

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

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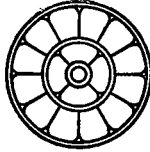
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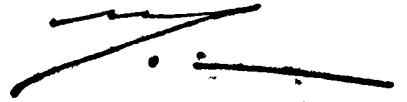


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXVI

No. 4

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of March 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.)

DECEMBER 5, 1956

Now we are going to read what should be done to realise what was expressed in the five preceding paragraphs:

“Transform reason into ordered intuition; let all thyself be light. This is thy goal.

“Transform effort into an even and sovereign overflowing of the soul-strength; let all thyself be conscious force. This is thy goal.

“Transform enjoying into an even and objectless ecstasy; let all thyself be bliss. This is thy goal.

“Transform the divided individual into the world-personality; let all thyself be the divine. This is thy goal.

“Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds; let all thyself be Krishna. This is thy goal.”

(Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*)

This is what ought to be done.

I believe there is no need for any explanation, it is sufficiently clear ... Unless you have some questions? Yes? (*To a child*) Very well, ask your question.

Here it is written: “Transform enjoying into an even and objectless ecstasy.”

Yes, this means that it has no cause.

Usually one gets pleasure or joy or enjoyment due to this thing or due to that — from the most material things to things psychological or even mental. For example, to take a mental thing, you read a sentence which gives you great joy, for it brings you a light, a new understanding; so that joy is a joy which has an object, it is because

you read that sentence that you feel this joy, if you had not read the sentence you would not have felt the joy. In the same way, when you hear beautiful music or when you see a beautiful picture or a beautiful landscape, that brings you joy; without those things you would not have felt that joy; it is these which brought you the joy. It is a joy which has an object, which has a cause.

What Sri Aurobindo says is that this enjoying, this kind of joy, this pleasure, on whatever level it be, high or low, must be replaced by an inner bliss which is communicated to the whole being and is continuous, "even", that is, something that needs no reason, no cause for its existence. The cause is the contact with the divine Bliss which is everywhere and in all things. So once you are in relation with this universal and eternal Bliss, you no longer need an outer object, an outer cause to have joy; it is without object, and being objectless it can be continuous, "even". You have found the source of joy in yourself, that is, the divine Presence, the communion with the Divine; and having found this source of joy in yourself, you need nothing else whatsoever in order to have this joy. And as that has no cause, it does not cease; it is a constant condition.

(To the child) You understand? Not very well? Yes — ah!

Has anyone else a question on what I have just said?

The last paragraph, Sweet Mother: "Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds; let all thyself be Krishna."

Oh! that is an image.

The animal — that's all the instincts of the physical being, the needs of the physical being and all the habits, all the impulses, all the movements of the physical being, the need of food, the need of sleep, the need for activity, indeed all that constitutes the animal part of the being. And then Sri Aurobindo gives the image of Krishna, whom he describes as the Driver of the herds, which is only an image; this means that it is the divine Consciousness which takes possession of all the activities of the physical being and directs and guides all its needs, which controls and governs all the movements of the physical animal in man. Sri Aurobindo uses what could be called Indian mythology, taking Krishna as the symbol of the Divine and the herds as the symbol of the animal instincts and animal needs of man. So instead of being among the animals of the herds you become the one who leads the herds and governs all their movements instead of allowing them to dominate him.... One is linked up. In ordinary life one is tied to the physical life and all the needs it represents — the need for food, sleep, activity, rest, etc. — well, instead of being an animal, that is, one subjected to these things and obliged to submit to them, one becomes the Driver of the herds whom Sri Aurobindo calls Krishna, that is, the Divine who takes possession of all the movements of the being and guides and leads them in accordance with the divine Truth.

Sweet Mother, when one has a world-personality, does one no longer need the individual personality?

Need? ... I don't understand.

Of what use is it?

But it is the individual personality which is transformed into the world-personality. Instead of having the sense of the individual as he ordinarily is — that altogether limited individual who is a little person amidst so many millions and millions of others, a little separate person — instead of feeling like that, it is just this separate, isolated individual, this small person amidst all others, who becomes aware of the world-individuality, the world-personality, and who naturally becomes divine. It is a transformation. It is one thing being transformed into the other.

And Sri Aurobindo does not mean that one gives up one's body, he does not speak of the body; he speaks of the vital consciousness, the psychological consciousness, the sense of the separate individual. Just think, you, child, you are one person amidst so many others; well, instead of being like that, you feel the world-personality; this sense of division and separation goes away, this limitation disappears. But one remains in one's body, one is not compelled necessarily to lose one's body; the body is another thing.

And it is exactly about the body that he speaks in the last paragraph: "Transform the animal into the Driver of the herds." When one becomes a divine consciousness, a divine personality, then one can become the master of all the bodily activities, because one is higher than they; one is not bound to these activities, not subject to them, one dominates them, one has a consciousness greater than that of the individual, of the little separate individual; one can progress just a little more and instead of being enslaved to all these animal needs of the being, one dominates them. But these are not two consciousnesses, one superimposed on the other, it is one consciousness transformed into another.

(Looking at the child) I am afraid she doesn't understand at all! She is gazing at me quite bewildered!

You are asking yourself how in a body like this, one can be different from what one is? Well, one can be! *(Laughing)* It is something that can happen!

(Silence)

(The Mother looks at the written questions.)

Here is the exact complement of your question. I am asked:

What are the characteristic features of a world-personality?

The most characteristic feature is just this change of consciousness. Instead of feeling like a small, isolated person, separated from others, one feels a universal person, containing all others and intimately united and identified with all others.

And I am asked:

How does this person speak and act?

Speak! ... The question is not very well put, for if you ask how he speaks, well, he speaks as everybody speaks, with his voice, his tongue, his mouth and with words! If you were to ask what is the nature of what he says Evidently, if he expresses the state of consciousness in which he lives, he expresses a universal state of consciousness, and seeing things in a different way from ordinary men, he will express them differently, in accordance with what he sees and feels. As for acting ... If all the parts of his being are in harmony, evidently his action will express his state of consciousness.

Now, there are people who have very decisive experiences in one part of their being, but these are not necessarily translated, or at least not immediately, in the other parts of their being. It is quite possible that though through sadhana or concentration or through Grace somebody has attained the consciousness of a world-personality, he still continues to act physically in quite an ordinary, nondescript way, because he has not taken care to unify his whole being, and though one part of his being is universally conscious, as soon as he begins to eat, sleep, walk, act, he does this like all human animals. That may happen. Hence it is still a purely personal question, it depends on each one, on his stage of development.

But if it is someone who has taken care to unify his being, to identify all its parts with the central truth, then naturally he will act with a total absence of egoism, with an understanding of others, an understanding which comes to him through his identification with others — and hence he will act like a sage. But that depends on the care that has been taken to unify all one's being around the central consciousness.

For example, to take the most positively material things like food and sleep: it is quite possible that, if he has not taken care to infuse as it were his new consciousness into his body, his need for food and sleep will remain almost the same and that he won't have much control over them. On the other hand, if he has taken care to unify his being and has infused his consciousness in the elements constituting his body, well, his sleep will be a conscious sleep and of a universal kind; he will be able to know at will what goes on anywhere, in this person or that, in this corner of the world or that other; and his consciousness, being universal, will naturally put him in contact with all things he wants to know. Instead of having an unconscious and useless sleep, except from a purely material point of view, he will have a productive and altogether conscious sleep.

For food it will be the same thing. Instead of being the slave of his needs, in an usually almost entire ignorance of what one needs, well, he will be perfectly conscious, at once of the needs of his body and the means of governing them. He will be able

to control his needs and rule them, transform them according to the necessity of what he wants to do.

But that requires a great self-mastery and the realisation of what Sri Aurobindo says in this last paragraph, that is, instead of remaining below, subject to the laws of Nature, dominated by these laws and compelled to be subjected to them, for without that one becomes completely unbalanced, one is the master, one looks at these things from above, knows the truth of these things and imposes it upon the body which normally must accept it without difficulty.

Anything else on the same subject?

Mother, what does "ordered intuition" mean? ("Transform reason into ordered intuition.")

Ordered intuition For at the beginning, when one enters into contact with the realm of intuition, it is a sort of spasmodic contact; that is, from time to time, for more or less explicable or conscious reasons, suddenly one has an intuition or is possessed by the spirit of intuition; but this is not methodical, not an event brought about at will, organised and obeying a central will. But Sri Aurobindo says that if the entire reason is transformed — he speaks of transformation, you know — if the reason is transformed into the very essence, the substance of intuition, then the whole inner movement of the inner mind becomes a movement of intuition, organised as the reason is organised, that is, it becomes active at will, answers all needs and comes into being in accordance with a methodical system. It is not something which appears and disappears one doesn't know how or why; it is the result of the transformation of reason, which is the higher part of the human mind, into a light higher than the mental light, a light of intuition. So that becomes ordered, organised, instead of being spasmodic and uncoordinated.

DECEMBER 12, 1956

At the first go we are leaping into the greatest difficulty! I believe this one paragraph alone will suffice for this evening ...

"What I cannot do now is the sign of what I shall do hereafter. The sense of impossibility is the beginning of all possibilities. Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being."

(Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*)

Do you know why this seems paradoxical to you? It is simply because Sri Aurobindo has left out the guiding links of the thought, hasn't led you step by step from one thought to another. It is nothing else. It is almost elementary in its simplicity.

And I am going to ask you a question, simply (but in fact I expect no answer), to tell you a very simple thing: When does a thing seem impossible to you? — It is when you try to do it. If you had never tried to do it, it would never have seemed impossible to you.

And how does it happen that you tried to do it? — Because it was somewhere in your consciousness. If it had not been in your consciousness, you would not have tried to do it; and the moment it is in your consciousness, it is quite evident that it is something you will realise. That alone which is not in your consciousness you cannot realise. It's as simple as that!

Only, instead of telling you the thing in this way, Sri Aurobindo puts it in a way that stimulates your thought. That is the virtue of paradoxes, they compel you to think.

Then, Sweet Mother, what does "impossible" mean?

There is nothing impossible in the world except what is outside your consciousness. And as your consciousness can grow, as what is not in your consciousness today may be in your consciousness after sometime, for the consciousness can become wider, so in the eternity of time there is nothing impossible.

At the present moment (I have explained this to you before), at the present moment, at a given moment, in certain given circumstances, there are impossibilities. But from the eternal point of view in the infinity of time, there is nothing, nothing impossible. And the proof is that all will be. All things, not only those which are conceivable at present, but all those which at present are inconceivable, all are not only possible, but will be realised. For what we call the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme, the Absolute (we give him many names, but in fact he is eternal, infinite, absolute), contains in himself not only all that is, but also all that will be, eternally, infinitely; and therefore nothing is impossible. Only, for the consciousness of the temporal and objective being, all things are not possible at the same time; it is necessary to think of space and time to make them possible. But outside the manifestation, *everything is*, simultaneously, eternally, potentially, in its possibility. And it is this All, inconceivable for He is not manifest, who manifests to become conceivable.

And this is what Sri Aurobindo tells us. This temporal universe, that is, a universe which is unfolding, a universe which does not exist all at the same time at the same place outside time and space, a universe which becomes temporal and spatial, is successive, — for That which is beyond the manifestation it is truly an absurdity, don't you think so, and a paradox, it is its very contradiction. For the temporal consciousness, it is That which is unthinkable and incomprehensible, and for That, which is incomprehensible to the temporal consciousness, it is this temporal consciousness which is incomprehensible!... We, we cannot conceive of something which is not in time and space, for we ourselves are in time and space; we attempt an approximation to attain some understanding of a "Something" which is not expressible and is simul-

taneously everything, eternally and beyond time. We may try, yes, and we use all sorts of words, but we do not succeed in understanding it, unless we go out of time and space. Well, turning over the problem, for That which is beyond time and space, time and space are something paradoxical and incomprehensible: they don't exist, they are not there. And Sri Aurobindo says: "Because this temporal universe was a paradox and an impossibility, therefore the Eternal created it out of His being", that is, He changed his non-existence into existence — if you like to put it jokingly, in order to know what it is! For so long as He had not become time and space, He could not know it!

But if we go back to the beginning of the passage, it becomes extremely practical, concrete and very encouraging For we say this: in order to have an idea of the impossible, to think that something is "impossible", you must attempt it. For example, if at this moment you feel that what I am telling you is impossible to understand (*laughing*), that means that you are trying to understand it; and if you try to understand it, that means it is within your consciousness, otherwise you could not try to understand it — as I, I am in your consciousness, as my words are in your consciousness, as what Sri Aurobindo has written is also in your consciousness, else you would have no contact with all that. But for the moment it is impossible to understand, for want of some small cells in the brain, nothing else, it is very simple. And as these cells develop through attention, concentration and effort, when you have listened attentively and made an effort to understand, well, after a few hours or a few days or some months, new convolutions will be formed in your brain, and all this will become quite natural. You will wonder how there could have been a moment when you did not understand: "It is so simple!" But so long as these convolutions are not there, you may make an effort, you may even give yourself a headache, but you will not understand.

It is very encouraging because, fundamentally, the only thing necessary is to want it and to have the necessary patience. What for you is incomprehensible today will be quite clear in a short time. And note that it is not necessary for you to get a headache every day and at every minute in order to try and understand! A very simple thing suffices: to listen as well as you can, to have a sort of will or aspiration or you may even say desire to understand, and then that's all. You make a little opening in your consciousness to let the thing enter; and your aspiration makes that opening, like a tiny notch inside, a little hole somewhere in what is shut up, and then you let the thing enter. That will work. And it will build up in your brain the elements necessary for understanding. You no longer need think of it. You try to understand something else, you work, study, reflect, think of all sorts of things; and then after a few months — or perhaps a year, perhaps less, perhaps more — you open the book once again and read the same sentence, and it seems to you as clear as crystal! Simply because what was necessary for understanding has been built up in your brain.

So, don't ever come to me saying: "I am no good at this subject, I shall never understand philosophy or I shall never be able to do mathematics or ..."—that is just

ignorance, it is sheer ignorance. There is nothing you cannot understand if you give your brain the time to widen and perfect itself. And you can pass from one mental construction to another (this corresponds to studies), from one subject to another, from one language to another, and build one thing after another within you, and contain all that and many more things yet, very harmoniously, if you do this with some care and take your time for it. For each one of these subjects of knowledge corresponds to an inner formation, and you can multiply these formations *indefinitely* if you give the necessary time and care.

I do not believe at all in limits which cannot be crossed.

But I see very clearly the mental formations of people and also a sort of laziness in front of the necessary effort. And this laziness and these limits are like diseases. But they are curable diseases. Unless you have a really defective cerebral formation and lack something, that is, something was “forgotten” when you were formed — then that is more difficult. It is much more difficult, but it is not impossible. There are people like that, truly imperfect, who are like an ill-made object (logically it would be better for them not to continue to exist; but still (*laughing*) that’s not the usual case, it is not in ordinary human ideas). But if you are a normal person, well, provided you take the trouble and know the method, your capacity for growth is almost unlimited.

There is that idea that everyone belongs to a certain type, that, for example, the pine will never become the oak and the palm never become wheat. That is evident. But that is another thing; that means that the truth of your being is not the truth of your neighbour’s. But in the truth of your being, according to your own formation, your progress is almost unlimited. It is limited only by your own conviction that it is limited and by your ignorance of the true process, otherwise

There is nothing one cannot do, if one knows how to do it.

(*Silence*)

(*To be continued*)

A CONVERSATION WITH THE MOTHER

ON JANUARY 28, 1964

THE PRESENT PROBLEM IN THE COUNTRY AND ITS SOLUTION

P: I am going to Calcutta. There they will ask me one question regarding the present situation, the communal riots: "What is the solution?"

THE MOTHER: The solution is, of course, the change of consciousness. I know that those other people behaved badly, like animals — even animals are better than human beings — but if people here also do the same, they are playing into the hands of the forces that make people do evil and strengthen the hold of these forces. Retaliation like this is no remedy.

P: People here feel frustrated, they see no remedy, do not know which way to go, whom to look up to. They are going the wrong way, following the wrong lead. Isn't the division of the country responsible for many of these troubles?

THE MOTHER: Yes, division of religion, of country, of interests. If people felt like brothers — not brothers who quarrel but brothers who are conscious of their common origin!

P: When are you coming into everything?

THE MOTHER: Don't be under the illusion that I am not there. I am there, the Force, the Consciousness, are there, but there is no receptivity. During the Chinese trouble, I was in those places at the front, concretely, but I am sorry to say that the only people who were receptive were the Chinese. Their impulsion to come forward disappeared. That is receptivity. No one knew why they withdrew. On the Indian side a few were touched and they told me of terrible conditions.

Since World War II I have been keeping Kali quiet, but she is restless. The times are critical, anything may happen. If people will only give up their ego!

P: I shall suggest a simpler way — to turn to you.

THE MOTHER: Perhaps the time has come to tell what I have told you. You may talk if any occasion arises. Keep your faith and go like a warrior.

Ā TALK OF THE MOTHER ON APRIL 17, 1969

A REPORT BASED ON NOTES TAKEN AT THE TIME

I KNOW very well the troubles and difficulties India is facing. I am constantly giving my help and blessings to her leaders.

As for the danger of Communism, Communism is a truth that has been distorted. When the truth comes out, the distortion will fall off. The truth is that all one's efforts and all one's work should be turned to the Divine. But in place of the Divine the State has been put.

Only one country in the world knows that there is only one Truth to which everything should be turned, and that country is India. Other countries have forgotten this, but in India it is ingrained in the people, and one day it will come out.

We must all recognise this and work for this. India is the cradle of the Truth and will lead the world to it. But she has to realise her role, and then she will find her real place in the world.

One should decide to become an obedient, faithful and devoted servant of the Truth and the Truth alone. Then nothing can obstruct one. All outward difficulties, and even persons trying to upset one, will be unable to have any effect. Although they may seem to succeed, nothing can stand against one if one is firm in faith and is devoted to serving the Truth.

To be a real servitor of the Truth, one must forget all one's personal desires and preferences and have only the thought to serve the Truth.

I hope the men hearing me will not be offended, but it is only women-leaders who know how to use the Power that comes from serving the Truth.

The laws of man cannot stand before the laws of the Divine and ultimately it is the laws of the Divine that will prevail.

The new Consciousness that descended on the 1st of January is very active, and we have come to an extremely critical time in the history of the world. It is most interesting to watch how things are happening. This new Consciousness is preparing for the Superman and so there are big changes occurring all around. When the first man developed, the animal had no mind and could not appreciate the evolution. Man has mind and can appreciate it. That is why the present is the most interesting period in history. If one can stand in the new Consciousness and watch all events from above, one can see how small and futile they are and then one can act upon them with a great power.

I am aware of the conditions in our country. If even one person can put himself faithfully at the disposal of the Truth, he can change the country and the world.

Auroville is the only hope for preventing a third world war. Tensions are growing and the situation is becoming very critical. But the idea of Auroville, if it can be more wide-spread, can prevent world war.

The children who are born at this time are fortunate.

SRI AUROBINDO'S FUN

Sri Aurobindo has written three poems — A Dream of Surreal Science, Self and Despair on the Staircase — where wit and humour have been at play in the service of profundity. In the course of his correspondence with Nirodbaran and Amal Kiran he has also given us some delightful doggerel. But there are only two poems from him which may be called nonsense-rhyme or surrealist verse. One of them, entitled Surrealist and beginning "I have heard a foghorn shouting at a sheep" and running into forty lines, appears on pages 113-14 of Collected Poems published in 1972. The other is published below for the first time. It was written, most probably in the middle thirties of the century, with a faint pencil on a loose sheet and, when found, was already fading. It seems to have been left unrevised. A transcript was made some years ago with considerable difficulty. Now the writing has almost completely faded and the paper itself has suffered discolouration all over. The piece is Sri Aurobindo's fun at its most nonsensically hilarious and yet, in some places, strangely suggestive in a semi-surrealist style.

A BALLAD OF DOOM

THERE was an awful awful man
Who all things knew and none
And never snub[bed] a Saracen
And always drank a bun.
He said he was a bullywag
And that he did it for fun.
I don't know what a bullywag is
And I don't think he was one.
Of nonsense and omniscience
All he was one who knew
That this was like a temperament
And that was like a hue.
He said there was a phantom sun
That saw a branching sky
And he who could and never should
Was always God's best boy.
And he who should and never could
Was not in the savoury jam
That thronged the gates of Paradise
Jostling the great I am.

He said they saw a smudgy moon
Adown a feathered¹ ridge
And that Beethoven to his ear
Sang like a bluzzing midge
That bluzzed and bluzzed and bluzzed
Until the eye grew green
With shouting for dear visible things
Where nothing can be seen.
For nothing can be seen, my child,
And when it's seen it's red,
And when red nothing once is seen
The world can go to bed.

¹ Tentative reading (Ed.)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of March 1974)

(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.)

July 2, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at P*): We are in a queer position about money.

P: How?

SRI AUROBINDO: The British Government has stopped the British notes from coming here and the French notes are not accepted by this Government.

P: Why have they done that?

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't know. The Consul seems to have written to the Government to make an exception for Pondy, but no reply has come as yet. Swiss money also is not accepted. Jwalanti says that she is ruined. All her money is in Switzerland.

P: Perhaps because people here are converting all their money into British money. M has been doing that for the last six months. The Chamber of Commerce also saw the Governor about these banks refusing to accept French money.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is about the Bank of France. Naturally the banks here can't accept French money because the value of the franc has fallen.

P: It is like during the last War. The mark had fallen so low that people began to buy it in large numbers. Perhaps Germany may introduce the mark now in France.

SRI AUROBINDO: Amrita went to see some businessman here and during the talk the businessman said, "Oh, I am ruined!"

P: Oh yes, plenty of people will have the same fate.

S: In the market there is panic.

SRI AUROBINDO: Panic? People are desperate.

N: Is it all caused by the Indian Government?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. The Indian Government has no jurisdiction over the colonies. Must be the British Government.

N: Is it done to exert pressure on the colonies?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, in that case in Africa and Madagascar also it would have operated. They have nothing to do with British money.

P: Gabriel says that he approached the French Government through the Governor to allow his wife to come here; and the reply was that the wives of the functionaries would not be allowed to leave France.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then others' wives can? (*Laughter*)

P: No, nobody is allowed to leave France now. Perhaps they fear that the internal condition of France will be revealed by these people. But the tourists will be doing that. Have you seen De Gaulle's statement about the French army? He says that France has been defeated without any fight. Only 60,000 people have been killed and nearly a million imprisoned — where was the fight? This is most absurd! One million imprisoned!

SRI AUROBINDO: Worse than the fall of the Third Empire. There was mismanagement, etc., at that time. But they fought before they lost.

P: What Dr. André says may be partly true, that the French army didn't really fight. Otherwise it couldn't have collapsed like that. The French air force didn't perhaps fly over Germany at all and dropped no bombs, saying, "Who is going to risk being killed?"

SRI AUROBINDO: We didn't hear much of the French air force, except at the beginning and that was also at the rear of the French line.

P: De Gaulle's accusation may be true. All these huge fortifications of the Maginot Line built at such a cost have come to nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO: He has the right to speak. He was the one man who was in favour of mobile warfare and urged about having tanks and mechanised units. He became so troublesome they had to remove him. Reynaud made him the Chief of Staff and from him he must have gathered all this news.

S: He is now degraded and has retired.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he speaks now in his own right and appoints Vice-admirals.

S: The colonies are still undecided. They don't seem to have made up their minds.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, except the Jibouti Governor who has said clearly that he won't surrender. Others are still hesitating. After tomorrow it will be seen. Tomorrow the 10th day of the armistice will expire and 5 days more will remain for the African and Mediterranean coasts.

S: They are hoping Micawber-like that something will turn up.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, waiting for that and to see who does what.

P: Russia has already come into the Balkans.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not quite. Still in Central Europe. Her claims on Hungary are understandable. It will be the completion of her Polish campaign. But she has no claim on Bulgarian ports in the Black sea. It has to be seen now what attitude they take.

P: If something happens in the Balkans it will be interesting.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, that is the only way to save the situation. Hungary and Bulgaria are relying on Germany and Italy to protect them. Now it has to be seen what

Hitler and Mussolini will do against Russia. If something happens Turkey and other powers will also pluck up courage.

P: What will happen to Hitler's pact with Stalin?

SRI AUROBINDO: "Pact of brotherhood sealed in blood": that's what he said. Hitler has cloven-hoofed everybody. Now it is his turn to be cloven-hoofed. Carol says the British and the Jews dislike Russia taking this step. Molotov will laugh at the idea.

P: In the recent naval engagement it seems that the Italian fleet ran away before the British.

SRI AUROBINDO: It may not want any engagement now unless the odds are in its favour. It might be waiting until the armistice and if the French fleet is removed it may start.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no confirmation of Russia's ultimatum to Hungary.

P: No, it may be just a rumour.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the news is too good to be true. (*Laughter*)

P: The communists in Bessarabia are very happy and the Rumanians are fleeing. Trainloads seem to be crossing each other carrying refugees.

SRI AUROBINDO: And the Jews are running away to the Russian territory. (*Laughter*)

P: The clashes, they say, are due to the overflow of the Russians.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, they outpaced the scheduled time!

P: The clashes on the Hungarian frontier have stopped.

SRI AUROBINDO: Italy and Germany have asked them to suspend their claims now.

S: De Gaulle wrote a book before the war, which has been translated into German. It seems he foresaw modern warfare in the form of mass employment of tanks at selected points, such as made by Hitler, as well as mechanised units, armoured cars, surprise in the Ardennes and on the Meuse, the defection of Belgium. He says, "This mechanical system of fire, shock, speed and camouflage will reveal itself when first let loose by bringing into action at least 2000 tanks."

SRI AUROBINDO: I see! That is prophetic! Where is that news?

S: In the *Indian Express*. (*Laughter*) But it quotes a French paper.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, it can't write it itself. It seems France invents these plans and Germany accepts them. It was the same as the plan of depth-defence in the last war. Some soldier invented it but the French refused to accept it. One of the copies was seized by the Germans and they put it into operation which gave a lot of trouble to the British at the end of the war. The Seigfried Line is modelled on that system for about 30 miles!

P: Spain's attitude seems to be doubtful. Hitler has massed an army on the Franco-Spanish frontier.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why?

P: Perhaps he wants to take Gibraltar with Franco's help.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then it will be very difficult for the British to hold it. Gibraltar is only a rock and, besides, Spain has got Tangier on the other side.

N: They shouldn't have allowed Spain to get that.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then they shouldn't have allowed Franco to win at all. If they had helped the Republican party, Franco would have been defeated. All this has been due to Chamberlain.

P: Lloyd George was also asking for this help at that time.

N: And they would have had Russia as their ally and she would have been more trustful of them. Now to take Gibraltar may well be Hitler's next move.

SRI AUROBINDO: Most probably.

P: Subash Bose has been arrested.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, by a friend of his. (*Laughter*)

P: It may be a prelude to the arrest of Congressmen. It seems there has been no change in the Government policy by the Gandhi-Viceroy meeting. Repetition only.

SRI AUROBINDO: Looks like that. Otherwise Rajagopalacharya wouldn't have said that in his speech. It must be due to these officials at Simla. They are all fossilised people. Once they have a fixed idea, they won't give it up.

S: The I.C.S. mentality.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Englishmen in England are quite different. Many of them, even conservatives, are speaking of change in India.

S: Though Amery seems to be a strong man, he doesn't have any idea about the Indian situation and the official mind.

SRI AUROBINDO: He knows what is going on behind the scene.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

APRIL DARSHAN

THIS day was set for your advent which shaped our lives.
The twenty-fourth has come again to celebrate that you arrived.
The streets are quick with joy and flower-sellers,
the Ashram canopied.

The day like a slow tide moves to this point:
the murmur dies, a sudden hush ...
a baby cries, a woman coughs.
“She’s coming,” someone says.
Auras spring up like rose and violet fires about our heads.

The sky turns faint, hung with an ashy light,
a vestige of infinity.
You slowly move, your cape a flame
that burns about your fragile frame, towards the rails.
You briefly scan the sky for us,
look down into our upturned eyes.
This is the moment when our spirits walk to you,
and in the silence face their destiny,
a silken veil, through which we look at your prophetic face.
We also have arrived.

MAGGI

SEVENTEEN ELEVEN

THE bird of blue sings on the bough
Strange sound of strings crossing the sphere —
Cymbals and flutes of glass ...
Listen. Listen. Why do they call?
Colours sweep by not seen before —
Why shine the stars so vibrant bright
Like brides on wedding nights?
What do they know that I asleep here
Cannot know?
Look, that white shaft reaching to sky —
It’s a stairway, to where it reaches
No man can see, so brilliant the light.
A thousand throats sing, lo the crystal clarions;

'Behold, the coming of the bride,
She passes tonight. The bright white maid, she comes!'

None unaware shall sleep tonight,
This is no ordinary night ...
Where am I, where am I? Who calls?

'Behold the golden amazon, the phantom-slaying
Warrior bride rides! She comes upon the lion tamed,
Her eyes of fire and of sea, crushing her foes
As she strides — clash, clang
The mighty maiden fights through the dark.'

Has my soul become my eyes, Oh most magical night?
Look, the heavenly queen stoops to earth arched like a bow
To drink the bitter lake,
And where she upon the lotus treads new rivers flow
And springs and mountains rise.
My soul stands beneath the stars, silver shines the night.

He walks tonight amidst the stars,
The golden one, the lord, counting the lamps
Already lit, inflaming those who sleep, alight.
Walks the mighty lord.
He makes ready for her coming, the beloved,
In the house of light.
Divinely robed,
Love-compelling the golden spouse waits,
He waits with fire in his limbs.
In the golden city, glittering white domes,
Pillars hewn of crystal stones, Oh bright Jerusalem!
Pavements made of light!
He shall fuse her love to his ...
Tonight the world be saved.

17.12.1973

GEORGETTE COTY

SAPPHO

LOVE is hard, so heavy it bears upon me,
Burns with flame not lifted to peace of godhead,
Till in keen blank piercing despair it drives to
Plunge, and the rock-foam.

So the lost pure blessing of Aphrodite,
Rising not, draws down to her turbulence the
Heart, that longs, point-shattered, consumed, its ashes
Strewn to the wind's moan.

Death is end, one hopes, that the pain and slaughter
Tear, not light-free lifted in flaming surging;
O that sweet close melting of body sunward
Cannot be found here!

Drowning waves pour full of the passion's gusting,
Calling down down down from the island loneness.
Goddess bright, rare, never is high the merging,
Clear, as the soul needs?

JESSE ROARKE

SAPPHO SILENT

AN arctic or an alpine night
is silence, yet life never dims.
But who shall wake her body's white —
this lunar landscape of still limbs?

The mouth is Sappho's, but no fret
breaks o'er that rose of Helicon.
"It's midnight, and time passes" — yet
in peace her body lies alone.

AMAL KIRAN

FRANCIS THOMPSON THE MAN: A BRIEF STUDY

(Continued from the issue of March 1974)

THE *Narcissistic* attitude together with *Schizophrenia** made Thompson a queer creature full of eccentricities and oddities. Here is a picture of the eccentric Thompson painted by Viola Meynell:

“Any onlooker knew more of his repetitive movements than he himself knew — a brushing upward movement at his scanty moustache, right and left; his shoulders hitching up his coat; the striking and re-striking of matches in the attempt to light his pipe, and his hand feeling in his coat pocket for something — his eyes showed he had forgotten what.”²²

His talk was not free from eccentricity too. He was slow or silent on great subjects but grotesquely tedious on trifles. Moreover, in his letters and manuscripts he always wrote the archaic form “ye” for “the”.

Thompson’s oddities of temperament and idiosyncrasies of behaviour were accentuated by his drug-habit. It would be too sentimental to deny the deleterious effects of opium on Thompson’s personality. Opium made his personality, like Coleridge’s and De Quincey’s, more unstable and wavering. Many admirers of Thompson have endeavoured to explain away the question of opium in his case on the ground of ill-health and weak constitution. This may be accepted in the last phase of his life but it is very difficult to excuse his addiction in earlier life. At the same time, it is hard to defend the tricks the young Francis played on his indulgent parents as a medical student at Owens College, Manchester. Instead of attending the lectures, he attended Manchester’s Public Libraries regularly and pored over the works of Sir Thomas Browne, Crashaw and Cowley, or visited museums, or went to watch cricket at the Old Trafford ground. He made a pretence of study for six years and paid heavy penalties for such pretence. He certainly did not act as a dutiful son but took undue advantage of his parents’ goodness and love. However, we are told that he started taking laudanum just after his serious illness in 1879 to relieve his pains. But the drug was not free from its dangers for him. Its disadvantages are notoriously

* The symptoms of *Schizophrenia* have been described as follows

“Although the symptoms have considerable variety, the relatively constant and characteristic indications are a loss of interest in normal occupations, an inability to communicate with other people, emotional responses unappropriate to the situations that arouse them, and a tendency toward peculiar mannerisms of speech, action, and gesture which seem to arise from the patient’s reveries and to have no connection with the outside world.”

—L. F. Shaffer and E. J. Shoben, Jr: *The Psychology of Adjustment* (Houghton Mifflin Co. Boston 1956) p. 195.

that some of those who take it first as a medicine become addicted to it and come to depend on it as a means of blunting their reactions to all the stresses and tensions of their lives. Thompson also could not give up the drug-habit. Why? We feel, firstly, because of force of habit; and secondly, because he found a refuge in opium for his fantastic and escapist way of life. His romantic and day-dreaming nature found in opium a kind of protection from the responsibilities of an adult. De Quincey's *Confessions* strengthened his feeling, with the result that he began to identify himself, consciously or unconsciously, with the senior writer.

Alice Meynell, defending Thompson, said once that none of his important poems was written under the influence of opium. But it is not correct. The influence of opium can be traced in several of Thompson's important poems. A few examples will serve the purpose here. The poem, *Ode to the Setting Sun*, was written at Storrington just after Thompson had mastered the drug-habit. But it is hard to believe that he had conquered the habit completely and forgotten his past life. Throughout the multi-coloured riot of imagery and the shifting patterns of thought and feeling in the early part of *Ode to the Setting Sun*, we may trace the effects of opium. Here is the forced conceit of the dreamer, in which the sun can

like a golden bee
Sting the West to angry red;

and in the following lines Thompson is referring to the sense of dominance and self-completeness brought by opium:

Must ye fade —
O old, essential candours, ye who made
The earth a living and a radiant thing —
And leave her corpse in our strained, cheated arms?

Thompson's fearful burden of struggle against addiction is certainly suggested in the "After-Strain":

Yet woe to him that from his burden flees,
Crushed in the fall of what he cast away.

The weight of his effort lay heavy upon him, but he knew well enough that to abandon it was certain destruction. When Reid says that "worship, faith and religious fervour have less place here than soul-sickness and misery,"²³ he is not far from the truth but when he sees "the sun as a symbol of opium",²⁴ he is exaggerating Thompson's weakness for laudanum.

Again, such poems as *The Poppy* and *The Sere of the Leaf* bear the effects of opium. There is a reference to Thompson's visions lost in the stupor of opium in these lines:

“Was never such thing until this hour,”
 Low to his heart he said; “the flower
 Of sleep brings waking to me,
 And of oblivion, memory.”

(*The Poppy*)

And in the last line of the following passage a craving for opium-oblivion can be traced:

I know not equipoise, only purgatorial joys,
 Grief’s singing to the soul’s instrument,
 And forgetfulness which yet knoweth that it doth forget.

(*The Sere of the Leaf*)

Both these poems throw light on Thompson’s personal life and reveal him as the man — gloomy, despondent, full of self-pity.

Thompson, as an opium-addict, was aware of his guilt throughout his life. The first stanza of *The Hound of Heaven* discloses this sense of guilt poetically:

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
 I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
 Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
 I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
 Up vistaed hopes I sped;
 And shot, precipitated
 Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears.

In the above lines, Thompson’s guilty conscience makes him run away from God because the memory of his attempts to evade the real world in the intoxication of opium haunts him and makes him restless. But at last the poet’s soul recognizes God as its pursuer in exhaustion and at the same time it submits to the voice of conscience. *The Hound of Heaven* begins with the opium-intoxicated and guilty Thompson running away from God and ends with the God-intoxicated and purified Thompson submitting himself to God’s will.

Laudanum developed another symptom in Thompson — that of *hypochondriasis*. With real ailments of insomnia and diarrhoea, imaginary aches, pains and illnesses were a perfect *alibi* for Thompson. Thompson’s sufferings — physical, mental and spiritual — were, as Peter Butter says, “to a large extent self-induced”.²⁵ In fact, his withdrawn nature and drug-habit made him more self-absorbed and unworldly. Laudanum precipitated the oddities and eccentricities in his character with an additional symptom of *black-out** in later days. Everard Meynell, in a more or less apolo-

* cf. *Alcoholic amnesia* or *black-out* is the state of the mind in which an addict “may carry on an intelligent conversation or a series of complicated acts in a perfectly rational way, and yet the following day he will have little or no memory of what happened to him during this time.” — Howard Jones. *Alcoholic Addiction: a psycho-social approach to abnormal drinking* (Tavistock Publishers), 1963, p.8.

getic tone, tries to defend Thompson's unpunctuality and absent-mindedness when he says that Thompson, "Captain of his soul, was not captain of his hours."²⁶

Thompson suffered much on account of his secretive and reticent nature. None shared his mental agony since he would not speak to anyone of his suffering. An introvert, he suffered alone and "Who alone suffers, suffers most i' the mind," says Edgar in *King Lear*.²⁷ He faced his sufferings with almost masochistic endurance. His reticent nature was one of the reasons of separation from his father. "My tongue was tenaciously disciplined in silence," Thompson had said to Everard Meynell.²⁸ He revealed his heart only in his poetry and his jottings in notebooks.

Thompson was looked upon by many as a queer creature and very few understood "his sky-scraping humility, his mountains of mystical detail, his occasional and unashamed weaknesses, his sudden and sacred blasphemies."²⁹ Though an opium-addict, he was certainly not a despicable man. Within his weak and frail body there reigned an undaunted spirit and a tremendous power of endurance. When McMaster asked him, during the "nightmare time" in the streets of London, if his soul was saved, Thompson's prompt reply was: "What right have you to ask me that question?"³⁰ His unflinching faith in God saved him from being spoilt and from self-destruction. Thompson grew in the faith of the man and poet who *de profundis*, from the depths of an agonized but unbroken spirit in a broken body, toiled ever upwards,

With bloody clutch and feet
Clinging the painful juts of jagged faith. (*An Anthem of Earth*)

The training in Catholicism, which he had received at home and strengthened at Ushaw, served him as a beacon light during the darkest days of his life; and devotion to the Blessed Virgin remained an important element in his emotional life. She is a recurrent theme in his poetry. His was a Christ-centred life and such a life was not easily to be understood by common people.

Thompson's love of God brought him nearer to children. He retained his child-like innocence until his death. Usually reserved in nature, when Thompson opened his lips he spoke as a scholar. A simpler mind, a more courteous manner were not to be found. His life, like R. L. Stevenson's, "was a search for health, or rather for such health as would allow him to work,"³¹ as he said in his essay on Stevenson. At his weakest an escapist and dreamer, but at his best capable of working out his dreams to compact reality, Thompson certainly had something ennobling in his character. He worked hard as reviewer for literary periodicals to earn his living during the last decade of his life. He was poles apart from St. Ignatius Loyola about whom he wrote a book, but he shared one vital quality with him — *tenacity*.

We do not agree with those who think that Thompson's life of destitution and suffering was due to debauchery with drink and drug. Unfortunately J.C. Reid has also laid extraordinary emphasis on Thompson's drug-addiction in his scholarly book

on the poet.* There are people who look upon him as a mental weakling dosing himself with opium merely to luxuriate in opulent dreams and imaginings. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A man may be an opium-addict and yet be a divine poet.

It would not be out of place here, we feel, to mention the name of Girish Chandra Ghosh (1843-1911), the great Bengali mystic poet and dramatist. Girish Chandra was a drunkard and an opium-addict as well. It was in no way a hindrance to his becoming a devotee of Goddess Kali and a devout disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Spiritual Master of Swami Vivekananda. Girish Chandra wrote many devotional plays and songs and he was regarded as a great *bhakta* for whom Swami Vivekananda had a high regard. Girish Chandra is remembered today not for his drinking habit but for his devotion to Sri Ramakrishna and his literary achievements. Similarly, we think, Thompson's personality should not be judged by his drug-habit only. He had many nobler and better qualities.

Thompson was a mystery to many because he had a dual personality. This dualism very often peeps out through his poetry. Everard Meynell, who knew the poet intimately, says that as a poet Thompson was happy, no doubt, but not necessarily as a man.³² In a letter to Everard Meynell, Thompson confessed:

“I had never your lightness of heart nor was I ever without sad overshadowings of the hurrying calamity I was born in the shadow of the winter solstice, when the nights are long. I belong by nativity to the season of ‘heavy Saturn’.”³³

Of course, it is difficult to establish Thompson as a happy man in the ordinary sense of the term. Thompson, in fact, remained chained in the loneliness of his own imagination. But at times he could rise above his pensive mood and laugh heartily. “It is pleasant,” wrote Alice Meynell, “to remember Francis Thompson’s laugh, a laugh readier than a girl’s and it is impossible to remember him, with any real recall, and not to hear it in mind again.”³⁴ Moreover, it is wrong to suppose that Thompson was frequently out of his senses, lost in the intoxication of laudanum. Sarath Kumar Ghosh, a Bengali youth who knew Thompson closely and was “at times the poet’s only friend in London,”³⁵ records his impression of Thompson thus: “Racked with physical pain he occasionally was: but his mind was perhaps at its clearest phase, his perception keenest, his judgement most matured.”³⁶ Thompson’s purity of soul, simplicity of mind and innocence of heart endeared him to those who knew him intimately. Against all the disparaging criticism and hostility, Sarath Kumar Ghosh defends

* The writer of this article, on reading Reid’s book *Francis Thompson — Man and Poet* (1959), felt that it was overwrought with description of Thompson’s indulgence in opium. He discussed the matter with Mr Paul van K. Thomson, author of *Francis Thompson — A Critical Biography* (1961), and Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Providence College, Providence, U.S.A. through correspondence. Supporting the present writer’s view Mr Thomson wrote to him on January 10, 1967.

“I share your reservations with regard to Reid’s book. I talked at some length about it with Father Connolly and I am convinced that the portrait of Francis Thompson as a bohemian figure is vastly over-drawn.”

Thompson in these words: "If ever again you see a stone cast against the memory of Francis Thompson, shield him with this testimony of the Eastern who dwelt with him in heaven and in hell."³⁷

To conclude and recapitulate. Thompson suffered at the hands of both his admirers and detractors. His friends either overlooked his defects or defended them vehemently and found all virtues in him. His critics magnified and trumpeted his minor follies and weaknesses and found all vices in him. The real truth lies between these extreme views. Thompson, undoubtedly, with his early hardships, his somewhat defenceless charm of character, and his intensity of religious ardour, is a moving and attractive figure. But to deny his major defects is to evade the truth. His withdrawn temperament led him to opium, which increased his isolation and sapped his will-power. He constantly sought to escape from the responsibilities of life; hence arose his inconsiderate behaviour to his parents and others, his selecting of women to love who could not return his love and so make a claim on him, his unpunctuality and self-pity. Though deeply religious at heart he did not lead a disciplined life. His timid and diffident nature, dreamy and escapist way of life, dread of action, cannot be called his virtues. But this is only one side of the picture. On the other side, his notebooks reveal a constant struggle to conform his life to what he knew his religion demanded. There was nothing abominable or despicable in his character. Those to whom he could reveal himself admired his intelligence and spiritual insight. He was indifferent to the comforts of life and to material prosperity. His only ambition was to be a poet, a "poet of the return to God". A great sufferer in life, Thompson could rise above his suffering and use it to express a joyous vision, not of the sordid, but of the Kingdom of God seen all around him. If he was drunk with opium, he was drunk with God too. One was the servant of the other. The portrait which the Hon'ble Neville Lytton drew shortly before Thompson's death was that of a prophet and seer, visualising "the dread future without dread", so that "after all he had nothing to regret in the manner of his life."³⁸ Apart from his eccentric habits and oddities in temperament, Thompson had a "many-splendoured" personality.

(Concluded)

SHAILENDRA NATH CHAKRAVERTY

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THE RAIN UPON THE ROSE

I CAME as a child, and touched knowing with wonder, all my life;
 I danced and died,
 sang and grew silent,
 Dreamed, and my dreams were torn from me;
 But never did a single grave bear nothing —
 All roses bloom and wither,
 and beget their children,
 All dust mingles with the rain, and the Sun returns the dust to itself,
 Laughing.
 But in my Eye I hear a darker heaving of the worlds —
 Terrible Hands remove the Temple
 with the noise of thunder claps,
 A rose shivers, and is gone.

And though a Prince cries, "Warning",
 I shall live — and, loving you, remain.
 Shall any rose regret the rain?

NANCY
 (At age 19)

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 March 1974)

6 (Contd.)

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

(g)

APROPOS of "the change in the face of God," with which Teilhard is primarily and passionately concerned, so that "God Ahead" may predominate over "God Above", he observes: "I know that hundreds of people around me feel it (hence the success of the books I've circulated privately)" (August 30, 1950).¹

This allusion to a wide Teilhardian public, because of the representative nature of the author in the modern context, sends us back to the sequel Teilhard has in *How I Believe* to his announcement that he has surrendered to faith in the Universal Christ as a complement to his surrender to faith in the World. He² writes: "But, if I have surrendered myself why should not others, all others, also do the same? I began by saying that what I am now writing is a personal confession. Deep in my mind, however, as I have proceeded, I have felt that something greater than myself was making its way into me. The passion for the world, from which my faith springs, the dissatisfaction, too, which I experience at first when I am confronted by any of the ancient forms of religion — are not these traces in my heart of the uneasiness and expectancy which characterize the religious state of the world today?"

Here we have an indication about the sort of people for whom *How I Believe* would be a significant and helpful document. Rideau,³ after de Lubac,⁴ has made out that the essay was specifically addressed *ad Gentiles*, unbelievers, non-Christians. And de Lubac⁵ quotes a letter of Teilhard's (March 1947) in which, answering an attack by Père Lagrange-Garrigou, Teilhard says that *How I Believe* "was

¹ *Letters to Two Friends* (Collins, Fontana Library, Theology and Philosophy, London, 1972), p. 114.

² *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), p. 130.

³ *Teilhard de Chardin: A Guide to His Thought* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 376.

⁴ *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning* (A Mentor-Omega Book, The New American Library, New York, 1967), p. 133. ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-6.

intended for a very special public and not for general circulation". De Lubac goes on: "he is ready to concede that his starting-point and his causes for credibility, in so far as they are personal, may have little solidity or probative force for many minds, including that of his critic: they may, if they wish, regard them as 'flights of imagination.' He does not, however, believe that he is thereby excused from trying to say something that will weigh with other minds — the 'special public' he refers to. He considered that he owed this to the scientists he mixed with and who more or less shared his initial 'general view of the universe', even if they were incapable of discovering a solid basis for it. It was among these men that God had placed him, and it was of them that he once exclaimed in his missionary zeal, 'These are the Indies that call me with even more urgency than St. Francis Xavier's.'"

What de Lubac and Rideau suggest is valid, as far as it goes, for Teilhard certainly wanted to reconcile science and religion; but he never thought that the shortcoming lay always on the side of unbelievers. One of Rideau's quotations¹ from him runs: "Everything stems from the perception and acceptance of a sense of the value of the world. It is the absence of such a sense ... that leaves the admonitions of our missionaries so cold and uninspiring. On the other hand, once this sense emerges, then I am convinced the Christian faith will once again find echo throughout the world" (Letter of 3 January, 1948). An earlier piece of Teilhard's writing rings the same note:² "In their quest to give a name to the unknown God whose existence they divine, the Gentiles look to us. And then they turn away from a Gospel that seems to have no answer either to their outlook on the world, or to the questions they ask or to the things they look for. The resistance the Church comes up against nowadays in getting a footing, does not derive, as is sometimes said, from its dogmas being too lofty and its moral systems too difficult. It is due to the fact that men no longer recognize in us their religious and moral ideal and accordingly stand aside waiting for something better" (*L'incroyance moderne*, 1933, in *Science et Christ*, p. 151).

There is nothing in the terms of Teilhard's extension from himself to others that would pinpoint fellow-scientists as his intended readership. Fellow-Christians who are forward-looking would as well come within his purview. Rideau has several passages, either directly quoting Teilhard or incorporating his words, which bear us out:

"With the present development of mankind, 'a new section or, to put it more exactly, a further dimension, has suddenly brought about an almost limitless expansion of man's destiny — a section and dimension of which *there is no explicit mention in the Gospel*. Until that happened, the Christian had learnt to think and act, to fear and worship, on the scale of his own individual life and death. How without breaking with his traditional background, will he or can he extend his faith and hope and charity to the proportions of a terrestrial organization that is destined to persist for millions of years?' ... There is 'a lack of proportion between the insignificant man-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 318.

² *Ibid.*, p. 326.

kind that still appears in our catechisms and the great mankind with which science is concerned'; 'a lack of proportion between the tangible aspirations and anxieties and responsibilities of life, according to whether they are expressed in a secular book or a religious treatise' (*Le Christ évoluteur*, 1942).¹ — "Teilhard concludes a criticism ... as follows: 'It is here, and only here, in this lack of balance (sometimes more sometimes less distinctly felt) that we can hope to find the ultimate source of the uneasiness that today lies heavy on the mind and consciousness of so many Christians. Contrary to what is generally held, it is not the scientific discovery of man's humble origins but much more the equally scientific discovery of man's fantastic future that now troubles the hearts of men; and it is with this above all, accordingly, that our modern apologetics should be concerned' (*Le Christ évoluteur*)."² "... Christianity will lose, to the extent that it fails to embrace as it should *everything that is human on earth*, the keen edge of its vitality and its full power to attract. Being for the time *incompletely human* it will no longer fully satisfy even its own disciples We wonder why there is so much unease in the hearts of religious and priests ..." (*The Heart of the Problem*, 1949, in *The Future of Man*, p. 260).³ — "Not only to the Gentiles and simple layfolk, but even in the heart of the religious orders, Christianity is still to some extent a *refuge*, but it does not *embrace*, or *satisfy*, or even lead the 'modern' soul' any longer. Something has gone wrong, and something, therefore, must be provided, on this planet, in the field of faith and religion — and that without delay" (*Le Dieu de l'évolution*, 1953).⁴ — "Many Catholics, failing to find in their religion 'a complete vindication of their lives, adhere to Christianity but only for *want of anything better*, and only so long as a number of central points (in connection with the origin and significance of the world) are discreetly left in the background. This is no longer a complete and fervent adherence to the light one has found. They are already — how many people have told me this — conscious of awaiting a new Gospel' (*Le sens humain*, 1942)."⁵

Lastly, we have Teilhard referring to his own writings and the Catholic readership it commanded: "Between my way of thinking and the really 'orthodox' (I do not say 'official' but 'practical') Christian vision of the World there is not such a big gap as you think. The proof is the way in which the best of the Catholics are jumping on my poor essays. As I wrote a few days ago to a Superior, a good friend of mine, I do not know whether my bread is well baked: anyhow the way the people eat it is a pathetic proof how much they are starving for a food in which Love of God does not exclude, but includes, Love of the World" (Letter of February 14, 1949).⁶

All this — taking us beyond the narrow focus sought for *How I Believe* — brings us back to the point made by the first two quotations we made in contradicting de Lubac and Rideau. They were directed at missionary work and the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 323. In connection with the italicised phrase here, see the discussion in the Note at the end of the article.

² *Ibid.*, p. 326. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 327. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 328. ⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Letters to Two Friends*, p. 198.

need for the right type of apologetics. The Catholic priesthood itself is confronted there. And it is strange how de Lubac forgets the information he¹ has himself proffered about Teilhard's essay: "Père Teilhard wrote it in China between September and November [1934] at the suggestion of Mgr. Bruno de Solages." And de Lubac never attends to the fact that at least four times Teilhard uses the pronoun "you" unmistakably to denote de Solages, a fellow-Jesuit who was the rector of the Institut Catholique of Toulouse. In one place, Teilhard uses it after affirming about the "cosmic sense": "In fact, nothing in the vast and polymorphous domain of mysticism (religious, poetical, social and scientific) can be explained without the hypothesis of such a faculty, by which we react synthetically to the spatial and temporal ensemble of things in order to apprehend the Whole behind the multiple."² Naturally the usual Roman Catholic mind would not be immediately receptive of this affirmation and Teilhard says to de Solages: "You may, if you wish, speak of temperament ..."³ At the next place, Teilhard says: "You see, then, how by degrees my initial faith in the world was irresistibly transformed into a faith in the increasing and indestructible spiritualization of the world."⁴ Evidently Teilhard is impressing on his Jesuit friend the mode in which the modern Christian should envisage religion. At another place, after being told that in the supreme universal personality we shall inevitably find ourselves personally immortalised, we read: "you may find this an astonishing prospect: but that is because the materialist illusion is still at work, in one of its many forms, and it is leading you astray, as it has led astray the majority of pantheists. We almost inevitably, as I recalled at the beginning of this section, picture the great Whole to ourselves as a vast ocean in which the threads of individual being disappear. It is the sea in which the grain of salt is dissolved, the fire in which the straw goes up in smoke. Thus to be united with that Great Whole is to be lost. But what I want to be able to proclaim to all men is that this is a false picture and contradicts everything that has emerged most clearly in the course of my awakening to faith. The Whole is not, definitely not, the tensionless, and thus dissolving, immensity in which you look for its image. Like us it is essentially a centre, possessing the qualities of a centre ..."⁵

These passages provide the key to the nucleus of the readership Teilhard has in mind. It is the Roman Catholic clergy, whom de Solages stands for in general. A friend of Teilhard's, he could not be the sort of mentality that condemned and thwarted Teilhard all his life. But he too has his reservations. Like "the majority of pantheists", as Teilhard conceives them, de Solages, though not a pantheist but representing all Roman Catholics of the official type, is yet habituated to think of any universal Whole as a diffuse unit in which the personal human soul would be submerged by union. Teilhard points out that to think in this manner is to approach the Whole on the analogy of a uniform material substratum — like the ether of the old physics. Teilhard shows the Whole to be a Being commensurate with the physical cosmos but with a quality which carries to the supreme degree what the highest result of uni-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

² *Christianity and Evolution*, pp. 102-3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

versal evolution possesses — personalisation — and in whose Super-Personhood this personalisation is itself super-personalised. The shying away from a religion of the Whole, from the worship of a cosmic Divinity, is hit off with precision by Teilhard in one of Rideau's citations:¹ "In practice, if not in theory, our Lord has been too exclusively presented to our contemporaries in the form of a complement promised to their personality — a complement that is moral, extrinsic, *particularist*, and individual. They have been given a picture of Christ dissociated from the universe, as a detached fragment which brings men into conflict with one another. Is it in any way surprising if the Soul of the world, now that it has, in its turn, spontaneously disclosed itself to their consciousness, has appeared to them as an 'extra', or antagonistic, or stronger absolute — a new Messiah more desirable than the old?" (*L'âme du monde*, 1918, in *Écrits du temps de la guerre*, p. 227).

Further, the extrinsic individual Christ stood in history for a God who was Himself expressed in religious texts "in terms of a typically neolithic symbolism" — that is to say, one belonging to "the age of a mankind (and, more widely, of a world) built up from the sky above to the village below, on the model and (practically speaking) the scale of the family and the ploughed field."² In such a universe, monotheism could not have emerged "except in terms of a God who is the great paterfamilias and supreme landlord of the inhabited world."³ This was written in *Le phénomène chrétien*, 1950, but round about the time of *How I Believe* there is the same attitude on Teilhard's part: "The expression of our Christology is still exactly the same as that which, three centuries ago, was sufficient for men whose cosmic outlook has now become physically insupportable" (*Christologie et évolution*, 1933).⁴ — "The time has gone when God could simply be imposed on us from outside, like a master or proprietor. The world will never again fall on its knees, except before the organic centre of its evolution. What at the present moment we all lack, in varying degrees, is a new formulation of holiness" (*Le phénomène spirituel*, 1937, in *L'énergie humaine*, p. 136).⁵

"The organic centre of the world's evolution" is Teilhard's Universal Christ. And the essence of all these passages is distilled in the words⁶ with which, just before its "Epilogue", the main body of *How I Believe* closes and from which we have already culled a phrase: "A general convergence of religions upon a Universal Christ who fundamentally satisfies them all: that seems to me the only possible conversion of the world and the only form in which a religion of the future can be conceived."

These words indicate that the essay was centrally written for those who want to convert the world to Christianity. It calls for the abandonment of the old apologetics and the adoption of a new line by the Church.

The right way for the Church to set about in its work of reassuring dissatisfied Christians and of Christianising unbelievers, the Gentiles, the "infidels" (to use another bit of the old terminology): such is the main general purpose that can be ascribed to *How I Believe*, apart from its character of a personal document contributing

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 319.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 318-19.

⁶ *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 130.

to the study of the psychology of belief. And the Christianity in which love of the World and love of God are combined has its true apologetic colour properly brought forth in a letter of 1948-49 which again discusses "faith in heaven" and "faith in earth" as both leading to the same religious conclusion: "The synthesis of the two forms of faith in *Christo Jesu* is not an arbitrarily chosen tactical move *ad usum infidelium*. It represents *hic et nunc* a condition of survival for an increasing number of Christians. We have to choose right now between the Christianising of neo-humanism and its condemnation. The problem is with us now, and the time is short."¹

The entire drive of *How I Believe*, with its synthesis of scientifically evolutionary pantheism and the Universal Christ who fulfils in a personalist manner Teilhard's innate pantheist tendency and who breaks through Christianity as it has been presented up to now is caught in an early communication of Teilhard's, bearing on his master-passion for a "converted" Christianity which could "convert" mankind: "What continues rather to dominate my outlook is the realization, sometimes overwhelming, of a lack of proportion between the greatness of the realities involved in the world's forward progress (physical, biological, intellectual, social, etc.) and the pettiness and narrowness, the makeshift nature, of the philosophico-dogmatic solutions which we claim to have built up as a permanent bulwark for the universe. We're trying to put the ocean into a nutshell" (Letter of 16 March, 1921).²

We can now discern with accuracy not only Teilhard's primary purpose, but also his basic belief as it emerges from his famous essay. Merely because his limited vision of historical spirituality could embrace Christ alone as a divine incarnation, he calls by the name of "Universal Christ" the Personal Pantheos whom he has intuited and loved from birth and in whom all God-lovers will attain by their union with Him a fulfilling super-personalisation. Accepting Christ, Teilhard naturally remains within the Roman Church that, in his eyes, derives from this incarnation, but he finds all traditional dogmas and apologetics most faulty, and strives, by reading his own Personal Pantheos in St. Paul's Epistles, to metamorphose Roman Catholicism into, first of all, a pantheist Personalism and, finally, an evolutionist form of this faith in a World single, infallible, all-guiding.

It is thus that we can evaluate correctly the conventional-seeming sentence at almost the start of *How I Believe*: "... I have tried to pin down, in what follows, the reasons for my faith as a Christian."³

Such an evaluation means that actually there is nothing of Christianity in the accepted sense in Teilhard's Christian faith. And perhaps we cannot do better than make a gloss on basic Teilhardism with an excerpt from another credo of our author — the commencement of *My Universe* (1924). There, after asserting "the primacy of consciousness", the faith that it is better to be than not to be and better to be more than to be less, he adds that "directly side by side" with this "corner-stone" of his "interior life" he "can distinguish another: Faith in life, in other words the unshake-

¹ Quoted by Claude Cuénot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study* (Burns and Oates, London, 1965), p. 271. ² Rideau, *Op. cit.*, p. 316. ³ *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

able certainty that the universe considered as a whole

- a. Has a goal
- b. Cannot take the wrong road nor come to a halt in mid-journey."¹

Then Teilhard speculates on what the assurance of success may be due to. He gives four possible causes: it "may be due to a providential transcendent action; or to the influence of a spiritual energy immanent in the whole (some soul of the world); or to a sort of infallibility which, though not accorded to isolated attempts, attaches to indefinitely multiplied attempts ('the infallibility of great numbers'); or again it may, more probably, derive from the hierarchically ordered action of these three factors, at the same time."²

In the last clause we have a clear pointer to Teilhard's full vision: transcendentalism fused with pantheism as well as with a progressivist naturalism in which a forward-tending "grope" of elements moves through the multitudinous play of "chance". But Teilhard, at this stage, hastens to add: "the precise reason does not matter for the moment. Before looking for an explanation of the thing, I believe in the fact that the world, taken as a whole, is assured of attaining its end, that is to say (in virtue of our first principle) of arriving at a certain higher degree of consciousness."³ Then comes the *grand finale* of the Teilhardian *confessio fidei*:

"I believe it by inference: because if the universe has hitherto been successful in the unlikely task of bringing human thought to birth in what seems to us an unimaginable tangle of chances and mishaps, it means that it is fundamentally directed by a power that is eminently in control of the elements that make up the universe. I believe it, too, from necessity because, if I thought that the solidity of the substance in which I am implicated was not proof against any test, I would feel completely lost and despairing. Finally, and perhaps most of all, I believe it from love: because I love the universe that surrounds me too dearly not to have confidence in it."⁴

The closing note of the confession has the gist of the "controversial" passage and the same accent of pantheist Personalism as in those key-words of *How I Believe*: "the universe which I adored from birth."⁵

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

NOTE

We have used a quotation by Rideau from Teilhard's essay *Le Christ évoluteur*, having the words: "... a section and dimension of which *there is no explicit mention in the Gospel*." In the essay's English translation, *Christ the Evolver*, included in the collection *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1972), the words carry a footnote (p. 142) by the Editor, N. M. Wildiers, Doctor of Theology: "Christ had foretold it:

¹ *Science and Christ* (Collins, London, 1966), p. 40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

'I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you in all the truth' (John 16: 12-13)."

Teilhard is speaking of the new conception of man's destiny that has emerged with the evolutionary vision of the world — the destiny of "humanization" of mankind which is a further step beyond the "hominization" of life" and which shows the human group no longer as forming "a static aggregate of juxtaposed elements" but as constituting "a sort of super-organism subject to a global and well-defined law of growth".¹ In short, Teilhard is looking towards a state of collective "co-reflection", awaiting us in the distant future, and he asks: "How can one expect [the Christian], without breaking through the framework of tradition, to expand his faith, his hope and his charity to the measure of a terrestrial organization which is destined to continue throughout millions of years?"² The Editor's purport is: the Spirit of truth, representing Christ after his departure, was meant to reveal even the Teilhardian evolutionary vision which Christ was aware of but kept silent about because the time was not ripe for it!

It is difficult not to laugh at the footnote's extravagant claim. But it is not merely its absurdity that strikes us. We are struck too, in the first place, by its attempt to cover up the obvious. Christ, who is addressing his disciples, refers obviously to matters which would be revealed in their own life-time and not in after-ages. In the second place, it is easy to prove from both the Bible and the Church's pronouncements that the doctrinal scope of Christ's "many things" and "all the truth" is severely restricted and can never be made to extend to whatever one wants. We may draw upon *The Mystical Body of Christ* by Fulton Sheen, Ph.D. (Sheed and Ward, London, 1938) to fix the correct relevance of Christ's declaration.

Fulton Sheen, himself a distinguished Roman Catholic thinker, is aware (p. 254) of the quotation Wildiers has made but his readers can never interpret it as Wildiers does, for already on p. 182 we have the proper setting for its drift. Discussing Papal Infallibility, Sheen writes:

"As the Council of the Vatican stated it: 'For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter, that by *His Revelation* they might make known new doctrines, but that by *His Assistance* they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the Revelation on the Deposit of Faith delivered through the apostles'.³ Infallibility, then, lays down nothing new; it only safeguards and explains what is old. The contents of revelation closed with the Apocalypse."

Hence "many things" and "all the truth" cannot go beyond what the New Testament already holds. Roman Catholicism, whether explicating the sayings of Christ (John 14.26) or understanding from the Spirit-inspired Apostles' writings all that he left unsaid during his life (John 16.12-13), cannot, without contradicting itself, trace to the Gospel the promise of anything like the Teilhardian vision.

¹ *Ibid*, p. 140.

² *Ibid*, p. 142.

³ *Const. Dog. de Ecclesia Dei*, c. 4.

Wildiers's footnote is one more example of how Teilhard's co-religionist admirers, when they are not trying to demonstrate that Teilhard merely formulates in a modern mode something the Church has already said, are trying to show that even if the Church has been silent in the past she can take as something implicit in herself any truth found in Teilhard!

K. D. S

NO CRASH-BACK, NO CRASH-BACK !

MY soul is aboard the sun-bound spaceship of Her Love,
 Which must be fuelled with barrels and barrels of motor yearning;
 While automating it singly for sunward move
 Its rocket She sabotaged which could help its world-returning.

Stripped of world-service decorations one by one,
 Wearing Her insulated space-suit of protection,
 My soul is alive to its constant zooming towards the sun,
 High ride mid teeming millions its sole attraction.

Herself She chose, gathered, trained, launched my soul,
 My spaceship laser-beamed on safe trajectory,
 She directs, controls and drives it to its journey's goal
 Till finally it reaches its target triumphantly.

Already my spaceship has crossed world's gravity,
 Never to its foul air my soul's crash-back can be.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

LOTUS-FLAME
OR
SURYAMAN

(Continued from the issue of March 1974)

Book I, Canto II

ESTRANGED from the unhorizoned silences
Of light's immensities and God's plenitudes,
He gazed down on the errant unshaped mass
Void of the soul's moon-opalescent gleam
And the spurious flares of thought and life's surprise
And the long and slow lost midnight of the sod.
All was there but God hid his eternal mien,
His eyes of flame waking the soul of things,
The magic whisper that compelled the stars
And was the base of all the moving worlds.
His light armed with her fiat came down and stood
Behind the cause of these travailing spheres,
A beginning's dawn with a slow gesture of grace
Urging the sombre heart of things to wake
And find its fulfilment in a greater birth.
The atom and the molecule now stirred
Within the core of outflung astral fires
And the photon moved with sudden lightning streaks
Causing the gloom to fail, the chill to recede
And give way to creative intensities,
The first passion of God's magnificence.
A joy came down winged with unbearable force,
Moving to strange felicities yet unknown
And winds of beauty swept with angel-feet,
And the mire thrilled with its impetuous rush.
But torpor lay heavy on the cosmic expanse.
The age-long sleep was yet an undreaming cloak
Too stubborn to be rent by ecstatic tides
Or shattered by the razor's-edge of bliss.
Relentless too was the unchartered Fire
Equal to the shadow and the ancient thrall
That chain the earth to the port of eddiless dusk
Secure behind the reefs of motionless death.

A white consciousness burst with stupendous rush
Breaking the iron doors of incoherent drowse,
A messenger-flare to survey the aeonless dark
With timeless arms flung into distant space
To feel the pulse of a far and banished dream.
A Splendour-scout rose from the mapless unseen
Striving to grasp the heart of matter's nought,
The fallen empire of a disowned god.
Sleepless, it sought to whip the limbs of sleep
To waking skies and ravishing ecstasies,
To charter its ship to portless ocean-range
Beyond the closed, peripheried, dungeoned sphere,
A world waiting to leap with light for its limbs.
And a viewless combat now began in Time
With the earth for its prize and for its crown the sod—
To grasp, possess this wheeling soulless point,
This dwarf nonentity hung in a dumb unknown.
Within arose a sharp clash at the base,
Endeavouring to live and take all stance,
This groping sheath abandoned, lost and nude.
All seeds of the gods were in its abysmal breast.
Unconscious, it bore the seed of perishless suns,
The dying finitudes bearing the Infinite.
A presence stirred within its sombre hold
Uncaring of the tumult and the throe,
The stark birth-pangs of an emerging world.
The soul-spark behind cast forth its luminous dream
Upon the twilight-vastness and the drouth
To rouse the dormant life, the frozen thought,
The spirit's sun lost in the cave of Time.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

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 March 1974)

3

THE British understand 'strength', said *Jugantar* in 1906. This strength was planned to be provided.

And it seems this had been planned for years, a political, massive open regeneration in a difficult area for the Rulers, combined with training of a select band of potential officers for irregular warfare in secret for decisive actions in future.

We find Sri Aurobindo visiting Calcutta for a few days in 1898 to "collect" his Bengali teacher Dinendranath Roy. He stayed longer in 1901/02, the period of his marriage to Mrinalini. Later in a speech at Bombay (1905) he commented on the general apathy and listlessness he had noticed in Bengal during his visits. Deoghar, which was part of Bengal, he had been visiting according to Dinen Roy during his college vacations even earlier than 1898.

After his deliberate decision to leave Baroda (1906) and to make Bengal his "centre of activity", *Jugantar*, the Bengali weekly, and *Bande Mataram*, an English daily, commenced appearing from 1906.

The *Jugantar* paper and the Jugantar party, according to Home Political Records, had a semi-religious origin. Astrologers of Benares had confirmed to Barin the end of a "yuga". Hence the name "Jugantar". The party headquarters under Barin were set up at 32 Muraripukur Road and there were 4 branches, at Midnapore (under Satyen Bose, an uncle of Sri Aurobindo), at Kushtia (under Jatin Mukherji of 'Bagha Jatin' fame), at Bankura (under Ram Das Chakravarty) and at Chandernagore (under Charu Chandra Roy).

The *Jugantar* weekly, according to J. C. Nixon ICS, "started on 3.3.1906 by Chhattra Bhandar Group at the instance of Abinash Chakravarty, edited and managed by Barindra Ghose aided by Bhupen Dutt".

The first copy of *Jugantar* that came to the notice of the Intelligence Branch was dated 1.4.1906: *vide* IB Report No. 14 of 1906 on Native Papers in Bengal for the week ending 7th April 1906.

The Printer's declaration on *Bande Mataram* Daily is 6th August 1906. J.C. Nixon comments on it, "Next in importance to *Jugantar*, *Bande Mataram* started on 1st August 1906 simultaneously with the opening of the National College. It was started by Hemendra Kumar Ghosh, Jessore Zemindar, with Bipin Chandra Pal as

Editor but who severed his connection with the paper in October 1906. Aurobindo Ghosh then took on the responsibility of Editor.”

We may note that Bepin Chandra Pal, writing in *Swaraj* on Sri Aurobindo, implies that Sri Aurobindo actually ran the paper. The book, *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, more or less confirms this. Technically, in the *Bande Mataram* case, Kingsford was forced to acquit Sri Aurobindo, as there was no evidence as to who was actually the Editor. Norton, the Prosecuting Counsel, during his arguments on the Alipore Bomb Case referring to *Bande Mataram* remarked, “I do not care if he was the editor or not; I say he was the paper itself.”

On 31st July 1907 a Bengali weekly, *Sandhya*, thus wrote on *Bande Mataram*, as recorded by the Intelligence Branch, “The roar of *Bande Mataram* and there laughs Mother Jaikali.” Next day a police officer threatened the *Bande Mataram* staff with early closure. The Warrant of Arrest of Sri Aurobindo, dated 30th July 1907, is signed by Kingsford, the offence being “reproducing in the issue of the *Bande Mataram* of the 26th July 1907 certain seditious articles from *Jugantar* and editing, publishing in the issue of the 28th July 1907 one article headed ‘India for the Indians’ (S124IPC)”. Even though one Purna Chandra Lahiri was ordered on 31.7.1907 to execute it, he actually arrested Sri Aurobindo only on 16.8.1907 (the day following his birthday). Sri Aurobindo was released on bail on 17.8.1907 with instructions to appear before the court on 26th August. He was acquitted on 23.9.1907. This briefly was the *Bande Mataram* Case time-table at the Lower Court.

Photocopies of the Warrant of Arrest, Sri Aurobindo’s statement (3 typed pages) bearing his signature, corrections, initials dated 10.9.1907, and Kingsford’s judgement (17 pages, handwritten) are now in the Ashram. This case drew a great deal of attention and practically every paper commented on it. Here is an extract from the *Bihar Bondhu* of 29th September 1907 — “Though the acquittal of Arabinda Babu filled the people then present in the court with rapture, it produced no change in him whatever. He was as composed and sober after the acquittal as he had been while under trial.”

Had the Yogin perfected his Samata?

During the period, 26th August to 23rd September, Sri Aurobindo appears to have been at the Royd Street Police Station: *vide Jugantar* dated 26.8.1907 (IB No. 35 of 1907, Report week ending 31st August 1907).

From normal mental standards, one could admire Sri Aurobindo’s shrewdness at the time. Yet was that all? Today Psychology talks of Group Personality. Sensitivity training in Behavioural Science demonstrates this group personality and shows how, in fact, we live simultaneously as members of different groups. In Management and in Workers’ Training, Behavioural Science today actually probes into ways of effective Group Dynamics. Mentally we have a conception of this — although hazy, nevertheless it demonstrates its acts in its characteristic manner, makes its own decisions, corrects, modifies and brings maximum satisfaction to its individual members as well as producing a group ‘delight’. Is there not something beyond of which it is

a shadow? Sri Aurobindo talked of a Group Soul — may it not be that he, over 70 years ago, lived in direct contact with this Reality, the Group Soul of which he was a member then? We know that even later on, in his letters to Motilal Roy (*Light to Superlight*), he says that he found no need for appointing any Editor for *Prabartak*. Thus, when he said in this case that he was not the Editor of *Bande Mataram* he was perhaps giving expression to what was a Reality to him. And yet he actually guided the “Group Personality”, the Editorial Staff. It would seem that Mr. Norton without realising what he was saying had in fact got to the truth. Sri Aurobindo was not the editor of *Bande Mataram*; “he was the paper itself.”

Hardly 8 months after his acquittal (on 23.9.1907) in the *Bande Mataram* Case, he was arrested on 2nd May 1908 at 48 Grey Street for alleged conspiracy to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty over India. The case was styled Emperor *vs.* Barindra Kumar Ghosh and 36 others and was referred to as Case No. 9 of 1908 in the Court of the Additional Sessions Judge, Alipore. There were 300-400 articles, guns and explosives included, and over 4000 documents as exhibits. They included hundreds of copies of *Bande Mataram* and *Jugantar*. The accused were all charged for “waging war”, “conspiracy”, etc., under Sections 121, 121A, 122, 123 of the Indian Penal Code. The maximum punishment could be death by hanging.

The enquiry ended by Commitment Orders by Mr. Birley, officiating DM, for trial of the accused by the Sessions Court. The hearings at Sessions Court started on 19th October and lasted for 131 days. Mr Norton of the Madras Bar took 21 days for the prosecution arguments and Mr. C. R. Das took 10 days for the defence. The judgement was delivered on 6th May 1909. Sri Aurobindo, Nolini and a few others were acquitted.

Since the Commitment Order, the Sessions Judgement and the Judgement of the High Court Appeal by Barindra and others are available in the Ashram, let me give some other interesting data that I found in various files and records:

(a) The Muzzaffarpur bomb-throwing by Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram took place on 30th April 1908. None could understand why Sri Aurobindo left his house at 23 Scott's Lane on the night of 29th April 1908 unknown and unspotted by the watchers. Was the Inner Guide in action?

The Search Warrant for 23 Scott's Lane where the Police Party expected Sri Aurobindo is filed in April (No. 456/09 now with the Curator, Victoria Memorial, Calcutta). It reads thus:

Report of 2.5.1907 by Priyanath Mukherji — “A party consisting of Inspector Bhasna Chandra Bhowmick of CID Bengal, 2 Head constables and 15 constables surrounded house at 3.30 a.m. night of 1st/2nd May. Aurobindo Ghosh was not there. Neighbours reported that Aurobindo Ghosh with family left between 9 to 10 p.m. on 29th April 1908. The vacant portion so left after departure of Aurobindo Ghosh was searched but nothing was found in the vacant place.”

(b) During their stay at Alipore Central Jail, the Chief Secretary of Bengal, on request from the Commissioner of Police, had arranged for army guard from the

Brigade at Fort William. This guard used to be doubled occasionally and the last occasion for this additional precaution was on the day the Judgement was to be announced.

I remember that in 1972 Nolini gave a talk on the radio where he mentioned a secret plan of escape, which had been prepared but was 'vetoed' and negated by Sri Aurobindo in jail. Had the attempt been made there would have been a massacre. "Inner Guide" again?

(c) To ensure Sri Aurobindo's acquittal the Higher Power seems to have acted not only through the judge Beachcroft and C. R. Das but also through the prosecutor, Norton. Norton overplayed his hand as regards Sri Aurobindo, was too confident and as such missed out obvious points of law, as was brought out in the High Court proceedings and in government files. Government seemed to have been determined to get at Sri Aurobindo. Norton by his bullying tactics, indiscriminate use of "leading questions", even when objected to in writing by C. R. Das, must have antagonised Beachcroft. He probably then earned daily the equivalent of Beachcroft's monthly salary. The jungle of documents and articles with much direct evidence was a veritable headache for any judge. Norton's police witnesses obviously lied in minutely describing incidents and their activities that had taken place 6-9 months before while asserting all the time, quite unnecessarily, that it was all from memory; they had been not even refreshing it. And the direction and the emphasis of attack seemed too obvious; yet the direct evidence was comparatively so little against Sri Aurobindo compared to the massive evidence against Barin for example.

Thus it happened, one feels, that Beachcroft unconsciously reacted to Norton and applied particularly the most stringent judicial standards while weighing the evidence against Sri Aurobindo. "It is better that even 99 out of 100 be wrongly acquitted, than that even one innocent be incorrectly convicted." To the over confident Norton, Beachcroft administered a real shock in a piece of masterly cogent judgement, using his discretion as a judge. He was not convinced, taking all the evidence together, that the proof was adequate enough for conviction in such a serious charge.

Again, in trying to make Sri Aurobindo the recipient of the famous 'sweets' letter, Norton gave to C. R. Das and Beachcroft the opening for suspecting it as a "Plant" by forgery.

Barindra never denied writing it. He was not even asked by the Defence, obviously.

Very probably it was a letter to a "brother" revolutionary of Barindra's in West India known to Sri Aurobindo, and Barin left the letter in an envelope for Sri Aurobindo who was to pass it on. Sri Aurobindo either did not look for it or thought little of it and forgot its existence afterwards, realist as he was. The "Inner Guide" once more?

(d) In the early stages during the Magisterial enquiry, there were a large number of petitions by Sri Aurobindo jointly or individually questioning and challenging the legality of procedure, etc.

Thus, a petition of 22.9.1908 protests against lack of facility to consult a lawyer privately. The lawyer could only stand at a "shouting distance" then. The Court afterwards permitted consultation in Court for 3 hours.

(e) In his oral examinations before the Committing Magistrate and the Additional Sessions Judge Sri Aurobindo (accused No. 18), after describing and declaring as required, refused to make any verbal statement or to answer questions.

(f) Nolini (accused No. 6), then 20 years old, however, positively delighted Beachcroft by his ready, non-committal, straightforward answers. He answered every single question with an amazed, cheerful and bland face.

(Nolini's examination records I read and extracted with positive enjoyment. They are in the Ashram. A copy of the same with photocopies of the Commitment Order and the Judgement on himself he read with interest [July 1973] and later he asked for a copy, in typical smiling childlike manner. This was itself the reward of my labour. With Birendra's help an album is put in his possession.)

(g) Sri Aurobindo's defence statement in the Alipore conspiracy case was found to be handwritten.

Smt. Aparna Devi, daughter of Deshbandhu C. R. Das, told me that the handwriting was not hers nor of anyone in the family. She also said that originally Ullaskar's mother had come to C. R. Das, asking him to take up his case. Later Das took up Sri Aurobindo's case also when the earlier barrister quit.

(h) After his acquittal, Sri Aurobindo came in a procession to C. R. Das's house and there was a big feast in joyful celebration. Crowds had gathered on either side *en route*. Although the date was to be a secret as per Home Political Records, information had leaked out. Strict military precautions had, however, been taken to ensure security of the accused — that he might not escape. Under rules, persons sentenced to be hanged are VIPs in jail and are guarded by a change of guard every 4 hours.

(i) Sri Aurobindo's acquittal shocked not only Norton but Writers' Building. Norton's gout also started troubling him. There were telegrams galore from Government of India, from London and internally from various departments. Beachcroft's handwritten judgement was first typed by three stenos. The result was chaos: too many mistakes. Next, Government detailed three Deputy Magistrates faithfully to ensure that every sentence (and every word) of the judgement was correctly typed. Some 59 copies of the judgement were required for distribution to Government circles alone. There is a separate file on this.

(To be continued)

LT. COL. G. L. BHATTACHARYA

THE MUTE PRINCE

A SHORT STORY

I

GREAT indeed, but few are they who can understand early and well the value of speech control. An Indian prince, however, had learnt and started practising it even from his youth. The prince was very brilliant or even precocious: hardly was he nineteen when he became known as a pundit, a scholar of many subjects. And — as were the demands in those far-off days — he was an expert horse-rider, a wielder of weapons of all sorts and his marksmanship with bow and arrow would have pleased even the Great Arjuna. He was extremely handsome and no less virtuous. In short, he had all the attributes that went to make a prince a hero to his subjects.

God alone knows for exactly what good karma of his he came to realise so early that the power of the spoken word is tremendous. Just for a word a brawl may break out between two persons, ending, maybe, in bloodshed. The Rajkumar well understood that in this world perhaps no action is as terrible in consequence as unguarded talk. But how did he come to realise this?

One Spring day the Rajkumar with his friends went hunting. He set out very joyously. On entering a jungle the party had a wild time killing birds and big game. Then in a pleasant grove they gathered together for a hearty feast. And when all were quite lost in it, the Rajkumar slipped away from the merry-making to have a stroll in the woodland alone. Nobody's company pleased him then. He entered deep inside the forest and experienced an unusual thrill.

Entering still deeper he saw up on a tree a wood-cutter chopping a thick branch with his axe while his son, of about twelve years, was standing below pulling at the end of a rope tied to that branch. The lad was jabbering away without a moment's pause, addressing, ostensibly, his father who slaved away at his chopping in silence. The Rajkumar stood behind a tree at a safe distance. Shortly he heard the woodsman barking, "Stop yapping, big mouth!" The boy, however, gushed on as though nothing had been said to him.

Suddenly the woodsman, having thrown down his implement, slipped nimbly down the tree-trunk. The boy got frightened. Flinging the rope aside he tried to make off. But his father caught hold of his ears all right. Instead of thrashing him right away he gave him a violent shake and said, "How often have I been telling you to watch your tongue, you wretch? Will you pour forth all that enters your head? Yesterday you made your dear mother weep. Poor woman, she passed the whole night in tears! And the other day you sneered at our priest! How *could* you have called him a crafty Brahmin while we bow our heads at his feet? Do you know what evil fruits you'll have to reap hereafter for your foolish conduct?" The face of the boy reddened, he stood there abashed with a bowed head.

Seeing, to his annoyance, that the boy stood stupidly without replying, he once again shook him violently and said, "I'm dying with exhaustion. You don't care, you have no concern for me; you can only go on prattling continuously, blithering idiot! Today we shall settle the matter once and for all!" He released his son's ears to seize him by the hand.

"Either you stop being a magpie from today or I leave you here with hands and legs tied to starve till death. Let me see if I can really cure you or not!" Thereupon the woodsman started going, hauling his son along. At last the boy touched his father's feet with his free hand and in a voice choked with sobs came out with, "Please, excuse me this time, I won't be troubling you any more. From now on I'll not talk unless it's necessary. From today onwards I'll be on this oath. Believe me."

At this his father released him. His eyes moistened with compassion and he mumbled with a catch in his voice, "You remember, the other day our priest told you such precious words, he told you that if you could remain for only twelve years without uttering any bad, useless or untrue words then you'll become master of speech, and a useless or untrue word will simply not come out of your mouth. Then whatever you will say shall come true. How wonderful it'll be, all will worship you! Surely you'd like to be worshipped!"

The prince saw the whole drama. A thrill passed through his heart: "Only twelve years of speech control ... and then Oh, I'll do it, I can do it!" Taking this solemn oath, he returned to his friends. On his way to the capital he observed complete silence.

This new attitude of the Rajkumar made his father ponder. All wondered, not without some tinge of consternation, why the Kumar should become mute. He always used to talk sweetly, comported himself like a perfect gentleman, and never was he of a domineering character. Until now he had been very social, loved merry-making, and always smiled when he did not laugh.

How long can a man remain without talking? He feels uneasy if he has to keep silent just for a few minutes! And yet for many days the prince did not let out the faintest sound from his mouth. The wonder of it all was that there was not a ripple of sorrow on his face, nor was there the least shadow of any gloomy thought or concern. It was as radiant, as smiling as ever, ... only there was a deep silence.

The Maharajah could not perform his duties whole-heartedly. The prince was his only heir, a young man now and not a playful boy, the jewel of the family and the hope of the country. His muteness was too much for the king. He was really disturbed. He spent all his cunning to get some reply out of his son's mouth to questions like, "What on earth has happened to make you so utterly dumb? Please tell me and I'll do all I can to please you", or "If you will not speak, at least make some gestures" Every effort went in vain. The prince would only smile and gaze at the ground with head bent forward.

Many enchanting dawns blessed the kingdom with their splendours after this, but there was no change in the Rajkumar's behaviour. And, as yet, nobody could win the great reward which the king had promised for whoever would make the prince talk. One day his chief minister had an idea. "Your Majesty," he said, after saluting the king, "be not troubled. The prince had gone for hunting in the jungle. There he must have heard or seen something which made him so listless, but I assure you that it is only temporary. Within a few days things will become normal; please don't worry. I'll see to it. I'll make the boy talk, for sure, but before that we must arrange another hunting party for him."

The Maharajah found some relief in this counsel. He arranged another hunting expedition for the prince.

"I'm curious to see that woodsman and his son once again," the prince told himself while nodding his approval for the trip. He got into his chariot and took his seat beside the minister.

On the way the clever minister observed the prince carefully, taking note of each of his movements. Now and again he would give the prince some precepts. He told the Rajkumar, "You should not be whimsical like a child. Since God has given you the power of speech, to neglect it altogether is improper. This may offend the Supreme." But there was no change in the Rajkumar's composure. At last the party arrived at the place where the prince had come to hunt previously.

Neither the prince nor the minister showed any eagerness for hunting. All that the prince did after stepping down from his chariot was to take a stroll near that part of the forest where he had seen the woodcutter and his garrulous son.

The minister had all the time been observing the mute prince, but still he could get at nothing. He now tried to make the prince hunt. He argued that all those ceremonious arrangements would go in vain if he did not hunt anything. The prince as always did not respond. At this the minister was crest fallen. "What will I tell the king upon our return to the palace?" he brooded. Still he did not give up hope.

The next day the minister asked the prince, "Do we have to return empty-handed? Won't you do a bit of hunting?" Not getting any reply the minister ordered his men to set off early the following morning. Except for the prince all were despondent. The minister now pleaded with him in servile tones. The prince, though quite astonished to observe the servility of the old man, the minister of such a big kingdom, spoke nothing. So the next day the party started homeward. The journey lasted a whole day. Meanwhile there was no end to the supplications of the minister to make the prince talk.

They were only halfway through their journey when the sky blackened with dark clouds. Soon there would be either a storm or a heavy rain. They needed some

shelter. Presently it grew dark everywhere. A little way off they perceived a huge banyan tree. The minister who was sitting beside the prince had his chariot parked near it. Upon this tree there were two big white birds, away from home, they too. On seeing the procession and hearing all the noise it made, they took fright and screamed, as if to say: "O you hunters! we are harmless creatures, you terrify us with all your pomp."

The noise they made attracted the attention of the minister and other hunters. They thought, "Ah, how wonderful! So nice a prey, and so near!" Shelving for a while his attempts to make the prince talk, the minister alighted from his chariot, holding his bow and arrow. Manoeuvring himself to a convenient position he aimed at the birds successfully. One after the other, the two innocent creatures dropped on the breast of the earth. Mother earth flushed with shame, while a shrill cry of agony shot through the sky. Of course, the minister bothered little about all this. With the glee of his success he went almost dancing to the prince, holding the kill. The prince had witnessed everything but, whatever might have been in his mind so long, he did not show on his countenance any mark of displeasure. Now, seeing the dead, blood-stained innocent creatures so near, he was moved and horrified. Looking once straight into the minister's eyes in sorrow he turned away his face. When the minister saw that the prince would not get down to congratulate him, he went and sat by his side, resuming his supplications:

"I beg you to speak one word. Oh, heed my prayer. Am I not older than your father? Have I not spent my time since your birth worrying about your weal? Please don't insult me. In this kingdom, right from the lowliest pariah to the Maharajah, who would disobey me? Oh, speak just once! Have respect for my age. I've never humbled myself so much before anyone."

When the minister promised that if the prince spoke only once he would not trouble him any more, he spoke. Smiling, he said, "Look, wasn't it for their talking that the birds lost their lives? You see now how dangerous it is to talk! What befell these two creatures might also happen to you tomorrow. Therefore, I beseech you, don't talk. If the birds hadn't made noise they would have been spared."

The minister, however, did not understand the profundity of the prince's short and precious saying. Mad with joy and excitement he started announcing there and then that the Rajkumar had conversed with him. He was glad that his obstinacy had prevailed and that he would be certainly rewarded by the Maharajah. "But the first thing now," he thought, "is to give this news to the king as soon as possible." Getting into the chariot he wondered when it would reach the palace!

Now a word is fast carried to all corners by the wind, so that by the time the hunting party reached the capital everybody except the residents of the palace knew that the prince had talked. As soon as the minister reached the palace he rushed to the king, intending to give him the news in person. In the king's chamber he was told that he had left for an excursion. Without reflecting for a second he instantly went into the queen's chamber. Seeing an air of urgency about the old minister the sentinels quickly

made way for him. On meeting the queen he poured out the whole story fast and in elaborate detail. The queen got the impression that the minister was speaking through four mouths. At the end she was so pleased that she gave the minister an invaluable ring. Then the minister left for his home, bursting with joy — not recalling at all the royal etiquette that except at times of great danger or emergency he had no right whatever to step into the queen's chamber.

4

After a while the king returned to the palace. The first thing he received from his consort was the news of the Rajkumar's talking. He asked the Maharani exactly how she had got this piece of information. She assured him that the news was authentic since the minister himself had come into her room to give it to her.

At this the king exclaimed, "My Goodness! He had no right to enter into these inner chambers!" The Maharani replied, "That's true, but we were so worried about the Kumar, our dear child, we were waiting eagerly to hear news such as this. No wonder that's why ..."

"No," interrupted the king, "I think it was only an excuse to get himself inside the forbidden chambers. He must have had some other motive. Well, I too heard a similar rumour about the Rajkumar's breaking his silence, but when I went to his room I was told that after his return he did not utter a word — he is as dumb as before. So I believe this news is a ruse of the minister!" After summoning the latter the king went to his chamber.

On receiving the king's summons he thought that it was to reward him that the Maharajah had called him. However, when he met the king in the palace he saw that he was far from having been pleased.

"Well, my dear mantri," the monarch summarily said, "if you cannot prove any time before the sun sets tomorrow that the Kumar talked with you then I'll have your head lopped off." Without any further explanation the ruler retired.

The mantri's head reeled. He saw around him heavy darkness. He recalled with horror that the prince had talked with him but once and when no one was around. Furthermore, in the heat of excitement he had forgotten completely what the prince had told him! Only the prince can save him by vouching for the truth of his claim. But the prince had agreed to talk only on the condition that he would not be pressed to do so a second time. He pondered and pondered. In this terrible confusion within him only one thing came out clearly, a prayer: "Oh Merciful Lord, save me!"

He went to the prince, finding no other way, and told him frankly all that had happened, and at the end he folded together his hands and prayed to him to speak just once more, to save his life. The old minister had burst into tears after saying all this.

The prince, of course, understood everything quickly. He broke his long cherished silence, "Look, do you remember what I told you yesterday, that what happened to the innocent birds might also happen to you?"

The minister now recalled everything with shame, and understood. He fell at the feet of the Rajkumar, who, very soon, convinced his father that what the mantri had said was true. The Maharajah gladly spared his minister's life. The latter had understood the danger of unnecessary talking so well that after that memorable experience he rarely spoke.

PROMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

(Translated by Gurudas Banerjee from the original Bengali)

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE

A VERY strange incident happened in my room just now.

I had been setting a tune to and writing the tune-notations of a poem of Probhat Basu titled "Chira Pawa" ("Attainment Everlasting") for quite a long time and I had almost finished when at the penultimate line — "Sri Aurobindo Charan Chhayaya" ("Shelter of Sri Aurobindo's Feet") — I felt, for the first time in my life, a great difficulty in giving the proper tune. Time and again I sang in different tunes and wrote their notations but I had to erase them again and again as they were not to my satisfaction and heart's desire. In fact I was in a fix.

Suddenly there was a heaviness in the atmosphere of my room and I had an uncanny and weird sensation. I distinctly felt the presence of some supernatural being but I could see nothing. My feeling was very keen. All at once I got a new inspiration and I was able to set the right and proper tune to the said line and write the correct notations and finish my work.

Thereafter I gazed steadily at the large picture of Sri Aurobindo which seemed full of life and to be staring at me intently. An ecstatic thrill ran through my body. The whole episode had taken not more than five minutes. It was just 7.25 p.m.

I maintained my silence and rivetted my eyes to the picture of Sri Aurobindo for some time in a trance. When it was over it was 7.50 p.m.

1st December 1973. 7.25 p.m.

TINKORI BANERJEE

(Translated by Abani Mohan Banerjee from the Bengali)

SEVEN LIVES

A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

(Continued from the issue of March, 1974)

CHAPTER VI

PART 3

KAMAL Rani drifted back to waking consciousness once again, like one returning from a dream that cannot be remembered. All she knew as she opened her eyes was how lovely the earth looked in her Spring bridal dress of green as she rose to meet her eternal lover, the ardent, waxing sun. For a moment it seemed to the young queen as she sat on the rooftop of Deogarh's great rock that she could share in their mystical union and feel upon her face the breezes that bore the soft breath of their passion. The Turk had receded into some obscure corner of her awareness, for some faint, unremembered voice had told her that the black hordes were as far from her as the yelping mongrels in the street from the kestrel that soars effortlessly above, and as little her concern.

At that moment, she heard a footfall in the grass and turned to see the towering, broad-shouldered figure of Shankaradev approaching the knoll on which she was sitting. The climb to this, her favourite spot was steep with its winding series of stone-cut stairways, yet her lord and husband showed not the slightest sign of fatigue. Breathing easily and moving with his customary relaxed grace, he came up beside her and knelt in the grass.

"I've wasted enough of my time these last four days on armaments and fortifications, Queen of my heart," he said. "The Fort is holding well and none dares to attack. We have made ourselves invulnerable, my love, and I'm free to drink in life's joys while life still courses in my body and the object of my adoration still lies within my grasp. Dictate to me how we should spend our time together, whether alone or with the court, whether here high on the rock, or in the inner chambers, or whether upon the fresh green land within our walls, where the horses can still run and the elephants manoeuvre in their battle exercises."

She looked up at the king and burst into a delighted laugh. "Oh, my lord, what a marvel it is to be like this again, the way it was when I first came as your bride and we had no care in the world. You know what we must do? We must visit Bahadur. Yes, we must see him at once, for I haven't glimpsed even a hair of him for the past four days. He is well, isn't he?"

"My sweet bride, there is only one thing that ails Bahadur, which is that by my cruel command you have not been allowed to visit the lower portions of the Fort these last several days, and so he has not seen you. Naturally, he is pining, the poor

creature, and has been begging me with his splendid brown eyes that could liquify any heart but a demon's, that I allow his mistress to put her arms once again around his neck — that beautiful neck more perfectly arched than any swan's."

"Come this minute, my Lord, I've heard enough."

Nimble as a little girl, Kamal Rani sprang to her feet, snatched up Shankaradev's hand and tugged him across the knoll. At the top of the first flight of steps he stopped short and pulled her back towards him.

"Ten steps down around that jutting rock," he said to her in the softest whisper, "Ten men and how many more women I haven't counted, are standing waiting for us. And do you know a strange thing? I am their king and you their queen for all your seventeen years, and ..."

"And kings and queens were never lovers?"

"No," he said, and embraced her so fiercely that her breath stopped in her mouth.

It was several minutes before they were able to draw apart and don their royal masks. But when they appeared before the waiting courtiers at the lower stair landing, they looked as sedate and composed as statues that had engraved upon them the solemn expressions which befitted their high stations.

"The Queen wishes to pay a visit to her personal stables," Shankaradev announced to the group.

"But your Lordship, you had yourself forbidden her Highness —"

"I had, my good minister, and she is indeed forbidden, except when I myself escort her there. Besides, last night the Turks celebrated a victory feast in advance, and are not fit to move so early from their camp cots. No, my friends, there will not be battle for at least another hour, if not another week, and in that much time the Queen will see her horses."

At leisure, the two, surrounded by their courtiers, descended the winding stairs and inner passageways of the Fort, crossed the narrow bridge that spanned the deep, viridian-coloured water of the inner moat, and traversed the grassy strip to the stables. The Queen's horses were kept in a separate set of stalls nearest to the exit from the Fort, for it was known that she enjoyed visiting her pets daily, and the King had seen to it that they were housed in the most accessible place.

"Bring them out one by one," Shankaradev instructed. "We wish to see them in the sunlight, moving through their paces."

At that moment a cry floated down from the battlements. Minutes later a man hurried up to Shankaradev with the news that the Turks seemed to be preparing for an assault.

"How soon?" the King asked.

"They should be upon us in half an hour."

"Is everything ready?"

"Yes, your Lordship."

"Good, I will be with you in twenty minutes. Meanwhile, see that all the posts are manned." He turned back to the stable and his deep voice rang out, "Come, there

is no time to lose. Bring Vir Bahadur and let the rest remain.”

A moment later, an old, white-bearded stableman led out a prancing white Arab stallion with the faintest tracings of grey markings on his back and shoulders. His exquisite neck arched, he was flicking his small, neat ears this way and that as he felt the sun and fresh air enfold him. Yet unmistakably, he was also looking for something, and after a brief, nervous survey of his surroundings, he fixed upon the object of his search. With a delighted squeal, he wheeled, having fastened his gaze on Kamal Rani, then heedlessly dragging his keeper after him he came to her at a lively trot. The great brown eyes almost seemed to water as he placed a soft grey nose on her shoulder, then closed in sheer equine ecstasy as she folded her arms around the narrow bridge of his neck just behind the head, and lost her fingers in the silken cascade of his wind-ruffled mane. She too momentarily lost herself in the presence of the beautiful creature, her memory flitting back to the time five months ago when she had first seen him. He had been brought in exhausted, but not bowed, by a band of Shankaradev's men who had captured him in a successful ambush of a party of Turkish soldiers. The horse, a rare young beauty from the Arabs' desert domains, had been ridden by their leader, obviously a nobleman in disguise sent to spy upon the Hindu kingdoms of the Deccan. Him, too, they had brought to Deogarh but Shankaradev had ordered him to be put to death at once over his ailing father's protests, so thick with deceit and guile had the Turk been that the Rajput could not tolerate him for the merest half hour. But the horse had been a different matter. Pure and gentle, yet of a courage and bearing that knows no defeat, he had been named Vir Bahadur by Shankaradev, and gifted by him to his bride. Nor could any gift have been more providential, for in a few encounters, queen and horse had come to cherish each other in a way all too rare between man and beast. And all too few times, before the Turks came, had Vir Bahadur a chance to carry his mistress on his light, springy feet far into the countryside, gliding across the grass like a white bird with an air sprite on its back. How strange it was, Kamal Rani had thought each time, that men such as the Turks, violent and ruthless as they were, could breed such magical beasts as these, who so easily put their human masters to shame in grace and heart and nobility of soul.

Stroking his face, Kamal Rani lingered over Vir Bahadur's every feature, until finally she turned to the waiting groom and said, “Let me see him go through his exercises.”

The old man drew away, and lengthened the line by which the horse was held, at which Vir Bahadur sprang out to the rope's full length, and at the barest urging from the groom started to trot around him in a circle with the line kept taut. Nor was it that he merely trotted. Like a peacock he showed off, and he showed off only for Kamal Rani. His eyes, shining like animated black beads in the sunlight, remained fixed on her, while he held his head high and arched his neck still more beautifully for her admiring gaze. His meticulously brushed tail and mane streamed behind him like shimmering banners, and his tiny feet skipped over the grass as the barest concession

to gravity. With inexpressible delight, Kamal Rani forgot all else, and lost herself in the display of her favourite horse. Finally she could restrain the impulse no longer and began to clap with her small, fair hands while calling out, "My most beautiful Vir Bahadur!" And the horse responded instantly by pricking forward his small, sharp ears and tossing his delicate head. Now the groom gave a slight jerk to the line and the Arab flowed effortlessly into a high, spirited canter, his neck arched even further, his clean dainty forehooves flying out before him with each step as though he would take to the air and shake off the dreary confinement of the earth once and for all. Faster and faster he went till the earth flew between the grass tufts under his feet, and his body leaned so far into the circle that to those standing outside, the underpart of his belly showed, and his mane and tail stood at an angle in the wind as steep as that of the mast and sails of a ship running before a gale. This was Vir Bahadur's most spectacular feat, for he had been trained as a colt to gallop at high speed in the tightest of circles, an indispensable manoeuvre for the lightning wheeling action at which the Turkish cavalry was so adept — and he was justifiably proud of his skill. Another flick of the line, the briefest word, and the horse pulled himself to a halt in a single step, with not one grotesque movement, or the slightest hint of a stagger. His nostrils were flaring with the exertion, and he snorted once or twice, but otherwise he showed scarcely any sign of tiredness as the groom led him back before Kamal Rani. Now once again she embraced him and kissed him on his forehead and cheek, and once again he rested his muzzle on her shoulder. A vague, ephemeral recollection passed across her memory from some lingering past hidden behind a wall she could not pierce, and instinctively she bent down, plucked a small yellow flower that was growing in the grass and stuck it in Vir Bahadur's halter beneath his right ear. It was no mantle of blooms and the golden horn was missing, but the single flower was a token that reached through the subconscious barriers in both woman and beast, and both, for reasons unknown to themselves, felt a passionate stab of joy at the simple gesture.

The moment passed, her arms slipped from the horse's neck and she whispered into his furry ear, "Bahadur, greet your Lord. No, my darling, you have been remiss. You have not been to him since you came from the stable and you know he loves you as much as I do."

Shankaradev standing next to her laughed. "Kamal, you fail to make distinctions. Bahadur is my friend, but he is your beloved and he plays up to it shamelessly. Now he must come to me and behave himself, and surely he would find such a duty unbearably irksome!"

But no. Impeccably bred as he was, Bahadur was a gentleman down to the last shining hair of his immaculate coat. He stepped over to the king, stood still before him, and whinnied softly. It was the salute of a royal mount to a warrior king, in which every equine muscle trembled with alertness, and the ears, the arched neck, and the little black hooves stood ready for the slightest command.

Silently the king reached forward and took the horse's head in his hands. The majesty of his ancient boon's love that embraced all things as though in an irresistible

sea, flowed out and engulfed the horse, while Bahadur for his part seemed to give himself to the man with that true and perfect fidelity of which only the uncorrupted animal heart is capable.

But now the shouts on the battlements had reached such a pitch that it was no longer possible to ignore the passage of time. One of the courtiers had even begun to edge forward with a tentative, "My Lord, should we not —?" when the king himself broke the spell.

One last time he spoke to the horse with the words, "Be prepared, Bahadur — one day soon we'll fight together." Then he turned, as the groom took Bahadur back to his stable, urged the women to return as quickly as possible to the summit of the Fort, and himself all but ran to the battlements.

That morning's encounter came to nothing and by mid-afternoon, the Turkish forces had retired, for as Shankaradev had remarked, the Fort was, indeed, well nigh impregnable, especially when the defenders were fresh, and both armouries and granaries were fully stocked.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

AVATAR

Thou that art, unknowable, our mind
 Knows but that thou art, that thou must be.
 In this field of forms we wander blind,
 Sense or feel but never truly see.
 Surely all are nodes of the Unknown,
 Shadows of the substance of the One;
 Yet our eyes see only what is shown,
 Dazzled by the rays, ignore the sun.
 Is there not on earth a perfect sign,
 Shape to limn thy formless mystery:
 Something making seizably divine
 All thy wonderful reality,
 Sent down from thy signless Self above,
 Body of thy rapture and thy love?

PETER HEEHS

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives by *Reginald H. Fuller*. 225 pp. SPCK. £. 3.25

The Real Resurrection by *D. H. van Daalen* 191 pp. Collins £ 2.25

“THE Easter faith gave rise to the Easter stories.” Whatever truth there may be in such a statement, we have still to account for the rise of the Easter faith. Without it there would have been no Christianity; but on how firm a foundation does it rest? Was the Resurrection something that really happened — as commonly phrased, a historical event — and if so, what kind of event can it have been? The two questions are, no doubt, separable, but the second presupposes the first. Traditionally, the truth of Christianity has been held to be indiscerptibly dependent on the reliability of the Gospels as narratives of what happened “on the third day.” Notoriously, however, these narratives are involved in confusions and inconsistencies which critical study throws into high relief; and even the most heroic attempts of orthodoxy have been unable to make a single, continuous whole of them. This undeniable fact has been widely taken to discredit the Gospels as witnesses — and does not the Christian case then fall to pieces? Under the impact of New Testament criticism what can still be meant by belief in the Resurrection?

Here we have two books of authoritative scholarship, covering very largely the same ground and (with minor differences on points of criticism) in substantial agreement in their main conclusions. Reginald Fuller, already well known in this country, is now a professor in New York Union Seminary. D. H. van Daalen, a Dutchman, is now a minister in the church of Scotland, with a wonderful gift of presenting the fruits of profound theological study in laymen’s language. Both would agree that, while faith in the Resurrection is an undeniable fact of history, what the Gospels do is to show how the early Christians thought that belief had arisen. But their real aim is to present the living Lord. “The Resurrection was not related, it was proclaimed.” The confusions in the Gospels, says Dr. Fuller, “have nothing to do with a primary uncertainty about the Resurrection faith; rather they represent various attempts to give that faith expression.” It did not originate in the Tomb stories, but in the revelatory “Appearances”, and these remain at the heart of Christian faith. The fundamental fact, says Dr. van Daalen, is that they recognized their risen Lord. If he was alive, then he must have “risen”; but “in the last resort Christians believe in the risen Lord and only by implication in the Resurrection”.

How did the narratives come to be composed? Oral tradition is handed down in small units, intended rather for hearers than readers. But in order to put them into a written Gospel they must be organized in a certain sequence and therefore connected and linked up together. The connecting links, however, are editorial, not themselves parts of the tradition. But of course the evangelists were themselves influenced by the

communities for which they wrote. Thus there opens up the "redaction" criticism which is rapidly overruling the positions of the older books, whether radical or conservative. By applying its methods in their full rigour Dr. Fuller traces the growth of the tradition from its earliest form (what St. Paul "received" from the Palestinian community) to the latest strata in the Gospel stories. There is no mention at first of the empty tomb. "He died, he was buried, he rose" was the primitive form; and to this St. Paul adds the lists of Appearances — lists which must have been in circulation at the latest by A.D. 35, when he paid his visit to Jerusalem. Mark lists Appearances but does not describe them, but he adds the discovery of the empty tomb. Actual narratives of Appearances begin to be included in subsequent strata. But none of them tries to narrate the Resurrection. (The apocryphal Gospel of Peter tried — disastrously — to describe "how it actually happened".)

Both authors agree that the Easter faith presupposes some real event which was not simply the rise of the Easter faith nor identical with that faith, but the cause of it. But both agree that the nature of that event cannot be contained within any historical narrative. In that sense it was not a historical event. Yet they are both certain that it was a real event, concerning a real person. It seems clear from I Corinthians XV that what the New Testament Christians believed was not the survival of the "soul" of Jesus nor the resuscitation of his corpse, but his "raising", his transformation from the grave in his whole psychosomatic unity into a totally new mode of being conceived in an eschatological dimension beyond the frontiers of empirical history. "He is not here, he is risen!" (If it was not an event in space-time it would seem to follow that it cannot be dated.)

This requires that "the faith of believers is the only manner in which the risen Christ appears on the level of phenomenal existence". Faith cannot be "proved", it is existential: it is God's gift and we cannot produce it. Here Dr. van Daalen becomes rather Barthian. There is no way from man to God, he says, and "all apologetics are vain". Indeed he almost makes Christianity depend on a series of repeated miracles. Dr. Fuller asserts that "the Christian faith does not necessarily accept or reject the alleged facts. To faith they are in the last resort matters of indifference". This is surely a pretty stiff dose to swallow?

Both writers add a chapter of applications. Dr. van Daalen works out what the Resurrection means as the truth about God and about man, and surveys the whole corpus of Christian doctrine in admirably down-to-earth terms. Dr. Fuller writes on how to present the Easter faith making his suggestions realistic by notes for preachers based on the traditional lections.

Clearly we are left with many questions. Conservatives may find these books alarming. Those who can take them will recognize that both authors are firmly constructive in their intention. Both would agree that what is fundamental is "not so much what we believe about him but who it is in whom we believe".

(With acknowledgements to the Times Literary Supplement, November 17, 1972, p.1399)

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of March, 1974)

SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY, RELIGION, YOGA, EDUCATION

SCIENTISTS believe that on the wings of the mind they can reach the highest height of reality. Spirituality does not deny the power of the mind, but it asserts that mind cannot lead to the direct perception of Truth. It can speculate about Truth: it cannot realise it. What Sri Aurobindo says about the occultist equally applies to the scientist:

“He must know himself and discover and utilise all his potentialities, but to know himself and the world he must *dive deep* below his own mental surface and the physical surface of Nature He must know also the hidden powers that control the world ... if there is no such universal or supreme Spirit or Being he must know what there is and how to lift himself to it out of his present imperfection and impotence.”¹

It is a very happy sign indeed that everywhere there is a quest for a new philosophy of life. This is the saving point in the present dismal situation. These words of Sri Aurobindo written more than fifty years ago should serve as a warning to us all:

“The safety of Europe has to be sought in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence, otherwise she will be crushed by the weight of her own unilluminated knowledge and soul-less organisation. The safety of Asia lies in the recognition of material moulds and mental conditions in which that aim has to be worked out, otherwise she will sink deeper into the slough of despond, of a mental and physical incompetence to deal with the facts of life and the shocks of rapidly changing movements.”²

One must try to realise God according to one’s innate nature *svadharma* — and bring about a change in the quality of consciousness.

A scientist need not give up his ceaseless search for new principles of life but he must learn to tap the resources of the deeper and higher layers of the mind.

Sri Aurobindo wants us to install the Divine in all we do. And he looks forward to the day when through a process of yogic evolution

“Men shall be lit with the Eternal’s ray.
The mind of earth shall be a home of light.”³

“It is conceivable,” writes Sri Aurobindo “that in this way there might appear a race of mental beings thinking and acting not by the intellect or reasoning ... but by an intuitive mentality which would be the first step of an ascending change.”⁴

A candidate who obtained his Ph. D in 1950 from Banaras Hindu University with

¹ *The Life Divine*, Am. edition., pp. 766-7.

² *Ideal and Progress*.

³ *Savitri*, Part I, p. 322.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, Am. ed., p. 819.

the thesis *Sri Aurobindo and Bergson*, writes: “If we are asked what is the greatest and most significant contribution of Sri Aurobindo, certainly our answer will be that it is his philosophy that foresees the descent of heaven on earth and assures us of becoming Godmen in this very world of ours.”

So far I have been able to collect the names of 21 candidates who had their Ph.D on Sri Aurobindo’s life and his works. According to Dr. B. L. Atreya Padmabhusan, Dr. Bhattacharya who wrote the thesis was among the earliest.

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Great words of avatars may not be listened to in their life-time but the seeds they throw in the air take root when the soil is ready. The story goes that the Ramayana was written long before Rama was born. Anyone can perceive that some issues are at stake, something is afoot, something is unfolding around us which might result in the emergence of quite a new world.

In the beginning of this century it was hard for an honest and intelligent person to be both religious-minded and a scientist. Let us recall here the inner crisis which Teilhard de Chardin had to undergo in his student life and the great role that his teacher played in the building of his future.

“I loved nature (by nature I mean scientific research) and loved God. My problem was — can you love and serve both? I even seriously contemplated giving up my research and told the Master of Novices so. He had a wonderful insight into my dilemma and explained to me how henceforth my service of God must push its way through scientific research to its extreme limit. So when they sent me off to Cairo to teach physics and chemistry at one of their colleges there, I went with a mind at peace. That was in 1905 when I was twenty-five.”¹

Later he was to write: “... religion and science are but phases of one and the same act of complete knowledge.”²

The turn that the creative teacher gave to Teilhard in the moment of his inner crisis made a new person of him and gave to the world a mystic, a poet, and a seer-scientist in one.

At a Unesco symposium in 1970 which was initiated by Sri Aurobindo Study Circle and Teilhard Study Circle in Paris one of our ex-students read a paper on “The Future Destiny of Man according to Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin”. We had the joy of hearing the recording of it. She had obtained her doctorate on a comparative study of Sri Aurobindo and Bergson from the Sorbonne University of Paris.

In an interview Pandit Nehru posed a challenging question to Jay Holmes Smith: “How do you detect a spiritual person? Have you a spiritual geiger-counter by which you detect him?”

After a moment Jay quoted what Sri Aurobindo had said about Nehru in an

¹ Neville Braybrook (Editor), *Teilhard de Chardin—Pilgrim of the Future*, p. 114.

² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

unpublished letter written long before Nehru came into power. "He is a man with a strong psychic element, and in this life or in another that must go beyond the mind to find its Source."

This visibly impressed Nehru, and within a few days he had the darshan of a "spiritual light" in the person of Anandamayi Ma. He had an interview with her in her Delhi Ashram. Later he saw her again a number of times. And this showed his serious interest in spirituality.

It was in this period that he was impressed by what Vinoba Bhave told him, "The days of religion and politics are over and the day of science and spirituality has come."

This Nehru quoted admiringly in several of his major speeches thereafter.

Three times he visited our Ashram. He wrote an appreciative "Introduction" to Dr. Karan Singh's *Sri Aurobindo, Prophet of Indian Nationalism*.

During my talk with Jay Smith, a highly qualified electrical engineer, who had resided in Australia for twenty-one years and had come to see Jay, joined us. Hearing the name of Nehru he exclaimed, "Among Indians I loved Nehru the most. When on the radio I heard about the passing of Nehru, I was almost frozen." The talk drifted to pollution.

Visitor: "The Western world is having a bitter experience of industrialisation. China has industrialised herself: there is some hope that India's spirituality will prove to be the saving point. But if India also is industrialised, what can be expected of her?"¹

This question demands an answer and the answer can be found in Sri Aurobindo's own words:

"The vast amount of new matter which India has to absorb is unprecedented in her history, but to her it is child's play. The genius of Japan lies in imitation and improvement, that of India in origination. Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means. Nowhere has it succeeded in realising the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction.

"The work which we have to do for humanity, which no other nation can accomplish is the spiritualisation of the race."²

To continue our narration:

"By pollution," he went on, "the balance of nature is greatly disturbed. According to some eminent scientists, humanity is facing extinction. Even marine life is not free from its effect. You might have heard, a group of people in America have formed a society called 'Save the earth'."

"How did you happen to come to the Ashram?" I posed a question as I could not check myself.

Visitor: "I am very much interested in the progress of humanity. I read a lot

¹ "India will never cease to be India." *Sri Aurobindo*.

² *The Advent*, November 1972, p.51.

and I am carrying back a lot of books from here. I came across an article on Sri Aurobindo in *Indian Philosophy of Modern Times* in the Russian language. Among the various spiritual personalities covered, Sri Aurobindo was one, and over fifty pages were devoted to him. It is from this book I came to know about his Ashram, his philosophy, his Integral yoga.”

I: “How long have you been here?”

Visitor: “Five days. I am leaving tomorrow. There are about 1000 students of yoga in Australia.”

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Here we may put in a word about religion. Religion must not be equated with spirituality.

“The aim of religion is to link the human with the Divine It must end in an opening up of the spiritual consciousness.”¹

SRI AUROBINDO

“The days of religion are over. We have already entered the age of spirituality.”
“The Supramental is in the air.”

THE MOTHER

The following makes an interesting story of the way a turning came to a man of religion towards spirituality:

For fifteen years he was a member of a religious order and for eight years a Roman Catholic priest. In 1968 he was sent to Central India to set up an institute for community development. While travelling through India for the work of the institute one day he found himself in Pondicherry, and the next day in Auroville. Although he had to go away, he never forgot Auroville and it drew him back. Now let him speak:

“... I thought that I left after a ten days’ visit but I discovered more and more that it was just my body that left. After almost three years, the time I needed came for the big step from religion to spirituality.

“It is not a nice experience to travel around in India ... in Pakistan and then again to Holland without a soul. One lives half a life; one is not there, one is not himself. That must be the reason why so many people feel that they have come home as soon as they enter the Ashram or Auroville.

“Auroville is far from being the perfect society yet, but being around here brings joy and peace on levels of existence which all the solemnities of my Order and all the ordinations and celebrations of my religious institution never managed to touch.”

Speaking about his own nature he says:

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine*, Am. ed., p. 767.

“I am a restless nature: always searching, travelling, discovering, never settling anywhere, giving up things as soon as I thought I knew their secrets, not letting myself be tied to anything or anybody. And now I find myself in one place for a long time already and without any desire to leave or go anywhere else. I don’t know how and why I am here, but I know that it is a joy and a blessing to be at the cradle of a New World.”

Marvellous is his way of giving expression to his feeling. He was lost to himself one night at the Matrimandir in Auroville:

“... A single spot-light guides our worker from the neighbouring Tamil village. Hundreds of insects of all shapes and colours and levels of evolution are attracted by the light and they fly, jump and bump without any visible pattern against the glass of the spot-light. That is how I came to Auroville: an insect from somewhere in the dark world attracted by one spotlight in the huge night, jumping and bumping around without any as yet visible pattern. The insect does not seek out the light, it is the light that draws the insect. After one and a half years in Auroville I still don’t know how and why I came. I did not choose to come here; rather I feel chosen.”

We find that firebrand youths of the western countries in their search for Truth are ready to go to any length. Twenty years before, could anyone conceive that they would be seen roaming about in the streets of London and New York beating drums in the name of God, hoping feverishly it might give them a taste of heavenly life on earth?

Sri Aurobindo teaches that a sincere inner call and a flaming aspiration could take us to God more quickly than outer vital movements of religiosity.

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Off and on I am asked what is your panacea to make life beautiful?

My answer in two words would be: “Yoga and Education.” These are the two words round which the present series is interwoven. The whole attempt of the Ashram is to beautify life and help us tread the path of perfection according to our capability.

What do we understand by perfection? Sri Aurobindo defines:

“We seek to construct systems of knowledge and systems of life by which we can arrive at some perfection ... some order of right relations, right use of mind, right use and happiness and beauty of life, right use of the body. But what we achieve is a constructed half-rightness mixed with much that is wrong ... because mind and life cannot rest permanently anywhere in their seeking.”¹

“Ignorant we cannot construct a system of entirely true and fruitful self-knowledge or world-knowledge; our science itself is a construction, a mass of formulas and devices; masterful in knowledge of processes and in the creation of apt machinery but

¹ Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine*. Am. ed., pp. 916-7.

ignorant of the foundations of our being and of world being, it cannot perfect our nature and therefore cannot perfect our life.”¹

That is why modern science is unable to free us from strife, discord, unhappiness. Rather it has invented weapons which can rain death.

Then what chances are there to make life beautiful? The answer in Sri Aurobindo’s words is:

“It is only if our nature develops beyond itself, if it becomes a nature of self-knowledge, mental understanding, unity, a nature of true being and true life that the result can be a perfection of ourselves and our existence, a life of true being, a life of unity, mutuality, harmony, a life of true happiness, a harmonious and beautiful life.”

Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga enjoins no compulsion, no outer renunciation or asceticism, no coercion or suppression. It gives full liberty to work out our destiny or sleep if it pleases us and suffer the consequences.

It allows us to do what suits our nature: remain where we are, do what interests us. It simply says: “Be God-minded. Let the Divine enter your life and He will do all that is necessary for your inner journey.” As years roll by, this system will make a ready appeal to the modern mind and the masses.

The surrendered attitude will be like putting up a sail on our lifeboat. If we are sincere in our call, we shall find a favourable wind and our voyage will be safe and swift in the sea of sadhana. If we do not care to move with the time, our boat is likely to remain where it is or get stuck in the mud of the lower nature.

If good habits are formed at an early date on yogic principles, life will not appear an empty dream. In the hour of God, the evolutionary forces will take our boat to the golden shore.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ *Ibid.*, 917.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

TWENTY-NINTH SEMINAR

24th February 1974

THE Twenty-Ninth Seminar of the New Age Association was held on the 24th February 1974 from 8.30 to 10.15 A.M. in the Hall of Harmony of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. The subject of the Seminar was:

Science, Reason and Yoga.

Five members of the Association — Matriprasad, Maurice, Minoti, Sachchidananda and Savitri M. — participated as speakers. In addition, five members — Maurice, Savita S., Renu, Vimala S. and Manju J. — recited poems of Sri Aurobindo on the subject of the Seminar.

At the commencement, a short piece of the Mother's music was played. After that, Kishor Gandhi made the following introductory speech.

Friends,

Ten years back when we started this New Age Association we asked the Mother to give us a message for our Inaugural Session held on the 12th July 1964. We take this opportunity to recall this message which She gave us in Her own handwriting and which has served as our guiding principle in all the activities we have carried out during these ten years.

12-7-1964

Never believe that you know.
Always try to know better.

Blessings
THE MOTHER

By way of introduction to the subject of the present Seminar, I may say that the issue between Science on one side and Yoga on the other is of immense significance for the modern age because it presents us with two alternatives which confront us as two contradictory pursuits between which we are compelled to make a choice and the choice we make will have a crucial bearing on our destiny as a race.

In saying this, I refer to Science and Yoga as they are commonly understood in the modern world and not in their intrinsic sense, because in their intrinsic sense they are not contradictory pursuits with opposing aims but complementary endeavours jointly moving towards an identical goal.

But in their modern form Science and Yoga drive us in opposite directions. For in modern times Science has become principally physical science and preoccupied itself with the investigation of the material world and its phenomena. It has also firmly entrenched itself in a materialistic world-view from which it refuses to budge even though the latest researches in its own field and by its own methods have broken the foundation on which that view rested till recently. This modern materialistic science asserts that the world and ourselves are a creation of a brute blind mechanical inconscient material force which is the basic reality of the universe. This gospel of scientific materialism has condemned Spirit and all spiritual values and endeavour as an ignorant superstition and a vain delusion.

On the other side, Yoga, as it is still commonly understood owing to the preponderant influence of the traditional ascetic spirituality, has preached the sole reality of the pure incommunicable silent Spirit and has condemned the world and earthly life as a futile illusion.

There is no meeting-ground between these two endeavours; Matter and Spirit, World and God have been made antithetical, each cancelling the other.

But, as I said, this is the result of the commonly accepted sense of Science and Yoga and not of their true intrinsic sense. For in their true intrinsic sense neither is Science compelled to confine itself exclusively to the study of the physical world and bound to the doctrine of materialism rejecting the Spirit as a blind superstition, nor is Yoga compelled to turn exclusively to the pure silent aloof Spirit and bound to the doctrine of illusionism preaching the vanity of worldly existence. Following Sri Aurobindo, we may say that it is only by some transitional evolutionary necessity that these two endeavours of immense significance to human evolution have turned into conflicting pursuits and driven humanity into blind or fruitless alleys. But this is not indispensable because in their essential sense and true significance Science and Yoga are comrade powers and not perpetually warring enemies.

They have turned into warring enemies because modern Science has taken a partial and therefore a wrong view of Matter, and traditional ascetic Yoga has taken an equally partial and therefore a wrong view of Spirit. If they discard their partial vision and see the complete truth of Matter and of Spirit they will change into companion powers and lead humanity by their joint endeavour to its supreme perfection, its divine destiny.

It is Sri Aurobindo who gives us this true and complete vision both of Spirit and of Matter and thereby bridges the gulf and reconciles the quarrel between Science and Yoga.

I do not intend to elaborate this point in these introductory remarks; the speakers who follow me will do that in their own manner. I shall conclude by reading only one

sentence of Sri Aurobindo in which he states this reconciliation in words of immaculate perfection:

“The two are one: Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit.”¹

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After this introductory speech, Maurice, Savita S. and Renu recited a part each of Sri Aurobindo's poem “Discoveries of Science” which is in three parts. After that the five speakers were called in the alphabetical order of their names to read out their speeches. Vimala S. and Manju J. recited two poems in between these speeches.

The poem in three parts is reproduced below. The five speeches and the two other poems will be published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

DISCOVERIES OF SCIENCE

I

Only by electric hordes your world is run?
But they are motes and spark-whirls of a Light,
A Fire of which your nebula and your sun
Are glints and flame-drops scattered eremite.

Veiled by the unseen Light act other Powers,
An Air of endless movement unbegun
Expanding and contracting in Time-hours,
And the intangible Ether of the One.

These surface findings — screen-phenomenon —
Are Nature's offered reasons but behind
Her occult mysteries lurk safe unknown
To the crude handling of the empiric Mind.

All yet discovered are but mire and trace
Of the eternal Energy in her race.

II

How shall ascending nature near her goal?
Not through man's stumbling tardy intellect

¹ *The Life Divine*, (American Edition, 1949), pp. 221-22.

Patient all forms and powers to dissect
But by the surer vision of his soul.

An algebra of mind, a scheme of sense,
A symbol language without depth or wings,
A power to handle deftly outward things
Are our scant earnings of intelligence.

The Truth is greater and asks deeper ways.
A sense that gathers all in its own being,
A close and luminous touch, an intimate seeing,
A Thought flung free from the words' daedal maze,

A tranquil heart in sympathy with all,
A will one-pointed, wide, imperial.

III

Our science is an abstract cold and brief
That cuts in formulas the living whole.
It has a brain and head but not a soul:
It sees all things in outward carved relief.

But how without its depths can the world be known?
The visible has its roots in the unseen
And each invisible hides what it can mean
In a yet deeper invisible, unshown.

The objects that you prove are not their form.
Each is a mass of forces thrown in shape.
The forces caught, their inner lines escape
In a fathomless consciousness beyond mind's norm.

Probe it and you shall meet a Being still
Infinite, nameless, mute, unknowable.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, Centenary Edition, 1972, pp. 166-68.)

EYE EDUCATION

SQUINT AND AMBLYOPIA

(Continued from the issue of March, 1974)

THE Snellen Test Card may be useful in the cure of squint. While swaying from side to side, standing a few feet from the card, all stationary objects in the field of vision may appear to be moving in the opposite direction to the sway. While practising the sway, the whiteness of the card increases in whiteness, while the blackness of the letters becomes darker and the vision improves. If one eye is normal and the other defective, the good eye is covered for several hours a day so that the bad eye may learn functioning in the right way.

Recently two teachers of the Centre of Education developed a squint in their right eyes due to working on the microscope with a strain. When the squint appeared, double vision followed and this was very disturbing and annoying. They were cured by palming, long swing and reading fine print or photographic type reduction with gentle blinking. Frequent palming kept their eyes under relaxation. In such cases football swing is also very helpful.

What is football swing? Take a tennis ball and move it with your foot, the sight moves with the ball but the floor appears to move backward. This imagination of the floor moving backward brings good relaxation. After playing this game for a few minutes one may read fine print or the Snellen Test Card at varying distances.

Usually there is a lowering of vision in the squinting eye which cannot be improved by glasses, and this condition is called *amblyopia* which is supposed to be incurable but by relaxation methods of eye education amblyopia is cured quite rapidly in many cases.

(Concluded)

DR. R. S. AGARWAL
