

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JULY 1976: SPECIAL ISSUE
SPIRITUAL INDIA AND BICENTENNIAL AMERICA

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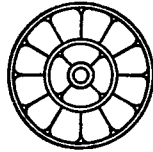
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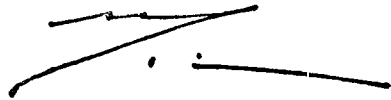


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

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. 7

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE TO AMERICA

**ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SEVENTY-SEVENTH BIRTHDAY AND
INDIA'S SECOND YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE: AUGUST 15, 1949**

I HAVE been asked to send on this occasion of the fifteenth August a message to the West, but what I have to say might be delivered equally as a message to the East. It has been customary to dwell on the division and difference between these two sections of the human family and even oppose them to each other; but for myself I would rather be disposed to dwell on oneness and unity than on division and difference. East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move. There has been a tendency in some minds to dwell on the spirituality or mysticism of the East and the materialism of the West; but the West has had no less than the East its spiritual seekings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics, the East has had its materialistic tendencies, its material splendours, its similar or identical dealings with life and Matter and the world in which we live. East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely, they have powerfully influenced each other and at the present day are under an increasing compulsion of Nature and Fate to do so more than ever before.

There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers. It is no longer towards division and difference, that we should turn our minds, but on unity, union, even oneness necessary for the pursuit and realisation of a common ideal, the destined goal, the fulfilment towards which Nature in her beginning obscurely set out and must in an increasing light of knowledge replacing her first ignorance constantly persevere.

But what shall be that ideal and that goal? That depends on our conception of the realities of life and the supreme Reality.

Here we have to take into account that there has been, not any absolute difference but an increasing divergence between the tendencies of the East and the West. The highest truth is truth of the Spirit; a Spirit supreme above the world and yet immanent in the world and in all that exists, sustaining and leading all towards whatever is the aim and goal and the fulfilment of Nature since her obscure inconscient beginnings through the growth of consciousness is the one aspect of existence which gives a clue to the secret of our being and a meaning to the world. The East has always and increasingly put the highest emphasis on the supreme truth of the Spirit; it has even, in its extreme philosophies, put the world away as an illusion and regarded the Spirit as the sole reality. The West has concentrated more and more increasingly on the world, on the dealings of mind and life with our material existence, on our mastery over it, on the perfection of mind and life and some fulfilment of the human being here: latterly this has gone so far as the denial of the Spirit and even the enthronement of Matter

as the sole reality. Spiritual perfection as the sole ideal on one side, on the other the perfectibility of the race, the perfect society, a perfect development of the human mind and life and man's material existence have become the largest dream of the future. Yet both are truths and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future.

The Science of the West has discovered evolution as the secret of life and its process in this material world; but it has laid more stress on the growth of form and species than on the growth of consciousness: even, consciousness has been regarded as an incident and not the whole secret of the meaning of the evolution. An evolution has been admitted by certain minds in the East, certain philosophies and Scriptures, but there its sense has been the growth of the soul through developing successive forms and many lives of the individual to its own highest reality. For if there is a conscious being in the form, that being can hardly be a temporary phenomenon of consciousness; it must be a soul fulfilling itself and this fulfilment can only take place if there is a return of the soul to earth in many successive lives, in many successive bodies.

The process of evolution has been the development from and in inconscient Matter of a subconscious and then a conscious Life, of conscious mind first in animal life and then fully in conscious and thinking man, the highest present achievement of evolutionary Nature. The achievement of mental being is at present her highest and tends to be regarded as her final work; but it is possible to conceive a still further step of the evolution: Nature may have in view beyond the imperfect mind of man a consciousness that passes out of the mind's ignorance and possesses truth as its inherent right and nature. There is a Truth-consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a Supermind, as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it. In one of the Upanishads a being of knowledge is stated to be the next step above the mental being; into that the soul has to rise and through it to attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence. If that could be achieved as the next evolutionary step of Nature here, then she would be fulfilled and we could conceive of the perfection of life even here, its attainment of a full spiritual living even in this body or it may be in a perfected body. We could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers.

The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, give a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit.

THE MOTHER ON AMERICA

IN the full spiritual knowledge I know that for saving the world and building the New World it is absolutely essential that India and America work together, because these are the two countries that will do it: America with her great material power and India with her spiritual force, both of which are necessary.

1973

... The American people are capable of enthusiasm and aspiration and of plunging into the Future.

1971

The work of the U.S.A. is to provide the financial help needed to prepare the earth for the new creation.

1968

A MESSAGE OF THE MOTHER

**TO DR. JUDITH TYBERG (JYOTIPRIYA) FOR HER WORK IN THE
EAST-WEST CULTURAL CENTER OPENED IN MAY 1953 IN
LOS ANGELES**

FOR you who have realised your soul and seek the integral yoga, to help the others is the best way of helping yourself. Indeed, if you are sincere you will even discover that each of their difficulties, each of their failures is a sure sign of a corresponding deficiency in yourself, the proof that something in you is not perfect enough to be all-powerful.

5 December 1955

THE MOTHER'S REPLY TO AN AMERICAN WELL-WISHER OF THE ASHRAM

NONE of the present achievements of humanity, however great they are, can be for us an ideal to follow. The whole world is there as a field of experiment for human ideals.

Our purpose is quite different and if our chances of success are small just now, we are sure that we are working to prepare the future.

I know that from the external point of view we are below many of the present achievements in this world, but our aim is not a perfection in accordance with the human standards. We are endeavouring for something else which belongs to the future.

The Ashram has been founded and is meant to be the cradle of the new world.

The inspiration is from above, the guiding force is from above, the creative power is from above, at work for the descent of the new realisation.

It is only by its shortcomings, its deficiencies and its failures that the Ashram belongs to the present world.

None of the present achievements of humanity have the power to pull the Ashram out of its difficulties.

It is only a total conversion of all its members and an integral opening to the descending Light of Truth that can help it to realise itself.

The task, no doubt, is a formidable one, but we received the command to accomplish it and we are upon earth for that purpose alone.

We shall continue up to the end with an unfailing trust in the Will and the Help of the Supreme.

The door is open and will always remain open to all those who decide to give their life for the purpose.

13 June 1964

SRI AUROBINDO ON WHITMAN AND THE NEW AGE

(Below are some extracts from The Future Poetry which was first published as a series of essays in Sri Aurobindo's monthly periodical Arya from 15-12-1917 to 15-7-1920)

I

THE mind and soul of the race is now moving forward on the basis of what it has gained by a century of intellectual stir and activity, towards a profounder mood and a more internal force of thought and life ...

A small number of writers,—in the English language Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin are the best known among these names,—build for us a bridge of transition from the intellectual transcendentalism of the earlier nineteenth century across a subsequent low-lying scientific utilitarian, externalised intellectualism, as if from bank to bank across morass or flood, over to the age now beginning to come in towards us. But in the region of poetic thought and creation Whitman was the one prophetic mind which consciously and largely foresaw and prepared the paths and had some sense of that to which they are leading.

He belongs to the largest mind of the nineteenth century by the stress and energy of his intellectual seeking, by his emphasis on man and life and Nature, by his idea of the cosmic and universal, his broad spaces and surfaces, by his democratic enthusiasm, by his eye fixed on the future, by his intellectual reconciling vision at once of the greatness of the individual and the community of mankind, by his nationalism and internationalism, by his gospel of comradeship and fraternity in our common average manhood, by almost all in fact of the immense mass of ideas which form the connecting tissue of his work. But he brings into them an element which gives them another potency and meaning and restores something which in most of the literature of the time tended to be overcast and sicklied over by an excessive intellectual tendency more leaned to observe life than strong and swift to live it and which in the practicality of the time was caught up from its healthful soul of Nature and converted into a huge grinding mechanism.

He has the intimate pulse and power of life vibrating in all he utters, an almost primitive force of vitality, delivered from the enormous mechanical beat of the time by a robust closeness to the very spirit of life,—that closeness he has more than any other poet since Shakespeare,—and ennobled by a lifting up of its earthly vigour into a broad and full intellectual freedom. Thought leads and all is made subject and object and substance of a free and powerful thinking, but this insistence of thought is made one with the pulse of life and the grave reflective pallor and want of blood of an overburdened intellectualism is healed by that vigorous union. Whitman writes with a

conscious sense of his high function as a poet, a clear self-conception and consistent idea of what he has to cast into speech,—

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person
 Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse ...
 Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
 Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
 The Modern Man I sing.

No other writer of the time has had this large and definite consciousness of the work of a modern poet as a representative voice of his age, this inspiring vital sentiment of the nation conceived as a myriad-souled pioneer of human progress, of mankind, of universal Nature, of the vast web of spiritual thought and action. His creation, triumphing over all defect and shortcoming, draws from it a unique broadness of view, vitality of force and sky-wide atmosphere of greatness.

But beyond this representation of the largest thought and life and broadest turn to the future possible to his age, there is something else which arises from it all and carries us forward towards what is now opening in man around or above, towards a vision of new reaches and a profounder interpretation of existence. Whitman by the intensity of his intellectual and vital dwelling on the things he saw and expressed, arrives at some first profound sense of the greater self of the individual, of the greater self in the community of the race and in all its immense past action opening down through the broadening eager present to an immense future, of the greater self of Nature and of the eternal, the divine Self and Spirit of existence who broods over these things, who awaits them and in whom they come to the sense of their oneness. That which the old Indian seers called the *mahān ātmā*, the Great Self, the Great Spirit, which is seen through the vast strain of the cosmic thought and the cosmic life,—the French poets, influenced in their form and substance by Whitman, have seized on this element with the clear discernment and intellectual precision and lucidity of the Latin mind and given it the name of unanimism,—is the subject of some of his highest strains. He goes to it repeatedly through his vision of the past opening to the ideal future, the organic universal movement of bygone nations and ages and the labour and creation of the present and some nobler coming turn to a freedom of unified completion,—

The journey done, the journeyman come home,
 And man and art with Nature fused again ...
 The Almighty Leader now for once has signalled with his wand.

And some part of his work, as in the *Passage to India*, opens out even into a fuller and profounder sense of its meaning. He sees it here as a new voyage of the human spirit, —“O farther sail”

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only ...
 For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
 And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all..
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?

And with a singularly clear first seeing of the ideal goal and the ideal way of the conversion of the intellectual and vital into the spiritual self, he calls the spirit of man to the adventure.

The circumnavigation of the world begin,
 Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,
 To reason's early paradise,
 Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
 Again with fair creation...

He casts forward too the ideal heart of this wider movement of man into the sense of the divine unity which is its completion, brings out the divinity of the soul in man and its kinship to the divinity of the Eternal,—

O Thou transcendent,
 Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
 Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them,
 Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving, ...
 How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if out
 of myself

I could not launch to those superior universes?
 Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
 At nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
 But that I, turning, call to thee, O soul, O actual Me,
 And, lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
 Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
 And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space,—

and he foresees the coming of that kinship of God and man to conscious fruition in oneness,

Greater than stars or suns,
 Bounding, O soul, thou journeyest forth:
 What love than thine and ours could wider amplify?
 What aspirations, wishes outvie thine and ours, O soul?
 What dreams of the ideal, what plans of purity, perfection, strength?
 What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give up all?

For others' sake to suffer all?
 Reckoning ahead, O soul, when thou, the time achieved, ...
 Surrounded, dopest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attained,
 As filled with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found,
 The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

These passages,—one of the seers of old time reborn in ours might have so expressed himself in a modern intellectualised language,—send forward an arc-light of prophetic expression on what is at the very heart of the new movement of humanity. It is in some degree an indication of that which the twentieth century is slowly turning to lay hold of, to develop and to make its own in a closer actuality of insight and experience.

2

Whitman's aim is consciently, clearly, professedly to make a great revolution in the whole method of poetry, and if anybody could have succeeded, it ought to have been this gaint of poetic thought with his energy of diction, this spiritual crowned athlete and vital prophet of democracy, liberty and the soul of man and Nature and all humanity. He is a great poet, one of the greatest in the power of his substance, the energy of his vision, the force of his style, the largeness at once of his personality and his universality. His is the most Homeric voice since Homer, in spite of the modern's ruder, less elevated aesthesis of speech and the difference between that limited Olympian and this broad-souled Titan, in this that he has the nearness to something elemental which makes everything he says, even the most common and prosaic, sound out with a ring of greatness, gives a force even to his barest or heaviest phrases, throws even upon the coarsest, dullest, most physical things something of the divinity; and he has the elemental Homeric power of sufficient straightforward speech, the rush too of oceanic sound though it is here the surging of the Atlantic between continents, not the magic roll and wash of the Aegean around the isles of Greece.

What he has not is the unfailing poetic beauty and nobility which saves greatness from its own defects,—that supreme gift of Homer and Valmiki,—and the self-restraint and obedience to a divine law which makes even the gods more divine. Whitman will remain great after all the objections that can be made against his method or his use of it, but the question is whether what served his unique personality can be made a rule for lesser or different spirits, and whether the defects which we see but do not and cannot weigh too closely in him, will not be fatal when not saved by his all-uplifting largeness. A giant can pile up Pelion and Ossa and make of it an unhewn chaotic stair to Olympus, but others would be better and more safely employed in cutting steps of marble or raising by music a ladder of sapphires and rubies to their higher or their middle heavens. Personality, force, temperament can do unusual miracles, but the miracle cannot always be turned into a method or a standard.

Whitman's verse, if it can be so called, is not simply a cadenced prose, though quite a multitude of his lines only just rise above the prose rhythm. The difference is that there is a constant will to intensify the fall of the movement so that instead of the unobtrusive ictus of prose, we have a fall of the tread, almost a beat, and sometimes a real beat, a meeting and parting, sometimes a deliberate clash or even crowding together of stresses which recall the spirit of the poetical movement, though they obey no recognised structural law of repetitions and variations. In this kind of rhythm we find actually three different levels,—the distinction may be a little rough, but it will serve,—a gradation which is very instructive. First we have a movement which just manages to be other than prose movement, but yet is full of the memory of a certain kind of prose rhythm. Here the first defect is that the ear is sometimes irritated, sometimes disappointed and balked by a divided demand, memory or expectation, hears always the prose suggestion behind pursuing and dragging down the feet of the poetic enthusiasm. It is as if one were watching the "aerial walk" of a Hatha-yogin who had just conquered the force of gravitation, but only to the extent of a few inches, so that one is always expecting the moment which will bring him down with a bump to mother earth. It is something like a skimming just above the ground of prose, sometimes a dragging of the feet with a frequent touch and upkicking of the dust, for inevitably the poetic diction and imaginative power of style fall to the same level. Much of Whitman's work is in this manner; he carries it off by the largeness and sea-like roll of the total impression, but others have not the same success,—even the French craftsmen are weighed down,—and in them the whole has a draggled and painful effect of an amphibious waddling incertitude. But there is a nobler level, at which he often keeps, which does not get out of the prose plain or lift above all its gravitation, but still has a certain poetic power, greatness and nobility of movement. But it is still below what an equal force would have given in the master measures of poetry.

But the possibilities of an instrument have to be judged by its greatest effects, and there are poems, lines, passages in which Whitman strikes out a harmony which has no kinship to nor any memory of the prose gravitation, but is as far above it as anything done in the great metrical cadences. And here, and not only in Whitman, but in all writers in this form who rise to that height, we find that consciously or unconsciously they arrive at the same secret principle, and that is the essential principle of Greek choric and dithyrambic poetry turned to the law of a language which has not the strong resource of quantity.¹ Arnold deliberately attempted such an adaptation but in spite of beautiful passages, with scant success; still, when he writes such a line as

The too vast orb of her fate,

¹ "Quantity" is the element of time taken in pronouncing a syllable, making it long or short as distinguished from its being stressed or slack. In English, according to Sri Aurobindo, quantitative length cannot replace the element of stress which is natural to this language, but can constitute an additional recognised feature of the metre, interplaying with it in the structure of the foot in various regular or irregular ways (Editor)

it is this choric movement that he reproduces. Whitman's first poem in *Sea-Drift* and a number of others are written partly or throughout in this manner. When he gives the dactylic and spondaic harmony of his lines,

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the ninth-month midnight,

one of them wanting only one foot to be a very perfect hexameter, or the subtly varied movement of this other passage,

Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama,

one has almost the rhythmical illusion of listening to a Sophoclean or Aeschylean chorus. In the opening stanzas of the noble *Prayer of Columbus*, there is a continuous iambic metrical stress, but with the choric movement. One finds the same thing sometimes in French *vers libre*,—one poem at least of the kind I have seen of wonderful beauty,—though success is not so easy in that language. Tagore has recently attempted a kind of free verse in Bengali, not so good as his regular metres, though melodious enough, as everything must be that is written by that master musician of the word, and throughout there is the same choric or dithyrambic principle of movement. This then seems to be the natural high-water mark of free poetical rhythm; it is a use of the poetic principle of measure in its essence without the limitations of a set form.

Evidently much can be done in this rhythmic method. But it is yet doubtful whether in languages which lack the support of quantitative measure, poetical expression in this form can carry home with all the same force as in the received ways of word-music.

AN AMERICAN'S SPIRITUAL SEARCH AND SRI AUROBINDO'S RESPONSE

The Search

New York, 24th April, 1947

FIVE years ago this spring I had a mystic experience, or psychic opening, or "vision"—I don't know what to call it. In a curious way that moment in my life marks the year O, for ever since it I have been a different person. I am writing to ask you the meaning of it all.

Immediately after this experience there was a period of elation, a season of living on a relatively high plane. There were many beautiful moments when time stopped and I entered into the life of things about me. Then there was the descent through the stages of the way I had gone up, rapid steps down the ladder of disenchantment into depression. Then a long, dead, empty period, the depth of which was in direct proportion to the earlier height. I became a vegetable, incapable of loving anything.

When I began to realise that the wonderful thing which had happened was not at all usual, that it was nothing which I might share with anyone else, and that clearly it was not going to happen again—I was an outcast from the light that I loved so—then I began to read, to search in books for the answer. I found your *Essays on the Gita* in the little Gateway bookshop here, and then other books of yours, and others. One by one I brought them home, read them, reread them and treasured them. The little one called *The Mother* I often carried around with me (still do) carefully wrapped up—partially to keep it clean, partially so no one should see.

I read of Margaret Woodrow Wilson coming to you, and briefly I thought, "Ah that's what I must do." But then there was the war and the impossibility of travel. The idea was in no way practical. Now in retrospect, that I did not come to you then was a sign that I was not ready, or that the executive power that manages my life and all things would not yet have me.

Then recently at a party I met Bharati Sarabhai. She asked me why I was so eager to go to India, what I was interested in. I found her enormously sympathetic, someone to whom I could talk at last and, as so seldom happens, we became friends immediately. It is she who has suggested that I write to you. I am very grateful for this bridge.

Though it is now some time since that moment out of this world, it was such a moment as to make all life in this world pale. I still think about it (perhaps this was a mistake), wondering how to recreate it. However pleasant, successful and well-coordinated my surface life is (and it is all of these), there was always with me a substratum of questioning and longing. Often I am vague and absent-minded like a person who has lost something and who goes about constantly wishing he could find it.

Have I attached too much importance to a tiny moment? Or is the light that I

saw the real world and, if so, is there a way for me to return to it? A revolutionary at heart, I could drop my life, give up everything I have carefully built over the years, and do whatever it is necessary to do—come to you pleading for instruction, for example. However, just because I am an extremist by temperament, I should probably aim to do things less drastically. My husband assures me that India is no place for an American woman to travel alone, especially with the difficult times that may be ahead, but I am not frightened, and you can see that I am turning over in my mind ways that might get me to Pondicherry.

I want to see you. Tears come as I write these words. But tears come easily when no one is looking. Sometimes they come at the mere sight of your books. (That's one reason why I keep them hidden.) To me your books have the quality of powerful Symphonic music. Their outside pristine whiteness fills me with emotion—that sense of longing, and a sort of fury with myself that I am not big enough to encompass what you say with full understanding, and as a whole. I want to contain it.

I wonder if the particular path which led me up into the light in the first place is of any importance as a link in my story. Certainly it is one which baffles me in view of all that I have since read. I went “through the shutter in the top of the mind” while making love with my husband. I would say that the period of preparation leading up to this covered approximately two years, though the renunciation spoken of in mystical literature is foreign to me. I gave myself because it is the woman's role to do so. It just happened that I asked nothing in return. Is that so unusual? Why should a miracle, if it is a miracle, come to me, and not to others? Who am I? What is my status on the evolutionary ladder? Where lies duty?

If the purpose of human life is spiritual evolution, then I am inclined to want to get on with the main business of living now, and with proper help. To stay in the hit-or-miss world with its stumbling, delay, diluted experience, fickle satisfactions, questionable and retroactive prizes seems to me to be wasting time. If there is a battle to be fought, what am I doing sitting around eating cream puffs that I don't like the taste of, anyway?

Often I am bored with the repetition of it all. There is a feeling of ineptness, isolation; I am weighed down and hemmed in by the shell that I know sooner or later will be shed. Must I wait? Certainly there is a goal, even for the human being on the mundane level. Why cannot I take even the first steps on the way to it? Surely a little progress is better than no progress at all; and wandering around in the maze hardly seems appropriate for one who at least feels that a goal exists.

It seems to me that the rhythm of life is a dynamic thrust from a relaxed centre of gravity. Ideally this is a rhythm of all activity, yet how can the thrusts be dynamic if the centre of gravity is not consistently calm? How can one be efficient at anything if one is not in and of this basic rhythm? From a ruffled centre the thrusts become petty jabs missing their mark, stirring up confusion, accomplishing nothing.

I see this and feel it in my present state in a dim sort of way. I should like to feel it again intensely. I would like to find that centre from which action springs—

efficient action, with a minimum of effort and a maximum of result. And I feel that I could, if only I might go off quietly away from all the noise and business and just concentrate ardently on one thing—a person, or an idea, or I don't know what. But I need help, or I need to get out of the West, probably both.

When I ask myself what single thing I want out of life I have but one answer; I want to return to the light. It's like an inward cry with me, and pathetic because I realize how slim are my chances at my present tempo and temperature. Life is a struggle, especially in energetic and competitive New York. It takes a great deal of energy just to go along with the current. Is it worth it? Cannot that same quantum of energy just to go along with the current. Is it worth it? Cannot that same quantum of energy be directed into a more fruitful, more lasting, more fundamental effort? I don't like waste, and I feel I am dissipating my will, frittering it out in little bits that don't add up to anything but the perpetration of the general confusion in the world. Where is my place? Where should I set my sight? What seeds of resolution can I sow now that I may one day re-enter the light, or if that is not to be given, that in the world I may live in the great pulse?

Thank you, Great Sir, for any help that you are willing to send my way. Thank you for your books, and for your work in the world. Thank you for what you are.

With deep respect and the longing that brings tears.

ELEANOR MOORE MONTGOMERY

The Response through a Disciple

It is no longer necessary to answer Mrs. X's original question about the occasion for her experience and the circumstances under which it came, since she has received a complete answer from the passage in the *Words of the Mother* and has understood its meaning.¹ But I may say that the opening upwards, the ascent into the Light and the subsequent descent into the ordinary consciousness and normal human life is very common as the first decisive experience in the practice of Yoga and may very well happen even without the practice of Yoga in those who are destined for the spiritual change, especially if there is a dissatisfaction somewhere with the ordinary life and a seeking for something more, greater or better. It comes often exactly in the way that she describes and the cessation of the experience and the descent also come in the same way. This first experience may be followed by a very long time during which there is no repetition of it or any subsequent experience. If there is a constant practice of Yoga, the interval need not be so long; but even so it is often long enough. The descent is inevitable because it is not the whole being that has risen up but only something within, and all the rest of the nature is unprepared, absorbed in or attached to ordinary life and governed by movements that are not in consonance with the Light. Still the something within is something central in the being and therefore the experience is in a way definitive and decisive. For it comes as a decisive intimation of the

¹ A second letter was written to Sri Aurobindo before the receipt of his reply to the first, and there a reference was made to the *Words of The Mother*. (Editor)

spiritual destiny and an indication of what must be reached some time in the life. Once it has been there, something is bound to happen which will open the way, determine the right knowledge and the right attitude enabling one to proceed on the way and bring a helping influence. After that, the work of clearing away the obstacles that prevent the return to the Light and the ascension of the whole being and, what is equally important, the descent of the Light into the whole being can be begun and progress towards completion. It may take long or be rapid, that depends on the inner push and also on outer circumstances but the inner aspiration and endeavour count more than the circumstances which can accommodate themselves to the inner need if that is very strong. The moment has come for her and the necessary aspiration and knowledge and the influence that can help her. It is not absolutely necessary to abandon the ordinary life in order to seek after the Light or to practise Yoga. This is usually done by those who want to make a clean cut, to live a purely religious or exclusively inner and spiritual life, to renounce the world entirely and to depart from the cosmic existence by cessation of the human birth and passing away into some higher state or into the transcendental Reality. Otherwise it is only necessary when the pressure of the inner urge becomes so great that the pursuit of the ordinary life is no longer compatible with the pursuit of the dominant spiritual objective. Till then what is necessary is a power to practise an inner isolation, to be able to retire within oneself and concentrate at any time on the necessary spiritual purpose. There must also be a power to deal with the ordinary outer life from a new inner attitude and one can then make the happenings of that life itself a means for the inner change of nature and the growth in spiritual experience. This was what was recommended to Miss Wilson when she first wanted to join the Ashram; she had already acquired the habit of inward concentration and it was suggested to her to proceed further in this way, opening herself towards the spiritual and psychic aid she could get from there, until she had made further progress; later on we acceded to her request to join the Ashram. The Ashram has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit. There is no general rule as to the stage at which one may leave the ordinary life and enter here; in each case it depends on the personal need and impulsion and the possibility or the advisability for one to take the step, the decision resting with the Mother.

The objection of the difficult times ahead and the idea that it is unsafe for an American woman to travel alone in India seem to be based on an erroneous impression; as a matter of fact, American and European women do very ordinarily travel alone in India without any fear of mishap. The difficulties in this country have been recently between Indians and Indians and not between Indians and Europeans; in these disturbances no Europeans have been the object of attack or suffered any trouble.

INTERIOR NAVIGATION

I'VE tied my fate to the tail of a kite
And however I flap in the gusty gale
Or whip-lash the wind, with a bright
Air-worthy lead I sail.

When I come into port in the thick of the night
I'll hurl the umbilical rope afar,
Tether somehow by some singular sight
This battered bark to a star!

Though I wake in the caves of the troglodyte
Or the underground vault of the safely dead,
Like a vapor I'll rise, or a flaming sprite,
To moor my ship overhead,

Then anchor (by some secret sleight
Of mind) up in the midnight sea
And wait on the deep for the marvelous light
That guides solitarily.

ELEANOR MOORE MONTGOMERY

A BHAKTA

INTENSE apotheosis of emotion
Transforms her: an attendant of the Lord,
Herself divine, from whose carved limbs are poured
Libations of the nectar of devotion,
Like wine from a sculpted pitcher. Like an ocean
That surges moonward all of her yearns toward
The soul-conducting orb of the Adored,
A symphony of polyphonic motion.

Her offering is made without reserve:
The whole sea's eddying and flux and swirl
Swept up into one wave's enormous curl
That races to the shore. Each ardent curve
Each poise of her rapt body is imbued
With a rich quintessence of infinitude.

PETER HEEHS

U.S.A.—“THE GIANT OF THE FUTURE”

AN HISTORICAL APPRAISAL BASED ON SRI AUROBINDO'S INSIGHTS

THE Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776 by the thirteen erstwhile colonies of Great Britain on the eastern sea-board of North America was in appearance a foolhardy act. But, like some foolhardy acts in the history of an individual or nation destined to greatness, it was fraught with an immense meaning for the future. The prophetic vision of Sri Aurobindo saw the United States as “the giant of the future”¹ long before the world was made aware of the fact.

The formation of the thirteen colonies into the giant nation that we see in being today was the fruit of an historical necessity. “It was a real unity, a psychologically distinct unit which tended at first ignorantly by the subconscious necessity of its being and afterwards with a sudden ... awakening to the sense of political oneness, towards an inevitable political unification. It is a distinct group-soul which is driven by inward necessity and uses outward circumstances to constitute for itself an organised body.”²

The significance of the American Declaration may have escaped the contemporary mind. But this could not be for long. The example of a weak unorganised people overthrowing the tyranny of an irresponsible Parliament armed with all the paraphernalia of power moved the French intelligentsia to rebellion against an irresponsible monarchical regime. The glorious French Revolution was a direct consequence. The lesson was not lost on the intelligentsia of the Latin American neighbours either. If the North could throw off the yoke of Great Britain, why could not the South expel Spain and Portugal? It could, and did, though it took a longer time to do it. In the course of less than half a century, a new world was brought into existence to redress the balance of the old, paradoxically enough with the full support of Great Britain.

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The formation of the United States has a deeper significance in world history. It was the first considerable attempt—and an eminently successful attempt—to create a nation-unit by agreement. Switzerland offers an earlier precedent and so do the Netherlands. But these were comparatively small units and the problems involved were not so difficult of solution.

Here, in the United States, the regional differences, between North and South for example, were most acute. The North was democratic and egalitarian in sentiment, the South was aristocratic and deeply attached to the episcopal system of church government. The North lived on free trade and industry, the South on the vast tobacco plantations depending on slave labour. The South had a large loyalist element to whom “independence” was a word that smacked of sedition, the North considered freedom as its birthright. The Middle Colonies, with New York as their hub, stood

in between these two extreme attitudes; but they too sought to maintain their own independent position at any cost. To have been able to convene a "national", or "continental", Congress, as it was called, at Philadelphia in 1774 was nothing short of a miracle.

A greater miracle happened when it passed a resolution to boycott the British Government; the resolution was to apply to all the thirteen colonies, loyalist and freedom-loving alike. When it met again in 1775 and soon afterwards issued the Declaration of Independence, the future of the United States was settled. A nation had come into being by agreement. The future could now take lessons from this important precedent, and it did. Gone were the days when, as in Plantagenet and Tudor England and in Bourbon France, a king had to forge the divergent units into a single nation-state with the help of an army and at the cost of much bloodshed in civil wars. And the federal principle was firmly established.

We in India have a particular interest in the American Revolution because it has many features in common with our own movement towards independence. In America as in India there were "exploitation" by a rapacious overlord and a smouldering discontent; there was an attack on national self-respect that set the revolt aflame for the first time — the Ilbert Bill in India, the quartering of troops in the Colonies; there was a highly educated lawyer and journalist class that assumed the mantle of leadership; in both countries "boycott" became the watchword of revolt. The only important difference was that whilst the Americans had to fight the battle with rifles and cannon, India was spared that ordeal. But in terms of human suffering, there was not really much to choose, for ours was a much more protracted agony. Washington was undoubtedly a Vibhuti, Sri Aurobindo no less than an Avatar.

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What, it may be asked, led to the unprecedented growth of the United States in the 19th century? The geographical factor was there: the enormous stretch of territory to the Pacific coast, with its fertile prairies and an almost unlimited store of coal and iron and mineral oil and other economic resources. The human factor was no less important: the inflow of strong energetic hungry adventurous people from across the Atlantic—the Germans and Scandinavians, Poles and Russians, Italians and Irishmen—who very soon melted into the older British and Dutch stock and added their special gifts to form the new nation; the mixture of races always makes for an improvement in the breed. The American negro, in spite of the moral, economic and socio-political difficulties connected with him, had his share in the nation's growth; "King Cotton" was ruler of the States for nearly a century and made the nation immensely rich, and there could have been no such king had not the negro slaved and pined for his sake.

But the foresight of the framers of the American constitution and the sagacity of the men at the helm of affairs had not a little to do with American greatness. Entirely

aware of the normal human tendency to the misuse of power, the framers of the Constitution did not only set up an efficient system of “checks and balances”; they also made it extremely difficult to alter the Constitution. This gave the United States a “strong attachment to its original constitution and slowness in accepting constitutional innovations ...”³ In order to safeguard the Constitution which lays an immense stress on the autonomy of the individual States and gives to the Federal Authority only such powers as are indispensable to national unity and well-being, the rulers of the nation were perforce obliged to keep the nation aloof from foreign entanglements as far as it could be done without prejudice to national honour and national safety. For, “once militarised, once cast into the vortex of old-world politics, as it at times threatens to be, nothing could long protect the States from the necessity of large changes in the direction of centralisation and the weakening of the federal principle.”⁴

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There is a strong element of idealism in the national character of the American people. To whatever sources this might be ascribed—the seeking for an escape from the intolerant Anglicanism of the Early Stuarts and, later, from the equally intolerant Puritanism of Cromwell’s England, the strong influence of the Bible among the preponderant middle class, perhaps even the spirit of the Wild West with its search for the unknown, the strong and influential Irish element with its proverbially “unpractical” bent,—the basic note is yet that of the highly efficient matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxon, with his strong sense of self-interest and the capacity to attain his targets by the shortest of short cuts. These two almost contradictory elements account for much of American history and especially in its aspect of foreign relations.

“The United States,” observes Sri Aurobindo in the period before World War I, “were always pacific and non-imperialistic in sentiment and principle, yet with an undertone of nationalistic susceptibility which threatened recently to take an imperialistic turn and led the nation to make two or three wars ending in conquests whose results it had then to reconcile with its non-imperialistic pacifism. It annexed Mexican Texas by war and then turned it into a constituent State of the Union, swamping it at the same time with American colonists. It conquered Cuba from Spain and the Philippines first from Spain and then from the insurgent Filipinos and, not being able to swamp them with colonists, gave Cuba independence under the American influence and promised the Filipinos a complete independence.”⁵ Such generosity, it is pertinent to observe, has not been shown by the Old World imperialism except under strong pressure of circumstances.

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It is this spirit of idealism and practical generosity that accounts for two of the most astounding events of recent history, the splendid and instantaneous reception given to Swami Vivekananda in America in the last decade of the 19th century, and the active

and practical sympathy shown by the American people and government to India's aspirations for political Independence. It is surprising how Vivekananda's "Brothers and Sisters of America" as the opening words of his first speech at the Chicago World Conference on Religions in 1893 literally swept the American audience off their feet, and prepared the ground for Vedanta in America. It is on record that the organisers of the Conference made it henceforth their policy to keep the Swami's speech as the last item on the agenda on all the subsequent days, just in order to hold the audience to their seats.

The part played by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the negotiations for Indian independence during the early 'forties is fairly well-known by now, especially since the publication of the relevant records from the Government archives. I need not dwell on it here. But one cannot escape the temptation of quoting *in extenso* a remarkable passage in the *Karmayogin* of Sri Aurobindo, where he refers to the "merit" acquired by America in extending its active and practical sympathy towards Indian aspirations during the first stages of the Independence movement. This passage appears under a strange caption, "The Recoil of Karma."

"There is a general law that Karma rebounds upon the doer. Associated in Hindu philosophy mainly with the individual and the theory of rebirth, this truth has also been recognised as equally applicable on other lines to the present life and to the destiny of nations. The Karma of the British people in India has been of a mixed quality. So far as it has opened the gates of Western knowledge to the people of this country it has been good and in return the thought and knowledge of India has poured back upon Europe to return the gift with overmeasure. Had they in addition consciously raised up and educated the whole people, all the fruits of that good Karma would have gone to England. But the education they have given is bad, meagre and restricted to the few, and their sympathy for the people has been formal and deficient. In consequence the main flood of the new thought and knowledge has been diverted to America, the giant of the future, which alone of the nations has shown an active and practical sympathy and understanding of our nation."⁶ The exact nature of the help given by America in the early phases of the Indian Revolution awaits further research. But Sri Aurobindo seems to have been aware of it as early as 1909.

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Is it possible to hazard a guess about the American future?

Present indications are always deceptive; one has to look deeper. America was the subject of informal conversation between Sri Aurobindo and some disciples during the early 'twenties. Here is the gist of what Sri Aurobindo is reported to have said.⁷

"There is a great future for America. But the possibilities are yet to be realised.... The success of the Americans is due not to the mind, which naturally is composed of many elements, but to their lively, quick, youthful though as yet crude vital force ...

The American mind is more alive and open to new things ... Some people in America are getting the same influence and touch, the same experiences, as the Sadhaks here though not of the Supramental. But what is going on at present is only a new movement of ideas, some elementary Yoga ...”

This was perhaps enough to make a beginning. Things may since have been moving faster in the right direction or, shall we say, preparing for a move in the right direction. The giant of the future is, for all we know, getting ready to spring us a happy surprise.

SANAT K. BANERJI

References

- ¹ “The Recoil of Karma”, *Karmayogin*, July 31, 1909 (Centenary Volume 2, pp. 121-22).
- ² Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Pondicherry 1950), p. 35.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-20. Independence was granted to the Filipinos in 1946
- ⁶ “The Recoil of Karma,” *loc cit.*
- ⁷ “Sri Aurobindo at Evening Talk,” *Mother India*, August 1971, February 1972.

U. S. INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION: FIRST WAR AGAINST COLONIALISM

PRIME MINISTER MRS. INDIRA GANDHI'S INTERVIEW TO "SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER"

(With grateful acknowledgments to Indian & Foreign Review of May 1, 1976, we are reproducing this report as doubly relevant—relevant not only because it deals with, among other things, Bicentennial America but also because it carries the views of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Our Prime Minister has always been deeply sympathetic to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram as the spearhead of Spiritual India towards the future. We may gauge something of her relation to it from the message she issued on November 18, 1973 about the Mother of the Ashram:

"I am profoundly grieved at the passing away of the Mother. It was rather a privilege to know such a being and to have her in our midst for so many years. May her words continue to give sustenance to her disciples and others.

"The Mother was a dynamic, radiant personality with tremendous force of character and extraordinary spiritual attainments. Yet she never lost her sound practical wisdom which concerned itself with the running of the Ashram, the welfare of society, the founding and development of Auroville and any scheme which would promote the ideals expressed by Sri Aurobindo.

"She was young in spirit, modern in mind but most expressive was her abiding faith in the spiritual greatness of India and the role which India could play in giving new light to mankind.")

THE Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, said on 12 April in New Delhi that there is no basic change in our philosophy. "We only wish to plug the loopholes and improve the functioning, specially of the legal system, so that major social and economic programmes can go ahead," she said in an interview with Dr. G. B. Lal of *San Francisco Examiner*, one of the Hearst group of newspapers of the U.S.A. Mrs. Gandhi added that "the emergency was a kind of shock treatment intended to tell the country that the nation cannot survive or the future built if there is widespread indiscipline, if factories, railways, universities are not allowed to work, if legislatures are degraded by shouting and fist-fighting and used only for personal attacks, and if elected representatives are intimidated and forced to resign."

Referring to the talk of India giving up "openness", Mrs. Gandhi said, "You can go round anywhere and see that there is no 'police state' atmosphere. In fact, throughout the emergency, we have not had to use the police at all and the people are relaxed. If by 'openness' or 'giving up openness' you mean that we have given up democracy, this also is a wholly incorrect surmise. The emergency is intended to deal with grave internal disturbance, which was no less than the breakdown of the country."

The Prime Minister said: "What the American editors do is that they make up their mind that somebody is anti-American and they project that opinion. I am not at all anti-American. Perhaps you know that the same was sought to be done with my father. There were people here, Indians, who went to America and said 'Mr. Nehru does not like the Americans.' That was the image that the people tried to spread. There was no truth in it, and there is no truth in it so far as I am concerned either." Mrs. Gandhi added that she knew that "the people of America are genuinely friendly and I can assure them that the Indian people fully reciprocate that feeling, and I do too. I admire the Americans and I think that most of the new ideas that come up in almost any field are coming up from the United States."

India's present generation as well as the earlier one, Mrs. Gandhi said, was inspired by not only the declaration of American independence but also by the personalities of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln. "I have publicly given the American people my greetings on their bicentenary. We believe that the people of the U.S.A. have built up one of the major civilisations of human history. The American war of independence was practically the first war against colonialism and the first freedom movement. And, apart from that, as I said, we greatly admire America's creativity and the achievements in the arts and science and technology," the Prime Minister said.

But, Mrs. Gandhi added, "unfortunately sometimes the American newspapers are interested in finding an anti-American bias and if something is said, they take it out of context and flash it, but they don't say any of the good things we say. And then, you know, we do have people who are critical of America. So, if you want us to have an open society, we can't shut them out."

On the present condition of the state, Mrs. Gandhi said, "I can tell you that we are much stronger than we were five years ago." "Outside", she added, "they are always talking about Indian poverty. It is true we do have poverty. But what people do not talk about is our heroic endeavour to overcome these gigantic economic problems."

Citing some of India's achievements, she said: "We have more than doubled our food production—from 50 million tonnes to 114 million tonnes. We have built some of the world's largest irrigation dams and added more than 55 million acres to the irrigated area. We have built up industry and today, in terms of industrial production, we are amongst the world's first dozen countries. We have produced and designed a wide range of machines which we are even exporting."

Clarifying another "great misconception" that "we live on aid and doles" the Prime Minister said: "Four-fifths of the investment for development has come from our own people's savings. Even the rest are loans which we are repaying. And our record of repayment has been praised abroad, because we have always been very prompt. We did receive considerable quantities of foodgrains as gift—mostly from America—to tide over periods of scarcity and we greatly appreciated this. But our aim is to become self-reliant."

Referring to a question on change in the science and technology policy, Mrs. Gandhi said that Jawaharlal Nehru, her father, regarded science as the most important key to the lessening of poverty and economic backwardness, and placed great emphasis on the establishment of national laboratories and centres of advanced technical training. "We have built up a research base and manpower capacity. And this has also been strengthened in the last ten years because we have paid special attention to it," Mrs. Gandhi said. "But I would like to stress that our science is being, and will be, used for economic development because you know sometimes they think that we are using it for war purposes. This is why I want to say that we are using it for the welfare of the people."

"Atomic energy," the Prime Minister said, "was not being used for defence. It is being used for generation of power mostly, and also for agriculture and medicine."

ON HEARING SOME MUSIC

"You built them temples in their sense of sound." (Rilke)

LIKE winds that walk in splendour through the night
 Clad in rapture's dark and burning cloak,
 Or the cool white voice of murmuring crystal light
 That through the silence of a star once spoke;

Like a dawn that flings her soul of golden fire
 Across the shores of stillness, strange and dim,
 Of seas that in their wild chants would aspire
 To sweep the earth with one vast silver hymn;

Like the lonely flight of prayer across the sky,
 Or the low shy call of Love's swift laughing streams,
 These notes hold in their hands the gentle cry
 Of the flames that sing in our hearts' quiet dreams.

JEAN

RECENT AMERICAN INTEREST IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

THE EAST-WEST PROBLEM YESTERDAY AND TODAY

(This is the reconstruction, from notes, of a Talk given some years ago in Bombay by Frederic Spiegelberg, Ph.D. (Thubingen), S. T. M. (Hamburg), distinguished American thinker, author of The Religious Experience of Plotinus, The Religion of No-Religion, The Living Religions of the World, etc., and co-editor of The Bible of the World. The reconstruction was made by K. D. Sethna and fully approved by Dr. Spiegelberg. Although already published in Mother India in the past it is appropriate on the occasion of America's bicentennial celebration.)

WE are faced all the time by the East-West problem. It is one of the most important and the acuteness of it demands an answer. Various answers have been attempted from Rudyard Kipling's to Benoy Kumar Sircar's. No solution has yet come forth, but it is possible to give a clearer definition of it. The definition is mainly psychological and therein lies its supreme interest because psychological analysis brings us a closer understanding of it.

The Psychological Laws of Generalization and Projection

We must confront our own prejudices before we can draw the East and the West nearer to each other. Psychological research helps us to get over our handicaps. We must understand two chief psychological laws — the law of generalization and the law of projection. When we generalize, we are inclined to speak of ourselves and our own group in contradistinction to other people. We think in terms of "we" and "they": we are the chosen and they are the common lot, our own town is the centre of the universe and all other towns are nothing compared to it and are foreign to us. We use all sorts of lines of demarcation: even a railway track suffices to divide two sides. There is a strong drive in the human soul to make such divisions and label them as good and bad, right and wrong. Naturally, therefore, we tend to speak of us Westerners and you Easterners or *vice versa* and to set the categories in opposition and give them favourable or unfavourable colour.

By the psychological law of projection we throw out of ourselves and upon others all those qualities we do not wish to have. The East-West classification brings this law into very lively play, in a negative as well as a positive manner. Qualities the Westerners do not want to be blamed for — the defect or shadow in them — they project upon the Easterners who become to them the dark fellows, the defective races. The Westerners say: "We are active", and in their anxiety to affirm their own active-

ness they cast on the Easterners the slur of passivity. All kinds of specious proofs are brought forward to show that they are making the world glorious by their efforts while the inhabitants of the East are mere escapists without creative energy. "We are the realists," say the white men, "you Easterners are dreamers." Or, in another mood, they declare: "We are the idealists who have great dreams; you are the materialists who are content with things as they are and remain unprogressive." The qualities that are sought to be shoved on to the East vary with occasions and individuals: there is not much consistency, except that, throughout, it is the self-same impulse to clear oneself of the suspicion of undesirable attributes by using the other man as a waste-paper basket for them.

The habit of negative projection has prevented the Western world from having a true and useful picture of India. Equally dangerous is the habit of positive projection. Here there is a negative attitude towards oneself, a masochistic impulse to accuse oneself of ignorance and impotence and look to somebody else to do the world's work. Such masochism is a strong streak in the religious consciousness. Dr. Rudolf Otto elaborated on its presence in his famous book, *The Idea of the Holy*. He explained that what he called the Numinous, the Godly, is that before which we feel infinitely dwarfed and awed and which is entirely different from us. What is utterly incommensurable for us, the absolutely other to the frail and mortal human — this is, according to Dr. Otto, the genuine definition of the Divine, the Numinous. Such a definition, when it works on not too high a level of mind, passes easily into a delusion that all which seems very different from us is wonderful. The very different has not the depth and intensity of the entirely different which assumes the aspect of Godhead when we feel that we are poor sinners and that beyond the world are all the ideals and truths realised. The very different which figures in positive projection is an *ersatz* article. The West's usual picture of India is a glaring example. Any swami who dresses in a flowing robe is taken to be a source of supreme wisdom. Every word of his is swallowed by those who search for a realisation of ideals and cannot find it in their own too-well-known surroundings. This is a mistaken approach and modern psychology teaches us to understand the mistake and overcome it and thereby arrive at a more accurate comprehension of the East-West problem.

The Time-Sense in East and West

Today this problem is dealt with in a much soberer way than in the past. There is no encouragement given to that malicious deception which served once as an outlet for passions. If Catherine Mayo wrote now a defamatory book on India, she would have hardly any followers. Such propaganda as hers would be seen for what it is: the psychological age has provided us with eyes to read the motivations of it and attach little importance to its slanders and scurrilities. We are eager for studies of the East-West problem on other lines, we want subtler and deeper evaluations. A book that has recently had a vogue is *The Meeting of East and West* by F.S.C. Northrop. It is not

exactly an original contribution but it sums up well the research that has been going on of late. Although it is not easy reading because of its rather technical language, one of its main theories stands out as especially illuminating, the theory that the time-sense in the East is different from the time-sense in the West.

The East lives in an indefinite continuum of the dateless, the West in a continuum of the definitely dated. In this difference lies the whole distinction of the East's attitude to life from the West's. In more simple terms we may bring the difference to a point by asking: How do Easterners and Westerners regard time? Time, as Kant has taught us, is a category of the human mind, it is one of the modes or frames into which our consciousness by its own nature puts reality during the act of apprehension. According as one consciousness varies from another, the time-sense varies. Time for the bee and the fly cannot be the same as time for the elephant. Time in India has a very different feeling from time in Europe and America. The East feels time as a circle, the West as a line running from future through present into past. The line is like a river with some breadth: fishes of opportunity swim in it and we cast nets in it to catch them. If the fishes are not caught, they seem to us to have been lost for ever. Hence the idea we get of not having done what we should have, the idea of sin and its consequence of remorse. A keen responsibility keeps our nerves on edge, a tension comes into our minds and there is serious neurosis. Our feverish desire to make use of the passing moment, our strickenness of conscience if we do not succeed—these are connected with the metaphysical picture we have of time as a line.

The Indian picture of time, which makes of it a circle, implies that time comes back again and again. What you do not finish now, you can finish later. There is no morbid hurry or pang of devastating irrevocableness. No opportunity is reckoned to be lost for good. And when there is a sense of return, it is exceedingly natural that there should be a belief in transmigration and reincarnation. The notion of rebirth is organic to the Eastern time-picture. But it would be out of tune with the Western. Rebirth must seem a miracle and a mystery when time is felt to bring everything only once and then to make it vanish beyond capture. Protagonists of karma and reincarnation in the West commit the folly of wanting people to take to the belief in them without first changing the Western time-sense. Christian missionaries commit an analogous folly on the other side: Western eschatology, the Western concept of the soul and its brief sojourn on earth and its passage to a permanent heaven or hell, they try to fit into the midst of India and China without altering the time-metaphysics and the time-psychology of these countries.

Academic America Ignorant of Indian Philosophy

As a result of a more enlightened definition of the East-West problem a large amount of interest has grown among present-day Americans in Indian philosophy. I must, however, make the sad statement that this interest is not reflected in American

University programmes. The dons and professors are very ignorant about India and hardly realise the significance of Indian thought. In Europe the case is not so hopeless. When that great student of civilization, Deussen, began writing on the world's thought-movements he devoted his very first volume to the philosophy of India. No American has followed in his steps. Our treatment of Indian philosophy is desultory in the extreme. I am lucky to be able to teach Indian philosophy at Stanford University in California. Perhaps ours is the only place in the U.S.A. where Indian philosophy gets its due.

Why this tremendous lack of academic appreciation? Sanskrit is being taught everywhere: six chairs are occupied by first-rate scholars who have made important contributions to Sanskritology. But all this study is purely linguistic! When the mighty scriptures written in Sanskrit are taken up, attention is paid to their syntax and sentence-structure and not to their inspired meaning, their revelation of profound truth. Grammatical subtleties are expounded, but little notice is taken of the luminous shades of thought. No life-stimulating use is made of the intellectual and spiritual force within the Upanishads and the Gita. I am reminded of the man who bought the latest model automobile and kept it locked in his garage. When asked why he had bought it, if he did not wish to use it, he answered: "I have nowhere to go. I just enjoy having it. I look at its design and mechanism and its ingenious gadgets." This is a deplorable situation, and its cause is traceable to the climate of philosophical thought prevalent in America for the last thirty or forty years. If you study philosophy in America you come under men who have been trained either by John Dewey or by his followers. Dewey is the master of the academic American mind today. And Dewey is the American edition of what is known in Europe as Logical Positivism, the doctrine developed by the famous Vienna Circle. The Logical Positivists have built up a philosophy of modern science which relies only on physical facts, facts observable by means of physical instruments, facts within the reach of ordinary people equipped with scientific apparatus. Logical Positivism rules out the validity of introspection, self-examination, inner experience—all psychological discoveries that cannot be subjected to laboratory tests. It rules out also all metaphysical statements, all pronouncements on a reality beyond physical observation, a reality which goes beyond scientific instruments and cannot be measured by them. So Indian philosophy, which is full of a looking into psychological depths and of a vision transcending the surface appearances and the observations possible to the common man, finds no response among the established intellectuals of American Universities.

Indian philosophy gets subsumed under Indian philology and the wonderful religions of the East are classified as Asian studies. Buddhism, for instance, is knocked off the philosophical curriculum because it has a tinge of religion in it and if one wants to study it one has to take up what is called Mental Anthropology of the East! Under that title it becomes quite safe and cannot put up a philosophical claim against Logical Positivism.

The Strange Idealism of the Young Generation

In America, if you want to know what interest is taken in Indian philosophy, you must look not at the University faculties but at the students. I have dealt with thousands of College students of 20 years or so. The metaphysics of the Vedanta is of extreme interest to the American youngster. The younger generation is quite opposed to the older in mental attitude. You must not judge America by its elderly intellectuals nor from the temper of the old commercial adventurers. The American youngster is not a materialist like them. Of course, materialism in a proper sense is not something to be avoided. If it means a denial of supraphysical realities, it is an error, but if it means a right appreciation of the world of matter it is necessary for a balanced life. The young American would be much better orientated, were he more of a materialist in the sense of paying attention to the sweet wonders of the earth—the sublimely soothing influence of the sunset or the innocent enchantments of forests or the calm happy utilities of common natural things. He has little of such materialism and a great deal of misapplied idealism. There is a strange fever in him to dedicate himself to arduous toils for high achievements. The dollar does not attract him, he cares not for comfort or luxury, unlike the older commercial generation: it would be the easiest thing to enrol his allegiance for any difficult ideal. Mostly he is drawn to the cause of advancing creative science. If he can strike on a new line in nuclear physics or jet-propelled motion, he will sacrifice all creature-comforts, make light even of his life. One split-second increase in speed, for instance, would be enough of an excuse for him to live strenuously and be a prodigal with his energy. This is a species of idealism, a straining beyond ordinary satisfactions of physical life, but an idealism that is unhealthy and perverted because it makes an absolute and an ultimate of something which is not of primary importance.

The last World War has been a significant factor in keying up the mind of young America to idealistic exertion. The G.I. returned home disillusioned. The old world had crumbled with both its commercial and intellectual complacences. The eyes of Logical Positivism, fixed always on the immediate, the experimentally accessible, the present surface of material phenomena, seemed to him deliberately averted from final truth. His head was full of questions which can hardly be called materialistic. "O shucks!" he cried, "what is all this about? Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? Am I just what I appear to be?" The G.I. was not content with mere money-making or with mere success in technics. The triumph of technics—the Atom Bomb—has disconcerted young America as much as people anywhere else. The only thing that technics can still provide is not an answer to a desire for physical well-being but a fuel to a passion for achieving the acme of scientific creativeness. Modern technics has given rise to a pseudo-religion which Gerald Heard terms the religion of "gadgetry". He tells us that people not only are glad to have new gadgets but also worship them. If a new model of an automobile with a dizzier speed per hour is put on the market, they yearn for it out of no actual desire to rush so fast through space

but just for the high-speed gadget itself as if it were some godlike power deserving devotion and adoration merely for being above common capacities. Heard is right in reading in the modern American mind a religious fascination for the gadget, and he is also right in declaring that such a pseudo-religion cannot satisfy the soul. The strongest symptoms of dissatisfaction with it are in the recent American interest in Indian philosophy.

Young America's Keen Interest in India's Wisdom

This interest takes various forms, since variously is Indian thought active in America. And the interest is not confined to bare thousands: hundreds of thousands and millions of men are eagerly seeking the wisdom of India and the East. Theosophy is one of the prominent influences, but there are several other movements deriving from different sources. Kahlil Gibran who wrote the subtle and beautiful book, *The Prophet*, has a following. Rabindranath Tagore is another light from the Orient which has entered both literature and life in the West. Somerset Maugham manifests in *The Razor's Edge* a religio-spiritual strain from India which has had a wide popularity. Then there is the penetrating work of Aldous Huxley and some others who have found inspiration both in Gerald Heard and in the Missions from India. Christopher Isherwood has been a devotee of Swami Prabhavananda. The Vedanta is a living message in artistic circles of the U.S.A. Poets and painters and musicians turn to it for their motifs and themes. You will be surprised to learn that Vivekananda Symphonies have actually been composed.

There are eleven swamis of the Vedanta preaching all across the country and their classes are overcrowded. Not only old men looking for an end-of-life consolation are hungering for the message of Indian philosophy: young men, full-blooded and with life's opportunities lying before them, are the most enthusiastic. You are grossly misinformed if you believe that America is a materialistic nation running after the dollar. America is bewildered, anxious to plumb life's depths, asking fundamental questions and eagerly seeking for answers.

I once circulated a questionnaire among University students, asking them to write down for my satisfaction why they had taken the Indian Philosophy Course, what they thought of God, whether they believed in immortality. A most interesting cross-section of the American mind was obtained. Very many answers may be summed up in the following words: "I went to Sunday School when young. My parents separated. I found Sunday School no good and ran away. Christianity did not appeal to me. But now when I am doing Senior Studies I want to give religion a trial. I want to find out whether it holds something for me. My aunt was a theosophist. My mother went for some time to a Yoga School in 52 Street, New York."

Demand not for Christianity but Indian Philosophy

Generally there is some influence of the women members of the family leading the young man to give religion a trial. And as a rule it is oriental religious thought that attracts him and opens his eyes and makes him feel also that Christian dogmas are not meaningless. The magnetism of oriental religions is very great indeed in America. During the war I remember how soldiers used to crowd round me in trains if it got somehow known that I had studied Indian philosophy. A Christian priest in the same compartment would be reading the New Testament to just a handful. The majority would leave him alone. Give a spiritual truth a Sanskrit name and young America grabs it with both hands. Christian terms they tend to edge away from. Ramakrishna's word they will take at once, while their own ministers "cut no ice" with them, though frequently the same truth is being offered in different forms. The American youth arrives at the religion his nature needs, his *swadharma*, not directly but in a roundabout way. It is perhaps a pity he cannot appreciate the large amount of wisdom Christianity has to give, but the fact that he cannot get the right answers from it is there and must be faced, just as we must face also the other fact that the purely scientific mood and the purely scientific view of perplexing problems are matters now of a past generation.

The sceptical mind is on its way out, and the spiritual Indian attitude towards life is coming in. As interest in Indian spirituality increases, the influence of the Yogi will gradually become greater and that of the Logical Positivist will wane. I can foresee a day when the teachings—which are already making headway—of the greatest spiritual voice from India, Sri Aurobindo, will be known all over America and be a vast power of illumination. An approach to fundamental reality not by mere logic but by a direct perception will establish itself. After all, the logical mind is not necessary when one has the straight Yogic perception. The ultimate Being of Brahman can be touched intimately by our own self-substance. Logic may not grant that a fire is burning unless there are signs of smoke. But the soul's deep intuition requires no such signs. What need have we of observed smoke to serve as a condition for our inferring fire, when in the very front of us the fire itself is aglow?

FREDERIC SPIEGELBERG

SRI AUROBINDO IN AMERICA

(The author of this article, Charles Maloney, a practising psychotherapist in the U. S. A., is already known to our readers from the series of articles by him we published some time back, "Evolutionary Psychology", which attracted considerable attention both here and abroad.)

If truth is received according to the nature of the recipient, it is crucial in any attempt to understand the phenomenon of Hinduism in America to focus attention not only on the truth of the religious or spiritual forms and their modes of transmission, but also on the nature and forms of the consciousness of America, the receiver. With the ever increasing pressure of an "energy crisis", whether under the form of food or fuel, we are being forced to see both problems and solutions in a global context. The creation of technological man by the "richest" nation in the world with the accompanying belief in an undiminished and ever increasing progress is juxtaposed to the crucial question of whether we can discover the requisite energy to sustain the planet and create the future. We are challenged to find new sources of energy and knowledge, or perish. It is from this perspective that the significance of the influx of Indian spiritualities in general and Sri Aurobindo's integral spirituality in particular are examined in this essay.

The increasing interest and participation in spiritual or religious groups in America receives the stamp of approval or disapproval according to the optic through which the phenomenon is viewed. To the Marxist it might signal the imminent death-throes of capitalism accompanied by an increasing alienation from the true sources of the problems in our society. From this perspective, as the contradictions increase in a society, the viability and stability of its institutions or forms decrease. In such a context the manifestation of spiritual communities appears only as a transitory phenomenon in the demise of capitalism.

The appearance of Hinduism engages a wide spectrum of interest in the academic world, but it is often forgotten that the primary concern of Indian philosophy "has always been, not information, but transformation: a radical changing of man's nature .."(1) Intimately related to the metaphysical discourse about the nature of reality is the psychological discipline for realizing or experiencing the highest realms of existence. While the Western academician is aware of this link between metaphysics and psychology in Indian thought, it is rare in his exploration to engage parts of his being (emotional, physical, spiritual) that transcend his intellectual mind.

For those who have lost hope in the possibility of America changing, the transcendental dimension of Indian spirituality may hold a special appeal. In this regard one often hears diatribes being delivered against Western "materialism" accompanied by the prescription of Eastern "spirituality". The implementation of this message ranges from rhetoric to a kind of quietism, or an actual abandonment of Western society altogether.

Beyond the various modes of receptivity to Indian spirituality there is the problem of the forms under which the experience of another culture is to be delivered to the West. While the influx of gurus seems to show no sign of diminishing and the number of adherents are increasing, the *guru-shishya* relationship remains basically foreign to the American experience. How will I find my guru? Can I have more than one guru? How will I know he is the one for me? Does one need a guru? What happens when my guru leaves America? These often-voiced questions and many more reveal our basic ignorance of this form of spirituality.

The efforts to accommodate the spiritual forms of a foreign culture range from the tendency of the propagators of Transcendental Meditation to appeal to the secular tastes of the American masses (see paper by Thomas Hopkins) to efforts which are intent on maintaining the purity of form at the cost of isolation from the life forms of Western society. If there is an evolutionary movement of consciousness which is conspiring to integrate the forms of consciousness of both East and West, then either of the above tendencies must be avoided. Pure renunciation or mere accommodation means, ultimately, a continued embracing of the *status quo*. In light of a growing awareness of the planetary dimensions of the problems directly related to survival and the creation of the future, can the various manifestations of Indian spirituality be viewed as a sign of movement towards a global consciousness and, possibly, the discovery of new sources of knowledge and energy? Sri Aurobindo's integral spirituality presents a challenge to the Westerner, not to renounce the vast discoveries of mental, vital and physical energy, but to realize their authentic ground as instruments of the Spirit.

Towards an Integration of Eastern and Western Ideals

In a message to America on August 15, 1949, Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the unity and oneness between East and West since both "have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself ..." (2) He further notes that it is equally a message to the East as "there is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers." (3) What appears initially as opposites are to be reconciled and realized as two sides of one reality.

The West has given the greater part of its energy to the development of the intellectual, emotional and material being of man. Its highest ideals center on progress, liberty, equality, fraternity, reason and science, efficiency of all kinds, a better political, social and economical state and, in general, the unity and earthly happiness of the race. (4) This preoccupation with the perfection of the world has often led to the deification of matter and, for many, a denial of Spirit. (5)

The tendency of the East has been to give itself to the pursuit of the transcendent realms of the Spirit which has resulted in a disregard for the world, if not considering it, in its more extreme philosophies, as an illusion. (6) Sri Aurobindo sees this divergence between East and West as truths that are part of the intention of the Spirit in

world-nature. On the one side there is the ideal of spiritual perfection. On the other side there exists the ideal of the perfection of mental, vital and material existence in the individual and society. In Sri Aurobindo's integral vision of reality, "they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future." (7)

This need to unite life and spirit confronts us in a most graphic way in the present situations of India and America. India faces an ever increasing reign of material disaster with millions starving. Beyond the proposed political and economic remedies, is India being called to turn its eyes toward the earth and apply its profound spiritual discoveries to the arena of life?

America stands as a paradigm of the West's drive to expand in an unlimited way the mental, vital and physical possibilities of existence. And yet for all of her glorious and profound scientific and technological creations, the power of her vast array of knowledge is now being called into question in the face of a global energy crisis. It becomes more and more common to discover examples of the impotence of the rational mind and the lack of vision in regard to this crisis. For example, there is a growing opinion among influential people in this country that the global food crisis can be "solved" through the system of *triage*. (8) *Triage* arose on the battlefield during World War I as a system for separating the wounded into three groups: those likely to die no matter what was done for them, those who would probably recover even if they were left untreated, and those who could survive only if cared for immediately. The impoverishment of knowledge and energy is graphically reflected in the growing tendency of America to allocate food only to those suffering countries who, in her judgement, will gain "decisive benefit." Implicit in this tendency lies the clear-cut criterion for America's beneficence: namely, which allocations of food will most benefit her? In this context India is placed among those countries least likely to survive.

A similar mentality is reflected in the reactions of intellectuals to the question not only as to what measures should be taken to insure man's survival, but also whether we ought to care about it. Robert Heilbroner discusses the issue of whether or not existing individuals should in any way deprive themselves for the sake of posterity. (9) He cites the "voice of rationality" using contemporary statements by a distinguished professor of political economy at the University of London and a younger economist from MIT. Heilbroner observes that within their rational frameworks their arguments in favor of not caring for posterity are not "wrong". However, he goes on to note that "if there is a cause to fear for man's survival it is because the calculus of logic and reason will be applied to problems where they have as little validity ... as the calculus of feeling or sentiment applied to the solution of a problem in Euclidean geometry." (10) While Heilbroner then proceeds to argue for a "survivalist ethic", the whole spectrum of thought, including Heilbroner's, seems to reflect a crisis of both knowledge and energy in regard to extricating ourselves from our suicidal course. Is America, in a way analogous to India, being called to rediscover the spiritual sources of knowledge

and energy, not only to save herself, but to realize her highest ideals? Does the true source of alienation of Western man from his creations, from others, from nature and from himself reside in his unconsciousness of the spiritual ground of his mental, vital and material energies?

Sri Aurobindo takes up these seemingly opposite directions of East and West in an integral theory and *praxis* that embraces the highest ideals of both. While Spirit, in his vision, is the fundamental truth of existence, the ascent of the human soul to the supreme reality is not to be seen as separate from the descent and manifestation of the same Spirit under the forms and powers of mind, life and matter:

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...(11)

In light of what appears to be a growing crisis of both knowledge and energy in facing the future of the planet, it is important to examine the significance of Sri Aurobindo's teachings for America.

An Integral Spirituality for America

The presence of Sri Aurobindo in America is to be experienced through a multiplicity of forms of consciousness rather than under only the expected forms of personality and organizations. We have grown to associate the appearance of Hinduism in America with certain figures (Satchidananda, Chinmoy, Muktananda, Baba Ram Dass, etc.), or organizations (ISKCON, Ananda Marga, Transcendental Meditation, etc.), accompanied by advertising or proselytizing to greater or lesser extents. The exception to this tendency is the Vedanta Society based on the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The notable absence of this in relation to Sri Aurobindo, beyond the fact that he never came to America, can be best explained through the distinctive nature and purpose of his yoga.

When Sri Aurobindo took leave of his work with the Nationalist political movement in India in 1910 he went to Pondicherry to enter a new stage of his yoga, but with no intention of gathering disciples or starting an ashram. In 1914 Mira Richard came to Pondicherry and upon meeting Sri Aurobindo recognized him as Krishna, a teacher who used to come to her during periods of psychic and spiritual experience which had occurred earlier. Although Mira knew little of Indian philosophies and religions at that time she "was aware that it was with him [Krishna] (whom I should meet on earth one day) that the divine work was to be done." (12) Mira returned to France at the beginning of 1915 and did not come back to Pondicherry until 1920. After six years of intense *sadhana* she became completely responsible for the organization and running of the ashram. At this time, November 24, 1926, Sri Aurobindo

went entirely into seclusion and cut off all contacts except through Mira, whom he had long recognized as the Mother :

There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all these, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here—it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. (13)

This concept of Mother *shakti* (Divine Energy) is an essential element in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. It is that aspect of the Divine that is *power of being*, one state of which is *Prakriti* or world-process in its feminine phase. *Purusha* or Self or Spirit is recognized in Indian tradition as the silent or immutable aspect of the Divine that supports the play, activity or process of becoming. Sri Aurobindo identifies his consciousness with that of the Mother's: "The Mother and myself stand for the same Power in two forms... Ishwara-Shakti, Purusha-Prakriti are only the two sides of the one Divine (Brahman)." (14) Sri Aurobindo acknowledged this intimate working of two in one consciousness as present even before Mira's coming to India:

Mother was doing Yoga before she knew or met Sri Aurobindo; but their lines of sadhana independently followed the same course. When they met, they helped each other in perfecting the Sadhana. What is known as Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is the joint creation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; they are now completely identified—the Sadhana in the Ashram and all arrangement is done directly by the Mother, Sri Aurobindo supports her from behind. (15)

Even after the establishment of the ashram in 1926 by the Mother, both she and Sri Aurobindo were never eager to attract disciples and, in fact, reminded many persons seeking admission of the difficulties of the *sadhana*. Beyond the absence of proselytizing or advertising they also gave repeated warnings to disciples not to make their teachings into a religion:

A movement in the case of a work like mine means the founding of a school or a sect or some other damned nonsense. It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the Truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence. It is what has happened to the "religions" and is the reason of their failure. (16)

The aim now was not to establish a religion, a school of yoga or a school of philosophy, but, rather, the spiritualization of the natural world. What is the nature of the spiritual discipline, practised by over 2000 disciples in Pondicherry and serving as the

power behind the progressive creation of the international city of Auroville, that aspires to realize this goal?

Sri Aurobindo's *dictum* that "all life is yoga" emerges from a full-blown vision of the evolution of consciousness which has been termed *purna advaita* or integral non-dualism. This has been expressed philosophically in a two-volume work, *The Life Divine*, psychologically or pragmatically in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and poetically in the nearly 24,000-line epic *Savitri*. These major works are among Sri Aurobindo's more than 15,000 pages of writings on philosophy, politics, literature, poetry, art, linguistics, psychology and education. Unlike the majority of Indian religious or spiritual movements in America today, there is a systematic body of writings here that presents an immediate challenge to the developed intellect of the West. Sri Aurobindo was, in fact, eminently aware that many Westerners would be led to a deeper spiritual knowledge through the instrument of the intellect. In a letter written in May of 1943 he advocates the "impersonal" approach to his work as far as it concerns England or America. By impersonal he means, "the philosophical side and the side of the yoga..." (17) This was to be a beginning until individuals were ready for the personal touch, or the *guru-shishya* relationship.

1. An Integral Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness

The philosophy of the evolution of consciousness which provides the foundation for the psychological discipline of integral yoga shares the Western evolutionary perspective which can provide a common ground for the meeting of East and West. Not only the scientific mind but the majority of the populace affirms evolution as the process that has generated the panorama of life forms that are present to our consciousness. While accepting this common framework for viewing the life process, Sri Aurobindo challenges the Western mind to look beyond its preoccupation with the growth of forms and species to the growth of consciousness. According to Sri Aurobindo, the Western idea of evolution can be reduced in general to the description of a process limited to the physical and biological data of nature. Under scientific observation, consciousness appears as an incident in the process, and "since it is only a process, it has no understanding of itself, and, since it is a blind perpetual automatism of mechanical energy, it has neither an origin nor an issue." (18) In light of this observation, Sri Aurobindo bids the Western scientific mind not to abandon its discoveries, but to move towards the secret of the meaning of the evolutionary process which he sees as consciousness itself.

The highest manifestation of evolutionary Nature appears as a mental-vital-material organization called man, and is in Sri Aurobindo's vision a microcosm of the whole evolutionary process. Biological organisms, both plant and animal, have issued from matter, and a collectivity of mental beings have in turn emerged from their physical-vital precursors. The pronounced tendency of the West is to associate "consciousness" almost exclusively with the latest manifestation of the process, and

also to take this collectivity of mental beings as both the highest expression and the end of evolution. Sri Aurobindo's testimony, based on his yogic experience, reveals another collective manifestation in the evolutionary process, "a Truth-Consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a Supermind as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it." (19)

It is crucial for an understanding of the nature of the discipline of integral yoga to note that in this ongoing process of evolution as each new stage emerges, from matter to life to mind to Supermind, the prior stage is not left behind but, rather, is integrated and given a new significance by what has emerged. It is a process of integral transformation whereby the manifestation of higher levels of consciousness respects the laws of evolution of the lower levels even when using the higher consciousness to uplift them. For example, the emergence of human consciousness makes available a radically new power for evolution, but is nevertheless still largely subject to the nature and law of its vital and material precursors. In Sri Aurobindo's vision only the original evolutionary power, the Supermind, can effect an integral transformation of all levels of consciousness, including matter. (20)

This integral process of evolution involves a simultaneous ascent and descent of consciousness, and is based on a key principle of integral non-dualism, namely, that evolution is possible only because of the involution, or the creative descent of pure Spirit. Spirit is the fundamental truth of existence and has chosen to manifest itself under the forms of matter, life and mind. These worlds of multiplicity are made possible only by the self-imposed limitation or veiling of the One Spirit that is pure existence, pure consciousness-force and pure bliss. Thus Spirit is not only transcendent to our world of matter, life and mind, but is secretly involved in each evolutionary level of manifestation. It uses each level as an instrument for its *līlā*, or play. Inasmuch as matter is the most complete expression of multiplicity within the omnipresent Oneness, it must be from this point that evolution proceeds towards its goal:

Our material world is the result of all the others, for the other principles [Life, Mind, Supermind] have all descended into Matter to create the physical universe, and every particle of what we call Matter contains all of them implicit in itself; their secret action... is involved in every moment of its existence and every moment of its activity. (21)

That the very essence of evolution is predicated on a prior descent or involution of Spirit suggests a spiritual path that *must* not renounce our material, vital or mental creations, but envisions them as evolving instruments or forms of the Spirit. Again, what at first appears to be opposite directions of the aspirations or ideals of East and West can be seen from this integral perspective as two sides of one reality. How is this integral vision of reality reflected in Sri Aurobindo's yoga and what significance does it hold for America?

2. Integral Yoga

The psychological discipline that Sri Aurobindo terms integral yoga reflects both individually and collectively the cosmic process of the evolution and involution of consciousness described above. Man stands as a manifestation of this cosmic unfolding of consciousness, and as microcosm he contains in his being all that has evolved until now, namely, matter, life and mind, as well as the future forms of the evolutionary process. The slow unfolding of higher forms of consciousness in the "yoga of nature", which has appeared to be inconscient in matter and subconscient in life, can be taken up consciously with the manifestation of mind in man. As a reflection of the entire evolutionary process he is now a laboratory for the working out of the manifestation of the higher consciousness, or what Sri Aurobindo calls the supramental. This organization of physical, vital and mental forces under the name and form of man provides a unique focus to study not only the interaction of these evolutionary disclosures of consciousness, but also the higher forms of consciousness of which the physical, vital and mental are instruments. To undertake this experiential study of the totality of our being is to do yoga, which is for Sri Aurobindo "nothing but practical psychology", (22) but with a much vaster range and depth than the goals and techniques of Western psychology:

. . . we mean by this term [Yoga] a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos. (23)

During this time when America has placed so much emphasis on psychotherapy as a way to deal with pain and to discover inner peace and harmony a yoga which is a "psychology of self-perfection" should find a receptive ground. (24) Moreover this effort towards self-perfection is in harmony with the highest ideals of the West in general and America in particular. The endeavors of Westerners which have been so much directed towards the perfection of material and mental life are often reflected as being of minimal value, if not completely illusory, by the mirrors of many yogas coming to America. While mind, emotions and the physical aspect of the being are seen as vehicles for self-realization, the *ultimate goal* is, in most cases, a movement away from the world and a merging with the highest realms of Self or Spirit. It is true that there is a great emphasis on action or work in many yogas, for example, Yogi Bhajan's kundalini yoga, Satchidananda's integral yoga and even the increasing element of service in ISKCON. However, even when activity is a major part of the *sadhana*, it seems to have, at best, only a transient reality. While the value placed on action, devotion and knowledge may vary according to the particular path (e.g., in Muktananda's siddhi yoga there seems to be a great emphasis put on bhakti which takes the form of group chanting for many hours each day), the common

point of emphasis is on *ascent*, whereby the individual, *ultimately*, departs out of world and life to some heaven or *nirvana*. One of the distinctive and new elements in Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga is the divine fulfilment of life rather than a release from life. It aims "at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, but as a distinct and central object." (25)

Ascent into the higher consciousness beyond what we recognize to be mind is a necessary, but only a first step in integral yoga: "It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and seal of the sadhana."(26) There is to be a further and greater manifestation of consciousness for which the entire evolutionary process of Nature has been a preparation. Therefore, the object is not only "an individual achievement of divine realisation ..but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here, a cosmic, not solely a supra-cosmic achievement."(27). It is, perhaps, here that one can discover an authentic *nexus* between the Western ideal of the perfectibility of individual and collective terrestrial existence and the Eastern ideal of the attainment of the highest realm of Spirit. The drive in America, especially, to perfect material and mental life is taken up in Sri Aurobindo's yoga not as a transient vehicle to move into the Spirit beyond, but to bring the Spirit into the field of life as the sole power and knowledge for its perfection.

The goal of a complete and integral transformation of earthly life in Sri Aurobindo's spirituality *necessitates* the development and expansion of our mental, vital and physical energies until they become perfect and transparent instruments for a full manifestation of their spiritual ground. Even the Gita's synthesis of *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma* yoga (way of knowledge, devotion and works) does not fully express the principles and goal of integral yoga, since the ultimate culmination of its yoga is the cessation of birth in the world. (28) The idea of the evolutionary manifestation of the supramental Truth-Consciousness with its knowledge and power for the transformation of terrestrial existence is not developed in the Gita. While it is present in principle in the Rig Veda, according to Sri Aurobindo's interpretation, it was never developed and has since disappeared from the Hindu tradition.(29) He has expressed the novelty of his message in relation to this tradition as:

the idea that the world is not either a creation of Maya or only a play, *lila*, of the Divine, or a cycle of births in the ignorance from which we have to escape, but a field of manifestation in which there is a progressive evolution of the soul and the nature in Matter and from Matter through Life and Mind to what is beyond Mind till it reaches the complete revelation of Sachchidananda in life. It is this that is the basis of the yoga and gives a new sense to life (30)

It is in this idea that America is challenged not to turn away from her ideal of the perfectibility of life, both material and mental, but to seek the higher knowledge and energy that will transform these ideals into the most concrete realities.

With the increase of various forms of Eastern spiritualities comes a host of expres-

sions or formulations which attempt to communicate the particular experience that has been received or is being pursued. One hears such phrases as: "receiving knowledge" (Guru Maharaji's Divine Light Mission), "hearing the Sound" or "seeing the Light" (Kirpal Singh), "receiving shaktipat" (Muktananda), "activating the kundalini" (Yogi Bhajan), etc. Whether the particular teaching behind these expressions be of the traditional yogic paths of knowledge, devotion or works, or some combination of these disciplines, they are commonly related to some "realization" or increase in consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga affirms this initial awakening of the inner being, but insists that a partial realization, or anything short of a complete and integral transformation, does not satisfy his aim. Man in his evolutionary context is a transitional being. He is a manifestation of *Spirit as power* under the forms of mind, life and matter, and yet there are ranges of consciousness that are still involved or unmanifest which have the power and knowledge to transform the present levels of manifestation. To open the mental, vital and physical aspects of the being to the *descent* or fuller manifestation of the higher consciousness is the essential aim of integral yoga.

In contrast to the yogic disciplines discussed above which move towards self-realization by opening to a deeper consciousness, it is important to recognize in Sri Aurobindo's yoga that "Light of realisation is not the same thing as Descent."⁽³¹⁾ Realization, in relation to yogas that use the mind or the emotions or the physical as vehicles towards the higher consciousness, may mean an opening or widening or heightening of the consciousness at the summit of the being while the parts below (*e.g.*, vital or physical) remain unchanged. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the necessity of the *descent* of the Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love and Ananda "not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place."⁽³²⁾ He goes even further in calling for a full manifestation of the higher consciousness; the purpose of the *descent* is not for liberation from mind, emotions or body, but, rather, for their *perfection*.

The movement in integral yoga is to transcend the long-standing propensity in the West towards associating spirituality with asceticism whereby mind, emotions or body is to be excised or renounced. The stress is, rather, on the *expansion* of the present limits of these instruments and their ultimate perfection.

In this context an opening of the inner being (as in the traditional yogas) while the outer remains unchanged, unexpressive or fragmented falls short of an integral transformation:

Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride ...⁽³³⁾

The increasing number of Americans who look to different forms of psychotherapy and techniques for "consciousness expansion" (*e.g.* Arica) to resolve inner conflict and to attain a more integrated personality will find in Sri Aurobindo's yoga an extensive mapping of inner and higher planes of consciousness. By "psychicisation" he means a movement from the surface being, or that selection of the mental, vital and physical aspects of the being organized around a temporary center (egoic consciousness or personality), toward the center of the inner being, the psychic entity or soul. This psychic entity constitutes the real individuality of which the mind, emotions and body are instruments. This psychological organization of the being presents a challenge to Western ego psychology and theories of personality development:

The psychic entity within, ... the spiritual individual in us, is the Person that we are; but the "I" of this moment, the "I" of this life is only a formation, a temporary personality of this inner Person ... (34)

Beyond this psychological process of "psychicisation" lies "spiritualisation" or the ascent or opening of the consciousness upward beyond what we ordinarily experience as mind into the ranges which Sri Aurobindo terms Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind, and the bringing down of these planes of consciousness into the ordinary mental, vital and physical consciousness. While realization on these levels effects a great expansion of consciousness, it is limited as long as the *full* power and knowledge of the Truth-Consciousness or Supermind remains unmanifest. Just as the highest knowledge of what we presently call mind is tempered or diluted by our vital or physical parts, the higher levels of consciousness (*e.g.*, Intuition) are qualified by being mixed with the consciousness of the rational mind. Sri Aurobindo declares that only the descent of Supermind which lives in unity while it plays with diversity (35) has the power and knowledge to effect an integral transformation whereby all of the lower levels of consciousness would become perfect instruments for the collective manifestation of Supermind. The growing interest of psychologists and large sectors of the American populace in exploring "altered states of consciousness" provides yet another fruitful ground for receiving Sri Aurobindo's "practical psychology."

From the perspective of the psychological discipline of integral yoga, man in his essential nature is "a spirit using the mind, life and body for an individual and a communal experience and self-manifestation in the universe." (36) Sri Aurobindo has taken up the basic insight of the Tantric tradition that there are two poles of being, "Brahman and Shakti, Spirit and Nature, and that Nature is ... spirit as power." (37) The workings of nature in her myriad manifestations from matter through mind is in its entire play the expression of the One Spirit that is infinite existence, infinite consciousness and infinite delight. The One chooses to limit itself for the manifestation of the Many, and yet is always at the core of all of its instruments supporting their operations and pressing them towards perfection.

The person who enters upon the path of Sri Aurobindo's yoga of self-perfection is called to offer or open all parts of his being to the power and knowledge of the higher consciousness which is pressing for manifestation. Since all life is a field for this yoga nothing must be given up or excised, but all must eventually be surrendered to the Shakti or the power of being of the Spirit for its work of transformation. One person, according to his particular psychological history, may have a developed intellect, or excel in the creative arts, while yet another may be committed to the perfection of the physical. According to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, all of these areas of endeavor can become occasions for a greater manifestation of Shakti which will progressively bring all of the forms involved to a greater degree of perfection and integration.

The American orientation towards pragmatic action can find a common direction in a yoga that is pre-eminently one of action with the goal of perfection. Whether one acts as educator, businessman, artist, farmer, athlete, etc., he can do his work as yoga, i. e. becoming conscious that the real power and knowledge behind the work resides in the Shakti. Because of the integral nature of the yoga, a psychological opening of one part of the being (mind, emotions or body) to the greater power and knowledge of Shakti will precipitate the emergence of other aspects of the being. Thus what appears to some as mutually exclusive endeavors, such as political involvement and spiritual development, is reconciled in Sri Aurobindo's integral approach.

Sri Aurobindo's own *sadhana* reflects a full involvement in revolutionary politics and, in fact, one of his major spiritual realizations came during the one-year period of incarceration in Alipore while awaiting the outcome of charges brought against him for alleged involvement in a bombing conspiracy. He later explained that after he took up the *sadhana* of the Gita, he experienced the presence of God as Krishna in all forms: jailor, judge, other prisoners, bars of the cell and the walls of the jail itself. (38) He ultimately realized that both his personal power and the power behind the uprising of the Indian people against the British derived from Shakti. Sri Aurobindo experienced in a concrete way that all men, whether conscious or not, are instruments of God. Thus humanity is

... not only to understand intellectually but to realise what Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what He demands of those who aspire to do His work, to be free of repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently. (39)

To become conscious of this higher knowledge and energy, whether in the context of political action or the acts of eating and walking, and to allow it to manifest fully in all parts of the being is to do the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo. Perhaps, the long standing debate between the advocates of political activism and those who seek a change in consciousness through spiritual or psychological means may be illuminated

and integrated by this integral spirituality.

There are two powers that can effect the transformation of terrestrial existence as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo, "a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers." (40) Any movement to give oneself to a higher ideal or consciousness, or to realize perfection in work brings a response from the higher consciousness:

In the spiritual order of things, the higher we project our view and our aspiration, the greater the Truth that seeks to descend upon us, because it is already there within us and calls for its release from the covering that conceals it in manifested Nature (41)

There seems to be in the spirit of the American people a strong impulse, aspiration or call for something higher or greater. This may take various forms and even seem to disappear from time to time, only to surface again under a new form. Whether it be in the investigations of the sciences into the realms of matter and life, the exploration of outer space or political movements aimed at realizing a better individual and collective life, America repeatedly strives toward a higher ideal of knowledge. This movement in America is consonant with the basic spiritual law of ascent and descent quoted above. In this context, perhaps, America needs an even greater or higher ideal than what has been expressed on a mental, vital or material level, *i.e.*, an ideal founded on a spiritual basis.

The central or key yogic technique that is employed in Sri Aurobindo's yoga is what he terms *consecration*. This means an offering or giving of oneself, not in a passive sense such as submission, but, rather, by plunging oneself into an action or a movement of consciousness. While there are varying degrees of consecration, Sri Aurobindo's psychological discipline calls for a self-giving that progressively becomes total, with the ultimate objective being union with the fullness of the Divine Consciousness (*i.e.*, transcendent, universal and individual). In contrast to the objectives of Western psychology, this means a total offering or opening of mind (thought and processes of thought), the vital being (feelings, desires, emotions, drives, impulses) and the physical self (all movement and activity) to the action of the higher consciousness. Again, this does not mean an excision of the mental, vital or physical parts of the being, but an intentionality on their part to become perfect instruments of the supramental consciousness. This process of surrender of the totality of the being in Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga involves the acknowledgement that a higher knowledge and energy than what is presently available in the mental-vital-physical complex is needed for the integration and transformation of the being. The key element to be noted here is that the tapping of a higher knowledge and a greater energy is used for a *full expansion* of all aspects of the being, *i.e.*, a fulfilment of the incipient ideals of a perfect mental and material life.

Sri Aurobindo indicates three stages or movements in his psychological discipline

which will effect a collective evolution of consciousness. First, a period of self-preparation in which personal effort will predominate is necessary due to the habit of egoic identification with our mental, vital and physical movements. This becomes a very detailed psychological process inasmuch as the totality of all of the movements in the being, not only in the waking or surface consciousness but also in what is below and behind (subconscious and subliminal), must be opened to the action of the Shakti.

Secondly, a transitional period will come when one feels more and more the action of the higher consciousness taking up the normal action of mental, vital and physical movements so that one may experience periods of activity which are "effortless" or "unplanned." As this process continues, longer periods will ensue of experiencing a great diminution of personal effort: "I" am not doing the thinking, writing, walking painting, dancing, etc. "I" am the instrument of a higher or greater knowledge and energy that is using mind, the vital force and the body for its work of perfection and transformation. "I" am no longer the source of thinking or feeling or acting any more, but rather the evolutionary instrument for the manifestation of the supramental. These transient experiences are often attributed to a "creative unconscious" in the West especially in the context of the psychological investigations of Carl Jung and those influenced by him. It is particularly consonant with the experience of persons in the creative arts (painting, writing, dancing, singing, etc.) that they feel the presence of a greater force of consciousness doing, through them, what would often appear to be "impossible" if left to the resources of the surface personality.

In the context of yoga this growing awareness of Shakti being the true source of all action and knowledge was experienced by Sri Aurobindo in its fullness during his stay in jail. He heard Krishna say:

I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path

.In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. (42)

Here there is the clear distinction between the higher knowledge and power of Shakti and the knowledge and power of the individual ego. But even more important is the indication of the relationship between the two. Seen in this context, the higher consciousness is constantly using its instruments for a greater purpose than what our separative and limited knowledge can discern. To do yoga is not to stop acting (even in the political arena) but, rather, to open to the true source of both the action and the knowledge. It has been indicated above that America stands in need of a greater knowledge and energy to meet and solve the problems which threaten the existence of the planet. Sri Aurobindo's integral approach offers a direction that does not negate

the American ideal of the perfection of life but places it on the foundation of Spirit.

The third and culminating stage of the yoga occurs when "there is no effort at all, no set method, no fixed Sadhana; the place of endeavor and Tapasya will be taken by a natural, simple, powerful and happy disclosing of the flower of the Divine out of the bud of a purified and perfected terrestrial nature." (43) Here the supramental consciousness will have fully taken up the action of the mental, vital and physical aspects of being so they become perfect instruments for its manifestation.

Presence in America

The concrete presence of Sri Aurobindo in America assumes a variety of forms which may be seen as a reflection of the integral nature of the yoga. The literature on and by Sri Aurobindo continues to grow with Robert McDermott's *The Essential Aurobindo* published in 1973 now entering its second printing. He has also edited Sri Aurobindo's *The Mind of Light* and a collection of essays, *Six Pillars*, on six of Sri Aurobindo's major works by scholars in the field of Indian and comparative religious thought. *The Adventure of Consciousness* by Satprem, a disciple, has just been published by Harper & Row, while Quest has brought out an anthology, *The Future Evolution of Man*, by another disciple, Pavitra. A full-length philosophical study, *Worthy Is the World*, by Beatrice Bruteau appeared in 1971 and two scholarly journals, *International Philosophical Quarterly* and *Cross Currents* offered entire issues treating Sri Aurobindo's thought. In this educational context more and more colleges and universities across the country have either offered courses on Sri Aurobindo's thought or included his works in existing courses. These include Harvard, Stanford, Cornell, Rutgers and the California Institute for Asian Studies. This is indicative of a serious study of Sri Aurobindo's thought by a growing sector of the intellectual community in America as distinct from a presence only in a *guru-shishya* context.

The California Institute for Asian Studies, whose president, the late Haridas Chaudhuri, was instrumental in introducing Sri Aurobindo to America through his numerous books and articles, has established an Integral Counseling Program. Its focal point is the contribution of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga and its relationship to contemporary humanistic and transpersonal therapies, and will offer both doctoral and postdoctoral training. Sri Aurobindo's presence in the healing professions as well as in academia is consonant with the integral nature of his vision of reality. Viewed through the optic of integral yoga education and healing appear as instruments of Shakti in the process of being perfected and transformed. This applies equally to any field of endeavor.

While there are many Sri Aurobindo centers of various sizes across the country, there is no uniformity concerning the particular work they do. For example, the East-West Cultural Center in Los Angeles, founded by Dr. Judith Tyberg, conducts classes in Sanskrit, Sri Aurobindo, Hinduism and Indian philosophy. Dr. Tyberg

teaches these courses under the auspices of the College of Oriental Studies, an accredited graduate school. Cultural Integration Fellowship, founded by Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, in San Francisco offers regular meditation and lecture meetings as well as courses in classical Hindu dance, integral psychology and creative meditation. There is also a Sunday school for children where the basic ethical and religious principles of all world religions are taught. Another center, Future Child in Salmon Arm, B.C., Canada, provides information and materials for the physical, vital, mental and spiritual development of the child of the future. Educational toys, films and film strips are developed under the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and spirit.

Matagiri, located in Mount Tremper, New York, is a small residential community dedicated to the experiment of living the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo within the framework of a collective. Since its inception Matagiri has served as a link to provide information on the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville, the "city of human unity" now evolving in South India as an expression of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Because of the continuity and stability of the collective effort at Matagiri and the fact that it is the center for the distribution of all existing literature on and by Sri Aurobindo, it has come to be known as the national center. Upon visiting Matagiri one has an immediate sense that the yoga being practiced there is very much life oriented. There is a peace that is infused with a very intense energy that seems to inform all of the work being done, whether it be building, cooking or distributing books. The individual and collective life at Matagiri is a concrete expression of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teaching that perfection in work is spirituality.

We must mention also that the earliest Aurobindonian institution in America was the Sri Aurobindo International Centre Foundation in New York City and that it has received recently the new name: Foundation for World Education.

The diversity of the presence of Sri Aurobindo in America, whether it be in the form of an ashram or in the university or in a therapeutic situation, is reflective of a spirituality that envisions the integral manifestation of spirit in matter: "All life is only a lavish and manifold opportunity given us to discover, realise, express the Divine." (44)

Conclusion

I would like to suggest in light of this brief exposition of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga that Hinduism must come to America in much the same manner that Krishna comes to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. In the opening chapter of the Gita, Arjuna, above all the pragmatic man of action, is poised on the brink of destruction and disaster at the very center of the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The initial dilemma of whether or not to act, indeed, to fight, is presented to Krishna, his charioteer and Teacher. Krishna's unequivocal response which forms the whole teaching of the Gita is that Arjuna must act but he must do it as yoga. Krishna does not countenance withdrawal from the world or abandonment of Arjuna's gifts as a warrior or man of action. Even after the revelation of the higher knowledge and power the in-

junction is the same, namely, to remember Krishna, who is the source of all knowledge and energy, and to act.

America finds herself in a similar situation as Arjuna. She stands amidst all of the mental, vital and material accomplishments which reflect her manifest nature, and yet finds that her many gifts may fail her in the face of an impending ecological disaster. While the "energy crisis" is becoming more firmly imprinted on our minds in the forms of food and fuel, these are only symbolic of a far more serious situation of alienation from the spiritual ground of our mental, vital and physical sources of energy. The rational mind moves in circles when faced with such questions as how we are to reverse the process of the destruction of sources of energy in nature (*e.g.*, the destruction of life in the oceans) which many scientists view as irreversible. The situation has reached global proportions and, perhaps, we will be driven at some point to cry out like Arjuna:

...O Krishna,...my limbs collapse and my mouth is parched, my body shakes and my hair stands on end; (the bow) Gandiva slips from my hand, and all my skin seems to be burning (I, 28-29).

Perhaps, we must be brought to this consciousness before we can move beyond our present attachments to mental and material life.

Just as Krishna would not hear of Arjuna's desire to abandon his nature as warrior, any form of Hinduism that comes to America to dissuade her from realizing her ideal of perfecting her mental and material life will only perpetuate the alienation between matter and spirit. Arjuna learns in the course of his dialogue with Krishna that the ground of his knowledge, his activity and his very physical being is in the higher knowledge and energy of the transcendent and immanent Spirit of whom Krishna is the avatar. In this light America, like Arjuna, must be urged to perfect, not excise, her manifest nature. The import of Sri Aurobindo's teachings is, precisely, that America must continue to act or work in all areas of mental, vital and physical endeavor, but she must discover that all of these areas if they are to be perfected will reveal their spiritual ground.

In this light it would seem that the integral vision and yoga of Sri Aurobindo encompasses the highest ideals of the West in general and America in particular as well as the highest ideals of the East that are presently manifesting here under the different forms of Hinduism. Sri Aurobindo comes to America as Krishna comes to Arjuna, *i.e.*, with the message not to renounce her nature, but to discover the knowledge and power of which her nature is a manifestation. In this context the variety of yogas that are now present in America are not to be seen as separate or contradicting the integral spirituality of Sri Aurobindo. They are to be viewed through the Aurobindonian optic as forms of the dynamic Spirit, Shakti, that is working towards a full manifestation and perfection of all of its forms, whether spiritual or what we ordinarily identify as secular forms of life. Here the Spirit is not only immutable and tran-

scendent to the dynamic existence of the cosmos, but is also moving toward a full manifestation in all cosmic form. It would seem that Sri Aurobindo's message to an Indian Nationalist colleague in 1920 is equally one for America:

... my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life ...(45)

CHARLES MALONEY

NOTES

(All references from Sri Aurobindo are from the Centenary Edition of 1972)

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2. *On Himself*, Vol 26, pp. 413-14.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 414.
4. "Ourselves" in *The Supramental Manifestation*, V 16, p. 330
5. See "The Two Negations The Materialist Denial" in *The Life Divine*, V 18, pp 5-16.
6. See "The Two Negations The Refusal of the Ascetic", *Ibid*, pp 17-24
7. *On Himself*, V. 26, p. 415.
8. W Greene, "Triage", *New York Times Magazine*, (Jan. 5, 1975).
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18. "Involution and Evolution", in *The Supramental Manifestation*, V. 16, p. 232
19. *On Himself*, V. 26, pp 415-16.
20. See "The Evolutionary Process—Ascent and Integration", in *The Life Divine*, V 19, pp. 702-25.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 258
22. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, V. 20, p 39.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 2
24. See Part IV, "The Yoga of Self-Perfection", in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, V 21, p. 583ff
25. *Letters on Yoga*, V. 22, p. 100.
26. *Ibid* 27. *Ibid.* 28. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
29. For Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Veda see *The Secret of the Veda*, V. 10.
30. *Letters on Yoga*, V. 22, pp. 69-70.
31. *Ibid*, p. 98. 32. *Ibid.* 33. *Ibid*, p 99
34. *The Life Divine*, V. 19, p. 821.
35. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, V. 21, p. 599
36. *Ibid*, p. 598. 37. *Ibid.*, p. 585.
38. "Uttarpara Speech", in *Karmayogin*, V 2, pp. 3-4. 39. *Ibid*, p. 3.
40. *The Mother*, V. 25, p. 1.
41. *The Life Divine*, V. 18, p. 270
42. *Karmayogin*, V. 2, p.8.
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44. "The Human Cycle", in *Social and Political Thought*, V. 15, p. 138
45. *On Himself*, V. 26, p. 430.

THE FIRST AMERICANS IN THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

RECOLLECTIONS OF THEM AND NOTES ON SOME PERSONAL TOPICS RELATED TO AMERICA

I

THE first American name to fly about in the Ashram's air was one that significantly had a plural ring: Macpheeters. It was two Americans who jointly started the flow of the New World to the Newer World which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had begun to build in the Old. They were husband and wife: Vaun and Jeanette Macpheeters.

They were here already before I stepped into Pondicherry on December 16, 1927. The Mother had given them the upper floor of a two-storeyed house, a comfortable apartment with a good open veranda and a big terrace above. Both of them must have been past fifty. Vaun was a huge hulk of a man with practically no hair on his big impressive head. Jeanette was a smallish person and fairly thin. I came to know them very well and they were always kind to me, especially as I was comparatively a very young man—just turned twenty-three. We used to meet often on their veranda and have long talks. A.B. Purani was another of their intimate friends.

They had undergone the discipline of meditation in the States with a spiritual teacher named Debbitt. I was told he had quite a following. I remember seeing not only a photograph of him in the Macpheeters' album but also a book of his lessons or instructions in typescript. He had a strong handsome clean-shaven face with powerful eyes. The Macpheeters thought very highly of him, believing he had a cosmic consciousness in which, according to them, he must have contacted Sri Aurobindo. I was not very much struck by what I had heard about his philosophy, and even made to Purani a rather irreverent joke comparing this teacher to Sri Aurobindo as "Debit" to "Credit."

Jeanette, at some time of her stay here, got from Sri Aurobindo an Ashram name: "Shantimayi" ("one who is full of peace"). She never went out of Pondicherry after her arrival. Vaun, after a year's stay, travelled in India and was absent from the Ashram for a fairly long period. When he returned he was not quite the same person, either psychologically or physically. His health had suffered a good deal and he lacked the old concentration on Yoga.

In the early days, whenever I asked him about his sadhana he would mostly say with a broad smile and an expressive movement of his hand at head-level, "Coming and going, going and coming!" Now it appeared there was less "coming" and more "going."

But during the time he had been in the Ashram, he along with Jeanette had lived in close contact with the Mother. In his absence, Shantimayi became a part of the

group of about twenty people who used to sit with the Mother every evening in the "Prosperity" Store-room for about an hour before the Soup Distribution downstairs. She entered fully into the spirit of the happy illuminative talks and intuition-developing games held there. She made one of the three Westerners who were present in that group—the two others being Pavitra (Philippe Barbier St-Hilaire) and Datta (Dorothy Hodgson).

When Vaun decided to go away from the Ashram, Jeanette appeared very unwilling but left out of a sense of duty. She kept corresponding with the Mother for a year or two from the States. Much more than Vaun she may be considered the first American to have become a sadhak of the Integral Yoga—though at the start both of them were equally sincere and ardent in their aspirations.

They had a great fund of humour—and Shantimayi was both amazed and tickled when our diminutive Ashram engineer, Chandulal, who also attended the meetings in the "Prosperity" Store-room, perpetrated one of his "howlers" in English by summing up her character. He said: "Shantimayi is frivolous in the eyes but serious in the back."

In *Light and Laughter: Some Talks at Pondicherry* (p. 22) I have recounted an amusing incident at the first *darshan* both these Americans and I had of Sri Aurobindo who had withdrawn from public contacts after November 24, 1926. The *darshan* was on February 21, 1928, the Mother's birthday, an occasion on which, as on two others in the year (August 15, Sri Aurobindo's birthday, and November 24, "the Day of Victory"), both the Master and the Mother received, one by one, all the sadhaks and some visitors to the Ashram. Let me quote from that book:

"I happened to be just behind them in the queue and I couldn't help overhearing their agitated conversation. It seemed a big problem had arisen at the last minute: to whom to bow first, the Mother or Sri Aurobindo? Vaun told his wife: 'If we bow to Sri Aurobindo first, the Mother may feel insulted; if we bow to the Mother first, Sri Aurobindo may get offended. So what should we do?' I too was very much intrigued by this almost insoluble problem. But they had remarkable ingenuity. Their solution was: not to bow to either of them—but to put their heads, one after the other, in the empty space between the two. Of course they had the unique privilege of having blessings from both the Gurus at once but they missed the feet of either. For the likes of me it was no problem because Sri Aurobindo was quite new and unknown to us, while the Mother had become familiar; and while Sri Aurobindo was sitting very gravely the Mother was all smiles to set us at ease. So we went straight to her, got soothed by her, gained moral courage, then proceeded to Sri Aurobindo and looked at him."

I recall another funny incident. There was to be no smoking in the Ashram, but Vaun had not been able yet to give up his pipe. The Mother used to visit their flat every week. Once, before the hour fixed, Vaun was having his little "pipe-dream". The Mother arrived earlier and Vaun in a hurry put his pipe on a ledge outside one of his windows where the Mother would be unlikely to see it. But it so happened that

the Mother, after the usual meditation with them, went straight to that particular window and looked out of it. Naturally she caught sight of the concealed pipe. Vaun was embarrassed but the Mother laughed heartily and he and Jeanette joined in the laughter. Later they remarked: "It isn't possible to hide anything from the Mother."

The Mother had once told me: "When a person wants to conceal something from me, the thought of the thing to be hidden keeps hovering all about him and I immediately catch it."

Shantimayi and Vaun were always anxious to get Indianised. Whenever she went out of doors, she dressed in a sari. She looked elegant in this dress—the white sari matching her white bobbed hair and making more graceful her somewhat bony body. Vaun moved about in a dhoti topped by a white shirt, like most of the Ashram-inmates.

Shantimayi once asked Purani how Indians managed to have strong white teeth. Purani attributed the strength and the glitter to the use of "tooth-sticks"—that is, small sticks of the neem or banyan tree, which were to be chewed at one end to make a kind of brush and then moved vigorously over the teeth as well as repeatedly bitten to get the astringent juice out of them on to the teeth and gums. This sort of morning-practice was a much more athletic exercise than ordinary tooth-brushing with a soft paste. Jeanette religiously took to the Indian way. After a couple of days her teeth looked a little whiter but unfortunately, because of the strenuous stick-chewing she had done, all her gold fillings fell out!

2

Apropos of the first Americans in the Ashram, I may write of my connection with America as an Ashramite, repeating what I have recounted elsewhere about my return to the Ashram in 1954 after several years' absence. As if from something above the head, from some uplifted luminous watching Will, the decision appeared to come in early February 1953 that I should make my home again near the Mother. When the decision was conveyed to her during my visit for the *darshan* of February 21 she confirmed its authenticity. But to make it practicable in terms of rupees was not easy. In an interview I laid all my difficulties before the Mother. At that time I was somewhat hard-up and I said: "Mother, I must have Rs. 500 to settle a few matters and pay for a thorough migration with my wife Sehra and our dog Bingo." The Mother replied: "So you must have Rs. 500?" I gave a big serious nod and she smiled.

I went back to Bombay and fixed the time of my permanent return a few months ahead. Weeks rolled by but there was no prospect of those Rs. 500 materialising in a lump sum.

In December of the previous year, an American journalist, Harvey Breit, had come to Bombay with a scheme of the Ford Foundation for a special India-Supplement to the *Atlantic Monthly*. I was introduced to him and he commissioned an article on Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram. I wrote my piece, 2000 words or so. It was approved. I asked hesitatingly whether there would be any payment. "Of course,"

was the answer, "we'll write to you from the States." But even after months there was no word from the *Atlantic Monthly*. Now the month I had fixed for my return to Pondicherry was approaching. Within a fortnight of D-Day (Divine Day, naturally) I got a letter from America. It said that a cheque was enclosed on the Ford Foundation's account in an Indian bank. I unfolded the cheque. There, unbelievably, was an order for Rs. 500. Not a rupee more, not a rupee less! But the story of the Grace does not end here. A week later I received another letter. It was apologetic, saying that owing to certain unavoidable circumstances the Supplement had to be cut down considerably and that, though my article had been much appreciated, it could not be used. This did not mean the withdrawal of the payment. The payment would be made and I was even told that the compilers claimed no right to the article: it could be sold by me anywhere else.

Thus my article went all the way from India to the U.S.A. and came back to me with a gift of the exact amount I had mentioned to the Mother and she had endorsed. Again, to take me to the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo, it had appropriately to be an article on Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram.

What is of further and final interest is that many years earlier there had been a talk between the Mother and myself about financial aid to the Ashram from America. She had said: "I have a feeling that we may have something to do with Henry Ford." Years afterwards, Margaret Wilson, the daughter of the one-time President Woodrow Wilson, came to stay in the Ashram and she got in touch with Ford. Ford replied that, as he believed in reincarnation, he would be interested to meet somebody who could throw light on his past births. Miss Wilson spoke with the Mother. The Mother said she could certainly throw some light. It appears that Ford was eager to pay a visit to the Ashram. Unhappily, adverse circumstances delayed his coming. A little later he died. So the only help that has come so far from the side of Ford are those Rs. 500 as a windfall to one to whom the Mother had talked about Ford's possible help.

K. D. SETHNA

A LETTER BY SRI AUROBINDO TO ONE OF THE FIRST AMERICANS IN THE ASHRAM*

WHEN you wrote to me from America, some of the experiences you narrated indicated a very clear call to the new supramental life. And we understood also that a Power from the higher planes that had a place in our work was trying to manifest through your personality. But a call is only the beginning; it is after many ordeals that it matures into a definite and irrevocable choice. Moreover, whenever a Power of this kind tries to manifest, always in the exterior human personality the opposite movements have a strong place. It is as if for each divine power the conquest of its opposite in its own chosen vessel was a condition for its perfect manifestation on the earth plane.

When you came here the Mother perceived that you must at first be left alone to your own movement and the discipline imposed on other sadhakas was not laid upon you. All she did was to bring down the supramental light and power in you and to open to them the different centres. This was rapidly and on the whole successfully done.

But to open the centres is only a beginning, for then comes one of the most difficult periods for the disciple. The consciousness opens not only to the true Light and Power, but to all kinds of experiences and all sorts of influences from all the planes and from all sources and quarters. There is a period of intense and overpowering internal activity of formation, vision and movements of new consciousness and new power. If then the disciple is carried away by the brilliance and splendour and delight of his experiences he can easily wander far from the highest way. But the Forces and Beings that are behind them are sometimes adverse Forces, sometimes the lesser Gods of the mental and vital planes. In either case they try to occupy and use the instrument, but for their own purpose, for the play of the Ideas and Forces they represent, not the highest Truth. There are only three safeguards for the disciple. One is to call down first the eternal peace, calm and silence of the Divine into the mind and the vital and physical being. In that peace and silence there is a true possibility that the mental and vital formations will fall to rest and the supramental creation can have free space. The second safeguard is to remain entirely detached even from the most absorbing experiences and observe them without being carried away by their brilliance. The power of discernment and discrimination will slowly form from above and he will be able to distinguish between the higher truth and the lower truth as between truth and falsehood. The third safeguard is to follow implicitly the instructions of the spiritual guides who have already trod the path and to follow their guidance.

This is the ordeal into which you have entered; but unhappily you seem to have departed from the guidance of the Mother in the crucial point. You seem to have deliberately rejected the peace and silence of the vital being in the fear that it would bring stagnation. As a result the strong habit of vital formation came into play and you began to call down lights and powers and build things in yourself in your own

* A draft letter found in a notebook of 1928.

way. In this condition, when the disciple is not accustomed to complete trust in his masters the one thing that can be done is to stand aside and let the disciple take his own way, for to insist is likely to raise in him doubt and revolt and decide him in the opposite way. According to whatever may be the supreme decision in his case¹, he will feel the need of guidance and return to the straight way or he will depart on his own path wherever his inner destiny calls him.

If you have not an entire confidence in us, are not prepared to submit absolutely to our guidance, if the supramental Truth is not your one aim, if you are not prepared to go through the slow, difficult and often painful process of self-emptying by which alone it can form in you, putting away all pride, self-will and excessive self-confidence, or if you think that with you is the Truth and not with us, then obviously you can draw no benefit from staying. It is for you to choose.

One thing I would say in ending is that you have formed very erroneous ideas about the work I have undertaken, as for instance when you imagine that I am working by spiritual means to bring about a world-wide conflagration and a war between the white and the coloured races. This is a sheer error. The Mother has indeed told you that I do not believe in crude and violent external means for a spiritual work. As for the division of the human race according to their colour, it is in my view the play of an obscure ignorance and I would never dream of admitting it as a basis for my action. If any such world catastrophe happened it would be the result of Karmic forces and far from helping would be a serious hindrance to my work. My work is one of spiritual creation, not of physical destruction. If anything has to disappear or change, it will do so by the turning on it of the spiritual Light and Force and what has to change must be decided by that omniscient Light and omnipotent Force and not by the human mind and its narrow ideas and false desires.

¹ Reading uncertain.

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ROCKET TO THE SUN

LETTER TO A STUDENT AT CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY FROM AN AMERICAN MATRIMANDIR WORKER IN AUROVILLE, CITY OF DAWN RISING IN INDIA

Dear Sankar, Brother:

The card at top of which was written in blue ink "OM Sri Aurobindo-MEERA" arrived a few hours ago. It touched me with wonder, for although the signature to the letter on it was of someone I had never met in this life asking me to accept him as my brother, it became as I read on a communication from someone near and dear. Yes; from a brother. Powdered with concrete dust from chipping work on the summit rib-ends of *Matrimandir* I had just entered *Unity* some five hundred yards away and there it was in the community mail-box. From a Sankar C., "devotee of The Mother, student of English (Honours) at Calcutta University." Reading some poetry of mine "published in the Ashram English Journal" you evidently felt through it our inner relationship in our Mother and asked to know more about me. And so I answer you, my Brother, accepting the love you send as hers, from the place she has named *Peace* at the Center of Auroville where an international band of volunteers—others of our wide family—are building her *Mandir*.

It is in fact the Earth's *Mandir*, for by its Charter Auroville "belongs to humanity" and an event that concerns its future is unfolding here: an instrument and vessel for its voyaging into the New World. That is what I shall try to tell you about, as it is my life now. And there seems to be a further reason why our Mother is connecting us at this time, you a student at a large Indian university, and I who have been planning to teach for two months in the Auroville Summer Institute this year at a large American university. You know this is the Bicentennial of America's Declaration of Independence from British imperialism and colonial rule, July 4, 1776 marking the successful conclusion of the American Revolution and union of the thirteen Colonies as the Republic of the United States of America.

It was the birthday of a nation esoterically linked with India on the cosmic inner levels, and what you may not know is the high degree of importance our Mother gave to the collaboration of these two nations. America had been seeded for its "Second American Revolution" —of Consciousness—by Vivekananda's journey there during the last century. As Sri Aurobindo later and prophetically wrote, "The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice."

About America's openness and readiness for the journey to the New World, the Mother told Satprem in 1971: "The people of Europe are too old, too much

bent on calculating every step they take and the consequences, while the American people are capable of enthusiasm and aspiration and of plunging into the Future ...” To Udar Pinto she was gravely emphatic about the necessity of India and America joining in power and spirit to work for that Future. He reports: “*Mother said in '73 that in her full spiritual knowledge she knows that for saving the world and building the New World it is absolutely essential that India and America work together, because these are the two countries that will do it: America with her great material power, and India with her spiritual force, both of which are necessary.*”

If you have read “*The Mother on India*”, dear Brother, you know her vision of that spiritual force and mission. “*India's true destiny is to be the Guru of the world*”, and so her aim in education should be to “*prepare her children for the rejection of falsehood and the manifestation of Truth ... There must be a group forming a strong body of cohesive will with the Spiritual Knowledge ... It is India that can bring Truth in the world. By manifestation of Divine Will and Power alone, India can preach her message to the world, and not by imitating the materialism of the West. By following the Divine Will India shall shine at the top of the spiritual mountain and show the way of Truth and organise World Unity.*”

Invoking the living soul of the world, India, our Mother called to the land of light and spiritual knowledge to awaken to her true mission in the world, to show the way to union and harmony by incarnating it. It is this call that makes possible what has been described as “a miracle ... rising from a barren plain” in South India. The technological miracle of a manned rocket to the moon launched in the West is known throughout the world. Now quietly, Sankar, scarcely known except by word of those connected with it, another kind of miracle is being prepared. It is the launching of a spiritual “rocket” through Inner Space ... sent up through a collective aspiration to the Inner Sun of Truth Where else on earth could such an enterprise be undertaken except in “the land of light and spiritual knowledge” which has summoned us from different cultures of the old world to find the new?

The secret of the rocket to the Supramental Sun lies in the Inner Chamber of the Matrimandir. At the close of the year 1969 in which a Consciousness had descended into the Earth's atmosphere and settled there, suffusing the whole earth with the light, force and joy of the Superman, our Mother had a vision of the interior — the “sanctuary” — of the Matrimandir. During the first days of the new year 1970 the vision remained. “One day, I saw it like that, as I see you. And still now, it is so living that it is enough for me to look and I see it,” she confided to certain disciples in January 1970. “I saw clearly, very, very distinctly. That means that it was like that and that it is still like that; it is there (*gesture indicating an eternal plane*) ... Since it has been decided to build this temple, I have seen, I have seen the interior ... I did not see the outside, I did not see it at all. I saw only the inside ... a tower with twelve facets; each facet represents a month of the year ... And then inside there will be twelve columns ... exactly half-way between the centre and the wall.” She had seen her symbol on the floor in the centre, four symbols of Sri Aurobindo standing upon it to form a

square, upon the square a translucent globe. There she saw “a ray of light that always falls on it—that turns, turns, turns . . . with the sun” striking its exact centre as the light is concentrated by an optical device set in the inner tower’s roof-peak. The Sun is a symbol of the Supramental Truth; and for the real life “we have to be able to look long upon the Sun.” Sri Aurobindo says in *The Secret of the Veda*: “A superconscient Truth lies concealed and is the basis of the infinite being which stands revealed on those higher altitudes of our ascension.”

What we are working at now, Sankar, is the setting, in the inner tower or chamber, for that compound lens which is to concentrate the “sun-ray” on the crystal globe. We work in close proximity, for the space for the ring-beam to be concreted in the tower roof-peak is not much more than the ring’s dimensions; Tamil, Italian, Swiss, English, American, Bengali, French, Canadian Aurovillians shoulder to shoulder, sometimes head to foot in curious new *asanas* of work-concentration as the sharp upward slope of wood-beams for the shuttering is hammered into place, the surfaces of rib-ends chiselled for the concrete joinings to the ring-beam . . . The atmosphere is filled with Presence . . . hers . . . at this peak-point of work and hope and . . . daring 40 metres up in the sky. Or rather, faith. Having ascended the narrow perpendicular iron ladder this high we know already who supports us in blue space.

Below us are four of the tower’s “twelve facets” — that dodecagonal wall which will enclose the interior our Mother saw. When we concreted the four this past October there were waves of such high energy and joy we knew we were embarked on the far voyage. That was the month in which Christopher Columbus, daring everything to find a new passage to India, discovered what was to be for that Age the New World. He had no chart, an American poet, Santayana, has sung,

Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
 To trust the soul’s invincible surmise
 Was all his science and his only art.
 Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine
 That lights the pathway but one step ahead
 Across a void of mystery and dread.
 Bid then the tender light of faith to shine
 By which alone the mortal heart is led
 Unto the thinking of the thought divine.”

Now armed with the Charter of the Mother and the charts of Sri Aurobindo we attempt by faith and dedication to have ready, by February 21st, 1978, the rocket to the Sun—passage from India to discovery of the New World of the spiritual Age. It is described in Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*:

A gold supernal sun of timeless Truth
 Poured down the mystery of the eternal Ray

Through a silence quivering with its word of Light
On an endless ocean of discovery.

“The call is to young India”, Sankar, Brother; to young America. To the young everywhere *who must be the builders of the new world* — “not those who accept the competitive individualism, the capitalism or the materialistic communism of the West ... nor those who are enslaved to old religious formulas and cannot believe in the acceptance and transformation of life by the spirit, but all who are free in mind and heart to accept a completer truth and labour for a greater ideal ... who will dedicate themselves not to the past or the present, but to the future.”

A world is in dissolution; its chaos surrounds us, beats and pounds at us as we work on the rocket within us and the *Matrimandir*. We wave to you from the scaffoldings Salutations and Greetings, dear Brother, knowing you too will find your place among the builders of the new world struggling to be born “in the land of Light and spiritual knowledge,” our Mother India.

SEYRIL,
Matrimandir Workers Camp,
Peace, Auroville, India

LOVELY JEWEL

LOVELY jewel, sparkling in the sunlight,
radiates from unfoldment ...
the long winter of many years is behind ...
now and beyond glow with promises of
fulfillment and giving ...
Gentleness softens the diamond facets
reflecting many colors ...

each day polishes the jewel,
reveals still another face perfecting ...

Yield, lovely jewel, to the
stone cutter's harshness ...
the seeming abrasiveness is done
with much love.

SALLY

AN AMERICAN POEM ON POETRY

FROM A TALK TO THE STUDENTS OF THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION

POETS have often written on poetry but mostly they have done it in prose. Rarely has a poet written a poem on the essence of his art and still more rarely has he produced a poem worth writing. Perhaps the most apt composition on the subject is a short piece by an American woman, Mary Sinton Leitch.

With small delicate pointed touches she penetrates to the secret heart of the poetic word. To catch the truth of poetry by way of a poetic and not a philosophic statement, or rather by means of a revelatory flash rather than conceptual lucidity, is this lyric's signal success. The verses run:

Advice to Would-be-Poets

Would you be a poet,
Be silent till you drink
Deep of a rainbow
At a brook's brink!

You shall tread deftly
Lest beauty be bereaved
By bruising of a flower.
Your spirit shall be grieved

When a bough is broken,
Else from your lips shall come
No elegy, no idyll,
Or prothalamium.

When you hear the world's laughter
And feel the world's grief
In the wash of a wave,
In the stir of a leaf;

When there shall fall upon you
The shadow of a wing
Though never a bird is in the sky,
Then sing!

Before we turn this gem round in our hand we may glance at the close of another

poem on poetry by an Englishwoman, Stella Kobrin:

He squanders joy who draws back from the brink
 Of beauty for some silly song. I think
 God never made a single flowering tree
 For poets' babblings—but for ecstasy!

Kobrin means that one who has the idea of writing a poem cannot fully enter into the experience of beauty. He goes to the brink of beauty to quaff the nectarous waters but, if he has it in his mind to write a poem about it, he is divided in his experience and cannot really enjoy the full intoxication. Or, if he halts to write a poem and express what he is experiencing, he spoils the magic by interrupting it. The fullness of the delight will fail to be his and, if that is so, how is he ever going to embody his experience in poetry? Unless you have got something which brims you, you cannot give a just expression to it. But if you let it brim you, you can't at the same time stop anywhere to write anything. The author doesn't, of course, consider the case of having the full experience and later turning to poetry. Perhaps she would ask: "If you have the full experience, where in the name of heaven is the need to say anything? You've got everything, and writing is superfluous, not to speak of superficial." In any case, she refers to "silly song", silly because the attempt is to utter the unutterable, to do what was never meant to be done.

What Kobrin "thinks" at the end about "a single flowering tree" reminds me of the ending of a poem by another poet, a young man who died in the First World War and whose Christian name seems rather a woman's than a man's: Joyce Kilmer. He has a whole poem on a tree. It concludes:

Poems are made by fools like me,
 But only God can make a tree.

The same idea as Kobrin's is here, but there is in her lines the additional shade that God never made a tree for men to be foolish enough to write poems about it. God made a flowering tree in order that there might be an ecstasy within us, a delighted sense within us, a delighted sense of the Divine. "Ecstasy"—the word in its etymology signifies "standing outside", you are beside yourself, as we say, and when you are beside yourself you are in no condition really to do anything but be beside. You cannot write poetry in that state: this is Kobrin's final contention.

You may have noticed that here the poet admittedly is framing a thought more than conjuring up a vision. She says: "I think ..." A fine excited statement is here but not the transfiguring touch of the very "ecstasy" she speaks of. Leitch gives in effect a reply to Kobrin with a movement of subtle rapture in every line. However, there is also an element of agreement. She doesn't say that no poetry should be writ-

ten but she does imply that one should not simply jump into verse the moment one is pierced by beauty: poetry should be written only under certain conditions. As if directly having Kobrin in mind she starts her poem where the other's terminates. Kobrin tells us of the joy squandered when one draws back from the brink of beauty. Now we begin with that theme:

... drink
 Deep of a rainbow
 At a brook's brink!

Kobrin wants us to be silent at the brink of beauty and Leitch says the same thing: "Be silent" Yet there is a vital difference. The former commands us not to draw back from the brink to commence poetising; the latter asks us to stay by the brink and poetise, but not until we have had the full experience: we must be in no hurry to express ourselves.

And here the brink is made the bank of a brook: the brook is a symbol of something which is flowing, it is a symbol of the flux of existence. As the Greek Heraclitus said: *Panta rhei*, "Everything flows," and Heraclitus is supposed to have added to the flow of things by his pessimistic temperament, by being, as we are told, "the weeping philosopher", just as his contemporary Democritus is called "the laughing philosopher". But the flux-symbolism is not all we have in the first stanza. We are asked to drink deep of a rainbow. This is a peculiar phrase. How can you drink deep of a rainbow at the brink of a brook? The phrase suggests that the brook is a quiver and a glimmer of many colors and also that it is revelatory. There is some marvel which the brook catches from afar in its limpidity, its crystalline quality. When you are drinking of the brook you have not merely to drink what is there in it: you have also to feel what is not there, an ethereal loveliness beyond the brook itself and appearing in it in a magical manner: a rainbow mystery. That mystery you have to absorb, sensed by your imagination through your eyes as suffusing the immediate outer world before you.

Then the poet gives a second piece of advice:

You shall tread deftly
 Lest beauty be bereaved
 By bruising of a flower...

There you have a play of alliteration: "beauty" and "bereaved" and "bruising". This kind of repetition of sounds frequently takes the place of logic in poetry. Instead of trying to prove a point we are given a sort of inner connection, a meaningful consistency of expression by means of the same consonant running on. Here the idea is that in the world of nature there is a living spirit. Beauty is conceived as a living spirit capable of feeling. If you tread in an unskilled, gauche, insensitive way, you will hurt the spirit of beauty which is there and which wants to keep her own creations or mani-

festations as beautiful as she can, as truly representative of herself as possible. A flower is not meant to be hurt, its petals to be torn apart or its stalk to be broken. Its delicate poise should be left untroubled, and that is why we are asked to be very careful, very conscious of the world spirit, which is the spirit of beauty.

A poet has always to feel that there is a living being in the world, a cosmic consciousness, a vast soul of the universe. A poet cannot be a poet unless, whether openly or not, he is both a pantheist and a polytheist on top of whatever other brand of theist he may be. He feels that there are gods or spirits or guardian entities everywhere in the world, who can respond to him and whose self-expression he tries to echo or visualize. He feels too that there is a complete secret unity in the whole world by which all the different objects and their shapes and colours are interwoven and made inter-reflective. What after all is the function of a simile or a metaphor? It is to show not only the relations between things but also the existence of one thing in another. A simile is meant to show a certain correspondence, but a metaphor identifies two things and sees the same thing in both. Similes and metaphors suggest not only that there is a cosmic scheme holding a variety of elements together in concord but also that there is one single cosmic fact which expresses itself in various modes and, by its omnipresence, renders the modes interchangeable so that we can speak of one thing in terms of another.

To continue. Our poet says:

Your spirit shall be grieved
When a bough is broken ...

Not only must you avoid grieving the spirit of nature: you must also yourself be so sensitive that in case you have not trodden deftly but have done something to bruise a flower or break a bough you will be grieved as if you have done a horrible deed, committed a crime. You must have such sensitivity that every time you do damage to the smallest piece of beauty you feel as if you should fall on your knees and beg forgiveness from the little thing which is hurt as well as from the great thing which has given birth to it. Unless you feel thus, you will never be a true poet, never give tongue to the three kinds of poetic forms which may be taken to sum up the natural channels in which inspiration can flow: the elegy, the idyll, the prothalamium. An elegy is a composition expressing a sad experience, it may not be a lament but there is a sense of the Virgilian "tears of things", a mortality-moved melancholy. An idyll is a poem which expresses a romantic figuration of life, the dream of a Shelleyan world "where moonlight and music and feeling are one". A prothalamium is a preliminary to a marriage song. Edmund Spenser of the Elizabethan Age coined the word and made it famous by a poem of his to go with another, entitled *Epithalamium*, the Marriage Song. A prothalamium means a poem expressive of life-sustaining joy. Not only the romantic imagination, not only the feeling of "the heartbreak at the heart of things", as Wilfred Owen puts it, but also the common happiness of earth-existence. Nothing

deep-delving, high-flying or wide-running is possible unless the poet is super-sensitive.

Next we come to more positive directions for the poet. Here the author sets forth one of the preconditions of bursting into poetry. When should you really take to singing? She gives an example of what you should do in the first place. The smallest thing holds for you immense significances, as if all mankind were finding tongue in the most tiny and trivial phenomenon you witness. The least occurrence of the objective universe is packed with the drive of all human history on the face of the earth, the whole world's movement through space and time with its million vicissitudes of evolutionary struggle—a struggle carrying tones of both laughter and grief, recurring fulfilment and recurring frustration. Perhaps the rejoicing and suffering of the totality of life and not merely of human history are the tones you have to feel. And the feeling is not to be confined to great events: it has to extend even to infinitesimals like the soft foam-burst of sea-water along the beach and the faint quiver a breath of air makes in delicate foliage. In these small events you have all terrestrial life happy or sorrowful in a low key—low yet with the entire essential meaning of the experience couched there. Before you are able to catch that entire essential meaning at every point of the cosmic scene you must not try to write poetry. That is one precondition.

Now we come to another, which is even more profound:

When there shall fall upon you
The shadow of a wing
Though never a bird is in the sky ...

You feel as if a great presence, a wide-spread presence from something very high were there. You are haunted by it. There is an intense movement going on far above you, and you are aware of it when you are standing on the earth. You have a sensation not only of wideness but of a power brooding over the cosmos, something very elevated far beyond, something transcendental, and you feel there is a supreme being high above who is attracting you. You are with the universe still, but you have the sense of a sky and not only the horizon. And it is as though the feeling that you have below were of the shadow of a great bird and you look up to see if there is anything really there, but you see nothing. The earth you see, the cosmos you see, but here is something not contained within them and yet they hold its essence. It is something supreme but invisible. As Shelley says,

Thou whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.

You look up and there is only the world you know, which is a very grand world no doubt and has to be a very active force in you, yet now you are aware of an invisible reality which exceeds this world. There is nothing to the physical eyes, and still you feel something. When you feel it, a kind of supernatural, a kind of divine, a kind of

supracosmic movement is held by you in your heart and seized as a suggestion in the earthly scene. Then you are in a condition to give utterance to poetry.

Then sing!

There comes a definitive command at the end: you are fit to be a poet.

This last verse is very intuitively evocative and profound. One can write a long essay on it. The two concluding stanzas could form the core of an entire theory of poetry which would be very much in tune with Sri Aurobindo's version of the poetic phenomenon. How would I summarize this version? Poetry, dealing with whatever themes are congenial to the poet, is intensity of vision, intensity of word and intensity of rhythm, caught up into a harmonious whole. It comes from an inner intuitive self. This self is silently in touch with a universal being as well as with a higher realm of reality whose creative Delight and Truth-Consciousness have manifested our world in all its vibrant details as its progressive self-expression. On the one side poetry with its rich or economical art may be called a happy play of the Gods; on the other side it is a great formative and illuminative power. We have to listen to it across a thrilled silence within us, so that what has come from heights and breadths through the inner intuitive self of the poet may be received by our own "soul" and open in us, as a line from Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* has it,

A golden temple door to things beyond.

Mark how effectively Mary Sinton Leitch closes her poem. The fourth lines in all the stanzas have several words: "At a brook's brink", "Your spirit shall be grieved", etc. These are either of two feet or three feet—four syllables or six. But in this last line of the lyric there are only two monosyllabic words. They fall like great ringing hammers and strike home the culmination of the poetic process.

Perhaps you'll ask me: "Could one call the poem didactic? If so, would it be less a true poem?" Didacticism is here in the sense that "advice" is given on what we should do, but the piece is not didactic in the ordinary sense of the term because it is full of imagery, full of subtle perception, full of inner feeling and is not just a number of thoughts arranged effectively to teach us a lesson. In the last verse the poet escapes into a sheer world of intuitive sight, and the suggestion is profound and the lesson is lightened up as well as lighted up, it becomes air-borne by the form chosen. There is no heaviness about the movement, not even the weightiness which would be impressively associated with a didactic poem. There is a certain springiness, a certain wingedness and all that evocation of wingedness ends with the mention of a wing in the end!

AMAL KIRAN