, his work becomes a "message for the future"; we may call it prophetic. For it is addressed to the world of tomorrow and to all peoples, as a bridge not only between East and West but also between the present and the past.

There is still another reason which led Sri Aurobindo as a philosopher and writer to reevaluate the most genuine and authentic Indian tradition. This time it is historical and cultural. The India of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was traversing a period of decadence, at least from the social point of view. Meanwhile, the orientlists had discovered the hitherto unsuspected relationship between the Indo European races and languages. But the interpretation of ancient Aryan texts by orientlists was inadequate, it failed to give their genuine and original aspect. Sri Aurobindo

therefore set himself to carry out a more authentic revaluation, made in the proper spirit. The fruit of his labours was *The Secret of the Veda*, a work which helps all of us living to-day to comprehend the most hidden meaning and thought of the Vedantic masters. Sri Aurobindo has many traits in common with the seventeenth-century Madhva, in the sphere of the newly-revived Vedanta—he too, the solitary of Pondicherry, swept away the dust of ethnical-linguistic and formalistic super-structures from the Vedantic texts, in order to restore them to their own *pristine* splendour. By this means the Indians of today regained a new knowledge of the treasures concealed within their own tradition.

The Indian Renaissance had already begun this process of revaluation, with Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Dayananda Sarasvati, Tilak and many others, before Sri Aurobindo appeared on the scene. But he was the only one to carry the process to its highest level, in a language suited to the understanding of the modern world. He undoubtedly possessed the means enabling him to achieve this synthesis—a synthesis which modern India needed. The impressive mass of culture which Sri Aurobindo had at his disposal helped him to achieve for us today what the geniuses of India in other periods had achieved for their contemporaries. His cultural bounds are so wide, in fact, that they embrace all those fields of knowledge which are known today as para-psychology, ethnology, semantics, and the philosophy of science, psycho-analysis and the anthropology of the myth. In other words, he realised that India required, in addition to her political freedom, a renewal of the best part of Indian culture. In fact, once she had regained her independence, a country such as India needed a new cultural basis on which to found her freedom. Sri Aurobindo's work provides this basis. For this reason it is so much alive today and attracts the younger generations both in the East and in the West.

But Sri Aurobindo did more than this. His genius and his will — which was as powerful as his genius — carried the traditional “philosophy of the divine” to undreamt-of limits. This philosophy had always been at the bottom of any form of research in India. And thus he was led to give us his masterpieces, his *Essays on the Gita* and on the *Upanishads*, his studies of the four Yoga classics united in his *Integral Yoga*, and finally *The Life Divine*, the *summa theologica* of all his thought. At the same time he by no means neglected the theme of social policy. It appears in all its real significance in his works *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle*, etc.

A great poet, he also established his own view of aesthetics in the essay *The Future Poetry*, while his book *The Foundations of Indian Culture* is both a defence and an affirmation of the particular values or merits of Indian spirituality, literature and art. After having analysed the great poetical works of Vyasa and Valmiki, Kalidasa and Vidyapati and thrown a new light upon them, and after having written the most original poems in modern Indian literature, — they are to be found in the volume *Last Poems* — Sri Aurobindo wrote his *Savitri*, a work of Dantesque proportions. He was engaged upon this work intermittently throughout his life. Not even in India is it as well-known and understood as it deserves to be and it has not yet found its

rightful place in the history of world literature.

The stages of his thought, therefore, are those of a genius and an "integrated man". The problems he treats go from those of everyday life to the supreme heights of human evolution. Sri Aurobindo, as has been pointed out, takes up the Bergsonian theme of "creative evolution" and the "élan vital" and gives it a precise metaphysical trend, thus enabling man to attain the *Supermind*, the real *Superman*, not the Nietzschean vitalistic version. We in the West have been given a hint of a spiritual renaissance proceeding hand-in-hand with new scientific discovery in the work of Teilhard de Chardin. As Professor Zaehner says in his book, *Evolution in Religion: A Study in Sri Aurobindo and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, it is by no mere chance that these two writers are contemporaries. In this age of space-flights and the disintegration of the atom, man is seeking new answers to the problem of his own destiny, because science, by uprooting him from surrounding nature, has carried him too far along an erroneous path. But Teilhard de Chardin is no philosopher. He is only a biologist, at most an anthropologist, who, although he "rehabilitates" science and matter itself, cannot offer us a finished system, a complete metaphysic of Being, as Sri Aurobindo does. Neither must we forget that it was a modern Indian who gave us a positive and organic philosophy, in a period when philosophy was in a state of crisis — gave us a philosophy concretely implicit in the visible and invisible world. Although he adopts the Darwinian concept of evolution, he transposes it into the plane of spiritual evolution so that man is no longer a kind of ape which has reached a certain stage of development, but is the highest expression of spirit on this earth, a being destined to continue along the path of evolution until he attains the divine.

Bearing all this in mind, we find in Sri Aurobindo's work not only a consolation of an optimistic nature, but the reintegration of the human being in the material and spiritual world, tending, as he does, towards the realisation of a superior form of life. Indian tradition in the past offered us the elements of a similar transfiguration of existence in a cosmic sense: in the mythology of the Purana, the idea of the *Kalpa* and the *Avatara* conceives of the whole world and mankind as being involved in the divine spiral — as in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Sri Aurobindo gave these myths a magnificent philosophical significance in *The Problem of Rebirth*, for instance. Modern man may derive from such works the far-reaching solutions he has been seeking to his problems throughout the ages. The existential triad — Matter, Life, Mind — has found its right place once more in the scheme of Manifestation which is *Abundance*, as the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad declares. The Brahman does not become the World through the Maya of Shankara, but is Brihad — the Great — in which the universe of all beings is transformed into the supreme Joy of Being.

After reading such works as *The Life Divine* and *The Human Cycle* we no longer feel disintegrated and torn by the void surrounding us wherever we may look. The greater the dimensions of external time and space the greater our capacity to expand our inner life

From the very dawn of her history India has been offering us a practical means with which to face this reality. This is Yoga: a discipline which becomes a really modern science, thanks to Sri Aurobindo's new system, a discipline and a science capable of uniting the body to the soul once more, and the soul to the Atman. It is by no mere coincidence that the Western world of today is devoting its attention more and more often to the discipline of Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo not only amalgamates the four ancient Yogas, but he helps us to keep the planes of existence clearly defined and helps us by diligent exercise to realise the gradual transformation of ourselves with the aim of becoming a whole man. If Truth does exist, then it is in fact the concreteness of Atman which dissolves us into one with the utter fulness of the Upanishads.

Sri Aurobindo, then, becomes the most brilliant example of the saint-philosopher, pointing out the path we have to travel if we are not to go astray in a world becoming daily more vast and more complex, a world in which all values are in a state of chaos, but where they are also tending or striving towards more elevated and more positive aims. Sri Aurobindo, that is to say, is not only the greatest idealist in modern India, greater even than Plato in the aims and the goals towards which he points the way. He is also the most powerful representative of "Knowledge-Realisation", his message being living and concrete. If by "sainthood" we mean only a flight from the evils of the present day and self-denial or self-negation, Sri Aurobindo was certainly no saint. But if by sainthood we mean joy in the fullest possible development of all the maximum potentialities man bears within himself, being capable even of including the divine in his own evolution, then Sri Aurobindo is really a complete Plato, fit to rank with the most supremely "realised" Mahaviras, the Conquerors, of ancient India.

*(Concluded)*

ANGELO MORRETTA

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## MY OCEAN-DEPTHS

MY ocean-depths are now stirred by a sound  
Coming on wings from a Silence profound.

Strange and sweet rhythms of that singing flame  
Sweep like sun-tides of a mysterious Name.

Tunes after in-drawn tunes break doors upon  
A blaze where the singer and the Stillness are one.

R. Y. DESHPANDE



# THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE GROUP IN HUMAN HISTORY

## A SUMMARY OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VIEWPOINT

IN the view of Sri Aurobindo, evolution — at least in the animal stage — proceeds through a double line of advance, a growth of visible forms and an invisible soul-development. In a broad sense, the genus or species, the group-body, represents the first aspect of this movement; the individual in the group the second.<sup>1</sup> It follows from this view of the matter that the group must necessarily lag behind the individual in its attained level of consciousness. “For the initiation of the evolutionary emergence from the Inconscient works out by two forces, a secret cosmic consciousness and an individual consciousness manifest on the surface. The secret cosmic consciousness ... while it organises ... the body and mind of the individual being, ... creates also collective powers of consciousness ... but it does not provide for them an organised mind and body ..., it develops for them a group mind, a changing yet continuous group body. It follows that only as the individual becomes more and more conscious can the group-being also become more and more conscious; the growth of the individual is the indispensable means for the inner growth as distinguished from the outer force and expansion of the collective being.”<sup>2</sup>

The process of group-formation in humanity, at least until it has reached a high state of development, follows primarily the external and physical methods adopted by Nature in the creation of living forms in the animal creation, “although its inner object is to deliver, to manifest and to bring into secure working a supraphysical, a psychological principle latent behind the operations of the life and the body.”<sup>3</sup> The human groups started with the family, the clan, the tribe, the city-state, the small regional state. Each of these lived in the midst of other similar groups. Each of them developed a well-defined body and vital functioning held together by strong bonds of unity which in this early stage were mainly those of geographical contiguity, a sense of real or fancied blood-kinship, a common economic interest. These gave them a strong sense of difference from all other similar units — a sense which was aided by the constant threat or actuality of war with those units and which in its turn helped in creating within the group a strong sense of psychological unity.

The progress of these group-units has been from the simpler to the more complex organism. For the ultimate aim of evolutionary Nature seems to be, in the vision of Sri Aurobindo, to manifest the Divine in all Its supreme complexity based on an inner Oneness of the whole.<sup>4</sup> Classes and castes were among the first subsidiary groupings to emerge in the early formations; the economic guild, the religious organisation, the nearly self-sufficient village community were the other developments that cut across the flat uniformity of the early state. What led to these variations? The physical necessity of compactness was an important factor. Economic specialisa-

tion was another. The psychological element also came into play, for it determined class-types — the priest and the ruler, the toiler and the organiser of toil, the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Shudra and Vaishya classes. And religion always played a dominant part. Sri Aurobindo has suggested in this connection that the emergence and domination of a particular class at a given moment of history is inevitable, since “the progress of all the individuals in a society does not proceed *pari passu*, with an equal and equable march. Some advance, others remain stationary, — absolutely or relatively, — others fall back .... That class will predominate which develops most perfectly the type Nature needs at the time for her progress or, it may be, for her retrogression.”<sup>5</sup>

There is also a deeper reason for this growing complexity of the group-life. Mankind is essentially one and must therefore one day realise its oneness. But the limited ego in which most of us live cannot feel this oneness except within a limited sphere. The effort of Nature has therefore been to help the ego enlarge its limits, and all the subsidiary group-units it forms within the larger group are meant as so many steps towards the enlargement of the ego. And most of these subsidiary units persist in more or less mitigated form when they are absorbed in the bigger units and man becomes readier to identify himself with these bigger groups. Thus, out of the warring city-states and tribal republics and regional kingdoms, there emerges the early pre-national form of empire — the empire of Macedon, the Roman empire, the empire of Chandragupta Maurya. But the old divisions still persist, and sometimes emerge again in full vigour when the empire is gone: the recrudescence of the independent city-life in medieval Italy and the constant attempt at regional autonomy on the part of the Indian states, whenever the imperial power showed signs of weakness, are typical instances in point. For, as Sri Aurobindo wants us to note, “Nature ... seldom destroys entirely the types she has once made or only destroys that for which there is no longer any utility; the rest she keeps in order to serve her need or her passion for variety, richness, multiformity.”<sup>6</sup>

The coming of the bigger groups was a necessity. For, without them, mankind would never proceed beyond the first steps towards the ultimate goal, the unity of the human race. But at the outset and for a long time, it has no clear conception of the form of this unity, although something in man seems to drive him towards it. Here the individual or a number of exceptional individuals take the leading role. An Alexander dreams of world empire and breaks the isolation of the Greek city-states and the West Asian tribal or regional kingdoms. A Julius Caesar, followed by an Augustus, thinks of bringing together the whole of Europe and Egypt and North Africa and the Asian lands bordering on the Mediterranean and erects the splendid edifice of the Roman empire. A Chandragupta Maurya brings together the ancient republics and kingdoms of India to make India safe from foreign attack.

But these early empires were doomed to decay; for, in their premature haste to unite, they destroyed the vitality of the constituent units and themselves fell like a pack of cards against the more vigorous barbarian, the Teuton, the Slav, the Scythian, the Kushana and the Hun, when their own strength had been sapped at the centre,

through a top-heavy intellectual culture and a snapping of the moral fibre. Hence followed a long period of feudal chaos when Nature seemed to be preparing for a new and better creation, the slow emergence of the modern nation-form. This has been a crucial movement in the evolution of the human group. For, whereas all the earlier formations seem to have been more or less ephemeral, "the nation in modern times," says Sri Aurobindo, "is practically indestructible, unless it dies from within."<sup>77</sup> It is the firmly united nation-group — using the term in the political sense — that Nature seems to have been in travail to bring into being. Even where the nation as a political unit had been destroyed for good to all intents and purposes, as for example in Greece, Italy, Poland, or where it has taken more than a millennium to give it a firm political unity, as in India and in all the great countries of the European world, the secret intention of Nature ultimately prevails. The empire group was no doubt revived for a little while in recent times, but none has survived. The reason is that it was an artificial creation lacking a real psychological foundation, whereas the sense of national unity has been a living thing. But, whether in the creation of the modern empire or the nation-unit, the individual has had a striking role to play. It was the king striving to assert his supremacy over the other estates of the realm that gave the nation in modern Europe its first form of unity. It was again the forethought and genius of a Washington, a Cavour or a Bismarck — in the Asian countries the builders of the modern nation are household names — who helped form the newer nations through their patriotic fervour, their diplomacy and skill. In either case it was a conscious endeavour, unlike the more or less unconscious process of amalgamation that had brought together the clan, the tribe or the city-state. The modern empire too, like its prototype of early times, has been the creation of a few exceptional men, a Clive and Warren Hastings, a Napoleon III and Delcassé. One might even venture to suggest that it was some exceptional men again who presided over the dissolution of the modern empire, an Attlee or a De Gaulle, a strange irony of fate!

We may pause a little to consider some of the other ways in which Nature has been fulfilling her desire for variation through the different types of political organisation within the group-life and the different culture patterns evolved in each. Sri Aurobindo discerns three main types in the first category, each marked by a particular kind of relationship established between the group and the individual. There is, first, the type that "asserts the State idea at the expense of the individual, — ancient Sparta, modern Germany; another asserts the supremacy of the State, but seeks at the same time to give as much freedom, power and dignity as is consistent with its control to the individuals who constitute it, — ancient Athens, modern France. But to these two has been added a third type in which the State abdicates as much as possible to the individual .... Of this type England has been until recently the great exemplar."<sup>78</sup> One may perhaps add that the Indian tradition has always favoured the type represented in this analysis by England. A consideration of these three types of internal organisation has an important bearing both on the past evolution of mankind and on its future.

The struggle between the group and the individual for supremacy has been an important factor in human history. It has worked in two ways. First, it has led to the various forms of political theory and organisation — monarchy and aristocracy, democracy, socialism and the totalitarian idea, — in their attempts at domination which have so far succeeded only in part: the quarrel between liberty and law still remains an unresolved quarrel. Secondly, it has had major repercussions on the evolution of culture patterns. As a general rule, we may assert that the predominance of the free individual has on the whole led to an efflorescence of art and literature, thought and science, and has given a strong impetus to the development of spirituality among the nations which allowed of this predominance. On the other hand, the overriding domination of the group-unit has made for the cultivation of will and character, perfection of law and order, the external efficiency of the group-unit. Thus, to take a few instances from history, “Greece developed to a high degree the intellectual reason and the sense of form and harmonious beauty, Rome founded firmly strength and power and patriotism, law and order, modern Europe has raised to enormous proportions practical reason, science and efficiency and economic capacity, India developed the spiritual mind ..., the sense of the eternal and the infinite.”<sup>9</sup>

In an apparent view, all this struggle for supremacy and the resultant discord do not give evidence of any ultimate issue. The constant struggle among the different group-units, from the beginning of history until today, for survival and growth, expansion and domination at the expense of the others seems also to belie the hopes of a future harmony. But, as Sri Aurobindo points out, behind all this struggle and conflict which man shares with the subhuman species, there is something in him which promises a better future. “In subhuman life there is a vital and physical struggle, but no mental conflict. Man is subjected to this mental conflict and is therefore at war not only with others but with himself; and because he is capable of this war with himself, he is also capable of that which is denied to the animal, of an inner evolution, a progression from higher to higher type, a constant self-transcending.”<sup>10</sup> The signs of this inner evolution are clearly visible not only in the growth of the individual type from the rude physical man engrossed in the body and its needs, to the more kinetic type, the vital man who is constantly moved to action and progress goaded by his desires and ambitions, until we reach the balanced sattwic man who seeks to live by the reason, and the more highly evolved spiritual man who can at last break the bonds of body, life and mind and live in an utter freedom of the spirit. And it may be noted in passing that the various types of culture patterns which have developed in the different group-units are simply an elaboration on a larger more complex scale of the progress made by the individual towards a more and more evolved humanity. The group-units have also shown some evidence of moving towards a more and more harmonious relation among themselves: there have been developing “the elements of what could be called international law or fixed habits of intercommunication and interchange which allowed the nations to live together in spite of antagonisms and conflicts.”<sup>11</sup> There have also been conscious attempts at cultural interchange, for

example, between India and the rest of Asia in ancient times, between Western Asia and Europe in the medieval ages, and a mutual interpenetration of Asia and the rest of the world in our own day

These are pointers to the future. The shape of this future is already visible though dimly, in the ideal of human unity which is "more or less vaguely making its way to the front of our consciousness",<sup>12</sup> an ideal that has some day to be realised if mankind is to survive as a race. To eliminate war and evolve a form of world union based on the right to self-determination of all the nations big and small has become an imperative necessity of the future. Within the group-units too, the right of the individual to free progress will have one day to be acknowledged. "Social aggregates which stand in the way of this perfection of the individual," warns Sri Aurobindo, "must find their term and their day of change or destruction under the irresistible impulsion of progressing Nature"<sup>13</sup> What exact forms of the group-life would ensure these desirable ends is more than anyone can foresee. All one can do is to echo the words of the Master: "It is even possible that our original state was an instinctive animal spontaneity of free and fluid association, and that our final ideal state will be an enlightened, intuitive spontaneity of free and fluid association. Our destiny may be the conversion of an original animal association into a community of the gods."<sup>14</sup>

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**ON READING WENDELL PHILLIPS'S ORATION  
ON TOUSSAINT OF ST. DOMINGO\***

Oh Lord, where is his soul now?  
Have you freed him, — has he reached yet  
from dungeon rat to high rank  
Amongst the shining great?  
Are all who suffer thus mightily,  
The most precious children of your love?  
Oh Mother of Grace, have you folded  
Your blessed arms round him, when he came?  
Divinely, did you comfort him?  
Does your love shine most radiant, when  
The Toussaints of earth come round, dragging  
their broken hearts?  
And how do you heal them, Mother,  
these most glorious of men?  
Is love of heaven enough?  
Has heaven a place for the martyred and where do  
those who cause their doom go?  
How do pain and joy figure  
In the celestial count? In the end,  
do they equal out?  
All things you know, and I trust in you,  
So pardon these tears I weep for him,  
weep from my heart to his;  
May they shine bright glory  
on his uncrowned soul

GEORGETTE COTY

\* *Mother India*, December 5, 1973, pp 897-905.

## THE MAGIC LANTERN

THE night, unbearably hot, is being followed by an equally hot, damp and oppressive morning. Thunder and downpour have done nothing to clear the atmosphere, neither in nature, nor, for that matter, in the family. We eye each other peevishly across the breakfast table. The normal conversation is supplanted by sharp, acrimonious remarks, that leap like poisoned darts off over-taut nerve-strings.

Nothing pleases. Everything and everybody is subject to bitter criticism, and whoever had come to table in a fairly good mood is sure to have lost it by now.

Listlessly I swill down cups of lukewarm tea, chew my bread and wish I were elsewhere.

The youngest member of the family did not do her hair before coming to table, and almost certainly didn't wash either. Her sister, well-groomed herself, cannot resist the temptation to point out the unkempt appearance of the younger one in inclement terms. Nettled, ten grimy little fingers push their way through the curly mop, while a cutting retort hits the elder sister's most vulnerable spot with precision.

And so we carry on, blow for blow. There seems no escape, if it were not for one tiny pink blossom,

that fell out of the mass of tangled hair onto the table.

A Polygonum-blossom, like a miniature lantern made of finest Chinese parchment. There it lies, demure, between an egg-cup and a dancing sun-dapple. I gaze, wonderingly, and I have the impression that even this dancing speck of sunlight has noticed the flower and shimmers, longing to reach it.

A very unkind word jolts me. Halfheartedly, no longer submitting to the goad of hostility, I try to formulate a fitting reply, but fail, being far too absorbed in that little flower, delicate, hardly pea-sized.

Isolated from the anonymous many, that pour over the wall in quivering cascades, it gains a singular meaning all of its own. A rosy fairy-lantern, an elusive detail of a multitude too great, too familiar to be seen. I behold it, amazed, and for a fleeting moment I feel myself transported into a different world, a realm of beauty, light and harmony.

The angry clatter of a tea-cup announces clearly yet another blow delivered and received across the table. It does not reach me as my attention is held by

a second sun-dapple, that is playfully joining the lilt. Vivid images appear to my dreaming eyes: sylphs splendidly dressed in rosepetals, snow-drops, or blue-bells. They are swinging, to a tune too fine for my ears, by the shine of bright-pink flower-lanterns. Sunrays for dance-partners, their ballroom is the sky. And I follow, leaving behind the disharmonious reality, willing to enter their land of sweet cheerfulness and peace.

But the brisk movement of a child's finger catches my eye and makes me suddenly alive to the danger that threatens my fairy-lantern. I lift my hand haltingly, too shy to touch

this token from the other world, yet urged to shelter, to protect it from wanton ills, but at that very moment

the sun-dapples reach it and undulate about the flower with their limpid grace.  
I watch, spellbound, aware of nothing but this spark of beauty on the littered breakfast table.

The child grabs the egg out of the cup and decapitates it with one sharp stroke. And there, like a tear,

a drop of water falls from her fingers just onto my magic-lantern.  
Set ablaze by the sunlight, it merrily tosses its rays to the rhythm of the sun-dapples' dance.

Just a glimpse of Nature's felicity in our daily life, small, hardly seen, yet of compelling charm.

The pointless quarrel continues at a pitch of unrelenting asperity. I cease to hear the words, but acutely feel their vibration. Then, awaking suddenly to a silence across the table, I look up and behold

a second pair of eyes caught in the enchantment. The anger has vanished and a smile illumines the face — a reflexion of magical rays that emanate from a tiny flower in this vast, crude world.

A perceptible calm begins to pervade the atmosphere like a fragrance. Even the children sense it and fall silent. The younger one, puzzled, searches the table for the point of attraction that keeps the three others in its spell.

She notices the blossom lying near her egg-cup and impulsively moves to flick it off the table, but the movement is checked mid-way.

Defeated by

the sheer beauty, her hand sinks back, while her glance lingers and softens.  
Just then a fresh, cooling breeze arises, lifts our fairy-lantern like a loving hand and carries it out, as if to declare its mission fulfilled. Gently it comes to rest amidst a multitude of its own kind, embracing a pink anonymity.

Our eyes follow its departure — and, above the table, oddly devoid of the recent splendour, our smiles meet.

AUBE

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## TWO POEMS

### THE SAMADHI NEWLY-TOUCHED

A VIBRANT canopy of green branches,  
Wakeful stalwarts day and night —  
The air electric, a transfigured  
Messenger of the Mother's Light —

Illumination as with a million candles,  
A million prayers of fragrant bloom —  
Strength of the Mother's perpetual Presence —  
Untiring Homage — not confined to a single room

But glowingly spread as if world-wide,  
Emanating from each shadow of the Samadhi!  
Every breath of incense, every unshed tear —  
A colossal Rapture is set free!

Her true Being liberated into the limitless ether,  
Her remains kissed by roses many-hued,  
Caressed tenderly by the fresh sweet earth —  
And with consoled quiet hearts we stand, subdued.

### NIGHT-DARSHAN

Long nights of Sweet Company —  
Intense communion, heart to heart!  
Deep troubled folds of mind smoothed bare,  
Hope of strength, each perplexity taken apart

For solution with the Beloved's touch.  
The velvet rest of oblivion, the sense  
Of Thy hand on the agitated mind,  
Panic curbed, thoughts made a little less tense.

O Glorious One, be my companion  
In those unending realms of sleep.  
With eyes open I seek Thee in vain —  
Let me find Thee alive in this core so deep

Within my being, which is lost in conscious hours.  
 O Helper of the needy, most radiant, most sweet,  
 Thy living nearness is my soul's Heaven —  
 The hope of my Salvation Thy hallowed Feet!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

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## ON LOVE

hints of heaven  
 with past's deep pores  
 shadows  
 in shadows  
 blocking out the light  
 and just poor hints  
 of heaven ...

lovers  
 lonely  
 waiting  
 sad ...  
 no leap  
 to light  
 no tricky trips  
 to bliss...  
 bubbles

balloons  
 inevitable burst ...

patience  
 first patience  
 and peace  
 a search within  
 for glimmers of gold...  
 patience  
 and peace  
 a search  
 for love's deep loneliness  
 within  
 hidden now  
 a law  
 a light  
 a love divine ....

WILLIAM T. NETTER

## TWO MEMORIES

### I

THAT very Saturday all went the wrong way —  
was upset, overturned, disordered, capsized...

I couldn't concentrate on writing down my thoughts. I was even unable to do any manual work. ..

It was so unusual, strange, unbelievable to my reason.

I did not remember to have been guilty, deserving anything of such a kind.

Yet, there were very strong vibrations in the air, penetrating my mind and feelings, enveloping me and everything I touched or came in contact with....

At first I was dissatisfied with myself, saying: "If you can be subject to such strange influence, though known as a positive thinker, how then can behave so called weaker natures, negative characters?"

On all Saturdays I go to visit a friend of mine, but that Saturday I rather hesitated to do so as I did not want to spoil our friendly relations. I then decided to excuse myself and stay at home. But how could I explain to him my situation, such a strange state of mind and feelings? He is my disciple since several years, but nothing of such a kind has ever occurred during that period — I could even say: in my lifetime.

Only late in the afternoon of Central European time — deep night in Japan and India — the tension grew weaker, the sense of something like "inferiority" disappeared — and I was again myself.

It happened to be November 17th, 1973. I made a note in my Diary, hoping that some day all would be explained to me ....

Since then I have written many articles, mainly about children and youth of humankind, of Nature's creations — about unending evolution of all that is, about eternal changes and the unreality of death....

On the 28th of November a letter from France was handed to me, containing also a clipping with News from New Delhi, announcing that the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry had passed on in the night of 17th November 1973.

When writing this, I am looking at the Mother's face and feel the immortality of Her Spirit, Her conscious ONENESS with the WHOLE, Her shining Vision through Cosmical Realms... I press to my heart the rose-petals once sent me as Blessings — and feel grateful for being one of Her spiritual children, whom She protected, when circumstances were the hardest....

### II

AN overturned linden-tree on the top of a rocky hill,  
where there is very little of fertile soil  
and the roots cannot grow deep....

It is indeed a wonder  
that — under such extremely hard conditions  
and on a place,  
where western and northern winds  
come very often to blow furiously —  
this tree could reach a height  
of about 10 metres....

It has bravely challenged  
all attacks, fury of tempests —  
as well as bad behaviour of some passers-by  
cutting its bark, breaking its branches....  
The tree did not mind.

Its blossoms were nourishing  
countless numbers of bees  
during some eight to nine decades .....

It seemed full of vigor until yesterday.  
Now it is lying down,  
overturned by northern winds  
which were blowing very strongly  
this very morning....

It is impossible not to feel sorry,  
not to be deeply grateful  
for all the tree has ever given  
spontaneously, selflessly  
to Nature and human kind —  
for its example of endurance and heroism  
under so very hard conditions,  
truly exceptional....

What shall the bees say in Springtime?  
And many people during Summer,  
when not finding agreeable shade  
under its hospitable foliage ?  
There will be sorrow and gratitude....

## FRANCIS THOMPSON THE MAN : A BRIEF STUDY

It is now a well-known fact that Francis Thompson, the Catholic mystic poet of the later nineteenth century, led an uneven life full of hurdles and trials. His brief life (1859-1907) has fascinated the modern world so much that there is a larger body of writing about Francis Thompson than about most of his contemporaries of comparable stature. Since human personality is a profound and complex phenomenon, time and again its behaviour comes as a challenge to all known and accepted criteria of life. We propose, in this article, to undertake a brief psychological study of Francis Thompson for a just and correct assessment of his personality.

In order to understand Thompson's personality adequately we should go back to his boyhood days. He was a timid, shy, little boy with a weak constitution and a peculiar way of walking that gave the impression that physical existence would be rather a struggle for him. His eccentric habits were already visible in his boyhood and his love of reading increased as he grew up. He was very quiet and unobtrusive by nature, and perhaps a little melancholy. In Everard Meynell's biography of Thompson we find a true picture of the boy described by Dr. Mann and Fr. Adam Wilkinson, who knew the poet personally at Ushaw: "He slid along the wall, and every now and then he would hitch up the collar of his coat as though it were slipping off his none too thickly covered shoulder-blades."<sup>1</sup>

We get glimpses of the man in the above description. His shoulder-blades remained ill-covered and the plucking-up of the coat behind was one of his familiar habits in later life. His appearance became pathetic during the "nightmare time" in the streets of London. A victim to laudanum and abject poverty, he looked like "something between a lamp-lighter and a man of letters, but nearer the lamp-lighter."<sup>2</sup> He roamed about the streets of London in his great brown cape, independent of all weathers, his shabby hat, his 'fish-basket' (for review books) slung over his shoulder. At this time, he looked like "a pedlar in an old Dutch etching."<sup>3</sup> This basket always puzzled people because it gave Thompson the appearance of an infatuated angler who had mistaken the thronged city thoroughfare for a trout stream.

At first sight Thomson's personal appearance did not impress the onlookers. To Richard Le Gallienne (who did much to get Thompson's *Poems*, the first volume of his poetic achievement, published by John Lane in 1893) Thompson "seemed a rather ineffective personality."<sup>4</sup> Again, Coventry Patmore's son has left an amusing description of Thompson: "Great poet though he was, I fear I had but a poor idea of him. A weakly little man, with untidy red hair and unkempt beard, he had a peculiar dread of dogs ... and I regret to say that my only feeling for him was unmixed contempt."<sup>5</sup> An authentic picture of the eccentric Thompson has recently been given by Sir Francis Meynell (Thompson's "godchild"):

"I remember him ... with the tolerant-critical memory of a boy of 16 who took his poetry on trust, and with it the untied bootlaces, the overcoat never taken off,

the collar much too big — or rather the neck so much too thin, the smoke issuing from a smouldering pipe in the pocket almost as often as from his mouth.”<sup>6</sup>

So much about Thompson’s appearance. Now let us come to his peculiar temperamental set-up — his eccentricities, oddities and contradictions in character. He was by temperament a romantic dreamer dwelling in his own world of imagination. His natural indolence, which was responsible for the rejection of his priesthood at Ushaw, coupled with the addiction to opium and the escapist temperament prevented him from becoming a practical man. He depended solely upon his mother as a boy and was happy with his toys, books, fantasies and make-believes. His childhood was, as he himself described it, “the true *Paradisus Vitae*” to him.<sup>7</sup> “I did not want responsibility,” Thompson confessed frankly later on, “did not want to be a man... I had my great toy of imagination whereby the world became to me my box of toys.”<sup>8</sup> In his essay on Shelley, we find his desire for romanticising his own childhood:

“Know you what it is to be a child? It is to be something very different from the man of today. It is to have a spirit yet streaming from the waters of baptism; it is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ear; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness, and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul.”<sup>9</sup>

Thompson’s self-absorbed nature in boyhood drove him out of the common experiences of a normal schoolboy in early life, and those of a normal man in later years. Too self-absorbed a nature develops self-admiration in the character, which is the core of Narcissism. Thompson’s super-sensitive nature and love of solitude developed Narcissism in him. Viola Meynell rightly remarks that Thomson was “never a schoolboy — only a boy at school.”<sup>10</sup> And in later life, he had nothing to do with the material world. His highly imaginative mind found in Shelley’s school-days the reflection of his own seven years at Ushaw. On the kind of torture Shelley experienced, Thompson writes in his essay:

“His is the torture which the ancients used, when they anointed their victim with honey and exposed him naked to the restless fever of the flies. He is a little St. Sebastian, sinking under the incessant flight of shafts which skilfully avoid the vital parts.”<sup>11</sup>

But this description of Thompson’s own torture under the guise of Shelley’s seems to be exaggerated since his classmates at Ushaw had no recollection of “Tommy” (as they called him then) being “treated with unkindness”, nor “was he unhappy with his companions,” as Fr. Wilkinson told Rev. T. L. Connolly during the latter’s visit to England in 1938, and he added that Thompson was “a very good

hand-ball player and by no means as unathletic as is popularly believed.”<sup>12</sup>

This sort of exaggeration was seen in Thompson's description of the street-girl (his “Ann” whom he celebrated in *Sister Songs I*) and of the suicide episode in later days. He was befriended by a girl of the streets who, like De Quincey's Ann, gave him food, shelter and the warmth of true affection. She left him when the Meynells discovered him because she thought his new friends would not understand their friendship. Nothing could be known about her definitely since Thompson never said anything about her in detail. Like the story of the girl of the streets, the story of Thompson's attempt to commit suicide has confused his readers as well as critics.\* But the suicide-story, as it has been made public, is twice removed from its original source. Blunt heard it from Wilfrid Meynell and Meynell from Thompson. But Everard Meynell, the poet's official biographer, is curiously silent on the incident. Challenging the authenticity of the fact Doyle Hennessy wrote an article in the February 1950 issue of *The Catholic World*. He wrote that the publicised “fact” was based on a dubious foundation and constituted something of a literary mystery. When asked, Wilfrid Meynell could not recall if Thompson had told him or he to Blunt. On further enquiry, Sir Francis Meynell (Thompson's “god-child”) wrote to Hennessy that Thompson was too reserved to talk of his personal matter to a “virtual stranger, as was Wilfrid Blunt,” and “he would not have talked about it, even to my father.”<sup>13</sup> But Sir Francis defended his father's suppression of the event on the ground of “jealousy of Thompson's reputation, and for fear of scandal in the Catholic community”<sup>14</sup> Viola Meynell, later on, confirming her brother's statement said that Wilfrid Meynell “may have been reluctant to make it common knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> From the critical point of view, the date of the incident is impossible to ascertain and it is laced with the typical Thompsonian imagination. But it was not impossible for Thompson to contemplate the question of suicide when he was immersed in utter hopelessness and despondency. We agree with J. C. Reid that Thompson's deep sense of Catholicism warned him against such an act of blasphemy and so he did not kill himself.<sup>16</sup>

However, one can only conjecture when the internal evidence is so slight and dubious. Both the stories had factual basis, we admit, but their description and style, as they were related to Wilfrid Meynell, bore all the signs of self-dramatisation and fancy. †

\* Wilfrid Scawen Blunt wrote about it in the November 1907 issue of *The Academy* just ten days after Thompson's death. Blunt repeated the same incident in his *My Diaries* published in 1919. Viola Meynell tells us about the episode as described by Blunt who had heard of it from Wilfrid Meynell.

“It was in an empty space of ground behind the market where the gardeners throw their rubbish that he resolved on suicide. He spent all his remaining pence on laudanum, one large dose, and he went there one night to take it. He had swallowed half when he felt an arm laid on his wrist, and looking up he saw Chatterton standing over him and forbidding him to drink the other half. I asked him when he told me of it how he had known that it was Chatterton. He said, ‘I recognised him from the pictures of him — besides, I knew that it was he before I saw him.’”

— *Francis Thompson and Wilfrid Meynell* — A Memoir (1952), p. 23

† Apropos the question of suicide, Professor Peter H. Butter, replying to some queries, wrote to the writer of this article from Glasgow University on December 22, 1966.

Again, a weakness for boasting is the other side of self-dramatisation and Thompson was not free from it. During his friendship with Katie King, he allowed himself a boast while writing to Coventry Patmore: "I have come to London for a month. I hope I may see you before I leave here. Am already engaged to go to George Meredith's for a day. While a girl I have met here wants me to visit her: which is pretty fair for the very evening one reaches town."<sup>17</sup> But when Mrs. King, Katie's mother, disapproved of this friendship between her daughter and Thompson, he withdrew himself silently.

Thompson was not a man of action; a man of action does not live in the imaginative world. A dreamer and an escapist, Thompson always dreaded responsibility and action. Thompson's unworldliness and lack of practical wisdom could be seen in the selection of the women he loved. Alice Meynell, about twelve years older than Thompson, was a good wife and dutiful mother and his love for her was, "mostly", as Viola Meynell says, "a distant worship even within a daily intimacy."<sup>18</sup> Thompson was, in fact, in love with Love, not with a woman of the world. He idolised Alice Meynell in his own characteristic way:

She that is Heaven's Queen  
Her title borrows;  
For that she, pitiful,  
Beareth our sorrows.  
So thou, *Regina mi*  
*Spes infirmorum*;  
With all our grieving crowned  
*Mater dolorum.*

(*A Carrier Song*)

Thompson sought in Alice Meynell for more a mother-substitute than a beloved. It is wrong to suppose, as Mario Praz does, that Thompson was one of the "unsuccessful lovers" of Alice Meynell.<sup>19</sup> There was no question of success or unsuccess in Thompson's life in regard to his love for Alice Meynell since he was aware of his own position and that of Mrs. Meynell's. An idealist, Thompson adored her from a reasonable distance and so it was never an issue between them or between Thompson and Wilfrid Meynell as it was between Coventry Patmore and Alice Meynell. Again, his love for Maggie Brien, who was a child in relation to him, was a failure because he could not combine in love the sexual feelings of a man and the emotions of a child. With Katie King, his friendship was, to some extent, on a par, but that friendship was also cut short by the disapproval of Katie's mother and ultimately Thompson's

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"Whatever truth there is in it is heavily embroidered with fancy . . . I see no reason to doubt that when Thompson told the story to Meynell he believed it to be true. I do not think he would tell a deliberate lie, but whether he was always able to distinguish — especially when telling of something which may have been far in the past — between fact and imagination is another matter."



meek nature and sense of decency made him withdraw himself from such romantic ventures.

Thompson was greatly attached to his mother from his childhood and his little world of fantasy was safe under her protection. She dominated her timid and dreamy child. A dominated child is not only shy and anxious, but also feels hopelessly unable to do anything without adult intervention. A dependent attitude acquired in childhood is often carried throughout adult life. Thompson could not get rid of this attitude in later years also. He depended upon the Meynells not only for food and shelter but every trifling thing. Further, this dependent attitude leads to "basic anxiety" It is a state of mind when one suffers from "an insidiously increasing, all-pervading feeling of being lonely and helpless in a hostile world."<sup>20</sup> Thompson's anxieties were far from being based on actual experiences. His anxious mind made him see calamity befalling him at every step. J. C. Reid rightly observes that Thompson's "abnormal sensitivity, together with a capacity for finding calamity lurking beneath the business of every day and a catastrophe in an inconvenience, form part of the scaffolding for Thompson the man."<sup>21</sup>

(To be continued)

SHAILENDRA NATH CHAKRAVERTY

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- 20 Horney, Karen *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (W.W Norton & Co , New York), 1937, p 89.      21. *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

## TO RECLAIM PARNASSUS

THE acute intellectual crisis of this "science"-dominated age is the crisis of "science" itself: that has given up the search for *truth*, except as provisional truth-of-working, and thus abolished or made wan and forlorn, among those who have *abandoned* their minds to the respect of "science", the perennial human search, and made men hopeless grovellers in their animal nature, becoming increasingly disintegrated and less alive while their "standard of living" rises high.

Here the poets have suffered too, and of course their particular sufferings have become a commonplace of critical literature. What has not become a commonplace is any real hope for a way out. For it is an unfortunate part of our breakdown that even the poets have for the most part accepted the "scientists" at their face value that is current in this our counterfeit culture. Thus they have actively concerned themselves only with such non-"scientific" things as are left to them. Poe indeed expressed it clearly in his sonnet to Science, "true daughter of old time" — time who devours his children: he accepted his being driven from the earth, and championed poetry as a native of some other sphere. Except in his "prose-poem" *Eureka*, in which he attempted to give the *truth* that the "scientists" had missed in their cosmological speculations, he avoided in his poetry any subject that touched on "science"'s domains. Here he was somewhat ahead of his time — there was no Victorian confusion about him, and he saw that the "truth" that "science" still spoke of in those days was not truth for poetry — but now the "march of progress" has rapidly caught him up, and in some respects most of our "moderns" have gone beyond him.

What they have sought, more and more anguished and despairing, is something that "science" cannot touch with its killing hand: some sphere in which they can still live, if not flourish, as poets — being gnawed on perhaps but not yet devoured. They will be *immediate*, they will give something of themselves at least, will *do* something somehow, in a sense or a way: they will give direct expression or perhaps "data" of some kind without even the intermediary of a logical syntax or structure (this being exclusively "science"'s right and rite now, by proper conquest): without any of that anachronistic (how "devouring" time does dominate!) that pre-"scientific" thing, the "traditional apparatus" of form and meter and music of words. For "science" does not value all this, or take it seriously — it is "just rhetoric": and they will have *something* that "science" cannot pick at. So they ask "science" what they may be allowed (at least perhaps until it gets there): look to it for the "psychological" light that it does not have. And here they have fallen far from Poe, for they have none of his independence and sovereignty in a poetical sphere that he did make his own. As a *poet*, he disdained "science"; they are its slaves. He saw the picture clearly; they have been doing their best to obfuscate it, and make poetry impossible.

But Poe too accepted "science" and its dominance too easily, too much without question. Though he believed that poetry could give *truth* that was not "scientific truth", he made no attempt (except in *Eureka*) to meet "science" on its own that is

its usurped ground. But this is what poetry if it is to live must do, and it cannot allow itself to be driven or bedevilled further by the illegitimate pretensions of ignorance. The physical mind with all its "precise" division and calculation of crudity has arrogated the name "science" long enough. The poet must stand on his own feet, and dare the tiger that is only a mangy alley-cat after all. He must dare to *see* what "science" cannot see, in all the world and not just some "happier star" — not to speak of some private preserve of triviality or anguished frustration — and to tell "science" what a blind fool it is.

For this poetry cannot be *autonomous*, as it has tried to be or felt itself forced to be. It must be fed by a large world-view in which "science" takes its legitimate but subordinate place, as a servant that can make some things "work", but does not presume either to pronounce on higher matters or to stand in their light and way. The poet must receive something of the higher influences now operative, be moved, quickened, kindled and moulded by the true *spiritual* light and inspiration, power and flame. He must have developed the many faculties that "science" has left in abeyance and found no "use" for, and that have atrophied or remained dormant under "science" 's tender care. He must know that his light, his growing consciousness, his creative thirst and furor, is an activity not of the nerve-endings but of the divine Being. Then he can not only climb Parnassus, rather with grand wings descend upon it, but extend its domain. For it is not a kind of solipsistic paradise or a mountain on which one sings in isolation, or to the clouds that pass: it is the Lord of the countryside, that brings down and distributes the Fire of Heaven. It is not an escape from "science", or aloof from "science", or "science"'s lackey or even its equal partner: nor is it a precursor that in some sort can begin to open new fields that "science" can then come and deal with properly. It is not a minor thing that lives more or less on sufferance only where that organized ignorance preposterously called "science" is not yet at home. It is "science" 's sovereign, and can be its redemption.

JESSE ROARKE

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# 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 December 5, 1973)

6 (Contd.)

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

(f)

WE have shown everything in the opening passage of *How I Believe* to be as clear-cut as the profundity of the subject permits. Teilhard's hand nowhere shakes or wavers. And, though he does not yet employ the word "pantheism" for his basic posture and afterwards condemns "false pantheisms", as against the true one which is his own "Christian" brand, we find here no blurring of any proper issue. His stand is unequivocal: "The world (its value, its infallibility, and its goodness) — that, when all is said and done, is the first, the last, and the only thing in which I believe."<sup>1</sup>

The spuriousness of the enigmatic character assigned to the passage is evident from what Teilhard on his own has to say of his essay. De Lubac<sup>2</sup> tells us about the work: "At first he wished to publish it, but when he had finished the draft he was not entirely satisfied and he does not seem later to have tried to have it brought out." However, in the period when he penned it, Teilhard has three capital disclosures to make. To begin with, we have one from de Lubac's own book:<sup>3</sup> "In '*How I Believe*', he confided to a friend when he was actually writing the last pages, 'I feel that I have succeeded in expressing my personal reasons for believing.'" Can we associate with this sense of success any dissatisfaction with the draft? The motive for the latter feeling must be sought in some extraneous circumstance connected with publication.

As for the essay's thesis, there is first his declaration<sup>4</sup> in a letter of August 18, 1934: " .. basically, my whole religion can be reduced to this active surrender to a world which I understand less and less in detail (in the sense that the traditional explanations that people give of it seem more and more inadequate) but whose 'divinization'

<sup>1</sup> *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 99

<sup>2</sup> *Teilhard de Chardin The Man and His Meaning* (A Mentor-Omega Book, The New American Library, New York, 1967), p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to Two Friends* (The Fontana Library, Theology & Philosophy, London, 1972), p. 83

or 'personalization' seems clearer to me every day. That my existence has been as much as possible an act of fidelity to Life is the only thing that interests and reassures me from now on." In addition to this affirmation of a profound "cosmic sense" and its passionate intuition of what the cosmos is leading us to — a consummating "ultra-human" — we have on December 31 of the same year the communication:<sup>1</sup> "I am taking the liberty of sending you ... a copy of my latest essay 'Why I Believe'. It seems to me that these pages are clear and that I have almost succeeded in expressing my present position.... 'Why I Believe' was originally intended for publication but as it has expanded it has taken on characteristics that may cause it to be considered unpublishable. In that case there is always private circulation." Teilhard has no feeling of ambiguity — he says he has attained clarity and near-exactitude and, if he puts aside the project to publish the essay, it is simply because the Church would not favour its thesis which, starting with faith in the world as primary and self-sufficient in essence, went on to say a number of unconventional things like: "the sense of the Whole ... is the life-blood of all mysticism."<sup>2</sup> — "Christianity gives the impression of not believing in progress. It has never developed the sense of the earth."<sup>3</sup> — "Judging from first appearances, Catholicism disappointed me by its narrow representations of the world and its failure to understand the part played by matter."<sup>4</sup> Teilhard also says that he found repose in Christianity only when the Universal Christ was revealed to him,<sup>5</sup> and that the Universal Christ is "the synthesis of Christ and the universe" and that we cannot have this Christ unless we fully "accept the most modern concepts of evolution".<sup>6</sup>

For Teilhard there is the crucial question: "How exactly is the divine power to put the universe together in such a way that it may be possible for an incarnation to be biologically effected in it?"<sup>7</sup> The answer, of course, is: in no other way than evolutively. And there is also the crucial point for Teilhard that, unless there is "a physical pole of universal evolution" where the world's "co-ordinated system of activity" rising higher and higher converges irreversibly, never "can any being, *no matter how divine he may be*, carry out the function of universal consolidation and universal animation which Christian dogma attributes to Christ".<sup>8</sup>

Then Teilhard adds a sentence with a puzzling last part. "By disclosing a world-peak, evolution makes Christ possible, just as Christ, by giving direction and meaning to it, makes evolution possible."<sup>9</sup> The last part is puzzling because the direction and meaning of evolution have already been traced entirely to a source outside Christianity: "Under the combined pressure of science and philosophy, we are being forced, experientially and intellectually, to accept the world as a co-ordinated system of activity which is gradually rising up towards freedom and consciousness. The only

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp 85-6 It will be noted that Teilhard refers to his essay as *Why I Believe*. In a letter of 23 September 1934 he writes of the essay: "I am calling it 'Comment je crois' ('Why and How')" (*Letters from a Traveller*, Fontana Religious Books, London, 1967, p 158).

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit*, p. 122    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 128    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 126.    <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*    <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.    <sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 128.

satisfactory way of interpreting this process ... is to regard it as irreversible and convergent. Thus, ahead of us, a *universal cosmic centre* is taking on definition, in which everything reaches its term, in which everything is explained, is felt, and is ordered"<sup>1</sup> This renders that last part itself devoid of "direction and meaning". It is just an inconsequential side-bow, *en passant*, to orthodoxy.

Obviously the Universal Christ, who alone enables Teilhard to embrace Christianity, has no logical link with that religion: he is indissolubly bound up with the scientific view of the world as evolutionary. The concepts of evolution are all in all to Teilhard and apart from them Christianity must fail and even "the most magnificent cosmic attributes lavished by St. Paul on the risen Christ"<sup>2</sup> be inexplicable and unconvincing: "Christianity takes on its full value only when extended (as I find it rewarding to do) to cosmic dimensions."<sup>3</sup> The only nexus with orthodoxy lies in the latter's ascribing to Christ "the function of universal consolidation and universal animation" — a function appearing akin to the one performed by the "physical pole of universal evolution". It is thus that Teilhard finds his "individual faith in the world" and "Christian faith in Christ" "inexhaustibly justified by one another".<sup>4</sup>

In pantheist style he calls Christ the "world-soul"<sup>5</sup> but he Christianises his pantheism by finding in Christ "a personalized universe whose domination personalizes me".<sup>6</sup> He does not hesitate to declare like the pantheist: "The world around me becomes divine"<sup>7</sup> — but he adds that in "pan-Christism" the individual is super-personalised and does not dissolve in the divine All. Looking at his religious discovery he<sup>8</sup> tells us. "I have never for the last twenty-five years ceased to marvel at the infinite possibilities which the 'universalization' of Christ opens up for religious thought..." And he<sup>9</sup> holds that only through the Universal Christ as he envisaged him "a religion of the future can be conceived".

But can the Roman Church ever allow the value of Christianity to depend vitally and inevitably on modern evolutionism? Surely it will not. De Lubac,<sup>10</sup> facing in an early work (*Forma Christi*) of Teilhard's the doctrine of "Christ the final determination and plasmatic Principle of the Universe" — that is, the Principle of Evolution — is liberal enough to say that the vision Teilhard so resolutely followed is one of the roads that lead to Christ, yet he firmly insists that it "cannot but be only one of the convergent roads ...; the road, maybe, that best answers the expectations of our own days, but that must fail to reach its destination if it claims to be the only road". We suspect de Lubac is being liberal because of missing the true import of Teilhard's highly heterodox evolutionism. For, on the issue of the "only road" Teilhard never compromised. About "the most modern concepts of evolution" he<sup>11</sup> wrote in *How I Believe* that "if we Christians wish to *retain* in Christ the very qualities on which his power and our worship are based, we have no better way — no other way, even — than fully to accept" these concepts.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 127.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 129<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p 128<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p 130<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit*, Preface, p. v.<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, p 127.

Hence Teilhard's exclusive Christianity of the Universal Christ cannot be considered attuned to the orthodox tradition despite the Pauline attributes to which he directs our attention. The Church would be bound to adjudge these attributes of a cosmic range to be cosmic in a different sense than the Teilhardian. No wonder Teilhard knew that his essay would lack the Vatican's *Nihil Obstat* and disqualify for official publication. However, we should refrain from thinking Teilhard personally averse to its seeing the light. He held his own Christianity to be not only in agreement with "what is most determinedly emergent"<sup>1</sup> in him but also with "what is most alive in the Christian religion",<sup>2</sup> so that he "finally and permanently recognized that in the latter" he had "found the complement" he had "sought" to his "own self".<sup>3</sup> He says that therefore to "what is most alive in the Christian religion" he has "surrendered".<sup>4</sup>

We may pause a little over this gesture. The word expressing it harks back consciously to the phrase about surrendering himself absolutely to "faith in a world that is one and infallible — wherever it may lead me".<sup>5</sup> The echo shows that world to be really "the synthesis of Christ and the universe", the Universal Christ whose being is organic to the cosmic Whole, the Christ who is "the soul of the world" and whose body in that case must be the world itself — the world for whose evolutionary progress Teilhard heartily shares the devotion of the modern humanists.<sup>6</sup> Among the humanists, he<sup>7</sup> informs us, "we have without any doubt been watching for the last century the birth and establishment of a new faith: the religion of evolution." And he<sup>8</sup> asks what in truth is his own "cosmic sense ... but precisely the same faith in the universe which animates modern pantheisms". Hence his synthesis of Christ and the universe is essentially pantheist except that the universe is not an impersonal energy but the fosterer and manifester of ever richer and deeper personality.

Similarly, the synthesis has an affinity with the "eastern religions" to which he was intensely drawn because "they are supremely universalist and cosmic"<sup>9</sup> — the religions which are responsible, according to him, for "the birth of pantheism"<sup>10</sup> but which he understood (or rather misunderstood) as suppressing the multiple in the One and leading to an unconsciousness of the individual person.<sup>11</sup> But inasmuch as he grants that the sense of the Whole "never perhaps has ... flowered more exuberantly than in the plains of India", he<sup>12</sup> proves himself again by his cosmic sense a pantheist with a stress on the individual person in the totality, the One being seen as "the concentration of the multiple".<sup>13</sup> But his "personalism" must not be taken as entirely Christian; for although "Christianity is eminently the religion of the imperishable and the personal", the average Christian, "as a result of seeing only 'personal' relationships in the world ... has ended by reducing the creator and creature to the scale of 'juridical man'".<sup>14</sup> Teilhard explains this verdict on the average Christian: "In his effort to exalt the value of spirit and supernatural of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p 129.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 129-30<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p 130<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*., p 103.<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*., p 123<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*., p. 124<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 121-22.<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 122.<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*., p 125.

divine he has come to look upon the soul as a transient guest in the cosmos and a prisoner of matter. For such a Christian, accordingly, the universe has ceased to extend the primacy of its organic unity over the whole field of interior experience: the operation of salvation, reduced to being no more than a matter of personal success, develops without any reference to cosmic evolution."<sup>1</sup>

Teilhard's true final position, as sketched in *How I Believe*, is best summed up in three passages of *Letters to Two Friends*: "We all need a new face of God to worship, and I am more and more convinced that this face can appear to us only through and beyond an 'ultra-human'" (March 31, 1950).<sup>2</sup> — "... the vague impressions of my youth are now invading everything in the form of participation in some immense energy which is a curious blend of Hindu 'totality', Western 'technology,' and Christian 'personalism'. More and more I see growing in me the evidence and the human consequences of the great thing that is happening right now. Not 'God who is dying,' as Nietzsche said, but 'God who is changing,' so that, as I am in the habit of saying, the Upward movement is now reinforced by a Forward moment never before considered by the religions" (July 25, 1950).<sup>3</sup> — "... the moment one realizes that the Universe flows (and always has flowed) in the direction of 'ever greater order and consciousness,' a whole group of values is introduced into things which, without making one blind or insensitive to Disorder or Evil, give everything an extraordinary savor, warmth, and limpidity: a superior and synthetic form of 'mysticism' in which the strengths and seductions of oriental 'pantheism' and Christian personalism converge and culminate!" (January 2, 1951).<sup>4</sup>

Of course, Teilhard, with his central religious slogan "the Universal Christ", seriously believes that "the mainstream of the Christian 'phylum' " is completely capable of carrying as its own "the great event of our time" — namely, "a change in the face of God in which the pure 'God of above' of yesterday is being combined with a kind of 'God of ahead' (in extension of the Human)" (August 30, 1930)<sup>5</sup> But he is perceptive enough to make three statements which clarify his "belief": "Truly ... I have confidence that my line of thought is essentially Christian, in spite of the fact that I am sometimes forced to define it to myself with a word that looks rather dangerous: hyper-Catholic" (June 25, 1926).<sup>6</sup> — "I remain rather (with a few others) at the spearhead of the fight for a 'new' Christianity, a position that renders my superiors shy whenever it is a question of me" (April 30, 1947).<sup>7</sup> — "I know that, from your point of view, those limitations (and my not fighting stronger against them) are hard to understand; and I feel it myself to some extent too. And yet, I do not see any other logical (or even biological) way to proceed. According to my own principles, I cannot fight against Christianity: I can only work inside it, by trying to transform and 'convert' it. A revolutionary attitude would be much more easy, and also much more pleasant, but it would be suicidal. So I must go on step by step tenaciously" (March 21, 1942).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 125-26

<sup>2</sup> P 112

<sup>3</sup> P 113.

<sup>4</sup> P. 115.

<sup>5</sup> P 114

<sup>6</sup> P 35.

<sup>7</sup> P. 171

<sup>8</sup> P 155.



A new, transformed, "converted" Christianity, brought about by his working towards it from inside the Roman Church, constituted the kind of change which Teilhard saw coming in the face of God. And we cannot help being struck by his mentioning "Hindu 'totality'" and "the strengths and seductions of oriental 'pantheism'" as the factors introducing the universal aspect of his religion. The Christian contribution is restricted to "personalism". Teilhard is often disposed to talk of the Christianity of St. Paul and St. John as supplying the universe-ingredient to make up his Universal Christ. Why has he not talked here of Pauline or Johannine "totality" plus the usual personalism of the Christ preached in the Gospels? Why has he not spoken of a Christian "pantheism" derived from the Epistles of Paul and the Fourth Gospel? We can see his feeling that his religion, while remaining Christianity by retaining Christ, transcends whatever totality of a pantheist character the Christian scripture can attribute to Christ.

Indeed, what he extracts from that scripture is more than it can really yield. We observe the excess when in his letter of October 30, 1926, he<sup>1</sup> refers to St. Paul: "Have you read ... the beginning of the Epistle to the Colossians (Chapter I, verses 12-23), and tried to give it the full, organic meaning it requires? Here Christ appears as a true soul of the World. It is only thus that I love Him." The last sentence is strange enough for a Christian: it implies that the human Jesus, though necessary for the World-Soul to be named Christ, does not draw Teilhard's adoration at all. And this exclusion is quite pointedly prepared a little earlier when, while appreciating "the real historical *beginning* of Christ (with a practical code of moral comparison with Him)" presented by "the first three Gospels", he<sup>2</sup> declares: "If Jesus were no more than 'a father, a mother, a brother, a sister' to us, I would have no need of Him; and, in a sense, the past does not interest me." But what is most notable is that, though the name "Christ" is there, it denotes the typical God-sense of "Hindu 'totality'" and "oriental 'pantheism'". Of course, the Hindu Godhead, the oriental Divinity, is more than a World-Soul; but the latter is the characteristic aspect of this Godhead, this Divinity, in relation to the universe. The beginning of the Epistle to the Colossians has never before been credited with such an aspect by any Catholic exegete. And Teilhard is aware of the *lacuna*. He writes of "the full, organic meaning" which that Chapter of the Epistle "requires": he is saying that so far the meaning he needs has not been given but that it should be given. In other words, St. Paul does no more than frame for us a text which we may use as a *point de départ* for an entirely novel development towards the coming change in God's face.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

**LOTUS-FLAME**  
**OR**  
**SURYAMAN**

*(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1973)*

THEN the white marvel, a sun-beam, emerged  
Out of the cloud of dim unfeeling dreams  
And Lotus-Flame awoke in nature's field,  
Feeling with a cherub's heart the dumb world-space  
And wonder-vistas of time's kaleidoscope.  
He was the bud of the moment and the flood,  
An orphaned light in the thoughtlessness' expanse.  
Creation sensed a new creative surge  
Unknown within its unplumbed solitude.  
Somewhere unseen a bridge now spanned the wastes,  
Incoherent seas of senseless aeonless sleep,  
Bringing with it a calm of inner change.  
Somewhere a light burned forth with magic touch;  
A brazier lit where all was oblivion.  
A name echoed in the abysmal Nought,  
A strange stirring as in a fathomless drowse.  
The whisper of a mystic syllable rose  
In the heart of things behind the vacant lull,  
A bodiless cry in the sheer emptiness  
Of the world's buried forgotten loneliness.  
All was not lost in the creation's maze.  
Something survived the chill and fixity,  
Defying the vacancy, the drunken pile  
Hiding the golden body of a god asleep.  
Nature arose smitten by a secret call  
As if a seed within sprouted like a flame  
Bringing the fragrance of a sky of light,  
The presence of a star, a mirroring sun.  
The wheeling earth, nameless, abandoned, lost  
Found a key to the entombed desire for light,  
The sealed aspiring cry restless within.  
Matter with dim and causeless throbbings stirred,  
Life felt ingrained the passage of nearing birth  
And distant winging thoughts hovered on earth.

The stage was set for the advent's strange outpour,  
 When Suryaman would rise and feel the sod  
 His mother's arms clasping his body of light.  
 And Lotus-Flame woke in the vistas of Time.

End of Canto 1. Book 1.

*(To be continued)*

ROMEN

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## THE GOLDEN BIRD

A WONDER-STIR in the vacant vasts,  
 A quivering surprise through silent soul-spaces,  
 A golden bird with flaming wings  
 Flew out of a still Immensity,  
 Cirled the whirling wheels of Time,  
 Perched on contemplation's deep brow.  
 A marvellous guest from invisible moons,  
 She gave note, to the earth, the sky and caverns deep,  
 Of marvel-hued realms of eternal Calm,  
 Of the glories of the eternal Child  
 Who thrilled the unrolling universes  
 With his mask of love, laughter and sweet rapture....

Then flew away the flame-winged Bird  
 Squandering the love-music of her voice  
 On the broad highways to Eternity.

VINAY

## STRAY THOUGHTS

### WHILE SEARCHING FOR THE MISSING PAPERS ON SRI AUROBINDO'S ACTION AGAINST BRITISH RULE IN BENGAL IN 1906-1910

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1973)

2

ALONG with *Bartaman Rananti*, there was the interesting booklet, *Mukti Kon Pothey*. It consisted of letters to the Editor of *Jugantar* as well as articles reproduced from that journal. If *Bartaman Rananti* was the Military Manual for leaders under training, *Mukti Kon Pothey* can be considered its political counterpart in indoctrinating the hearts and minds of political officers with love for the Motherland and with hatred for the Enemy, a perfectly logical and recognised military approach. I remember similar booklets during the last War about the Germans and the Japanese.

So here were the Military Manual and the Psychological/Political Manual. To use them rightly there was Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, whom Chief Justice Sir Lawrence Hugh Jenkins (23-11-1909) called "the master mind" and about whom the same legal head wrote: "he conceived the scheme; he designed the means; and he inspired the work .... He dexterously utilized the opportunities that came his way, began a scheme of recruitment whereby he sought to attract to himself and his purposes a band of youths inspired with deep religious fervour, and indoctrinated with principles of absolute discipline, self-negation and intense love of the mother country, which would lead them willingly to lay down their lives at what they were taught to regard as a paramount call of duty."

The Training Centre was the Garden, and the Field of Exercise Area (for bombs and grenades) at a remote country house near Baidyanath (Seal's Lodge).

Arms, ammunition, explosives had been collected and bombs prepared. Code-words and a sort of Cipher were used.

In fact, as I read all this, the scheme seemed to be a fusion of the intense patriotism and self-discipline of the Japanese and the professional approach of the British in training leaders, yet it essentially drew its strength from *within*, the endless intangible foundation of India's ancient spirit and culture.

I felt that I was actually reading of the foundation of a true India's National Army. It is anyhow (militarily) incorrect to call Barin and his group 'Revolutionaries'. Barin, under Sri Aurobindo's Shakti, was, in fact, training the first batch of 'Indian Irregulars'. The Military Manual, the Psychological/Political Manual, the Training Centre, the Field Firing Area, the practical training in weapons and explosives, the teaching of organised and irregular operations of war, the teaching of Army Rules

and Regulations (*i.e.* the aspect of discipline), the training in use of code and cipher were all the basic essentials required for such training to any professional Army.

Here we can refer ourselves to the letters of Sri Aurobindo on revolutionary activities addressed to Motilal Roy, published in *Light to Superlight*. Sri Aurobindo repeatedly emphasises the need of perfecting professional skill before undertaking operations. He condemns imperfect preparation and lack of skill, demands physical fitness, mental alertness, devotion to the cause but most of all professional efficiency. He repeatedly warns against premature emotional activities that lead to waste of good materials. The teaching of *Bartaman Rananiti* seems repeated.

Next what struck me as interesting was Sri Aurobindo's moving from 23 Scott's Lane to 48 Gray Street at night on 30th April 1908, as well as the conduct of Barin at the Garden. There was a deliberate shut-down of the Training Centre.

The Police came for Sri Aurobindo to 23 Scott's Lane. Unknown to them, he had moved and nothing incriminating was found. In the Garden and after, Barin behaved like an "Army Commander" who surrenders when odds are overwhelmingly against him to avoid wasting lives. He and his immediate subordinate colleagues admit the responsibilities so that those 'innocent' are spared. Barin puts into use the teaching of *Bartaman Rananiti*: "save lives so as to fight another day."

From a book, *Maharishi Sri Aurobindo*, by the brother of Abinash Bhattacharya (published in 1950) we learn that on 30th April 1908 the news of the murder of two European ladies at Muzzafarpore had reached the *Bandemataram* office and that Mr. Shyamsundar Chakravarti, then editing *Bandemataram*, saw Sri Aurobindo the same night and Sri Aurobindo through Abinash Bhattacharya passed instructions to Barin at the Garden. Many of the revolutionaries at the Garden were moved out that night and the following night, the arms and weapons buried so as to avoid, I feel, the occasion of a pitched battle and to deny the Police any excuse for a wholesale massacre of the revolutionaries. Barin actually took the entire responsibility and showed the Police where the arms and weapons had been buried.

Since none would normally store shot guns, rifles and pistols thrust into the bowels of the earth, it is obvious that this was planned and done deliberately. Defeat was openly admitted, bravely faced, useless slaughter prevented. There was to be no shooting match. We may recall here the unequal shooting exchanges with loss of precious lives on numerous subsequent occasions.

It would appear that Sri Aurobindo functioned as a strategist militarily and also on the political plane. Barin was the "C-in-C" and had liberty of action for acquiring arms and for training as per the Manuals for a distant revolution. Abinash Bhattacharya seems to have functioned as "Chief of Staff" to Sri Aurobindo, in his dealings with *Jugantar* and also with Barin on the tactical training. Sri Aurobindo, as he later tells Motilal Roy, must have been also working 'below the surface' with his 'force' on this group.

The Muzzafarpore affair seems to have been originated by Barin, without Sri Aurobindo's knowledge. Long after, in 1910, new information received and recorded

by Mr. Denham at Port Blair in Home Political File No 265 shows that Khudiram only at the last moment replaced Sushil Sen of Sylhet, who had gone previously with Prafulla Chaki to study the ground at Muzzafarpore. Sushil had been unable to join Prafulla Chaki for the final job, as he had left for home, his father having taken ill. Khudiram was wrongly identified in place of Sushil (both looked alike) as having been at Muzzafarpore earlier. He had not "rehearsed" the operation and got captured. It was Sushil who had been ordered to be publicly flogged by Kingsford. The entire organisation, meant for prolonged training for years, got suddenly exposed through a premature action as shown by the unskilful use of arms and explosives at Muzzafarpore. Defeat had to be acknowledged to save trained men, as per *Bartaman Rananiti*. The German Army after World War I was reduced by treaty — but its General Staff saw that every single "soldier" of this army was in fact an officer, one who could train a minimum of 100 soldiers within one year. That is how Hitler, after he had denounced the Versailles Treaty, could suddenly within a short time have an army 100 times the size approved by that document. Avoiding a wasteful battle was thus, in the long term, in the interest of the defeated.

"We got badly beaten the first time," says Sri Aurobindo in one of his letters to Motilal Roy and he obviously refers to this occasion. The fatal weakness here was impetuosity. There was no attempt at perfection in skill through prolonged and patient training.

I feel the above partly explains Barin's course of action. No doubt, we must also remember the additional factor, the 'Inner Guide' that Sri Aurobindo always obeyed but of which in this case we have no specific mention. However, his moving out on 29th April 1908 at night, unnoticed by the Police, could have been due to this 'Guide'.

In concluding this part of the study of Sri Aurobindo, I found myself deeply impressed by the realism, the daring originality, the deliberate professional approach in training irregulars and potential Regular Army Officers, trained in basic military knowledge both in theory and practice. In the plan there was no violent impetuosity, no room for vapid emotionalism. The material chosen was excellent. Given 5 to 7 years of uninterrupted training (and here was the failure, the premature action) the Training Centre begun with 50 would have produced a few hundreds who, dispersed in groups of say two, could have annually trained groups of ten to twenty suitable material per group. But a five year plan became operative in one year! And in that premature action lay the cause of failure.

So much for the School of Irregular Warfare, its training syllabus and its aims and how and why Sri Aurobindo closed it down on May 1, 1908 only one year after its inception.

*(To be continued)*

LT. COL. G. L. BHATTACHARYA

# SEVEN LIVES

## A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

*(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1973)*

### Chapter VI

#### Part 2

SHANKARADEV came to Kamal Rani as usual that evening so that they might have their customary hour alone together. And once again, never before had the hour seemed so measured with each second a grain of golden sand that slips away inexorably, never to be recovered. Still, it was difficult to break the silence as they stood beside one another looking out upon the twilit countryside. How to speak when hour by hour throughout the day they felt their very lives being dammed behind a great wall — a wall of probability through which only the smallest sluice of hope allowed the waters to run out and maintain a semblance of life's large, onflowing river?

At last Shankaradev could bear it no longer.

"No, Kamal," he burst out. "This must stop. Have we already died so thoroughly with apprehension that we must cut still shorter whatever time has been granted to us, instead of living out our dreams as we had always wished? There is only one difference now — we may have to live out those dreams a little faster. Otherwise, they remain unchanged while we continue to move and breathe in these human bodies. What more do we need? Nothing — my queen — nothing, but to keep the diseased and mangy jackal of defeat from our hearts."

She turned to him and flung her arms around his neck. "That's true," she whispered urgently. "All day I've been split in two, one part of me saying, 'Live — all that exists is life, and being, and the green-gold beauty of Deogarh under the March sun,' while the other part watches the townspeople leaving, the Fort being stocked and my Lord inspecting his war elephants, and knows that in battle with the Turks there is death without honour and defeat with shame."

"Send that second part away, my love. It is an illusion. Your king fights for his people, his land, and his divine guru, and if he dies with his face to the enemy, the gods themselves shall honour him. As for shame, there is none, not only for a king but for a Rajput queen who knows her dharma. And what is the pain of death, after all? A few seconds out of eternity ... seconds we have been bred to bear unflinchingly for countless generations, because at the ultimate moment we know we will rise again to fight the divine battle a thousand times, if need be. One day we may even know Death for what he truly is — a charlatan — for in reality he has no authority over

any man and the guile of his working is simply a deception practised upon living things.”

“You speak the words of a sage, my Lord.”

“It is true. Within me lives one who accompanied this soul into its body at birth. Our union was sealed in some distant past that lingers on the furthest verges of my memory, but which I cannot bring any closer to conscious recollection. All I know is that he was my guide, my sacred guru who taught me all I knew, and sometimes it is his words, his knowledge that find their way to my lips.”

She smiled and felt a sudden infusion of warmth spread through her being. Something that she could not herself immediately recall but that gave her an instinctive sense of comfort and familiarity reawakened in her as she listened to her husband’s explanation and she looked at him with a twinkle in her eye.

“Then the gods have truly made you invincible,” she said. “And I must throw out each one of my lonely, brooding thoughts that come to me when you are far from my side, and the whole world, instead of staying fused together in its customary union of joy, flies outward from itself in a myriad shrieking pieces — each drawn to its own solitary doom.”

“Quiet, my love. These are images the minions of Yamraj, the Lord of Death, delight in spinning in the minds of mortals. Remember, rather, that there is a sun in each man that never sets, a fire in each soul that burns through every night, a strength in each heart that never fails, and a divine presence about each living consciousness that never absents itself.”

“Yes, my Lord,” she whispered. “How fortunate you are, for you have conquered the dark ways and walk in the avenues of light.”

“And you, my queen? Why this unaccustomed wistfulness of tone, when even the rudest peasant would declare you a goddess released directly from the cool beauty of the moon?”

“Oh, splendid one, if only I knew. Never before was I like this. The sunlit paths were my perpetual joy. But now a dark moroseness steals upon me when I am unmindful. A fear and a sorrow rush upon me from the horizon like bat-winged phantoms and the sunlight recedes before me.”

Taking her firmly in his arms, he spoke to her earnestly. “No, my beloved; thrust them from you, or — better — call me that I may defend you, for I’ll permit no stain of darkness to defile your perfection.”

She started to weep softly as she clung to him, for unknowingly she felt the caress of the white lion on her heart, the clear rippling water of the love goddess all around her, and the white flames of ananda through all her senses burning the dark shadows from her being. And the tears flowed from her eyes in sheer relief.

Three days later, the Turkish host appeared filing like a plague of black locusts out of the jungles at the northern horizon’s verge. Beneath the Fort lay the almost deserted city, noiselessly awaiting its hour of pillage, while within the Fort the last sack of grain had been received and stored, and all the tanks providentially brimmed



with many month's supply of water. Around the rock promontory spread acre upon acre of a golden grain crop that riffled in the wind as bereft of its human tenders as the shops and mansions of the city, for it was the third time that Malik Kafur had marched upon Deogarh, and Shankaradev's warnings to evacuate had needed no repetition.

From the royal parapet, the king watched the encampment of the Turks. It was late afternoon, and the sun was sinking to one side over a great swathe of land before the northern face of Deogarh that had been, the same morning, a vast sea of corn and grain. Now not one plant stood as the crop lay trampled into the black soil, and a tent city sprang up where, hours before, sparrows had foraged and field mice burrowed. Lines upon lines of cavalry horses stretched where the peasants had hoped to stack their harvest, and the standards of the Turks fluttered where Deogarh's cattle had browsed and grown fat.

All this Shankaradev noted as he watched the dread panorama play itself out before his eyes. Then suddenly, with a sharp pang of recognition, he became aware of another thing he had not remarked upon before, and that was that the Turks had not come alone. The fear that had come upon Kamal Rani the previous evening had overtaken her with the stealth of an advance scout direct from the heart of the enemy. For the God of Terror marched with the Turk, and with him the gods of rapine and black avarice, their favourite godchild being Malik Kafur himself, slave and tyrant, courtier and murderer at once. Shankaradev shuddered with revulsion as he looked out upon the enemy encampment and saw his arch-enemy in his mind's eye, seated at the centre of it like a great black spider at the hub of its web.

The next morning a rider emerged from the Turkish ranks bearing a message for the King of Deogarh. One of Shankaradev's lieutenants took it from him outside the city walls and carried back to the rock citadel. It read:

"I, Malik Kafur, come to chastise the rebel, Shankaradev of Deogarh, for his failure to recognize and offer due tribute to his overlord, Sultan Alauddin Khilji of Delhi. I therefore command him to surrender the Fort forthwith to avert the punishment he so richly deserves or have it taken from him by force, and his body made food for vultures and jackals."

Shankaradev's answer was brief and immediate: "I see that it is not possible for a slave, however favoured, to acquire the tongue of a nobleman. His origin must rush forward and speak for him at each moment. Take Deogarh if you can, for I shall surrender to no man, whether slave or sultan."

Within an hour the sack of the city began, but the redoubtable walls of the Fort withstood the attack and no Turk was able to either scale them or force the massive gate. The city burned for the rest of the day and the fetid black smoke besmirched the blue clarity of the sky, while from the summit of the Fort, Shankaradev watched the small black figures of the Turks dragging away their spoil in long lines like ants carrying their booty from a dead lizard.

Yet the Deogarh forces made no foray from the Fort and by next morning the

Turks had encircled it preparatory to laying siege. Now the mountain reared up from the blackened, ravaged plain like a great hunched beast shrinking into itself from the waters of some malodorous flood. Above it, all the scavengers of the sky seemed to have gathered, for great flocks of vultures manoeuvred and screeched in the updrafts where parrots had chattered and herons flown, and crowds of crows fluttered about the rock and over the Turkish camp like petty spirits of ill-will.

Nevertheless, for all the contaminating presence of the Turks, the high summit of Deogarh remained as free as the sun and air above it, and Kamal Rani still walked there like a white dove that has never known a cage. Now each morning, instead of going to the temple, she would sit on a grassy knoll upon the small plateau at the top of the rock Fort and work ostensibly on a piece of embroidery. Her attendants would keep their distance, for they understood that their queen wished to be alone, and in this solitude the same miracle would occur in her that used to transpire inside the temple's sanctuary. Resting her head against the small boulder behind her, the crickets and bees singing lazily about her under the tranquil sun, she would pass into the sweetness of the trance that brought her not only to Shukratma but also to herself.

But that day, the third after the siege began, the darkness of which she had spoken to Shankaradev a few evenings before returned to haunt her, rising from the plain like the smoke from the Turkish camp fires. Even in her high, shade-speckled retreat she felt its influence and when the trance came it was as though she and Shukratma stood in a white bubble at the centre of a sombre, uncertain sea. The Rishi did not wait for her to speak — her consternation was clear enough for him to see.

“So he seeks you again, Silent One?”

“Yes, dear friend. This time he comes in mortal guise with all the earth's demons gathered about him in a raucous ill-assorted horde. The earth falls before them as before a great merciless engine that has captured and turned the world's good to its own use. The best horses that the deserts and steppes of Asia ever reared come as the enemy's servile mounts. The best metals tip their spears and flash in the curved blades of their scimitars. The hides of the best bulls serve for their saddles and armour, for no scruple of love or sentiment prevents them from taking what they need and using it as they please. Even the blue lotus they would dip in poison and serve up to their god to eat if they could profit by it. Such are the ones the Dark Lord loves and uses for his own machinations.”

“Of course, Silent One. Such has always been his way and such the fate of a guileless world awestruck by the might of the Dark One's champions. But it is not right that you, a goddess, should share in the earth-man's cringing, and permit fear to come upon you as it does upon ordinary mortals ”

“Ah, Shukratma, it is not really that I become mortal with my fear and cringing; it is rather that I find no division between my deity and man's mortal being. In the heart of each man I have my place, my very existence, whereas, in my own soul dwells each man dead or alive, for our essence is one and has been so from the beginning

of time. By the same token, the earth becomes my living sphere for I find myself embedded in every particle of it, silent, unseen, but tangible as the beat of a living heart. And so when the Dark Lord threatens, or cuts my children low, or drives them from the truth of their senses with the veils and nets of his multiple darknesses, I too shudder in the depths of my being, immortal though I am, for I am as much joined to my children as the least of she-goats to her kids.

“Furthermore, when the Dark One wishes to display his power most arrogantly, he reaches to strike the gods themselves, thereby crippling every mortal in one direct blow, insofar as each deity finds his temple in each living man ”

“I rebuked you too hastily, my lovely sister. For truly the pain of man returns to the hearts of the gods since both are one in essence. But the gods live to demonstrate and vindicate their own perfection. They and even you, sweet flower and fragrance of the immortals, live to conquer and prove your invulnerability. Laugh in the face of the Dark One then, and teach men how to laugh with you, for in actuality you are immaculate and cannot be touched by his painful, angry yearning, or burned by the red fires of his revenge as he rages on, forever unrequited.”

“The truth you speak has soothed my soul, beloved friend. Such words had I longed to hear from you this morning — now I can return to life like a bird whose broken wing has been healed by the touch of a sage, and who bursts into flight with a new delight. But tell me, before we part, when Silent Daughter may be united with Kamal Rani, this earthly shadow of hers, and I may no longer have to live as though in two separate dreams that do not awaken into one another.”

“Only slowly, Silent One, slowly. Let the reality come upon you as gradually as the clearing of the fields of morning mist when the sun rises in winter. For Kamal Rani is yet a girl — a beautiful child full of the earth’s innocence and simplicity, and still an unopened white rosebud in the hand of her lord and king. Let her rest so awhile from the rich maturity of the goddess. For the new leaves of Spring are in love with her freshness. The rocks are warm with her childlike pleasure. And the air sings with the purity she still carries with her from the realms of the unborn. Allow the majestic tread of the goddess to come later, dear sister, when circumstances shall require it; for the moment be content to lose your divine fire in a child’s contemplation of a butterfly’s wing. Let your mortal shadow enjoy each second for itself as only it knows how to do, with no burden of past memories or of heavy foreknowledge to mar the present perfection of passing time. Only in this way will the Divine One’s purpose best be served.”

“I bow before your wisdom, ancient friend. Let me return quickly then to my earthly self, and do the Divine One’s will, for even the veil before one’s eyes is welcome when it is placed there by his decree.”

*(To be continued)*

BINA BRAGG

# “LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1973)

## YOGA AND EDUCATION

### Science, Spirituality and Education

INNER and outer are not two separate entities. A wall of obscurities separates the two. This China Wall cannot be demolished by scientific methods. The first work of spiritual education is to demolish it and let the inner transform the outer.

The first thing needed is the change of attitude. All can change if man is actuated by spiritual ideals.

In the Mother's class with the green group in the playground one of the children asked which type of man would be most receptive to the Supramental change. After a moment's thought the Mother replied:

“The scientist, because he is in search of Truth.” And then a teacher perhaps jokingly asked, “And who will be the last?”

The Mother replied in the same vein, “The politicians.”

There is a search for knowledge — a hidden desire in all of us to know the self and the world. All human efforts lead to that; all art, all literature, all science is an immense groping for true knowledge. The knowledge that a mystic seeks through the unity of things, the poet seeks through the beauty in things, the scientist seeks through the hidden law of things.

A question was put to the Mother:

“Is there not a physical law that is able to explain everything in the universe?”

The Mother: “Find out. I will be very glad.”

“Can it be found by science?”

The Mother: “Yes, if it moves in a very definite direction, if it progresses sufficiently, if it does not stop on the way, it will find the same thing as that found by the mystics, by religious people, by everybody, because there is only one thing to find, there are no two.”

Life is not a problem to be solved, it is a mystery to be unravelled. Here I speak about a scientist of our Centre who was fired with a desire to embark on a spiritual journey right from his childhood. As an ambitious youth he dreamt to be a scientist, not for any position but as a seeker of Truth. The question that haunted his seeking mind was whether it was possible to discover the inner Truth, the hidden law of things through science.

Something imbibed in infancy endures for life. In a text-book read by him as a boy of twelve, there was a mention of Swami Ramtirtha. The impact of Swamiji on his life was so great that the very sight of a *sanyasin* elevated his consciousness.

For writing an essay on the *Gita*, he received Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* as the first prize.

The first impact of Sri Aurobindo on his mind was through a photograph. Was the earth still blessed by the touch of his Feet? Was he still living? If so, the young man resolved to go and see him one day.

From 1949 he aspired for the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo but could not dare to open his mind before his Principal, for in those days it was not easy to secure leave.

In 1954 he happened to see a film on the Ashram. “It moved me to my depths,” he confided. “Ah, is there such a place where life is not divorced from spirituality and one is not forced to resort to the Himalayas for the practice of spirituality?”

“I could no more check myself. I told the Principal how eager I had been to see Sri Aurobindo from 1949 but couldn't go. He is no more there.”

“Why, the Mother is there. You can go now,” exhorted the Principal and added, “You thought I would stop you. You hold such a poor opinion of me?” These words of the wise Principal turned the current of his life.

Thus from his childhood he had spiritual leanings; but in embarking on a spiritual journey one has to fight not only external hazards but also internal hazards.

When he was sixteen his father died and the whole burden of the family fell on him. The period of 1949 to 1954 was for him a very hard one, both materially and spiritually. All his dreams got shattered. All his ideals evaporated.

His first visit to the Ashram was in 1957, but the stars were not favourable: he fell ill. Illness did not deter him from going to the Mother to receive her gracious touch on the appointed day. Unable to procure a flower in haste, he went without it. Seeing him empty-handed someone on the staircase shared one of his flowers with him — it signified “Physical Strength,” the thing he needed the most at the moment.

When he was waiting for his turn to see the Mother his mind was seized by rebellious thoughts: should he bow down to the Mother or not?

But no sooner did he stand before her than he forgot himself completely — even that he had a flower to offer. The Mother herself took the flower from his hand and asked very sweetly, “Are you all right?”

“Yes, Mother,” he replied as if awakened from sleep.

This event made him reflect: “About a thousand visitors are there. How could she remember that a stranger was not keeping well?” He wondered: “She must be an extraordinary personality.” And this belief was strengthened by the study of *Sri Aurobindo on the Mother*.

In the course of our talk I put to him rather an odd question:

“What was the greatest ambition of your life that you must be missing by joining the Ashram?”

“Ambition?” He seemed touched to the quick. “I have no ambition. I want to be nothing. When I count the many blessings God has given me from my childhood, my grateful heart cries. I shall be quite happy even if I am reduced to the dust of His Feet.”

It is the psychic being in us that demands nothing, expects nothing, wants to be reduced to nothing. Expect the touch of the awakening light it craves nothing. Surrender is the secret of success in all spiritual pursuit.

“‘Make me your nothing’ was the opening phrase in the concluding stanza of a poem by K.D. Sethna. It echoed my feeling. This is my answer to your anxious question.”

When he finally took up the Ashram life in 1961 people questioned his wisdom: “How great were your prospects! You could have been a first-class scientist. What a pity you left everything!”

To them his reply was: “All prospects are here. I should have come fifteen years earlier.”

He received an offer of Research Fellowship for a period of three years from the Government of Australia while he was at Rurkee Engineering College.

When an offer came from the Government of India after his joining the Ashram he sought the Mother’s advice and she asked him to accept the assignment; so he did. He is back now, and has been here for the last two years.

What makes one a real scientist?

A scientist’s job does not end with merely making experiments with test-tubes. The world gives the name “scientist” to the type of man in whom there has awakened an adventurous spirit to discover something new, hitherto unknown. He is the worshipper of nature. His absorption in his work of research is so great that like the seeker of Light he would say: “My zeal for the Lord has eaten me up.” His laboratory to him is all in all. Does not his tapasya there have a link with what a yogi undertakes sitting on a hill-top or in a mountain cave?

Science is success when the inner blesses the outer.

Life is success when the outer bows to the inner.

*(To be continued)*

NARAYAN PRASAD

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# *Students' Section*

## **EYE EDUCATION**

### **SQUINT AND AMBLYOPIA**

WHEN one or both eyes are turned in towards the nose, the condition is called convergent squint. When the eyes turn out, it is called divergent squint.

The cause of squint is a mental strain. Normal eyes have been taught to consciously produce a squint at will. This requires an effort, but the fact suggests that since a squint can be produced at will, it should be considered curable by eye education. The success of the operative treatment is uncertain. Some children produce convergent squint by straining to see the end of the nose. The production of divergent squint is difficult.

**Treatment:** Since squint is caused by an effort or strain to see, mental relaxation is the fundamental part of the successful treatment. This may explain why teaching the eyes to see better is a relaxation method, which promotes the cure of the squint. When the vision is improved of each eye to normal, the eyes become straight. If somehow the relaxation treatment fails to correct the squint, then only one may think of the operation.

A child is cured of his squint by swinging his whole body in a circular direction and swinging it strongly enough to lift the feet from the floor. While swinging, the hands of the child are held by the hands of the adult who is swinging him. At the same time the child is encouraged to look upwards as much as possible. The little patient will immensely enjoy this form of exercise. Games of all kinds have been practised with much benefit to the squint in children.

When double vision appears with the squint, it is very annoying. Any method which secures relaxation, corrects the double vision and lessens the squint. Many patients are greatly benefited by palming, long swing and reading fine print in good light and candle light. Undoubtedly blinking is a great aid to cure the squint as well as double vision. When this is not sufficient, one may select the exercise of memory or imagination.

*(To be continued)*

DR. R. S. AGARWAL  
SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT

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