

MOTHER INDIA

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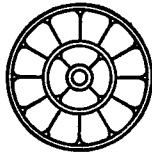
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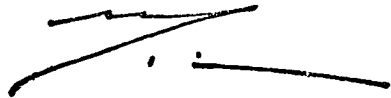


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. XXVIII

No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

THE true love for the Divine is self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender. It makes no claim, imposes no condition, strikes no bargain, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger—for these things are not in its composition.

*

Try to be spontaneous and simple like a child in your relations with me—it will save you from many difficulties.

*

Your difficulty comes from the fact that you have still the old belief that, in life, there are some high things and some low things. It is not exact. It is not the things or activities that are high and low, it is the *consciousness* of the doer which is true or false.

If you unite your consciousness with the Supreme Consciousness and manifest It, all you think, feel or *do* becomes luminous and true. It is not the subject of teaching which is to be changed, it is the consciousness with which you teach that must be changed.

*

I am very fond of proper organisation—if those who organise want sincerely to do it—I require only clear and precise information. When this is given and there is sufficient trust in the Organising Power it is sufficient. The rest will be done.

*

I propose that we should simply do what is right and fair, without thinking too much of the future, leaving it (the future) to the care of the Divine's Grace.

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS TO A SADHIKA

It is the resistance of the vital that takes the form of this dryness—a form of passive resistance, just as revolt or an excited activity of desire is its active form of resistance. But you should not be discouraged—these phases are normal and almost everybody has to face them. It is not really a sign of failure or inability, but a trying part of the process of change. Hold fast and aspire always for the love and opening. The inner heart is there and that will receive an answer to the aspiration and one day quickly open the outer and make it also receive. To call to the Mother always is the main thing and with that to aspire and assent to the light when it comes, to reject and detach oneself from desire and any dark movement. But if one cannot do these other things successfully, then call and still call.

The Mother's force is there with you even when you do not feel it. Trust to it, remain quiet and persevere. 15-9-1934

Yes, it is by quieting the mind that you will become able to call the Mother and open to her. The soothing effect was a touch from the psychic—one of the touches that prepare the opening of the psychic with its gift of inner peace, love and joy.

17-9-1934

Openness is not always complete from the first—a part of the being opens, other parts of the consciousness remain still closed or half open only—one has to aspire till all is open. Even with the best and most powerful sadhaks the full opening takes time; nor is there anyone who has been able to abandon everything at once without any struggle. There is no reason to feel therefore that if you call, you will not be heard—the Mother knows the difficulties of human nature and will help you through. Persevere always, call always and then after each difficulty there will be a progress. 20-4-1935

Suffering is not inflicted as punishment for sin or for hostility—that is a wrong idea. Suffering comes like pleasure and good fortune as an inevitable part of life in the ignorance. The dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and grief, good-fortune and ill-fortune are the inevitable results of the ignorance which separates us from our true consciousness and from the Divine. Only by coming back to it we can get rid of suffering. Karma from the past lives exists, much of what happens is due to it, but not all. For we can mend our karma by our own consciousness and efforts. But the suffering is simply a natural consequence of past errors, not a punishment, just as a burn is the natural consequence of playing with fire. It is part of the experience by which the soul through its instruments learns and grows until it is ready to turn to the Divine.

What happens usually is that something touches the vital, often without one's knowing it, and brings up the old ordinary or external consciousness in such a way that the inner mind gets covered up and all the old thoughts and feelings return for a time.

It is the physical mind that becomes active and gives its assent. If the whole mind remains quiet and detached observing the vital movement but not giving its assent, then to reject it becomes more easy. This established quietude and detachment of the mind marks always a great step forward made in the sadhana. 25-4-1935

It is not necessary to have the mind quiet in order to see the lights—that depends only on the opening of the subtle vision in the centre which is in the forehead between the eyebrows. Many people get that as soon as they start sadhana. It can even be developed by effort and concentration without sadhana by some who have it to a small extent as an inborn faculty. The quietude of the mind is needed for other things, such as the feeling of the presence of the Mother etc.

The small things go with difficulty because they belong to the vital physical and things of the physical consciousness are obstinate owing to the great subjection of the physical to the force of habit. All the same the will can act on them so as to dismiss them either rapidly or by a slow pressure. 6-6-1935

If you yourself felt the withdrawal necessary, you can certainly do as you feel. But do not put too much of a pressure on yourself—certainly the feeling of a “hell of torture” is excessive and seems to show too vigorous a strain somewhere. There is no need for you to stop seeing S when it helps you. It is always best to move quietly and steadily and not allow too vehement a sense of guilt to come in. Rely always on the aid and keep yourself as open as possible to it.

We will send you help, so that you may get rid of the obstruction.

Never allow this idea “I am not able” or “I am not doing enough” to come and vex you; it is a tamasic suggestion and brings depression and depression opens the way to the attacks of the wrong forces. Your position should be “Let me do what I can; the Mother’s Force is there, the Divine is there to see that in due time all will be done.” 4-11-1935

It will not do to yield to these attacks which are without reason and obviously are only waves from outside. You should recognise them as such, things not your own but forced on you by a Force from outside and when they come remain still, reject and call the Mother’s Force to liberate you. 15-7-1936

It is also good that his visit has made you realise the change in you and the progress made in the turning towards the true light. With that inner turning all difficulties can be crossed—the vital difficulty like every other. 27-7-1936

To be free from all preference and receive joyfully whatever comes from the Divine Will is not possible at first for any human being. What one should have at first is the constant idea that what the Divine wills is always for the best even when

the mind does not see how it is so, to accept with resignation what one cannot yet accept with gladness and so to arrive at a calm equality which is not shaken even when on the surface there may be passing movements of a momentary reaction to outward happenings. If that is once firmly founded, the rest can come. 7-9-1936

What you say about the increasing harshness of the ordeals is true but they have to be met by a firmer resolution in the single-minded pursuit of the Path. 18-9-1936

Fluctuations of this kind cannot but come and when they come, one has to remain very quiet and detach oneself from the surface condition and wait for it to pass while calling the Mother's force. A neutral condition of this kind serves a certain purpose in the economy of the purification and change—it brings up things that have to be transformed or rejected, lifts up some part of the being in order to expose it to the transforming force. If one can understand, remain quiet and detached from the surface movements, not identified, then it goes soon, the Force can quickly clear out what rises and afterwards it is found that something has been gained and a progress made. 5-12-1936

The movement of the lower vital getting into motion over small things is its own ingrained characteristic and it comes independently of the mental will and choice. It is so much ingrained that time *is* necessary to root it out. What can be done is to stand back from it and remain in the part which is already enlightened and open—for such a part there is—and from there open the lower parts and get rid of their habits. If you keep this in mind and aspire and try for it, it will come more quickly and afterwards the action of the sadhana will become much more easy. 7-12-1936

It is an obsession from the subconscious physical bringing back habitual thoughts “I can't call rightly—I have no real aspiration—etc.”; the depression, the memory etc. are from the same source. It is no use indulging in these ideas. If you cannot call the Mother in what you think the right way, call her in any way—if you can't call her, think of her with the will to be rid of these things. Don't worry yourself with the idea whether you have a true aspiration or not—the psychic being wants and that is sufficient. The rest is for the Divine Grace on which one must steadfastly rely—one's merit, virtue or capacity is not the thing that brings realisation.

I shall send the force to rid you of this obsession in any case, but if you can abandon these habitual ideas, it will make the disappearance of the attack easier.

4-1-1937

No one in fact is kept here when his will or decision is to go—although the principle of the spiritual life is against any return to the old one even for a time especially if the deeper urge is there and striving towards a firm foundation of the new

consciousness—for the return to the ordinary atmosphere and surroundings and motions disturbs the work and throws back the progress.

The dream is a little difficult to interpret. N's interpretation is possible, and the other carriage would then be that of one who comes back exhausted and broken from a vital passage. But the Horse is also the image of Yoga-power in the Vital and the circumstances seem rather to indicate a rapid and impetuous advance—especially the horse going forward over the gap into the air and the peaceful lake etc.

10-3-1937

It is the true psychic opening that you have, as Mother saw; it is now only a question of making it complete and stable. With a steady aspiration this can be quietly done.

8-5-1937

What you have written is quite correct. To say that the Divine is defeated when a sadhak goes away is an absurdity. If the sadhak allows his lower nature to get the better of him, it is his defeat, not the Divine's. The sadhak comes here not because the Divine has need of him, but because he has need of the Divine. If he carries out the conditions of the spiritual life and gives himself to the Mother's leading, he will attain his goal but if he wants to lay down his own conditions and impose his own ideas and his own desires on the Divine, then all the difficulty comes. This is what happened to B and H and several others. Because the Divine does not yield to them they go away; but how is that a defeat for the Divine?

27-5-1937

The attitude you express in your letter is quite the right one—whatever sufferings come on the path, are not too high a price for the victory that has to be won and if they are taken in the right spirit, they become even a means towards the victory.

11-6-1937

TWO STANZAS IN ITALIAN BY SRI AUROBINDO

MA non so qual divin romor benigno
vada tonando nei mortali cuori
come canta divinamente il cigno,
lasciando il suo corpo nei freschi fiori.

Puri pensieri, d' un gran impeto il segno,
speranze benvenute, come cori
di voci amabili, fan l' uomo degno
del ciel, vincendo peccati e timori.

Translation

I know not what divine benign sound
Goes thundering in mortal hearts
Like the swan singing divinely
When it leaves its body amongst fresh flowers.

Pure thoughts, mark of a great impulsion,
Welcome hopes, like a chorus of kindly voices,
Make man worthy of heaven,
Conquering all sin and fear.

NOLINI, *helped by an Italian authority*

Rhymed Rendering

I do not know what sound, godlike, benign,
Goes thundering in mortal hearts,
As when the swan singing its song divine
Leaves mid fresh flowers its body and departs.

Pure thoughts, a great impulsion's sign,
Hopes that are welcome, like a chorus clear
Of kindly voices, make heaven-worthy a man,
Conquering all sin and fear.

AMAL KIRAN

THE SPIRITUAL FUTURE OF MAN IN THE THOUGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

Introduction

(Charles Maloney, the American psychotherapist who is well known to our readers from his series of articles, Evolutionary Psychology, as well as his long essay, Sri Aurobindo in America, is at present writing a book on Sri Aurobindo. We are glad to publish the opening part of it here.)

WHETHER it be wishful thinking or the intuiting of an authentic start in a new way of being, contemporary man scrutinizes the horizon of life with a keen sense of both anticipation and anxiety. The threat of an impending nuclear disaster, so much to the fore in the recent past, blends into the deeper and more pervasive issue of the sources of energy needed to sustain the present earth order and to create the future. Has man already destroyed or radically depleted the reservoirs of energy needed to preserve the planet? Can the damage that has been already done to nature be reversed? Has the vast technological extension of man determined his destiny or does he retain a measure of freedom to control the unleashing of its awe-evoking power? The list of questions that might be asked from a political, technological or ecological perspective seems endless. However, no matter how long the list might grow, the common characteristic of the problems and their solutions is that they are global. They are concerned with the survival of the earth and its human community.

The problem of the future of man has been approached from a number of perspectives ranging from the ethics of technological development to those which assert that man is no longer in control of his creations. In the many attempts to examine man's relationship to an ever changing environment, determinism has become a common theme. Futurists such as Mumford, Giedion, Ellul, Wiener, Fuller, McLuhan and Innis "all...suggest some dimension of technology where control is impossible or futile."¹ While the various technological analyses assuming this perspective have tended toward the establishment of an organic continuity between man and his environment, there is no guarantee that this will insure either a utopia or even improved conditions and deeper values. Whether it be Ellul's pessimism or Fuller's optimism, concerning the future of technological man, we are still faced with the resources and limits of technology itself. Unless technology has become the new metaphysics, there remain yet the deeper and more pervasive questions related to the source and nature of both the knowledge or consciousness and the power or energy needed for the unfolding of the future. Closely related to these concerns is the question of the methods to be employed in tapping these stores of knowledge and energy if they are deemed to exist.

¹ W. Kuhns, *The Post-Industrial Prophets* (New York Harper, 1973), p. 259.

Futurist thinkers have long been plagued with questions pertaining to the validity of their predictions about the future. Are they based on an extrapolation from what has been in the past and what seems to be the signs of the times in the present? Does the vision of future forms arise out of an intuitive faculty or does it come from some source of revelation? Given the propensity toward error and wishful thinking, is the human mind an adequate instrument through which we can see or know our future? Whether it be the heralding of Marx's classless society or the Christian Parousia, there appears to exist serious *lacunae* regarding both an epistemology of the future and the sources of power to realize the future.

Apropos of what presents itself to us as the foundational problem in considering man's future, namely, one of knowledge and energy, I would like to embrace the perspective that the resolution of these problems is to be found in a rediscovery of the spiritual sources of knowledge and energy. The inadequacy of the recognized mental, vital and physical forms of knowledge and energy to meet the global problems of man persists through their alienation from their spiritual ground. More specifically, I would like to examine the vision of the great poet, philosopher, revolutionary and yogi, Sri Aurobindo, as it bears on this urgent question of the future of man.

While this vision has its roots in the classical sources of Indian thought, *i.e.*, Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, it creatively synthesizes by a new spiritual experience such authentic Western motifs as the value of matter, evolution, the relationship between the individual and the collectivity and the significance of the historical process. At a time when there is so much discussion of a world-wide "energy crisis", either in the form of fuel or food, it is crucial that what emerges as a global problem be confronted with a global solution, *i.e.*, a synthesis of the highest forms of the knowledge of both East and West. Unlike many spiritualities which would depreciate man's mental, vital or physical accomplishments or abandon them completely in favor of the transcendent Spirit, Sri Aurobindo's integral approach seeks an expansion and transformation of the mental-vital-physical organization presently called man. It is basically the recognition that any attempted planning or control of the future based on the intellect, which Western man prizes as the supreme source of knowledge, can at best be only a partial and limited approach to truth. What is heralded in Sri Aurobindo's vision is the manifestation of a higher knowledge than that which we now recognize as mind. In an evolutionary context, just as mind emerged from its precursors, matter and life, as a collective phenomenon, so will the supramental mode of knowing issue in a race of gnostic beings. In an ongoing evolution of consciousness man, as we know him now, is a transitional being, and mind, once considered as the source of knowledge, becomes the instrument of a higher knowledge.

Western man, long entranced by the glories of the rational mind and captivated by the modern magic of the sciences, feels a sense of shock at any attempt to question reason as the supreme guide of his destiny. And yet the rational mind and its handmaid, technology, appears to be impotent when confronted with a radical depletion, if not exhaustion, of the vital sources of energy needed to maintain life on this planet. The

scientific establishment itself bears testimony that the destruction of certain forms of life needed to maintain an ecological balance is going apace and, what is even more devastating, that this process of destruction is irreversible. Science and technology, once considered to be the modern messiah of Western man, is more and more being forced to face, not only its marvelous creations, but also the unleashing of a power that threatens to destroy both its own creative forms and the myriad manifestations of Mother Nature. To discover new forms and sources of energy in the light of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual optic means an unveiling of Spirit in Matter, a process which transcends our present mental knowledge and energy but does not exclude them. Sri Aurobindo's call to India to rediscover the Spirit as the true source of strength applies equally to the crisis of Western man:

We have to create strength where it did not exist before; we have to change our natures, and become new men with new hearts, to be born again. There is no scientific process, no machinery for that. Strength can only be created by drawing it from the internal and inexhaustible reservoirs of the Spirit, from that Adya-Shakti of the Eternal which is the fountain of all new existence.¹

This is above all a *spiritual process* which is beyond any effort of body and mind and yet utilizes, widens, deepens and ultimately transforms mental, vital and physical forms through the rediscovery that "The Brahma within, the one and indivisible ocean of spiritual force is that from which all life, material and mental, is drawn."²

Sri Aurobindo's realization that spiritual energy is the source of all other strength challenges alienated Western man in a way that encompasses Marx's brilliant insights but goes far beyond them. The long recognized three-fold alienation of man from nature, from others and from his own deeper self is confronted in Sri Aurobindo's spirituality through a deep and pervasive psychological process whose goal is the full unveiling of the inexhaustible source of Shakti. While this spiritual process involves an inward movement toward the source of all forms of energy residing in the One Self, it is equally the discovery that all external forms and activity find their true ground in this Self. Sri Aurobindo's spirituality does not demand an abandonment of the mental, vital and physical accomplishments of the West whether they reside in the sciences, economics or the arts. In fact, no field of endeavor is foreign to the manifestation of Spirit, inasmuch as all external forms find their true foundation and fulfillment in the One Self. The genuine endeavor of people like R.D. Laing and Marcuse to reconcile what has seemed to contemporary Western man to be separate disciplines, *e.g.*, depth psychology, economics and politics, is taken to a more profound depth in Sri Aurobindo's integral spirituality. If it be true that the Spirit is the authentic ground of all of man's efforts to plumb the meaning of human existence and its unfolding, then—no matter how profound—any effort to illuminate man's life that remains ignorant of this ground cannot overcome what lies at the heart of all alienation.

The light released by Sri Aurobindo's explorations of the higher planes of con-

¹ *Bande Mataram*, p. 68

² *Ibid.*

consciousness illuminates many facets in the prism of futurist thought. One of the central themes that will be developed in this exposition and analysis of his thought as it bears on the future of man is the notion that man has a "memory of the future" as well as a memory of the past. At our present stage of evolutionary development as a collectivity this power of consciousness remains for most involved or unconscious. Perhaps we get some insight through flashes of what we call intuition or through the growing acceptance of such psychic phenomena as precognition. However, these modes of consciousness remain, at best, peripheral to the linear, rational and analytic ways of knowing. To speak meaningfully of the future within the limits of the generally accepted powers of mental consciousness becomes problematic for the reasons alluded to above and the time-bound character of the mind. Not only is our knowledge of the future short-ranged and subject to error and distortion but also our knowledge of the past. Memory of the past, whether of a personal or collective nature, is generally highly selective and subject to the reigning bias of the present. The manifestation of a higher consciousness in man has as one of its consequences the expansion and transformation of our present powers of consciousness to include a knowledge of the future. This particular aspect of Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary vision can provide an invaluable contribution to the present-day interest in futurology.

Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future finds its roots, ultimately, in his metaphysical commitments which he traces to the Vedas. True to the mainstreams of Indian thought, metaphysics is intimately wed to psychology or the concrete and practical methods for realizing the ultimate reality. In the first chapter an overview of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of the evolution of consciousness will be presented in order to provide a context for a more detailed examination of this process as it takes place in the individual and the collectivity. This will be drawn mainly from the two-volume work, *The Life Divine*, which comprises the philosophical presentation of his vision.

The second chapter will examine spiritual evolution as it unfolds in the individual. The high value given to individual reality in Sri Aurobindo's spirituality provides a unique nexus for dialogue between East and West inasmuch as this issue has been a major stumbling-block to a common understanding of the nature of reality. His understanding of the psychological organization of the individual encompasses the discoveries of modern depth psychology in the West but goes beyond the Western identification of individuality or personality with the ego or surface construction of consciousness. True individuality appears only with the full manifestation of the psychic being of which the mental-vital-physical selection comprising the ego is only the instrument. A total psychological exploration of the individual reveals ultimately all of the evolutionary planes of consciousness and provides a unique understanding of the nature of collectivities. The major sources used in this chapter are *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Human Cycle*.

Chapter three which treats spiritual evolution as it manifests in the collectivity reveals Sri Aurobindo's unique insight into the spiritual foundation of social and

political realities. The perennial controversy between representatives of democracy, socialism and communism over the issue of the primacy of the individual or of the collectivity reaches a new spiritual ground in his integral vision. Sri Aurobindo's own yogic experiments in the field of politics provides another bridge of understanding between East and West through a deep synthesis of the West's social and political consciousness and the East's spiritual consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's social and political writings, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*, will be used here.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, *purna advaita* or integral non-dualism, is not without its *praxis* or its methods for realizing the higher states of consciousness both individually and collectively. This is called Integral Yoga and is presented in the psychological exposition of his vision, *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Chapter four will explore the yogic techniques needed for the expansion of man's mental, vital and physical consciousness and their ultimate transformation by the higher or supramental consciousness. Whereas other yogas have often emphasized one aspect of man's being (mind, emotions or physical life) as a vehicle to the higher consciousness, Integral Yoga advocates the utilization of all aspects as instruments of the Spirit. One need not withdraw from worldly activity whether it be of a political, educational or agricultural nature since every situation is an opportunity for opening and allowing the *Chit-Shakti* or Consciousness-Force to do its work of transformation. The goal of this yoga is not the abandonment of the terrestrial stage of evolution but, rather, its transformation. This transformation has both an individual and a social nature which will issue in the next evolutionary manifestation, communities of supramental beings. World transformation rather than abandonment provides a resolution of what has long appeared to be a basic contradiction between Eastern and Western values.

The nature and forms of supramental collectivities will be discussed in chapter five. Among the many themes that might be examined special emphasis will be placed on: the manifestation of a direct mode of knowing, the supramental time vision which includes a memory of the future and the transformation of the physical body. The relationship between supramental communities and those still existing at the level of mind will also be discussed. The primary sources for Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future are the last six chapters of *The Life Divine* and *The Mind of Light*.

The sixth chapter will compare and contrast Sri Aurobindo with other futurist thinkers of both a spiritual and materialistic predisposition. While there have been many formulations of the future of man few have provided such a global and integral synthesis as Sri Aurobindo. Where this cosmic dimension has been offered, as in the case of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, there is a notable absence of an integral relationship between theory and practice, as well as the depreciation of the Eastern perspective.

Karl Marx has offered a unique understanding of alienation and a praxis to overcome it. While his thought has had a tremendous impact on both Western and Eastern man, there is no recognition of the spiritual dimension of man. In light of this ignorance one must question seriously whether or not Marx is able to overcome

alienation on the very deepest level, *i.e.*, man's ignorance and separation from his spiritual ground.

No effort to rearrange our external world *via* technology will be sufficient to answer to the demands of the future. Nothing less than a change of consciousness that has the power and knowledge to change our very nature is called for in Sri Aurobindo's spirituality. Perhaps we have been "men" for such an expanse of time that we tend not to question the fact. The present crisis of present-day man as he gropes toward the future is formulated succinctly by Loren Eiseley:

We men of today are insatiably curious about ourselves and desperately in need of reassurance. Beneath our boisterous self-confidence is fear—a growing fear of the future we are in the process of creating. In such a mood we turn the pages of our favorite magazine and, like as not, come straight upon a description of the man of the future.¹

Eiseley indicates the web of our present instruments of consciousness that subtly weaves an entrancing prison. The models of the future created by the mind cannot move beyond the limits of mental knowledge and power. Sri Aurobindo offers a passage to the future by unveiling a higher consciousness that has the knowledge and power to create the future through an expansion and transformation of the present organization of consciousness called "man":

Our ideal is not the spirituality that withdraws from life but the conquest of life by the power of the spirit. It is to accept the world as an effort of manifestation of the Divine, but also to transform humanity by a greater effort of manifestation than has yet been accomplished...²

CHARLES MALONEY

¹ L. Eiseley, *The Immense Journey* (New York. Vintage, 1957), p. 128.

² *Social and Political Thought*, p. 329.

SRI AUROBINDO—THE SEER-POET

MID-20th century is the age of Sri Aurobindo who was the greatest Seer-Poet of modern times. His ideal of a divine life upon earth is profound. But humanity will take some time before it reaches that stage or its possibility. This colossal harbinger of a new message has boldly prophesied that man will become divinised and that there will be total transformation of body, life and mind. This prophet of a new age has spiritually visualised what the fifth act of this drama of human life is going to be. His spiritual vision assures us that it is going to be the marriage of heaven and earth in the coming future.

The Aurobindonian spiritual vision of a divine life promises the world the opportunity to be free and go out into the high seas of larger and greater realisations. The highest ideal, the very highest which God and Nature and Man have in view, is the ideal of the Life Divine which embodies a central truth of existence and is the preoccupation of the inner being of man. That ideal is a norm and a force that is ever dynamic and has become doubly so since it has entered the earth atmosphere and the waking human consciousness.

What is the world that Sri Aurobindo sees and creates? What lies behind at the source, what lends it the force it has—the sense of the “grandly real,” the vivid and pulsating truth? What then is the thing that Sri Aurobindo has visualised, has endowed with a throbbing life and made a poignant reality? What is the dead matter that has found life and glows and vibrates in Sri Aurobindo’s passion? The greatness of his achievement lies in throwing such a material into his poetic fervour and creating a sheer beauty, a stupendous reality out of it. “A true and genuine poet in his own way is a philosopher. But a philosopher chanting out his philosophy in sheer poetry has been one of the rarest spectacles.” Nothing can be more poetic in essence than philosophy which means spiritual truth and spiritual realisation. It is the problem of existence itself, of God, Soul and Immortality, which gives the full breath, the integral force to poetic inspiration. These are the things that touch life and are at the very root of reality. It is the mystery of his own being, the why and whither of it all that most concerns man, and strikes the deepest fount in him. “But presentation of spiritual truths, treated philosophically and yet in a supreme poetic manner, has always been a rarity.” Sri Aurobindo has dealt with spiritual experiences by presenting them in their nakedness, just as they are felt and realised. He has given us in his poetry thoughts that are clear-cut, ideas beautifully chiselled—he is always luminously forceful. It is the bare truth, ‘truth in its own home’, conveyed in a limpid and harmonious flow. There is no veil, no mist, no uncertainty or ambiguity. It is clarity itself, an almost scientific exactness and precision. There is a straightness and fullness of vision characteristic of the Vedic Rishis, a glow of supernal genius which can mould speech into scripture, sublimate the small and the finite into forms of the Free and the Infinite. Mark the following lines embodying a deep spiritual experience in which the seemingly inexpressible has been expressed with a luminous felicity:

He made an eager death and called it life,
He stung himself with bliss and called it pain.¹

Like the Vedic Rishis, Sri Aurobindo sought to divinise the human by transfiguring his spiritual visions into the expression of the truth, of divinity itself. His mental light was not confined in an ivory tower, but brought down and placed at the service of our perception and appreciation and explanation of things human and terrestrial, made immanent in the mundane and ephemeral, as they are commonly called. This is not impossible and Sri Aurobindo has done this miracle. In him, the three terms of human consciousness arrive at an absolute fusion and his poetry is a wonderful example of that fusion. The three terms are the spiritual, the intellectual or philosophical, and the physical or sensational. The intellectual, or the mental, is the intermediary, the Paraclete, as he himself calls it—the agent who negotiates, bridges and harmonises the two other terms usually supposed to be antagonistic and incompatible.

His poetry is philosophical but has its concrete application—even as the soul has its body; and the fusion, not mere union, of the two is very characteristic in him. He knows how to suffuse the deepest and most unseizable flights of thought with a Kalidasian richness of imagery or a Keatsean gusto of sensuousness:

Son of man, thou hast crowned thy life with the flowers that are
scentsless.²
A song not master of its note, a cry
That persevered into eternity.³

There is a flood of sympathy in him for ordinary humanity. All the tragedy, the entire pathos of human life is concentrated in the first two lines so simple yet so grand. And the whole aspiration of striving mortality finds an echo in the last two lines. It is not merely the earthly that is of supreme interest, but something which even in being earthly yet transcends it.

Sri Aurobindo sings of the divinity of man. He has made us realise that a poetic world exists in the domain of spiritual life, even in its very severity. He has made a passion of the spiritual life. His poetry has a mission of inspiring, invigorating and elevating. He looks beyond humanity, beyond earth and has made divine poetry of humanity and earth. He takes his stand upon divinity and thence embraces and moulds what is earthly and human in a grandiose, sublime and puissant manner. The heroic, the epic is his natural element and he expresses himself in the grand manner with the ring of the old-world style of our Vedic poets, as when he makes “the Rishi of the Pole” say to King Manu:

¹ “Parabrahman”, *Collected Poems* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972), p. 63.

² “Ahna”, *Ibid.*, p. 536.

³ “Reminsence”, *Ibid.*, p. 41.

My mind within grew holy, calm and still
Like the snow—¹

or when in equally Rishi-like accents he articulates:

Marry, O lightning eternal, the passion of a moment-born fire!²

or else:

These wanderings of the suns, these stars at play
In the due measure that they chose of old ...³

There is a stately march, a fullness of voice, a wealth of imagery, a vigour of movement, a majestic sweep, a wide rolling cadence, a superb imperial tone instinct with concentrated force in the above grand and sublime utterances. Aurobindonian poetry is salutary and lofty, full of the ardours of genuine and serene experience. The creative spirit of Sri Aurobindo has illustrated how poetry is not merely sweet imagination but living vision—even the ‘mantra’ that impels the gods to manifest upon earth, that fashions divinity in man.

The late Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has hailed Sri Aurobindo as “the greatest intellectual of the age”: our world will also come to recognise him as its greatest seer, sage and philosopher poet. His thought is profound; his technical devices are commendable and his craftsmanship is *par-excellence* suited to our practical, pragmatic, scientific and technological times. His literary work is a mighty achievement in the literature of the spirit. The ever-recurring theme of his spiritual vision is very felicitously and compendiously embodied in the statement: “The True Creator, as the True Hearer, is the Soul.”

There is a subtle difference between mystic poetry and spiritual poetry. When the spirit speaks about itself in its own language, we have spiritual poetry. If, however, the spirit speaks of an inner consciousness as distinguished from what we may term the higher consciousness, deals with more or less an occult domain and uses a language which is suggestive rather than revelatory, we have mystic poetry. Thus, when Tagore sings:

Who comes along singing and steering his boat?...
He goes in full sail, turns nor right nor left;
The waves break helplessly at the sides!
His face looks familiar,

it is mysticism, mysticism at a fine pitch. But when Sri Aurobindo sings in “Transformation”:

¹ “The Rishi”, *Ibid.*, p. 299.

² “Ahana”, *Ibid.*, p. 523.

³ “Parabrahman”, *Ibid.*, p. 62.

My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight.
 My body is God's happy living tool,
 My spirit a vast sun of deathless light,¹

there is direct vision, the fullness of light, the native rhythm and substance of revelation. Tagore expresses the spirit in terms and rhythms of the flesh liberally. In him the reference to the spirit is evident. It is the major or central chord of his mystic poetry. But the poetry of Sri Aurobindo is spiritual poetry in its quintessence. It seeks to establish direct and immediate contact between the normal and the transcendental. The result is pure spiritual 'mantra.' He is a pioneer who infuses the ultimate Reality into Thought Power in poetry. John Donne, the English religious poet, sought to tone down or cover up the mundane taint by a strong thought-element, the metaphysical way. William Blake, the English Romantic mystic poet, did the same by a strong symbolism, the occult way. But the truly spiritual poetry of Sri Aurobindo has a higher grade of consciousness. It is the spirit's own poetry with its own matter and manner. Blake echoes an approximation to it in those famous lines:

To see a World in a grain of Sand
 And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
 Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
 And Eternity in an hour.

But fullness of spiritual matter and manner overflows in the epic lines of Sri Aurobindo's poetical *magnum opus*, *Savitri* :

His spirit mingles with Eternity's heart
 And bears the silence of the Infinite.
 In a divine retreat from mortal thought,
 In a prodigious gesture of soul-sight,
 His being towered into pathless heights,
 Naked of its vesture of humanity.²

He has "An eye awake in voiceless heights of trance." Therein lies the subtle difference. The mystic gives us the magic of the Infinite. The spiritual gives in addition the logic of the Infinite. The Aurobindonian spiritual poetry follows a pattern of thought-movement. There is the distinguishing trait of the real spiritual consciousness in the poetic creation. Therein lies the spiritual vision of the future poetry, having rationality, clarity, concreteness of perception rounded off with a halo of magic and miracle and explaining the logic proper to the Infinite, the spiritual

¹ "Transformation," *Ibid.*, p. 161.

² *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1970), pp 80-81. Book I, Canto 5.

consciousness. The fullness of the spiritual consciousness means the presentation of a divine name and form. And this distinguishes it from the mystic consciousness which is not the supreme solar illumination but the nearest approach to it. The spiritual poet has a solid mass, the essential lineaments of revelatory knowledge, the typical "wave-particles" of the Reality. It is vision pure and simple. Sri Aurobindo epitomises a new voice announcing an altogether new manner which discloses a supreme truth, not merely mystic or religious but magically occult and carved out of the highest if recondite philosophia:

A finite movement of the Infinite
 Came winging its way through a wide air of Time;
 A march of Knowledge moved in Nescience
 And guarded in the form a separate soul...¹

Sri Aurobindo is master of his faculties and implements. His poetry fulfils the travail of man's conscious working by a spontaneity of vision resulting in the free and untrammelled activity and expression of the heights of Being. He sums up the age of spiritual art in which the sense of creative beauty in man will find its culmination. His poetry is preoccupied with the pain of the present and the passion for the future. He is as much prophet as poet, looking ahead and beyond, always yearning for the true and the real which explain, justify and transmute the present Calvary of human living.

In the words of Romain Rolland, Sri Aurobindo represents "the most complete synthesis achieved up to the present between the genius of the West and of the East" not only in his general philosophic and practical vision of life but also in the diverse "realms of gold", as Keats so felicitously called the world of poetry.

O. P. MALHOTRA

SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE RIG-VEDA

A CRUCIAL QUESTION AND ITS POSSIBLE ANSWER

SRI Aurobindo has given a symbolic interpretation to the Rig-veda with a great deal of penetrating analysis, showing it to be a powerfully imaged story of the soul's adventure towards Light, Freedom, Infinity, Immortality—a mystical adventure in which Gods are helpers and Demons hinderers. Objects of the physical world are spoken of in such a way that to the initiates they represent realities of the inner life while to the common herd they appear in a literal sense.

This sense is associated with a ritualistic religion devoted to a worship of personified Nature-powers by means of an elaborate "sacrifice" and invocatory chant. But the hymnody of ritual remains at best a semi-clear semi-obscure utterance. Hardly a consistent interpretation is possible of the imagery and the phraseology employed. The mind bent on an understanding of this poetry on the basis of a primitive humanity's outer existence is bound to be baffled again and again and driven—as is the greatest traditional commentator, Sayana—to give different meanings to recurring turns of speech in order to make some head or tail of the strangely moving body of an antique religious poetry. Thus Sayana explains one of the key-words, *ṛtam*, which connotes "truth" or "right", as "truth", "sacrifice", "water", "one who has gone", even "food", not to speak of a number of other meanings.¹ The reading that Sri Aurobindo has proposed brings clarity, order and cogency as well as a persistent high-seriousness of significance into the Rig-veda, doing justice both to its intrinsic mantra-quality and to its reputation as a divinely inspired revelatory scripture.

Once we admit this reading, not only the cows, horses, rivers, mountains, treasures and booties of the hymns become symbolic but also the sacrificial gestures, journeys and wars as well as the heroes, sons, kings, nations and men in general. Yes, even men in general are symbols—for collective powers affined in the occult realm to human psychology. But here a crucial question arises. The evil forces of supernature are fought at the same time by the Gods and by the Aryan seers and workers in whom the Gods progressively take shape. If so, would there not be anti-Aryan human beings too, who are opposed to the Gods and the Aryan seers and in whom the demonic powers have progressively found embodiment?

Sri Aurobindo's answer in one place is that, though he has established a very strong *prima facie* case on a large scale, nothing except a complete and thorough examination in detail of the whole Rig-veda can finally decide whether those who figure as human-looking antagonists in the events and incidents pictured in the Rig-veda

¹ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Vol. II of the Birth Centenary Edition (Sri Aurobindo Ashram), p. 9.

are entirely or only partly symbolic.¹ At another place he is quite confident and writes: "We may, if we like, suppose that there was a struggle between two different cults in India and that the Rishis took their images from the physical struggle between the human representatives of these cults and applied them to the spiritual conflict, just as they employed the other details of their physical life to symbolise the spiritual sacrifice, the spiritual wealth, the spiritual battle and journey. But it is perfectly certain that in the Rig-veda at least it is the spiritual conflict and victory, not the physical battle and plunder of which they are speaking."² A third context in Sri Aurobindo seems to allow room for a dissimilar conclusion: "The one thing that seems fairly established is that there were at least two types of culture in ancient India, the 'Aryan' occupying the Punjab and Northern and Central India, Afghanistan and perhaps Persia and distinguished in its cult by the symbols of the Sun, the Fire and the Soma sacrifice, and the un-Aryan occupying the East, South and West, the nature of which it is quite impossible to restore from the scattered hints which are all we possess."³

Synthesising the three statements, we may say: "According to Sri Aurobindo, there were two different cults in ancient India and there may have even been a conflict between them but from what he has studied and expounded of the Rig-veda we are led to affirm that whatever the theoretical uncertainty until the whole Rig-veda is analysed, the actual practical upshot is absolutely definite: we may generalise that the possible conflict does not appear directly at all in the Rig-veda. Everything there is symbol and apologue of the inner spiritual development."

However, there is one extremely taxing point. And here some remarks by Sri Aurobindo at an earlier period of his Vedic study gives us pause. Repeatedly in the Rig-veda we come across expressions like the following:

"Whatsoever mortal being exceeds us by the keenness of his actions, may he not as our enemy have mastery over us" (I.36.16).⁴

"...may we overcome the battle-hosts of mortals" (V.4.1).⁵

"The mortal of evil movements who gives us over to the stroke, guard us, O Fire, from him and his evil" (VI.16.31).⁶

"Protect us, deliver us not, O knower of all things born, to the mortal, the evil-thoughted one who would bring on us calamity" (VIII.71.7).⁷

What is more, a prayer like the last one is preceded immediately by the declaration: "Thou bringest, O Fire, the wealth in which are the many strengths to the mortal giver."⁸ The same word "mortal" is applied to the Aryan Rishi and to an enemy of his. In numberless instances the Aryan Rishi is called "mortal" as distinguished from the Gods. Most often occurs the great phrase about the in-dwelling Agni: "the

¹ *The Secret of the Veda*, Vol 10 of the Birth Centenary Edition, p. 237.

² *Ibid*, p. 215.

³ *Views and Reviews* (Sri Aurobindo Library, Madras), p. 47.

⁴ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 49.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 281.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Immortal in the mortal”, (e.g., I.77.1; IV.2.1). Is then the word used in two different senses, one literal and the other symbolic?

Again, what are we to make of consecutive verses like:

“O Fire, consume utterly the demon-magicians...

“Not even by magic can the mortal foe master the man who offers worship to the Fire with his gifts of the oblation” (VIII.23.14-15).¹

A distinction seems to be made between “demon magicians”—beings that in the Sanskrit original are named as rakshasas employing their power of maya—and the “mortal foe” employing such a power. A comparable cleavage appears to be driven between two categories when we read: “O Fire, guard us by thy lights from every hostile force and from mortal foe” (VIII.71.1).²

Further, apropos of the verse—“Let not mortal men do hurt to us, O Indra who delightest in the mantra; be the lord of our bodies and give us to ward off the stroke” (I.5.10)³—Sri Aurobindo, at a time earlier than his *Arya*-series, *The Secret of The Veda*, has the note: “The Rishi has already prayed for protection of his spiritual gains against spiritual enemies; he now prays for the safety from human blows on the physical body.”⁴ Then he adds that, though the Sanskrit *marta* undoubtedly means “mortal” in the Rig-veda, the termination *ta* may have either a passive or an active force so that the word may be like the English “mortal” itself which means either subject to death or deadly. Here he is inclined to accept an active rather than a passive sense and to understand “slayer, smiter, deadly one”. Then the translation would be: “Let not the slayers of the body do hurt towards us, Indra who delightest in the mantra; govern them (our bodies with thy mental force) and give us to ward off the stroke.”

Taking our cue from all this gloss of Sri Aurobindo’s of an earlier phase when he clearly admits outer human enemies no less than inner spiritual ones, we may come to the aid of his later outlook by holding that “mortal” when applied to the enemies of the mortal Rishi connotes “body-slayer” without implying a human agency. Thus there may be, on the one hand, inner enemies who could hurt the inner being of the Rishi and, on the other hand, those who could destroy his outer being by an occult power. In that case the “mortal foe” employing “magic” would be the sort of supernatural demonic agency that can kill the body of the Rishi.

But is it possible to equate “mortal” to “body-slayer” in all contexts? What about the verse: “O God, repulse on every side with thy tongue of flame the doer of wickedness; oppose the mortal who would slay us” (VI.16.32)?⁵ Now the sense of slaying is differentiated from the meaning of “mortal”. The latter word emerges as signifying no more than one who is subject to death—like the Rishi himself—unless we can light upon a connotation which would not be tautologous with the slaying-phrase.

Some translations of Sri Aurobindo’s at another time may be looked at for help.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 332

² *Ibid.*, p. 357.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 500-01.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

Thus V.4.1, which we have already quoted as "...may we overcome the battle-hosts of mortals", is now rendered: "...may we...overcome the embattled assaults of mortal powers."¹ The hymn preceding this has the phrases: "The creature of whom thou becomest the guest, O godhead, prevails by sacrifice over all that belong to the mortality"⁽⁵⁾—"We by the felicity, O son of Force, overcome all that are mortal"²⁽⁶⁾. We might resort to the idea that the elements of weakness and obscurity in our nature are what the last-named hymn, mentioning the worshippers of Agni, names "mortal dwellers in this substance" (8),³ but will this idea suit the description: "all that are mortal"? Beings loom out of these words.

The connotation we need does not yet emerge. But it is surely to hand in the very set of terms Sri Aurobindo has offered on the strength of the double edge of the termination *ta*. If we choose the last term out of the three, our problematic verse will end with "... the deadly one who would slay us." There is emphasis here but no tautology. And a way is opened to pass beyond the human world into the supernatural.

We may well regard this particular active aspect of *marta* as evident only to the initiate and as helping—by the mask it wears of the apparent passive aspect in consonance with the Rishi's own case—to put the layman off the esoteric track of the hymns.

Perhaps a further shade needs to be added in order to lend full substance to the term's esotericism. "Mortal" calls for an implication exceeding the mere vocable "man" which too occurs for the occult enemy the Rishi meets with, as in the verse: "O Fire,...may Atri overcome the destroyers who satisfy thee not, may he overcome forces and men" (V.7.10)⁴. We may consider "mortal", when applied to the Rishi's occult enemy, as pointing to a hostile supernatural power which not only brings a deadliness towards the Rishi's body but also looks to his inner eye like an embodied human being subject to death such as his own outer physical self.

Thus, to my mind, the challenging "mortal" may be seen as falling into line with the symbolic character of the Rig-veda's heroes, sons, kings, nations and men in general.

I should be glad to have the opinion of Aurobindonian exegetes more competent than myself in the niceties and subtleties of Rig-vedic Sanskrit turns.

AMAL KIRAN

¹ *The Secret of the Veda*, p. 393 ² *Ibid.*, p. 371. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁴ *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, p. 217. The last part of this verse Sri Aurobindo elsewhere translates interpretatively: "these souls that rush upon him with their impulses may be overcome" (*The Secret of the Veda*, p. 383). No clue is afforded to the status and nature of "these souls".

UDAR REMEMBERS

VIII

THE room of Sri Aurobindo was old and rather dilapidated and the Mother decided that it should be redone. So it was done up by all of us, Building Department, Harpagon, Electric and Water Service, Golconde Service, etc.

But the furniture was also old and made of boxwood painted green or brown, quite useful at one time but now become shabby. So the Mother suggested to Sri Aurobindo that we make new furniture for Him and He agreed. I was given the wonderful opportunity of designing the furniture and having it made under my direction at Harpagon Wood Working Unit.

The sadhaks who were attending on Sri Aurobindo had become so used to the existing furniture that they insisted I keep before me the dimensions and conveniences to which they had been accustomed. This put a sort of limit on the design potential and also the existing spaces had to be considered such as those between the doors and the windows, niches, etc. This was good as it gave me some concrete dimensions on which to base the designs.

I had been reading Le Corbusier's book *Modulor* and had been quite taken up with his ideas based on the Golden Section of proportions and so I used the principle in my design so as to be sure of a harmonious blending of the furniture with the room itself. Then with regard to the material, with the Mother's happy approval, it was decided to have a blend of two of India's best woods: teak and rosewood.

We had a fairly good supply of very high quality rosewood which I had purchased some time back when someone had offered an old stock for sale. But teak wood we had to buy and, as Pondicherry merchants did not stock such a good quality at that time, I said to the Mother that I would have to get it from Cuddalore, twelve miles away. By that time the Mother had started going out for drives in Her car, Pavitra (Philippe Barbier St.-Hilaire) driving. She said with joy that She Herself would go to Cuddalore with me and watch me select the timber. I was thrilled.

In those days, as Pondicherry was still under the French, one had to pay, before going outside, a tax of Rs. 5 to the tax authority in Madras and the money order receipt was generally accepted by the police check-post on the frontier as evidence that we had paid the tax. So Pavitra sent the Rs. 5 by money order for the journey to Cuddalore and had the receipt with him. At the check-post the police, for some reason, refused to accept it as evidence and insisted that he pay again. A long argument started and all the time the Mother was sitting in the car. Then She called me from my car that was accompanying and asked me what all the argument was about. I explained the matter. The Mother took a Rs. 5 note from Her bag and asked me to pay it quietly. I went behind the policeman who was arguing with Pavitra and surreptitiously slipped the note into his hand without Pavitra seeing it being done. Immediately the policeman withdrew his objection and Pavitra was

happy. He came to the Mother and said how he had eventually succeeded in convincing the police. The Mother gave me a little wink.

Now there are some moralists who might object to this, as I suggested later to the Mother, but She explained that a *true* spiritual action is not bound by any moral code which is, after all, a mental stance. Here, in my view, the central point to consider was that Pavitra, having already paid the tax, was in the right and should not be defeated by the wrong demand to pay the same tax twice over and yet a way out was to be found from the policeman's obstructive posture.

We went on to the Cuddalore timber depot and I spent quite some time there selecting the teak logs that I needed. The Mother sat quietly in the car watching me all the time. Then, when my selection was complete and the price, etc. settled, She called me to Her and asked if I had all I needed. I said, "Yes." Then She pointed to a very large log lying in a far corner, a log of wide girth but not squared. I had not chosen that log because of this reason and it was really not what I wanted. But the Mother said that the log had spoken to Her and had pleaded to be taken as it wanted to go to Her. I was again thrilled to hear this and immediately included that log in our selection at a special price. It was so large that it needed two carts to transport it to Pondicherry. I did not cut up the log. How could I do it to one who had actually spoken to the Mother? But quite some years later when I was to make furniture for the Mother's new room on top of the roof, I cut up the log as I knew it would be happy to go right in to Mother and be a bed for Her to lie on. This is one of my very happy remembrances.

UDAR

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TOUCHES OF GRACE

SOME WAKING AND DREAM EXPERIENCES

Birthday Blessings

I WOKE up from my sleep in the morning at about 6 a.m. and sat on the bed awhile before leaving it. The day being my birthday, my wife came to me saying, "Happy Birthday, and many happy returns of the day." I was still sitting on the bed and before I could say anything I experienced a fragrant smell coming from somewhere. I asked my wife whether she had any scent on her person. She said, "No." Then I had my morning tea. And the matter of the smell was forgotten. After tea I went to the terrace upstairs for my constitutional and there to my great surprise I experienced the same fragrant smell coming on the wind. Then only I knew that the smell had some significance!

I am deeply grateful to the Mother for Her subtle presence with me on my birthday.

15-9-75

Darkness and Light

I had a dream during an afternoon nap while I was a patient in the Ashram Nursing Home. There were a lot of people around the house making unnecessary noise and also many people unknown to me were coming to my house. I had to push them back down the staircase. All on a sudden a tall hefty woman of stone-grey complexion appeared in my room and stood against the wall in front and started staring at me. I was surprised and asked her impulsively where she had come from, who she was and what she wanted, all in one breath with great force. She replied calmly, "I am darkness." Immediately I answered, "I am light", and told her to go away. She made a left about-turn and passed out through the door. I saw her passing silhouette through some white cloth outside put up for drying.

Two days after this dream, I, though seriously ill, became by the Grace of the Mother normal to the great surprise of my friends and well-wishers.

7-12-1975

Enfolding Love

I was having my nap in the afternoon. When I woke up, I left the bed to drink some water. It was about 3-30 p.m. After drinking it I returned to my bed and lay down just to laze away. But I was quite conscious of my surroundings. Just then, it seems I fell into a pleasant reverie. In that state I felt I was lying on my side on the

cot and my wife was sitting on the ground doing some needle-work. Soon I felt that somebody was putting a shawl on my back. I asked my wife, "Who is putting a shawl on my back?", and told her I was feeling very happy with the sensation of its touch.

Every time the shawl was being properly adjusted, I experienced ripples on ripples of joy and a glow of light in the inner heart. Again and again I said to my wife, "I am having a very pleasant sensation, but who is this that is placing the shawl on my back?" She did not answer. Then when I woke from my reverie I was surprised to see that my wife was not there. The whole phenomenon had taken place as if I had been in the waking consciousness.

The joy I experienced is beyond my humble capacity to describe. Only I wish I could retain a fraction of that joy permanently in my heart.

By the way, this day happened to be the birthday of my wife.

3-4-1976

Call and Answer

At about 4 p.m. I was resting on a cot with my back on a big cushion. My wife was sitting in front on a chair with her feet resting on the cot. We were just talking on some light subject. I sat in one position for some time. Then I wanted to get down from the cot, so I stretched my right leg slowly beyond the edge of the cot to touch the floor. During this procedure I felt some pain in my right knee and when I stood on the floor I felt as if pins and needles were moving under the right knee cap. I could not stand erect and I was in a hurry to go to my bed and lie down. The pain was increasing, and I told my wife to keep out of the way, and with great difficulty I reached my bed. After laying myself there, I said in great agony, "What is this, Mother?" Immediately a Force in a zigzag movement ascended from the foot to the knee and the pain disappeared instantly! I felt a sudden relief and the joy I experienced can never be described. I immediately called my wife and said in a loud voice, "Look, the pain went as soon as I called the Mother."

Then Sri Aurobindo's words came to my mind: "And, remember, your call is already an answer." I am thankful to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for the experience of the answer to my call.

1-6-76

D. S. PATHARE

AN IMPRESSION OF THE AUGUST DARSHAN

A LETTER FROM THE ASHRAM AND A REPLY FROM ABROAD

My Dear Brother JS,

You would like to know perhaps how this August 15th, Jayanti Day, was observed in Pondicherry. I do not know if you have heard how some elements had tried to disturb the whole atmosphere of the Ashram before that day. In spite of all that, the August Darshan was never before so charged with an intensity and depth—psychic and spiritual—as during this year. The devotees poured in in hundreds and like a mighty sea-wave submerged all the human pettiness, ignorance and the rest. If you had been here you would have felt rejuvenated and experienced that the Mother's work is not only continuing but has now gained a new momentum. It is as if She were feeling impatient at the present speed and insisting on hastening up Her work.

You would have seen also the glow of Her Light and Power not only on the faces of the sadhaks but even on those of the visiting devotees. The Ashram vibrations, particularly at the Samadhi, were too strong even for the agnostics.

Naturally a question arises: Is it not rather strange that the Mother should have been able to work so powerfully even without Her material Presence?

A DISCIPLE

Reply of JS from Holland

About last Darshan-day, 15th August, it was a very special day for me too—and as I heard later also for M. Since that day my lower vital has been pushed back and my contact with Mother renewed, so at this moment sex does not rise and I am able not to smoke or drink. Only during work contact with Mother is very difficult, but all will come in due time.

28-8-1976

VIGIL ON MY EYES

(Inspired by Maggi's poem, "Two Angels" in *Mother India*, January 1973)

Two heavy angels sat upon my eyes;
They took their stations when I, a child,
Scanned the horizon for kaleidoscopic lights
In the playful years of life and now I wish
I could smile again lightly
Without the burden of their might.
They came descending to enact their high decree
That no wrong done be left unchanged and to adhere
To every act of the play of men
They seemed to like;
For their high purpose and most accurate task
They made an observatory and two mirrors of my eyes.

Two weighty lids felt their vigil,
They kept me wakened, bright-visioned
When I would follow the flying things
And the marked stones on the ground. Oh, fast running
Toward the flowering fields of joy,
With so many songs to praise their loveliness
I came; like a thunder from unexpected sky,
Intruding came their sentence—"You exuberate,
Stirring off-course"; I aghast—
"It is only a play, a song!"
"Not yet the song, we shall sing another time,"
They said.
I, misty-eyed, to my witnesses, when
The moon hung above the waves
And the air was rich with sleep—
"Don't send my dreams away far from me,
You know I want to love!" They solemnly—
"We teach you to love."

Stubborn is the dream's ensuing heart
Making of expectations certainties,
Of *fata morganas* high hopes... the song
Stayed warm honey in the throat.
They, always close by, my heavy wardens
Ever present, listened awhile to my cadenced joy,

Then thrusting came their command—
 “Awake! Enough!” I startled—“Who called?”
 “Observe,” they said, “look and awake!”
 My eyes, command-following, looked,
 Registered and saw, filed and contained,
 Oh, heavy files they gave.
 “Watch,” they spoke on, “and now sing;
 Sing of what you see!”
 “What?” cried I: “sing of pain, not joy?
 Men need laughtery songs, bubbling fresh drinks
 To cool their summer thirst and warm their hearts
 On winter days. Sad songs I will not sing!”
 They waited then till my stores were filled
 And I had knowledge of the pained and the slain,
 The orphaned and the poor...
 The mirrors flowed with tears,
 For each tear shed below their weight
 They gave a diamond, now a ruby, now a pearl.

Oh, yes, they taught me all there was to see
 And made me rich with living love, and now
 I possess such priceless gems stored
 As most men have never seen, yet sometimes
 I wish I could smile again lightly
 Without their mighty eyes in mine.
 “Oh bright brothers, I am made wealthy
 With your toils and mine, and with love so burdened
 I can sing no more. One more price,
 You know I gave you all, just one request:
 Give me back my tune!...” I called and called.
 Two mirrors came weightless, the pictures
 Brighter than before, my heart pounded
 Like temple gongs at ceremony’s start
 Gong...gong...gong... I rose.
 “You cannot leave now! Without you I am blind!”
 Their parting words as crystal rain fell
 And came like music from afar—
 “Long were the years of our vigil,
 Togetherness made us one. The light we brought
 Upon your eyes is yours now for the toil,
 Regard it well, it contains the sound you call.
 Never alone, illumined eyes,

We leave behind the tune—
 Sing to men now beautifully toned,
 Sing our own, of high ascent and joy,
 Sing to men of love and hope!"
 Two mirrors shone flaming bright;
 My wardens, they were gone.

April 1973

GEORGETTE COTY

I WIND UP CLOUDS AND CLODS AND BRINE

AND now the Universe is mine
 I wind up clouds and clods and brine
 and hang them on my arm
 to take back to the Friend.

Here are the houses, gates, and schools
 Here are the cliffs and peaks
 and valleys green
 the little cows that nestle
 in between the trees,
 this cow that tethered to the post
 outside my house
 gave me much joy
 and every day a blessing.

And here are my dear ones, every one
 parents, brothers, husband, sons.

In the place in my heart
 where life's dolours burn
 I see all my offerings rolled into
 one small child
 that's curled up and naked
 and still
 And it's all that I am;
 And it's smiling at me.
 And though utterly new
 this is where I began
 and this is the place where
 I start to be.

MAGGI

ASSURANCE

How long hast Thou risen, O Boundless Light,
And flamed upon our shores,
And carried the Day through the fields of Night?
Still untouched the ocean-stores!

Every morn is a page of Night
Writ with the promise of eternity,
Long hast Thou come and gone, Sun-Bright,
And still this all-too-human cry.

None heeds this message at every dawn,
None sees the communion
Twixt Nature and Gods and the souls withdrawn
And the lovely blissful One.

I have seen. I have longed to snare Thy feet
And have slain the mimic Bird
Whose flight is a circle of snow and sleet,
Thy melodies unheard.

I met Thy Light on my terrace-sky
As the pall of dark stood plain,
And heard the words "The hour is nigh" —
And silence again.

Across the Ocean, across the Zenith-Star —
And still of Thee no sight,
Then I saw the unfading Flame afar
Over the long dunes of Night.

ARVIND HABBU

THE MESSAGE OF THE GITA

A BRIEF REVIEW

(Continued from the issue of June 1976)

(4)

The Psychological Basis (Contd.)

THE *puruṣa* of the Sankhya system, we have said, is a silent, inactive entity, almost a *roi fainéant*; he allows *prakṛti* to gambol about much as it pleases. And, unlike *prakṛti*, *puruṣa* is not one but many, as many indeed as there are individual beings. What gives the Gita concept of the *puruṣa* its peculiar significance is, first, that it quietly substitutes the one *puruṣa* or Conscious Being of the Upanishads for the multiple *puruṣa* of Sankhya, and makes Him lord and master of *prakṛti* and, second, by clearly bringing out the idea of *puruṣottama*, the Supreme status of the *puruṣa* which was implied in the Upanishads, the Gita points to the ultimate goal of man, not necessarily as an absorption of the individual in the Eternal but as his continued existence with the possibility of action in the world in union and communion with Him.

The other idea of capital importance which the Gita introduces, quite independently of Sankhya, is that of Swabhava and Swadharma; this plays an important part in its discipline, and must be regarded as a distinctive contribution to psychology. But here, at the outset, one must make it perfectly clear that Swabhava in the Gita does not mean what it normally means in the Sanskrit language; it is not man's ordinary nature or character. Nor does Swadharma mean one's religion or the creed one professes; this is a wrong translation that has led to much unnecessary misunderstanding of the Gita's purpose. For example, when the Gita says, "It is better to die while following one's Swadharma, the Dharma of another is a frightful thing", it does not obviously encourage the religious fanatic; it means something of much wider import.

Swabhava in the Gita means what Sri Aurobindo has described in the plainest terms as the "fundamental nature, temperament and capacity" of a man.¹ In more erudite language, it is "the essential divine nature which remains constant behind all conversions, perversions, reversions" of the external being of which we are normally aware.² Perhaps it might be described, in the phraseology we are familiar with, as the true soul in man which seeks to express itself as best it can through the outer instruments; it is the nature of the "real man". Swadharma in this view is simply the line of conduct, the ideal law, imposed on the outer man by his true inner nature. Dharma, in the view of the Gita, "is action governed by the Swabhava, the essential law of one's

nature.”³ To follow the Dharma of another’s nature is perilous, because it is “sterilising to one’s growth towards the true stature of the spirit.”⁴

Before we conclude this summary account of the Gita psychology, a reference might be made to a “pregnant saying” of the Gita which again has a large bearing on its discipline. This *puruṣa*, says the Gita, this soul in us, is made of faith, and whatever is his faith, that and no other is he, *śraddhāmāyo-yaṁ puruṣaḥ yo yacchraddhaḥ sa eva saḥ* (XVII.3). It is the will to be, it is what a man feels himself as being capable of becoming or doing, that he tends to be or do. This faith is the great lever which helps him rise out of the morass of his ordinary existence. Indeed, he could not take a step forward if he did not have this faith in him. We shall not here discuss the role of faith in the Godward endeavour which is the core of the Gita’s discipline. But it is interesting to note how in the Gita’s view the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti* influence to a large extent the nature of the faith one has. This faith is in fact born of the Swabhava and is therefore intimately connected with it: *trivīdhā bhavati śraddhā dehinām sā svabhavajā* (VII.2). As is the man in his true inner nature, so will be the nature of his faith, in works, in life, in God, in his future becoming.

The Ethical Problem

The starting-point of the Gita teaching in its practical aspect is an ethical dilemma, a conflict of duties which we have to meet often enough in our day-to-day life, or at least in moments of crisis. It is no accident that the profound words of this teaching have been given a most dramatic setting in the text; they are uttered on a battlefield at a decisive moment in the history of a great nation. The historicity of Sri Krishna and of the Kurukshetra War is no longer held in great doubt. But even if it were all a legend, that would make no essential difference to the point at issue. It is indeed obvious that the great body of spiritual knowledge developed systematically in the eighteen chapters of the Gita could not have been spoken from the charioteer’s seat on the “no-man’s land” between two huge armies drawn up in battle array. Sri Aurobindo has adduced irrefutable proofs to show that the book “appeared in or was written into the frame of the Mahabharata.”⁵

But that does not detract from the importance of the background, and the problems it raises. The first problem, to which modern scholarship attaches a great deal of importance, is the problem of ethics. Arjuna the fighter and leader of men finds himself face to face with a conflict of duties, and he demands an ethical solution, a *dharma* or right line of conduct that he should follow. He wants to know what is his “duty”, *kartavyam karma*. As a warrior and Kshatriya, his duty is to uphold the cause of right and engage in battle to maintain the rule of right, *dharmarājya*. As a man with a high ethical sense and a noble temperament, he suddenly realises, visibly, in concrete fashion through his very sensations, that the men against whom he has to give battle are his kith and kin, his “own people”, *svajana*; some of them are his elders and teachers whom he has been enjoined to revere. Will he not be incurring

sin, suffer ignominy, lose this world and the next, by undertaking this “terrible action”, *ghore karmāni*? How is he to get out of this dilemma? Wherein consists his true “duty”?

The Spiritual Problem

There is another problem of a wider import, as it touches the very foundations of man’s existence on earth. And here, the legendary or historical background of a terrible war finds its other significance in the teaching of the Gita. It is not an inner battle that the Gita speaks of, unlike the Veda where the battle of man is patently with his inner enemies. The battle here is between men in flesh and blood, even though it is waged between the protagonists of a “righteous” and an “unrighteous” cause; but that is a matter of viewpoint, for each side considers itself justified in its own eyes. This battle may however be regarded as “symbolic” in a sense, at least for the purposes of the Gita.

For the Gita is not limited in its view to the problems of a particular individual, society or nation at a particular point in time; its scope is universal and its teaching applies to all ages. The battle on the field of Kurukshetra, the field of Dharma, *dharma-kṣetre kurukṣetre*, where men have gathered together for the sake of a fight, *samavetaḥ yuyutsavaḥ*, is symbolic of the battle of life, the struggle for existence, in which man has to engage from birth to death, where he has to work out the evolving Dharma. “Life a battle and a field of death, this is Kurukshetra.”⁶ Given this fact as the basic fact of our existence on earth, how is the seeker of the Spirit, the higher Life, to deal with the problems of ordinary life, the reality of strife? The strife is persistent, not only on the physical level where one has to find security for himself, his family, his social group, his country and nation, against foreign attack; it is also a constant struggle against ignorance and error, weakness and incapacity and failure, sorrow and suffering of all kinds, illness, pain and death, discord and hatred. Normally, we somehow make do with life as it is, by trying to evade the issues; we rely on some sort of compromise, we seek palliatives. The Gita does none of these things, at least in the core of its meaning.

The Gita Solution

The solution that the Gita offers to these problems, the ethical as well as the spiritual, borders on the absolute; it does not seek to evade the issue, it offers no compromise. It is doubtless possible, as Sri Aurobindo suggests, to answer the ethical question “as a question between the personal conscience and our duty to the society and the State, between an ideal and a practical morality.”⁷ Often enough in our practical dealings with life, we make a choice or accommodation between our reason, our ethical being, our dynamic needs, our emotional being, our soul-instincts or physical preferences. The Teacher himself at the outset offers such a practical solution when he makes an appeal to Arjuna in the name of honour and glory; if he

refused to fight, people would for ever talk about his inglorious act, *akirtim cāpi bhūtām kathayisyanti te avyagam.*

Evidently, the Teacher's intention was not to stop at this kind of "practical" solution. He goes into the very basis of right action, and takes up the whole question of man's existence on earth as a thinking and living being in a perishable body. Man's life is a perpetual action and struggle; how to help him out of this struggle and find him a satisfying norm for his action is what the Gīta aims at. Here too there can be many ways of dealing with the problem. There can be a sage acceptance and a philosophic resignation; there can be an attempt at living an ethical life, or a life of philanthropy and service to our kind, the life of the aesthete or the devotee enraptured within himself, the life of the intellectual seeker after truth. At a high pitch, this may lead to a complete negation of mind, life and body and a seeking for and a merging in the Absolute, the ascetic solution. But these are no solutions at all, for they leave the life of man basically unchanged, keep most of its problems alive.

The Gīta accepts the value of the ethical, the pietistic, the ascetic life as useful means of chastening the crude animal man. It does not disparage altogether the seeking for an escape into the Beyond. It encourages the acceptance of one's Swabhava and Swadharmā. But what it prescribes for the élite, the master men, is something much more difficult. To them it says, in effect: "Liberate yourselves from the bondage of the three *guṇas*, of Sattwa no less than Tamas and Rajas, for Sattwa binds by its light as the others do by their darkness and vehemence. Be seated firmly above the *guṇas*, in your higher Self. In its peace and silence you will know the Divine Will. Follow that Will in all your acts and in all the details of your life. If you can do that, the Lord Himself will free you from all your difficulties; *aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi*, this is the promise. But a preliminary condition is that you get rid of all mental constructions, desires and preferences, of the vital, the ingrained habits of the physical and take refuge in Him alone, *sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇam vraja.*"

By what practical steps this high attainment becomes possible will have to be considered next.

(To be continued)

SANAT K BANERJI

References

- ¹ *Mother India*, September 1976, p. 778.
- ² Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gīta*, Second Series (Calcutta, 1928), p. 46.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 371.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, First Series, p. 56.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 365.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

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

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1976)

10 (Contd.)

“COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS”, SRI AUROBINDO’S “SUPERMIND”
AND HIS VISION OF THE DIVINE LIFE, THE DEMANDS OF AN
EVOLUTIONARY WORLD-VIEW, TEILHARD’S “PLEROMA”, HIS LATE
CONTACT WITH SRI AUROBINDO’S THOUGHT.

(b)

2

TEILHARD has frequently spoken of the importance of the person, the value of personalisation. Evolutionarily, the importance and value have been focused in the individual, the human unit. No doubt, the collective is also of importance and carries value, it is the inalienable context and continent of the individual; but it is not more important, more valuable than he. Both are equal in the ultimate computation, but the individual is always the spearhead of evolution. Nor does the individual evolve just by a collective unity. Socialisation however wide-spread, totalisation however intense, unanimity however love-mooded and knowledge-motivated cannot by themselves effect a superior state of evolution. The individual has to follow the *via mystica* in himself, practise Yoga in his own distinct capacity. And it is only by evoking his true soul which feels itself to be a child of the Divine Father and Mother in a boundless family, only by realising the one Self of selves and the unique Ground of all existences, only by entering the Cosmic Consciousness which interconnects all beings and things and holds them as expressions of a single secret dynamic harmony and, most of all, by getting into contact with the sovereignly illumining and unifying power of Supermind—it is only by compassing such mystic and Yogic states that the members of the human species can give rise to a true socialisation, totalisation, unanimity.

Teilhard, by postulating a full stop to individual evolution outside of a future collective development, has missed the essential potency as well as the essential significance of the individual. We have already noted Christopher Mooney’s perception of Teilhard’s underplaying of the individual *vis-à-vis* the race in spite of his care for the preservation of the personal in the universal. Teilhard’s ultimate attitude towards the individual is in striking contrast to Sri Aurobindo’s. Jacques Masui, French

journalist and editor of Art books and admirer of Sri Aurobindo, has gone to the length of remarking that here lies the fundamental divergence between Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard. He¹ says:

“Teilhard de Chardin was interested above all in the group, in mankind. Sri Aurobindo was interested principally in man. There is here a certain paradox, since Père Teilhard had some fear of oriental thought which ‘depersonalises’. Now, the strange situation today is that it is the orientals who are concerned about the fate of the person, whom they see crushed by science and technology. They say—and Sri Aurobindo said it first of all: ‘It is absolutely necessary, in the rather over-celebrated words of Bergson, to add to mechanicity mysticism.’

“Yes, Teilhard de Chardin was more preoccupied with groups, and in one of his last writings—perhaps the last—he said this: ‘I do not know whether the present state of man is better or worse, but I am certain of one thing: it is that humanity is doing well, humanity is in good control’—that is to say, evolution moves towards its fulfilment, a fulfilment in which man and society find themselves united in a sort of unanimity, unanimity of which he does not speak much but which we feel in all his work, as also in that of Sri Aurobindo.”

It may not be inapposite to pause a little over the passage Masui has quoted from memory and to set it out in its original form in full. Orthodox editorship of Teilhard’s writings has tried to give it a sense which does not really oppose concern about individuals to concern about the race. We must once and for all determine its true drift. Teilhard’s words² run: “If you tell me that, as time goes on, man is getting ‘better or worse,’ I hardly know or care what the words mean. But if you tell me that mankind can be regarded at this moment as a species that is disintegrating or has reached its ceiling, then I deny it absolutely. And this for the very good reason that in virtue of the power and the actual method of operation of its technical mental unification, twentieth-century mankind, so far from trailing behind or falling back, presents itself as a system in the full vigour of *co-reflexion*, which is exactly the same as saying of *ultra-hominization*.”

The orthodox comment comes in a footnote to Teilhard’s opening sentence. The footnote goes: “Whether a man be ‘better’ or ‘worse’ is in fact an ambiguous question. In any event, for Père Teilhard, as for every Christian, a man’s moral value is a mystery of which God alone is the judge and to penetrate which is outside the competence of the scientist.” •

The comment is essentially off the mark. Teilhard does not only say: “I hardly know”—he also adds: “or care...” What he means is that he is primarily concerned not at all with individual “moral” problems, which in any case are difficult to judge,

¹ Passage translated from the speech in French made in the *Échange de vues sur “L’Évolution de l’humanité selon Sri Aurobindo et le Père Teilhard de Chardin”* sous la Présidence du Dr. Louis Armand de l’Académie Française: le 4 décembre 1965 à Paris, au Palais de L’UNESCO. A typed report of the seven speeches made is with the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

² *Activation of Energy*, (Collins, London, 1972), p. 380.

but with the evolutionary growth of humanity into the state of "co-reflexion" or "ultra-hominization." The race as a biological unit, not the individual as a moral unit, engages his attention and care in regard to the problem of progress.

An analogous impression of Teilhard in general is also recorded by Émile Rideau,¹ himself a Jesuit: "Careful though he was to preserve the difference of individuals, it is fair to say that the problem of personal options and the eternal history of individual persons are blurred by an outlook that is primarily concerned with wholes."

Sri Aurobindo's sights are trained on the individual more than are Teilhard's. The individual's evolution beyond thought is a possibility and an obligation on which Sri Aurobindo insists in season and out. And by his evolution within a co-operative assemblage of individuals and not cut off from them as in the old cave or cloister the real evolution of society can occur. There is no mandate from the study of evolution to reverse this order. Teilhard has talked of convergence in evolution. Evolution is convergent in that the elements at play converge upon a centre and create thereby an ever deeper and richer interiority of being. But the increasing centration does not mean that, at the human stage, evolution must bypass the individual and work exclusively on the collective level, with the individual centres benefiting as a result of the social convergence. What happens at the human stage is that social convergence goes on *pari passu* with convergence within the individual—but the former is the secondary phenomenon, the latter is the primary one and determines collective evolution.

In that evolution too the unified larger consciousness will not stop short at "co-reflexion". Even Supermind will not mark the sheer terminus. The Divine is endless: a progression within the Divine must continue: vistas and prospects of perfection will keep opening up. The kind of necessity Teilhard posits for the collective being to break down by entropy is mythical. And, even if the vistas and prospects of perfection did terminate, it would be arbitrary and irrational to think that an ultra-human realisation had not enough spirit-force to resist entropy. Teilhard has conceived all evolution as a counter-current to entropy, a rise in complexity-consciousness against the drift towards disorganisation. What is more, there is a general irreversibility. Are we to imagine that the summit of complexity-consciousness will forfeit the irreversible counter-current and inevitably fall a prey to this drift? Will it not have consolidated a super-consciousness matched with a super-complexity, which would stand against the tendency of disorganisation? "Radial" energy at its sheer maximum should certainly be able to resist the drag of the common "tangential" energy. Even in the human stage of evolution, Teilhard takes psychism to be free to an appreciable extent of physical determinism. What may we not expect of psychism at its apogee? And let us not forget that the maturity accomplished is fit to make the evolving Soul of the World meet the transcendent Omega in its invincible eternity. The potentialities of the latter should be sufficiently active in

¹ *Teilhard de Chardin. A Guide to His Thought* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 249

advance in the former. How then should the Second Law of Thermodynamics have any decisive bearing? Obviously a pressure from outside of science and logic and mysticism—some compulsion from a religious dogma—the demand of a doctrinal bed of Procrustes—has vitiated Teilhard's evolutionary and spiritual vision.

In that vision we even find a "slant" on entropy which takes away the lethal look he gives it in deference to Christian eschatology. At one place he¹ asks: "Are life and entropy the two opposite but equivalent faces of a single fundamental reality in eternal equipoise? Or radically has one of them the natural advantage of being more primal and durable than the other?" Postponing a detailed answer he says for the moment: "Later we shall show by a critical study of the conditions of human activity, that unless the universe contains internal contradictions, it seems to demand that life shall be guaranteed a boundless future; that is to say, it will escape the complete mastery of the forces of retreat. Life would not be liveable if it were not conscious of being, at least partially, irreversible, and therefore superior to the inverse attractions of entropy." Then Teilhard demonstrates that from "a universe whose primal stuff is matter" and whose "initial state... consisted entirely of determinisms" it would be "radically impossible to conceive that 'interiorized' and spontaneous elements could ever have developed".² "On the other hand, from a cosmos initially formed and made up of elementary 'freedoms', it is easy to deduce, by virtue of the effect of large numbers and habitual behaviour, all the appearances of exactitude upon which the mathematical physics of matter is founded."³ This means that "a universe of 'spiritual' stuff has all the elasticity it would need to lend itself both to evolution (life) and to involution (entropy)".⁴ But, if the *weltstoff* is spirit, how shall entropy threaten it when it has manifested its spirituality at the maximum with the attainment of Omega Point?

Talking elsewhere of "the phenomenon of spirit", Teilhard⁵ affirms: "...since, very probably, these two contrary movements (that is to say vitalization and the dissipation of energy) are merely the opposite poles of a single cosmic event of which the positive or synthesizing term is the most significant, it is finally *the* outstanding cosmic movement, the movement on which everything depends and which nothing explains..." Surely, if finally even entropy must depend on and be explained by the phenomenon of spirit, "the dissipation of energy" cannot ever have the upper hand of "vitalization" at the latter's peak-development as a "super-life",⁶ as "a common centre of total organization"⁷ coinciding with a God who is "the organic centre of [the world's] evolution"⁸

¹ *Human Energy* (Collins, London, 1970), p 22

² *Ibid.*, p. 23. ³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* Teilhard's "involution" here, meaning the fall of energy to a less organised level, must be distinguished from his own use of the term elsewhere in the opposite sense as well as from Sri Aurobindo's several uses of it, the most common of which signifies the concealed or submerged state preliminary to the disclosure or emergence or evolution of the various powers of the Spirit from apparently "inconsistent" Matter.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Teilhard is hardly logical here. And wherever his forward look does not specifically bring in the world's end his language about things to come is always suggestive of endless evolution. In the quotations we have just made, there is the expression: "...life shall be guaranteed a boundless future." The essay on "the phenomenon of spirit" offers the statements: "If the world is really bound as a whole for consciousness, nothing could possibly oppose the growth of spirit...¹ If, in fact, the pressure of spirit is on the one side irresistible, this is a sign that it must victoriously attain its natural goal. But if, on the other, this goal reveals itself as the infinite ahead, this is a proof that it must succeed in propagating itself interminably...² Theoretically, the phenomenon of spirit develops a magnitude that we think of as indefinitely perfectible, and consequently never self-saturated. *Functionally* it is sustained by its own growth, each degree of consciousness at a given moment existing only as an introduction to a higher consciousness: so that we cannot see how, from a mechanical point of view, its progress could be stopped...³ And, in fact, *historically*, consciousness on earth has never ceased to expand. This simple observation should suffice to show us that, for the progress of the spirit, the universe is completely *free ahead*."⁴

If the "goal" of the spirit is "the infinite ahead" and if for this goal it is our "universe" and not an eternity beyond it that "is completely free ahead" and if the "magnitude" developed by spirit is "indefinitely perfectible" and "never self-saturated" and there is always "a higher consciousness" to be attained and if "consciousness on earth" has a history of unceasing expansion, how can we ever envisage natural conditions compelling the evolutionary spirit to escape from Nature?

Even supposing that a co-reflective unanimity or a totalisation of consciousness such as Teilhard anticipates is the *ne plus ultra* of evolution on our planet, is escape from Nature the sole means open for a step further? Let us remember that Teilhard has spoken of the "universe" and not merely of the earth being "completely free ahead". Again, when he speaks of "the world as a whole" being "bound for consciousness" he has in mind the entire cosmos whose evolution has blossomed on earth into Life and Reflection. We cannot leave out the vast dimensions of the cosmos and the possibilities of the universe while discussing our arrival at Omega Point on our globe. In 1950 Teilhard⁵ wrote: "...we may assume that sporadically, in the course of time, numerous centres of indeterminacy and consciousness can and must have appeared in sidereal space, of which our own Earth is one. Although Life by its structure seems in certain ways to be highly exceptional, everything suggests that its pressure is exerted throughout the universe. And everything suggests that, wherever cosmic hazard has enabled it to hatch out and establish itself, it cannot thereafter cease to become intensified to the utmost, in accordance with an automatic process..." 1953 saw him affirming: "...considering what we now know about the number of 'worlds'

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "From the Pre-human to the Ultra-human" in *The Future of Man* (Collins, Fontana Books, London, 1969), p. 304.

and their internal evolution, the idea of a *single* 'hominized' planet in the universe has already become in fact (without our generally realizing it) almost as *inconceivable* as that of a man who appeared with no genetic relationship to the rest of the earth's animal population. At an average of (at least) one human race per galaxy, that makes a total of millions of human races dotted all over the heavens....¹ Then, our minds cannot resist the inevitable conclusion that were we, by chance, to possess plates that were sensitive to the specific radiation of the 'noospheres' scattered throughout space, it would be *practically certain* that what we saw registered on them would be a cloud of thinking stars."² In the same year, after asking "...who will at last give evolution its *own* God?"³ Teilhard suggests that in Christ we should be able to find "the 'new' God for whom we are looking",⁴ provided he does not lack certain characteristics, and at once Teilhard⁵ tells us: "The first is this: that in a universe in which we can no longer seriously entertain the idea that thought is an exclusively terrestrial phenomenon, Christ must no longer be *constitutionally* restricted in his operation to a mere redemption of our planet." Both scientifically and religiously, a strain in Teilhard brings into view at Omega Point the entire universe which he has conceived to have been engaged from Alpha Point in evolving earth-life. Further, he⁶ grants: ". . .there is every reason to believe that should material contact be effected between two 'hominized' planets, they would be able, at least through their noospheres, to understand one another, combine and be synthesized with one another." So, at the peak of our planetisation, we may be destined to start being integrated within an organised complex composed of a number of noospheres. More and more noospheres in a practically infinite cosmos could synthesize with ours when we are launched on an Omega-career after millions of years of Teilhardian evolution.

Mostly Teilhard is disposed to reject this prospect, though something in him directly or indirectly takes it into account at times, as when he speaks of Christ's third nature in addition to the two that are divine and human respectively—"A cosmic nature", as a footnote in the context of other inhabited worlds explains, "enabling him to centre all the lives which constitute a pleroma extended to the galaxies."⁷

None of Teilhard's habitual attitudes are cogently and definitively argued. His picture of the world's end is forced. Sri Aurobindo's position is clear-cut. Supermind bears the perfect archetypes of our natural moulds and, by both action from its state above and *nisus* from its own involved state below, it makes evolution possible. Evolution is the process of complete development, in space-time terms, of the archetypal ideality of mind, life-force and body organised around a perfected soul-person. This process is not only individual but also collective. A unified humanity, realising the one Divine who is general in the race and particular in the individual, has to evolve. In the fully evolved being, there will be a variety of spiritual realisations: the inner psychic, the surrounding cosmic, the overarching transcendent—and, corresponding

¹ *Christianity and Evolution* (Collins, London, 1971), pp. 231-2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 231.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231, fn 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 239, fn 12.

to the realisations, the change in nature: a psychic transformation, a spiritual transformation, a supramental transformation. A complete self-fulfilment here and now, together with the attainment of an all-illumined reality beyond earth: this is the Aurobindonian objective, the legitimate consummation of evolutionary existence. The method of such consummation is what Sri Aurobindo calls Integral Yoga. Man, a self-conscious being, has to co-operate and collaborate in his own evolution. The reflective condition he has reached puts on him the obligation of deliberate endeavour, willed self-surrender to the Supreme in all His aspects and most to the aspect of the Divine Person whose projection is the embodied personal existence that each of us is. All Nature is a secret Integral Yoga spread out over aeons and, since evolution starts with a total involution, a total seeming reversal of the Divine, the Integral Yoga of Nature is beset with various difficulties, meanderings, setbacks. But through all vicissitudes the rise of consciousness in an ever more organised form is inevitable. With the appearance of man this Yoga, by his deliberate and willed endeavour, can become an accelerated process. The practice of the Yogic acceleration under the guidance and influence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in an Ashram which balances the individual and the collective demands of life is what has gone on for nearly half a century with an expanding creativity in outer circumstances. A whole world ultimately progressing by an Integral Yoga flexibly adjusted without losing its essential truth is the vision animating the Ashram.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

THE GREAT BRIDAL

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

Characters

DADU	...	A poet and saint.
SUNDARDAS	...	A disciple of Dadu.
JAISA	...	A disciple of Dadu.
NATHU	...	A blind singer.
RAJJAB	...	A young Mohammedan nobleman of Jaipur.

(The action takes place in 1586 A.D. It is a very sultry April-afternoon. The sun is about to set.)

Sundardas, who is in his early thirties, is sitting on a knoll. He is a man of clean-cut features. He is fair-looking and his head is clean-shaven.

Behind him is Jaisa standing. He is bearded and negligently dressed. From his appearance nobody can guess his age. He has a pair of dreamy eyes.

Near him stands Nathu, the blind singer; he is in his late fifties. He is of very dark complexion and his face is always lighted up by smiles, which never leave his lips. He is very jocular.

The whole atmosphere is charged with silence and peace. Suddenly Sundardas breaks the silence.)

SUNDARDAS (*With half-shut eyes*): The sun is setting in crimson glory. Look, look, the whole range of Amera hills is becoming black. Soon the world will be covered with darkness! Light is God's boon—nay, Light is God..... But darkness is hell itself. Oh, it is so terrible!

NATHU (*Lifting his face towards Sundardas*): You are a Sadhu, yet you are afraid of darkness? Thank God that I am blind; I see only Light! Darkness has no terror for me.

JAISA (*With some emphasis*): But there is darkness in this world!

NATHU (*Excitedly*): Light your lamp within and there will be no darkness, my friends!

SUNDARDAS (*Vaguely*): Yes, yes, that is true. We all must kindle the lamp of Love within; then, and only then, we will not be afraid of the darkness outside, however terrible it may be!

JAISA: But is that possible...? (*His voice fails.*)

NATHU: Do not despair, O Sadhu! That is surely possible! Only you must have faith and set your heart on doing it.

SUNDARDAS: Yes, once this lamp is lighted all darkness vanishes. You must light this lamp, my brothers!

NATHU (*To Sundardas*): Sundar, please tell us what our Master has said about light and darkness.

SUNDARDAS (*Singing*):

There is neither the sun nor the moon,
Nor is there day or night!
The Light there shines forever,
In Truth's triumphant might!

NATHU: Yes, Truth is always triumphant! Only in a heart where Doubt has enthroned itself, Light cannot be kindled.

SUNDARDAS: Oh, no! by the Grace of God and the blessing of the Guru, Light can be kindled and darkness banished forever, my friend

JAISA: Yes, but for that what should we do? (*He pauses.*)

SUNDARDAS: We are to empty our heart of all its ego, pride, vanity and meanness; and then offer the whole heart to the Guru, with a prayer for Light! Fortunate enough we are, that we are at the feet of such a Guru.

NATHU (*To Jaisa*): Brother, do you know what the Master has said to Sundardas?

JAISA (*With surprise*): No, I don't. Brother Sundardas, please tell us.

SUNDARDAS (*Descending from the knoll*): A great thing will happen to-day. It will happen here before nightfall. I questioned him, curious as I was to hear all about it, but he would not answer!

NATHU: Let God's will be done, and the Master's efforts be victorious through the grace of the Almighty.

JAISA: Yes, brother! Let us pray for that; and let it be always like that; victory to our Gurujji!

SUNDARDAS (*Vehemently*): When the Master is victorious, everyone of us will be surely benefited.

NATHU: Let us pray with our heart and soul so that our Master's victory be quick and certain. (*He stops short*)...O, what a deafening noise is this?

(*Suddenly the clattering of horses' hooves, the beat of drums, and the music of pipes are heard. The music becomes louder and louder and nearer and nearer.*)

SUNDARDAS: Some rich man's bridal procession is passing this way. But why are these fools making so deafening a noise? Can't they respect the sanctity of our Ashram, and pass noiselessly?

JAISA: Worldly-wise people will always make noise. That is their habit; they cannot do otherwise.

NATHU: Yes, this world is full of noise; it has more noise than music; more smoke than light. (*He pauses.*) There is a Music which the world does not heed.

There is a Light which the world fails to see. Oh, the tragedy!

(They see a horse, gaily bedecked, coming in their direction. The rider now can be seen, though not very distinctly. The rider and the horse come nearer and nearer. Now the rider is seen distinctly. As he gains the knoll, he stops. The rider is a young man in his early twenties. He is very tall and handsome. He is dressed in bridal robes. There is a big white turban, with a sparkling diamond set in it, on his head. A beautiful jasmine-garland dangles gracefully from his neck. He dismounts from his horse and addresses Sundardas who is near him.)

THE RIDER: Salaam Alekoom, holy men... I don't know who you are; but I think that you are all Sadhus. I need your blessings. I do not know why my horse bolted suddenly and brought me here. I have left my companions...I do not know this place—though I feel I belong to it and am aware of an unspeakable peace here.

JAISA: You need not know anybody or anything. Only know that all this universe belongs to the Lord and all of us men are His dear children. With love in your heart you will never be in the midst of strangers. For love is a great unifier.

NATHU (*Sings*):

Love is the bond that binds this life,
 Love is the light that pierces gloom!
 Love is God's flawless golden life,
 Love is Eternal Eden's bloom.

SUNDARDAS (*Who has kept silent all the while, now speaks gently*): You are welcome. We are all disciples of Dadu Maharaj. Look, over there is his Ashram. If you so wish, and if your business permits, you can come with us....

THE RIDER (*Overwhelmed with joy*): I am...so fortunate. My poor self's name is Rajjab. My father is a nobleman of Jaipur. I am...going to bring home my bride. (*He hesitates a moment or two.*) In fact to-day is my bridal day... ..

NATHU (*With a smile*): So,...you are the bridegroom.

JAISA: Hush, Nathu. The Master is coming. (*To Rajjab*) Look there,...our beloved Master is approaching. (*Everybody stands up with hands folded.*)

(Dadu comes nearer and nearer. He is a tall fair-looking man in his mid-forties. His eyes are soft and dreamy His face is full of compassion. His presence radiates peace. Approaching Rajjab, he raises his right hand in a token of benediction and addresses the dumbfounded bridegroom.)

DADU: Lord bless you, my child.

RAJJAB (*Awakening from a stupor*): Salaam... .. Alekoom! I need your blessings, O Guruji!

DADU: Yes...God will bless you. You are going to bring home your bride? (*He pauses and then speaks forcefully.*) Oh fool, when the Beloved is waiting for you, why are you going elsewhere?

RAJJAB (*still in doubt*): Who is my beloved? Where.... (*He breaks into a sob.*)

DADU: Search your heart well; there you will always find your Beloved. His love knows no bounds. He is ready to accept you without any reserve. Leave everything and follow Him.

RAJJAB: Is it true? Yes... but still I do not understand.

DADU: Because your "I" will not allow it—so root it out first. Then everything will be clear to you.

NATHU (*Sings*):

There is no room for "I"
In the house of Soul!
There Lover and Beloved
Are a single Whole.

DADU: True... Renounce everything that binds you to your ego.... (*After a pause*) Renounce all your bondage of attachment and only then will you realise your oneness and that will give you freedom and peace. There will be never-ending union. Union without separation. When the cup of nectar is offered to you, why run after bitter-sweet?

RAJJAB (*Unable to restrain himself any longer, falls at the feet of Dadu.*): O Guru! (*He pauses.*) Kindly show me the way. Pray, rain your grace on me.

(*Dadu raises Rajjab by catching hold of both his hands.*)

NATHU (*Extremely delighted, with both his hands raised to the sky cries*): So, the great thing happens.... The great bridal begins.

DADU (*Quietly*): Yes! our whole life is a bridal.... We are on a tryst to meet our Lord!

RAJJAB: Master, make me your slave, only grant me this that I may be united with the Beloved and my tryst with Him never end. (*He suddenly looks at his garments with disgust and is about to tear them off. Dadu understands the move and checks him with a smile and embraces him affectionately.*)

DADU: Henceforth you are a bride of the Beloved! YOUR TRYST WITH HIM will not end ... You shall always be in these bridal robes. The Beautiful, who is your Lover, does not accept anything that is ugly! (*After a pause*) Now, go and dismiss your companions and come back to our hermitage.

SUNDARDAS (*Beaming with joy*): The wonderful event....

NATHU (*Loudly*): Hush!

(*Dadu turns back and goes towards the road leading to his hermitage.*)

RAJJAB: Friends and brothers, farewell for the present. I shall hasten to fulfil the commands of our Guru and come back quickly. Bless me, all O brothers! Salaam to you all.

(*He mounts his horse and disappears.*)

NATHU: Oh, my heart! (*He sings.*)

Trim and light your lamps,
 And strew your flowers;
 For the Bridegroom comes
 In Life's moth-time hours.

Open, O open your eyes,
 Open your barriered heart;
 In His Love's bridal
 Live not apart!

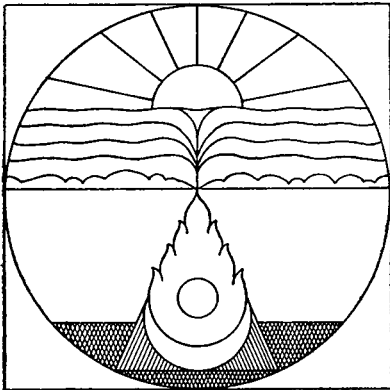
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DIALOGUES

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1976)

Synopsis:

As Isabella, the Italian Renaissance princess, the voyaging soul barely averts a major disaster in her existence. On the verge of being driven to insanity by her father, she calls upon the divinity in her heart to save her, and is given the strength and the vision to withdraw from her parent's malevolent influence in the nick of time. Simultaneously, her father falls gravely ill.

Chapter XI

QUICKLY, Prince Jacopo's condition came to be of prime concern to his small but wealthy state. None at his court yet trusted to the sanity of the young princess, for she seemed these days to be acting under excessive strain. And why not, poor creature, when the one support of her life was about to pass away? But under normal circumstances, would she not revert to her customary behaviour, and what besides had she ever learnt of government or state-craft? Of course, on the other hand, it would not be difficult to find a tidy crowd of pretenders to the noble seat and thus precipitate a struggle that would destroy the state altogether.

The wisest heads among the court advisors had a simple solution—one that many had been dreaming of for the last several years of Jacopo's increasing derangement: a grand alliance between Isabella and Ludovico, a neighbouring and once rival prince, but now the one and obvious saviour of a state in peril. Cautiously they presented their proposal to the ailing prince when, despite his enfeebled condition, he still retained some capacity for coherent thought. Even then, after having heard what they had to say, he fumed and mumbled on for quite some time about "family pride", "surrender of the state and its escutcheon" and "God's blight on an heir-less house", plus making the inevitable and ultimate assertion that Isabella, his only child, was fit to be son and daughter at once. At this, the ministers and advisors brought forth the only argument they knew would have any effect:

"But surely, your lordship, you would not wish the Princess Isabella to risk her life in battle, and we have known for some time that war with the French is in the air?"

Predictably, the sinking man could find nothing more to say, and the same evening ambassadors galloped forth to Ludovico's court with the momentous proposal.

Isabella herself took the news of her fate without a tremour. For within her, the goddess continued to smile serenely, and she felt herself immune from fear thus watched over by the divine presence. Nor did she tremble when, with the alacrity of something already decided and pre-arranged, the answering consent came.

Jacopo's palace immediately leapt to re-doubled life. Courtiers hastily prepared

guest lists. Others rode out with the invitations in their saddle-bags. The kitchen compiled its own considerable list of requirements for all the birds and animals that in fifty different dishes would comprise the wedding banquet. The court tailors daily cut and stitched till well past sundown so that Isabella might be wed in a voluminous masterpiece of gold and silver brocade. And to crown the effort, all available hands joined in to embellish the palace chapel with countless yards of new tapestries, woven cloths and hangings bearing the arms of the state stitched in gold.

Finally on the day itself, as though in a dream of unparalleled magnificence—surrounded by a galaxy of peers and dignitaries—Isabella was married to a man she had never seen, while her dying father watched silently with streaming eyes from his great carved chair draped in cloth of gold.

He did not survive the evening. Barely had the wedding banquet drawn to a close before he expired gasping on his bed, to which he had been hurriedly carried from the celebrating throngs in the dining hall.

Using her mourning as an excuse, Isabella did not face her new husband till two days later. Then at last she confronted him for the first time in her own familiar room. She had been prepared for almost anything, even a younger version of her father, but perhaps she was least prepared for Ludovico as she actually found him—kind, gentle and benevolent with a hint of promised profundities that would perhaps open themselves to her gradually as the years drew on.

In fact, she did not have to wait that long. Month by month, the formal, studied courtesy that marked the couple's first weeks together blossomed into a more real mutual consideration, a truer reciprocal respect, and even something that might have been termed the first stirrings of a love deeper than that of the shallow surface heart. Ludovico seemed to gain a genuine pleasure in making his bride happy, not in the way her father had done as though at some midnight of the dark phase of the moon, but in a way that befitted his own nature—through the warm, benign sunlight of a clear summer morning. He even enjoyed taking her riding with him, and watching her graceful figure as she sat ensconced in the massive arching saddle on her grey mare's ample back. For she was delicately lovely and, even now, as richly dressed, bejewelled and manicured as her father had always insisted she should be. Her quiet often distant look, rather than echoing a threatened mental derangement, spoke to Ludovico of a serene calm that he found deeply reassuring.

It was on such an occasion now that she found herself beside him, six months after their wedding. The sun shone through the leafy roof of the forest bespattering the bridal path with little interlacing spots of yellow-green light. The heads of the heavy, ornately caparisoned horses on which they rode nodded rhythmically with each step, while their great hooves seemed to touch the earth but lightly for fear of disturbing the dancing patterns of leaves and sunlight. Around the regal pair, their hounds ran sniffing and nosing among the trees, Isabella's two ever-faithful beauties, and three splendid creatures that had been with their master Ludovico since their puppyhood. He spoke first, as he usually did, smiling through his red-gold beard, and

holding her with his blue eyes that for all their kindness had in them also the unmistakably commanding flash of a trained leader:

"I do hope you are happy, my dear. You speak so little that sometimes I wonder. Or is it that I have forced you out too soon after your father's passing? Speak, I beg you, for who knows how many days like this we have left together. The war presses as you know, and I may have to leave you shortly for some months. So I must be sure above all that you are happy before I go. Ah, you smile at me—it's a good sign. How beautiful you are when you smile."

"Sometimes, my lord, I believe you plan to keep me alive on flattery alone."

"Now again you mistake me. Flattery, you say? Why, did your father nor anyone else ever tell you that you smiled beautifully?"

"Well, I suppose I must expose to you sooner or later the truth about my father. Did you never hear anything but good of him?"

"Oh, that he was a crafty statesman—that he drove a hard bargain—that he hoarded his wealth."

"Then they kept our secret well."

"Indeed they must have, for I had heard of no secret of any consequence."

"Of consequence? Heaven knows, perhaps it was of no consequence to anyone but me or possibly his personal attendants. My father was mad, you see, possessed for the last so many seasons. And I felt myself all the while withering under the shadow and the touch of the demon that had entered into him. It was a demon that always pursued me with much wheedling and yes—I must say it—much flattery, until I too stood on the brink of madness. So you will understand how mistaken it is for you to believe that I still mourn my father. In fact, may God forgive the blasphemy, his passing was to me the greatest release for which my soul could ever hope. As for being happy, my lord, I suppose I am so happy I know no way to express it, no way even to comprehend fully what has happened to me, and how I come to be here walking tranquilly through the forest beside you—a saviour and knight from which paradise I know not."

He laughed outright. "Isabella, beloved, when it comes to flattery you have no equal, but I revel in it as a dolphin in sea foam. Promise you shall never cease to flatter me—it is balm to a craving heart."

They both laughed now, forgetful of Jacopo's madness, of the war that threatened their borders, and of how few of these idyllic hours they had left together. Then suddenly he remembered and almost casually asked, "How will you spend your time while I am away, what can I give you for your amusement that will keep you occupied till I return?"

"Why should I need amusement, my lord? I shall think of you and whatever you may be doing at a given moment. And then I shall pray."

"But that is dangerous, dearest. I shouldn't want to return to find you transformed into a nun."

"Oh no," she laughed again. "The divinity to whom I shall pray has not the

ascetic bent. She is full of joy and sunlight.”

“How marvellously pagan!”

For answer she looked at him and smiled her serenest and most exquisite smile, rendering him speechless so that he could do no more than gaze back at her in bemused delight.

By the time Ludovico left, they knew Isabella was carrying her first child, and so it was with a particular concern that he saw to all the arrangements of the estate and household, and all the details of her care before his departure. Soon after, Isabella's palace settled into the most restful quiet it had known in living memory. It was as though the goddess had done everything possible to make her soul-child not only whole again but strong and secure in that wholeness, or as though nature were somehow trying to redress a balance of suffering with peace and a steady inward pleasure in existence.

Nor was the attempt a failure. Isabella basked in and throve on the new life she had been given. The little being she nurtured within her she shared with her patron divinity. “Make him worthy, or are you gifting us with a princess?” she would pray. And the goddess would smile back at her benignly and say nothing, but would enfold her, rather, in her wide eternal embrace. Isabella would chide herself then before pleading again, “Yes, I know I am foolish—but are not all women a little foolish in this state? I know all souls must be worthy before God—but I do so want a special person, a portion of perfection out of heaven to show the world what man can truly be. So would you not, Divine Mother, grace us with one who would be out of the ordinary—one wise and marvellous who would lead us through the dark ways of the future with a surer light and knowledge?”

Isabella asked the question several times before she received a definitive answer:

“Child, still after all these many aeons you are but an infant at heart. Have you not learnt, has life not yet taught you that angels and heroes are not born but made, fashioned, beaten and hammered out in the hardest school the Divine has ever devised? Remember that even your father, poor Jacopo, somewhere within himself was born an angel, that he too had been given his chance to shine above his fellow men, but that at one wrong moment he showed weakness and lost all his advantage, his very umbilical connection with light and truth and balance. None is immune from such dangers. No god can protect a man from the lessons he must learn for himself. You shall have as beautiful a child as any woman has ever borne, but after that, and after the sweet felicity of your own hope and care, you must offer your offspring to Fate, to its own will, and to its personal relations with God or devil. None may escape this law of being.”

Isabella pondered long on the goddess's message, which sank slowly through all the parts of her being, till she responded to her new inner realisation with a fervent outburst.

“Of course,” she castigated herself, “I am worse than a child. Indeed, in carrying a child, have I too become infantile? Have I learnt through all my years

of existence to do nothing but shrink from the effort the Divine expects of man? Forgive me, blessed Mother, for being importunate and asking for miracles where none are called for. I pray again, nevertheless, that my child and all those that follow be at once not only God-fearing but sufficiently courageous to face and conquer all that life may place before them."

The infant that Isabella presented to Ludovico upon his return, as his one-month-old son, was all either of the parents could have hoped for. So, also, were the two sons and three daughters that followed at regular intervals for the next decade. None was deficient or maimed mentally or physically, and each in turn did his or her part to make Ludovico's and Isabella's various palaces and estates centres of vibrant and unrestrained life.

Ludovico continued to absent himself at regular intervals for reasons of state—warlike or peaceful as the circumstances dictated, while Isabella settled back to observe and enjoy all the riches that the benignant gods could possibly bestow upon a human being. In all things she found and saw nothing but the varied play of beauty—in the burnished splendour of the powerful, ponderous horses in her stables, the streamlined alacrity of her hounds, the multi-coloured vivacity of her parrots, the slender grace of her pages that she had admired even through the madness of her father's days, and always, everywhere, the boisterous jollity of her large and healthy brood of children. In the midst of all these, she felt herself to be the calm and often taciturn core, for she was given to losing herself in thought. All had learnt to respect her meditative silences, not because she enforced her moods through any violent displeasure at being disturbed, but because she seemed so to enjoy her own stillness. In fact, all the other elements of life around Isabella, far from wishing to upset these states, came to share in them as a part of themselves which was somehow always there, always steady, sustaining, and therefore—in a most inward way—essential.

Isabella, for her part, wandered far and wide through the realms of thought and inner feeling during her hours of quietude. At times she even returned to review her moods of madness as she remembered them. She saw again her struggle to comprehend the least motion, the least word in a frozen world where all phenomena seemed to stand immobile in meaningless patterns. Long before, she had loved to see beauty in patterns, she could not remember when or how, but the patterns she saw in her hours of derangement were different. They were as sterile, as bereft of function or meaning as the discarded clothing of a dead man. Yet, even then, she remembered the little pinpricks in that vast, flat screen of immobility through which slender threads of life had nevertheless managed to force through and meet her. The eyes of her dogs—oh yes, their look had aged now into an inextricable mélange of wisdom and fatigue—but they were the same eyes still, reminders of a love that never flagged, pure, fearless eyes, that beamed out to reach and save even in the abyss itself. The tapestry that had plumbed her sadness and her peril—she found it richer now than ever before with its deep glowing lustres and a profound trance-

like silence more compelling than the impact of any moment in which she had fancied it to have spoken to her. The great grey mare that had carried her on her first rides with Ludovico—now she was as white with age as a patriarch's beard, and no less venerable. Was she not most beautiful this way as her groom paraded her on a lead in front of her mistress? And was it not more fitting that she should be seen so in her old age, unhindered by saddle or bridle? Only now could Isabella appreciate the delicate tip-toe gait of so ponderous an animal, the queenly arch of the massive neck, and the soft, gentle look of the liquid brown eyes with their extravagant sweep of white eye-lashes.

All these that had once been fragile threads of life now came to her whole in all the wealth of their hidden, lurking divinity, for once again had the vision of the great Mother in all things returned to her. The more the vision returned, the more she retired into a profound inner happiness, while her husband, Ludovico, as all the others around her, continued to respect and love her as the nobly imperturbable empress of all she surveyed.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

PSYCHE

A PLAY IN VERSE

(Continued from the issue of November 24, 1976)

ACT THREE

SCENE THREE *(Continued)*

(Re-enter PERSEPHONE with the demon who had summoned her.)

PERSEPHONE: Even as I expected.

(Enter EROS dressed as an Eleusinian initiate)

EROS: Persephone!

PERSEPHONE: Who invades the realm that Kore rules as queen
And dares set foot in her black marble halls?

EROS: A knower of thy Mysteries, O Queen.

PERSEPHONE: My Mysteries indeed! I did not know
The paltry cult men call my Mysteries,
The secret rites of godless Attica—
Cheap secrets that are open to all in Greece!—
Were so effective, giving such sublime
Results to my devoted votaries;
They rarely come to visit me, at least
Here in my winter palace. There above
All long to see divine Persephone,
Maiden of spring, child of the fruitful earth;
But here below men call me Hecate
And none desire to see me. How came you here?

EROS: The Mystery-priest of Eleusis showed the way;
He placed in my hand the sprig of sacred grain
And whispered the word of initiation in my ear.
There opened before me the path of the great descent.
I felt then, Goddess, the thrill and the agony
That thou feltst when the earth gaped open beneath thy feet
And Death, in his chariot with its coal-black steeds,
Carried thee here, far from thy mother's love.

PERSEPHONE: How could you know or feel what I felt then?

EROS: Because I too left light and life behind
As I plummeted swiftly down, but as I fell
My terror gave way to joy, for I was freed
From all the bonds of living, all desire

Was blown away like dust from an eagle's wings.
 I felt myself dissolve in the infinite
 And all that still remained of what I once was
 Was caught up in a clear ecstatic cry
 To be no more—to be eternally.
 And then I saw the very base of things,
 The sheer, unshakable stability,
 A place where I could stand and fall no more,
 Below me like a sacrificial seat
 Spread to receive the gods' epiphany.
 And when I reached it, I looked up to see
 The face I have long sought, thy face, O Queen.

PERSEPHONE: And what do you want from me?

EROS: All things I know
 That mind can know, art, science and philosophy
 And, greater than these, all secret things revealed
 To man by his Mysteries. I know the rites
 Of Dionysus, Orphic rites of wine
 And orgiastic frenzy; I know the rites
 Of clear-eyed Phoebus; but greater than these, O Queen,
 Are the rites of the earth, the cult of Persephone,
 Thine own Eleusinian Mysteries. I now know
 Their outward ritual, but from thee I seek
 The inner initiation, the golden key
 To the death-sealed doors of immortality.

PERSEPHONE: Advanced you must be, and innured to pain, to place
 My rites above the lesser, alluring ways,
 The right-hand path of Apollonian light,
 The left-hand path of Bacchic ecstasy:
 Subtle they are and brilliant, but I remain
 Beyond both the uplifted life and mind;
 Unknown to gods and men. Life they have known—
 Man's life of limitation on the earth,
 The gods' life on Olympus—but none know
 Immortal life because they know not death.

EROS: But surely, the gods that drink the sacred wine,
 They who are called immortal, must enjoy
 A perfect life unvisited by death.

PERSEPHONE: They know a life of pure felicity
 Safe from the ravages of disease and age
 And beyond the reach of death, but immortal life
 Is more than deathlessness.

- EROS: These things we know,
Great Queen: we die but our immortal souls
Are born again in plant or beast or man.
- PERSEPHONE: But know that immortality is more
That the metempsychic round of birth and death.
- EROS: Then say, Queen, what is immortality?
- PERSEPHONE: To be immortal is to be unborn
But be able at will to pass the gates of birth
For life and labour and at will to die,
Forever at one with the eternal and supreme.
But the gods are not immortal, they who roam
The illumined slopes of Olympus at their ease;
They are immune so long as they remain
Aloof in their unreal empyrean,
Where change never disturbs the timeless round
Of satisfied celestial life and mind;
But it would be a dull misguided god
To think he could put off his form of light
And set out upon the earth's evolving ways,
Or enter this obscure inconscience,
And yet return unscarred to paradise.
A deity that would descend to earth
Or seek to trespass into these domains,
This kingdom that is ruled by me alone,
Would lose his freedom and be made to bear
A portion of the world's harsh agony.
Which of the gods would make that sacrifice ?
Even this mortal woman is more divine
Who carries in her heart the unborn fire.
- EROS: A mortal like myself! And who is she
That lies here like one dead?
- PERSEPHONE: You have not heard
Of the famous and presumptuous bride of Love?
She lost him because she could not obey.
Now, seeking to regain him, once again
She has been disobedient and pays
The penalty: not death but unending sleep
Has numbed her limbs and clouded her fickle brain.
One power alone could raise her besides my own.
- EROS: And what power is that, O Queen.
- PERSEPHONE: The power of love.
- EROS: Then know me, Goddess, as the God of Love;

And in this vessel of sacrifice received
 From Zeus' own hand to her I love I bring
 The immortalizing nectar of delight.

PERSEPHONE: Surprise revelation! Hasty impetuous fool,
 You have fallen in my trap. Ha, ha, ha, ha.
 Already my infernal gravity
 That draws towards all that is low and foul and mean
 Has seized on you.

EROS: Proud Queen, I am divine
 And by the divine power of my life and mind
 I shall escape your diabolic grasp.
 For always the light is triumphant: night may spread
 Its mantle of obscure unconsciousness;
 But always the sun returns.

PERSEPHONE: Fond hopes, but vain.
 For here no rays of mind's reflected light
 Pierce the opaque impenetrable black skies;
 But thought is opposed, pushed back and made to deny,
 In a brain-washed nightmare of tranced nothingness,
 All it has known or knows or hopes to know
 And servilely submits to be no more;
 And life, subdued and stifled, no more tries
 To extend its empire of uneasy delight.
 Its tentacles of viscid tenderness
 Dry up and its unruly heart is made
 To lapse into inert indifference.
 If this has been received from Zeus' own hand
 Its power is irresistible and sure,
 But you shall never escape from here, unless
 You can take all hell on your back when you would go.

EROS: It matters not, for she will at last be free.
 When I have given her of this to drink,
 She will rise a goddess, deathless and divine,
 And live forever in beatitude.
 One being at least will have escaped your power.
 [*Prepares to give her the nectar*]

PERSEPHONE: Go, give it to her; but know that if she drinks
 The spark of God in her, her immortal soul,
 Will be drawn back into the unborn fire.
 Yes, she will be made deathless and divine
 But will lose her right to immortality
 And all that she has done will go to waste.

EROS: How go to waste? The goal will be attained
Towards which she long has laboured; she will cast
Away from her the manacles of birth
And live in limitless eternal peace.

PERSEPHONE: She will, but not for that has she been born.

EROS: Why then was she born if not someday to enjoy
The fruit of her long labour in paradise?

PERSEPHONE: Do you think the labour of a few short years,
The sufferings of an hour, the doubtful love
Of one brief lifetime shall count for anything
When her immortal soul is weighed? If all
This went to waste, what difference would it make?
What matters is the work of the centuries
That she has dwelt on earth, the countless lives
That she has struggled, suffered, loved, enjoyed,
Thought, acted, tasted the poignancy of death
And all the sweet and bitter fruits of life;
Her ceaseless labour till she could create,
Out of the crude materials of birth,
An entity progressively divine
And a form of deity upon the earth.

EROS: But in her inmost self she is divine.
Why should she be commanded to create
A replica of her immortal soul,
An image liable to be defaced by time,
As if a god should chisel a god of stone?
Towards what does this "divine progression" tend?
If she is all what more can she hope to gain?
Why is she made to leave her perfect home
And driven along the pathways of the world,
When, after all had been explored and found
Unsatisfying, all she could hope would be
To rise into her perfect home again?
Who set her to this fruitless journeying
And goads her mercilessly?

PERSEPHONE: No one but I.

EROS: And who then are you, you ancient nemesis,
You unknown cause of all the ills of man,
Denier of his peace, gad-fly of Time,
That drives him to a goal that ever recedes;
Making him labour yet withholding from him
The fruits for which he is compelled to strain,

Racking his body with pain and disease
 And weaving in him the monstrous web of mind
 In which he soon is caught inextricably;
 Who are you? for no god of heaven or hell
 Has such vast potency? Declare yourself.

PERSEPHONE: I am the power the submissive man calls Fate,
 The moral man fixed Law, the divine man Will,
 The power that went forth first from the Supreme,
 The force of creation, the mother of the universe.
 One, I assume innumerable names
 And different aspects in the triple world:
 On earth, Demeter; below, Persephone;
 And, in the heaven of beauty and bliss above,
 Aphrodite.

EROS: Mother! [*Embracing her knees*] Now everything is clear
 That was obscured by my too ardent love.

PERSEPHONE: But by that love alone has she been saved.
 Because you did not hesitate to cast
 Your portion of felicity aside
 For her sake, she will be yours for all time.
 But since you have abandoned paradise
 And cast your lot with one of mortal birth
 The doors of heaven to you are forever closed.
 Instead, upon the earth's evolving ways
 You two shall walk forever hand in hand.
 Denied the static and unfading joys
 The gods are condemned to enjoy eternally,
 To you will open unexpected bliss,
 The ecstasy of married heaven and hell.
 Mix with the nectar you have brought for her,
 The juice that gives to the Olympians
 Their beatific status, but denies
 To them the chance of a progressive birth
 And the delight of time, the contents of this phial.

EROS: O Mother, what is it?

PERSEPHONE: The quintessence of pain
 And sorrow and earth's insufficient joy
 Transformed by the threefold alchemic fire
 Of endurance and indifference and love
 Into a magic potion, that will make,
 When blended with the god's too-potent wine,
 A drink of earthly immortality.

[*He mixes the elixir*]

Now let her drink it, it will give to her
Not high escape into felicity
Beyond, but everlasting life on earth.

[*He gives it to PSYCHE.*]

PSYCHE: I have been sleeping. Eros, oh, you are here!
My love, you have come to me!

EROS: And will remain
Forever at your side.

PERSEPHONE: Together return
My children, to your earthly paradise,
And live in gladness, kept apart no more
By darkness, for the veil of ignorance,
Once necessary to protect you, child,
From too great splendour, has been torn aside
And now has been consumed in your love's fire.
It was my hope that it could disappear
Without the rending that caused you such pain,
Like a rainbow that dissolves in too much light
Or a golden chrysalis that thins and breaks
To let the new-born butterfly emerge.
But that was not permitted you by Fate.
My eyes are open now on what shall be.
I see for you a life of happiness.
Together you will do the works of time—
No more harsh labour, but a sunlit field
Of ever-new unfathomable delight.
You will walk together to the distant goal
Exploring the unnumbered ways of love
Together, and you, my child, will bring to birth
Twin daughters, to be named Rapture and Joy.
[*Enter SPIRITS dressed as demons*]

EROS: And what is this?

PSYCHE: The demons! Drive them away!

EURUS: [*Unmasking himself*] But, Psyche, it's us.

PSYCHE: It was you who tempted me?

THERME: But it's not our fault.

AUSTRA: You make us what we are.

ZEPHERUS: [*Entering*] Our actions can only answer to your heart.

PSYCHE: Friend Zephyrus.

SPIRITS: Come on, let's sing for her.

Everything around is moving,
 Everything around is changing,
 Somebody is rearranging
 Everything that was;
 Everything he does is making
 Everything divine;
 Everything around is breaking
 Out into a shine.

Dance with song

The End

PETER HEEHS

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THE NEW ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA

A STEP IN THE MENTAL EVOLUTION OF HUMANITY

THE publication of the 15th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1974 is a significant landmark in the evolution of human knowledge. The editors of this new edition have departed from the 200-year-old tradition of encyclopaedia-making to re-organize the presentation of human knowledge according to the interrelations and integrality of all its divisions.

Until now all general encyclopaedias in the English language have been compiled by an alphabetical organization of innumerable subject topics, these topics ranging in scope from the very narrow to the very broad. Individual articles were arranged in alphabetical order and related to one another by an alphabetical index. This presentation greatly facilitated reference to a particular topic and allowed divergent topics to be arranged in order without need of a wider conception of the relations between them.

The 15th edition concedes the advantage of the alphabetical organization from the standpoint of accessibility of information. But it also recognises that the alphabetical system is inadequate as an instrument for education, because it fails to show the relation of each particular topic to other topics and the general field in which it falls and the relationship and interdependence of the different broader fields.

To combine these advantages of accessibility and educational value, the new edition has been re-organized in three parts. The Micropaedia consists of 10 volumes in which all topics are briefly dealt with and arranged in alphabetical order for easy reference and with cross references to the Macropaedia. The Macropaedia consists of 19 volumes in which each field of knowledge is presented as a whole and in its major and minor parts.

The organizational chart for the Macropaedia is presented in the Propaedia which is the master key to the entire work. The Propaedia is an outline of all human knowledge and the form of the outline is a circle of knowledge. The editors have appropriately selected the concept of a circle to best represent the fact that all aspects of human knowledge are related to all other aspects. The circle is conveniently divided into 10 parts.

They are:

1. Matter & Energy
2. The Earth
3. Human Life
4. Life on Earth
5. Human Society
6. Art
7. Technology
8. Religion

9. History

10. Branches of Knowledge.

Under each of these parts all the divisions and sub-divisions of each field are listed and indexed.

But the achievement of the new Britannica does not lie solely in a new ordering of materials. The same principle of integrality finds expression in the scholarship of the separate articles. In the treatment of each topic of the Macropaedia the broader context in which it occurs is kept in mind. There is an attempt to constantly refer the particular topic to the general field rather than treat it as an isolated subject. By this approach all the contents of the Encyclopaedia representing the entire field of human knowledge are represented as a single unified whole and shown in their relationship to other parts of that whole.

From the viewpoint of spiritual evolution this new conception in the organization and presentation of knowledge takes on a small but significant meaning. On the spiritual planes all knowledge, all truth, is one. It is only as one descends from the spirit that various divisions and sub-divisions present themselves as individual and independent entities. From the spiritual viewpoint the innumerable divisions of mental knowledge are only various partial expressions of one truth which is indivisible.

But from the viewpoint of man's evolution as a mental being, the opposite is true. Man begins by observing specific objects and events and gradually constructs larger, broader, more detailed conceptions to express to himself the relations and interrelations between these various phenomena. He begins by experiencing infinite multiplicity and gradually evolves a synthetic vision of interrelations. The first stage in his evolution beyond the fragmentary knowledge of the divided mind takes place when he sees from below that all phenomena of the world and all concepts of the mind fall within general categories which can be broadened to include all aspects of human knowledge. The 15th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica marks the achievement of this integration of knowledge by the mental consciousness of humanity and indicates the ripeness of the human mind to transcend the boundaries of its limited vision and discover the vaster truth of the spirit beyond.

GARRY JACOBS

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Ave Mater: In French, by *Nolini Kanta Gupta*, Secretary, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price not mentioned. Pp. 26.

To the readers of Sri Aurobindo literature, Nolini does not require an introduction. He is respected by almost all followers and admirers of Sri Aurobindo as a patriot, a critic, a philosopher, a chronicler, a translator, an administrator and, for voracious readers of *Mother India*, even an athlete.

But as a poet he is not well known. In the article "Forty Years Ago" Sahana Devi writes:

"At one period I set myself to writing a lot of poems, this may be called a bright period of poetry. Many wrote—Nolini Gupta, Suresh Chakravorty had been doing so for many years—even Anilbaran Roy was found writing. Dilip and Nishikanto had increased their tempo, even Behari Barua, Jatin Das of Chittagong... .. Nolini, Dilip, Nirod wrote in English as well as in Bengali—perhaps Anilbaran also was in this group. Nolini, versatile linguist that he is, wrote poems in French too..."

The present book in the balance is presumed to be one of the products of that bright period of poetry in the Ashram of which Sri Aurobindo wrote:

"I have seen both in myself and others a sudden flowering of capacities in every kind of activity come by the opening of consciousness,—so that one who laboured long without the least success to express himself in rhythm becomes a master of poetic language and cadence in a day" (*Conversations*, Vol II).

The book is divided into two parts—*Première partie*—*Mater Dolorosa* contains ten beautiful poems all but the last in rhyme and *Deuxième (Seconde?) Partie* contains five poems in prose, five unrhymed *Maximes*, eighteen rhymed *Distiques* and three translations in prose, two being taken from Bengal Vaishnava sources and the last one from Tagore.

The first section shows brilliant workmanship in French verse, mostly *Alexandrine*, with not infrequent enjambements. Some of the poems show strong influence of *Pleïade* poets, particularly of Du Bellay. No.VIII seems a clear imitation of Baudelaire. Most of these poems are very rich in alliteration, e.g.

S'élancer et plonger dans les fanges charnelles...

...M'embrassaient je ne sais de quels secrets transports (p.4)

La rose d'un matin, le parfum d'un printemps. (p.5)

O rougeur puérile aux paupières timides!

Et délice, dis-moi, n'est-ce enfin lie et fiel? (p.6)

Il pleut... il pleut... il pleut sans fin des pleurs amers. (p.9)

Apart from these ornaments the book is full of excellent diction, mostly natu-

ral French. Such a rare success in mastery of versification in a foreign language by an Indian need not, however, astonish or shock us as we remember the Mantra of Sri Aurobindo:

All can be done if the God-touch is there. (Savitri, BK.I C.II)

The book is sure to encourage other Indian students of French. It must be an asset to all French-teaching Institutions and their Libraries. The get-up and printing are praiseworthy.

N. D. Ghosh

Socrates and Christ by *Firoze C. Davar*: 457 pp. Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, 1972. Rs. 20.00.

SOCRATES and Christ belong to two "supreme moments of human history". Europe's debt to them has been incalculable. Their personalities sound the two most persistent and dominant notes in Western civilisation: its insatiable curiosity to know and its keen willingness to believe in a millennium to come.

Philosophy and Science in the West have moved far enough away from Socrates's delight in nonplussing the opponent in debate, by reducing him to a position of absurdity. Modern man is prone to deny the existence of God and the possibility of finding the Kingdom of Heaven within himself. He tolerates uglinesses which the Christian ethic abhors. He has even tried to prove that Christ is a myth.

But, in spite of all, the clarity of mind which was the whole aim of the Socratic method has been the basis of Philosophy and Science. The need for human brotherhood, the reign of justice and peace on earth, the right of man to be free—these three props of modern civilisation—formed the main gospel of Christ. The French Revolution which sought to eliminate God and enthrone the Goddess of Reason in His place made these its watchwords. Neither the scientific mind nor the spirit of the French Revolution has yet reached fulfilment. So Christ and Socrates live on.

A very full and fair account of these two builders of Western man has been given by the learned author of this volume. He has done much more than that. He traces out the entire course of Greek and Roman philosophy in its setting of general history and culture. He elucidates in the process the high and difficult thought of Plato and brings out the full significance of Aristotle "who did the work not of an individual but an institution" in shaping the higher mind of Medieval Europe. He has an interesting chapter on the Stoics and the Epicureans, and his discussion of Neo-platonism is masterly.

For the story of Socrates the Professor has used all the available sources and dealt with them in the manner of a true historian. One does not really know for certain if

Xanthippe, the wife of Socrates, was as bad as she has been made out to be by the Alexandrine biographers. Socrates is reported to have said, "If you are wedded to a shrew you will soon be turned into a philosopher." This may be just an instance of the man's well-known irony. It may be that what turned Socrates into a philosopher was not Xanthippe but the Daimon or "inner voice" which constantly spoke to him. This Daimon by itself would set him in a class apart from the ordinary run of mortals. It brings him nearer to Christ. He too like Christ had to pay with his life for this "impiety".

The Christ story has been retold by the author with great ability. He gives it an added interest by setting it in the background of Jewish history and religion. What exactly did Christ mean by the Kingdom of Heaven within man? Did he really believe that man and his world were going to undergo a miraculous change within a short time? How are we to understand his description of himself as the Son of God? These are questions which have racked the brains of theologians for two thousand years. The Professor has given his own view-points and we need not perhaps discuss them here. But the soundness of the ethical and the beauty and nobility of character on which our author lays much stress are undoubtedly beyond question. He has brought them out admirably.

We in India today are urgently in need of widening the basis of our culture. One feels certain that this excellent work will serve as a pointer on the way.

CHAUNDONA BANERJI
