

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

### SPECIAL ISSUE

21 FEBRUARY 1980 : THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

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#### TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

The enormous rise in the cost of paper, production and distribution and the change in some other factors have forced us to raise by a small margin our subscription from 1980. We have kept the margin as small as possible because the cost of living is everywhere on the increase. In passing, we may state that the cost to us of each copy of *Mother India* is more than Rs. 3/-. It is only the donations and advertisements that help us out to a great extent.

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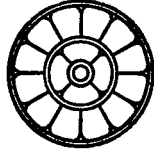
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.

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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XXXII

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

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### AN APPEAL TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

*Mother India* is in need of donations of any amount that can be spared.

The scheme of Life-Membership is still in force. If attended to, it can also help.

Advertisements too can be a good contribution. Tariff cards can be had on application.

Increase in the number of subscribers is always welcome.

We shall be grateful for help in any form, and particularly in the form of donations.

The donations will be tax-free if sent ear-marked for us through the Ashram Trust.

### AN EXPLANATION TO OUR WELL-WISHERS

The good number of our advertisements must not be taken as a sign of great gain. We pay a very large commission on several of them, and after deducting press-charges our profit is small on the whole.

# **SURRENDER TO SRI AUROBINDO**

## **A REMINISCENCE BY THE MOTHER**

LONG before I met Sri Aurobindo, 10 or 12 years before I was doing conscious yoga, I was aware of two dangers: one was the danger of accepting as the Divine one of the Asuras who masquerade as so and the other was mistaking movements of the lower nature as inspirations coming from above. But I surrendered to nobody. I felt the presence of the Divine in my inner being and my exterior life was faithful to it. I was never divided. Then when I saw Sri Aurobindo, I at once knew that it was he, the Divine, and I wholly surrendered myself to him; my whole being gave the consent; if it was a mistake, it was a mistake of the whole being and I could not do anything else. Thereafter whatever Sri Aurobindo said, I accepted without the least doubt, questioning or hesitation. (19-11-1929).<sup>1</sup>

## **TOTAL SELF-GIVING**

### **GUIDANCE FROM THE MOTHER**

THREE typical modes of total self-giving to the Divine:

1. To prostrate oneself at His feet giving up all pride in perfect humility.
2. To lay down one's being before Him, open entirely one's body from head to foot, as one opens a book, spreading out the centres so as to make all their movements visible in complete sincerity that allows nothing to remain hidden.
3. To nestle in His arms, melt in Him in a loving and absolute trust.

These movements may be accompanied with three formulas or any of them according to the case:

1. Let Thy Will be done and not mine.
2. As Thou willest, as Thou willest.
3. I am Thine for eternity.

Generally, when these movements are done rightly, they are followed by a perfect identification, the dissolution of the ego bringing in a sublime felicity.

## **SRI AUROBINDO ON SURRENDER**

THE first word of the supramental Yoga is surrender; its last word also is surrender. It is by a will to give oneself to the eternal Divine, for lifting into the divine consciousness, for perfection, for transformation that the Yoga begins; it is in the entire giving that it culminates; for it is only when the self-giving is complete that there comes the finality of the Yoga, the entire taking up into the supramental Divine, the perfection of the being, the transformation of the nature.

<sup>1</sup> "Notes from a Sadhak's Diary" by A. B. (*Sri Aurobindo Society Annual*, 1977).

## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

### THE ASHRAM AND AUROVILLE

THE Ashram is the central consciousness. Auroville is one of the outward expressions. In both places equally the work is done for the Divine.

### DOING YOGA

...One may have a very good will, a life oriented towards a divine realisation, in any case a kind of more or less superficial consecration to divine work, *and not do yoga*.

To do Sri Aurobindo's yoga is to want to transform oneself integrally, it is to have a single aim in life, such that nothing else exists any longer, that alone exists. And so one feels it clearly in oneself whether one wants it or not, but if one doesn't, one can still have a life of good will, a life of service, of understanding; one can labour for the Work to be accomplished more easily—all that—one can do many things. But between this and doing yoga there is a great difference.

And to do yoga you must want it consciously, you must know what it is, to begin with... You must take a resolution about it, but once you have taken a resolution you must no longer flinch. That is why you must take it in full knowledge of the thing. You must know what you are deciding upon when you say, "I want to do yoga"; and that is why I don't think that I have ever pressed you from this point of view....

---

## THE CASTE SYSTEM

### A PRONOUNCEMENT BY THE MOTHER

IN the beginning, about six thousand years ago, each individual was classed *according to his nature*. Afterwards it became a rigid and more and more arbitrary social convenience (*according to birth*), which completely ignored the true nature of the individual. It became a false conception and had to disappear. But gradually, with human progress, human activities are being classified more and more in a similar, less rigid but much truer way (according to each one's nature and capacity).

7 November 1969

## PONDICHERRY AND THE ASHRAM IN FEBRUARY 1933

### A LETTER BY THE MOTHER TO HER SON ANDRÉ

AFTER a very long time I was happy to receive your letter of January 5th, especially since you think of Pondicherry as an ideal resting place. True, I think that it could provide a perfect place of cure for the restless... Even if one seeks entertainment there is none; on the other hand we have a beautiful sea, the countryside is vast and the town very small; a five-minutes drive and you have left it; and at the centre of it all the Ashram is a condensation of dynamic and active peace, so much so that all those who come from outside feel as if they were in another world. It is indeed another world, a world in which the inner life governs the outer, a world where things get done, where the work is carried out not for a personal end but in a selfless way for the realisation of an ideal. The life we lead here is as far from ascetic abstinence as from an enervating comfort, simplicity is the rule here, but a simplicity full of variety, a variety of occupations, of activities, tastes, tendencies, natures; each one is free to organise his life as he pleases, the discipline is reduced to a minimum that is indispensable to organise the existence of 110 to 120 and to avoid the movements which would be detrimental to the achievement of our yogic aim.

What do you say to that? Isn't it tempting? Will you ever have the time or the possibility to come here? Once you let me hope for a visit.

I would like to show you our establishment. It has just acquired four houses which I bought in my name to simplify the legal technicalities; but it goes without saying that *I do not own them*. I think I have already explained the situation to you and I want to take advantage of this opportunity to remind you of it. The Ashram with all its real estate and moveable property belongs to Sri Aurobindo, it is his money that enables me to meet the almost formidable expenses that it entails (our annual budget averages one "lakh" of rupees, which at the present rate of exchange corresponds approximately to 650,000 francs); and if my name appears sometimes (bank accounts, purchase of houses, of automobiles, etc.) it is, as I have already told you, a matter of convenience for the papers and signatures, since I manage everything, but not because I really own them. You will readily understand why I am telling you all this; it is so that you can bear it in mind just in case.

10 February 1933

(From *Bulletin*, August 15, 1979)

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN THE EVENING OF THE DAY OF THE SUPRAMENTAL MANIFESTATION

29 February 1956

ON this evening, during the meditation which followed this conversation, there took place what the Mother has called “the first Manifestation of the Supramental Light-Force in the earth-atmosphere”.

*“The law of sacrifice is the common divine action that was thrown out into the world in its beginning as a symbol of the solidarity of the universe. It is by the attraction of this law that a divinising, a saving power descends to limit and correct and gradually to eliminate the errors of an egoistic and self-divided creation. This descent, this sacrifice of the Purusha, the Divine Soul submitting itself to Force and Matter so that it may inform and illuminate them, is the seed of redemption of this world of Inconscience and Ignorance. For with sacrifice as their companion, says the Gita, the All-Father created these peoples. The acceptance of the law of sacrifice is a practical recognition by the ego that it is neither alone in the world nor chief in the world. It is its admission that, even in this much fragmented existence, there is beyond itself and behind that which is not its own egoistic person, something greater and completer, a diviner All which demands from it subordination and service.”*

*The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 98.*

*Sweet Mother, what does the “sacrifice to the Divine” mean?*

It is self-giving. It is the word the Gita uses for self-giving.

Only, the sacrifice is mutual, this is what Sri Aurobindo says at the beginning: the Divine has sacrificed Himself in Matter to awaken consciousness in Matter, which had become inconscient. And it is this sacrifice, this giving of the Divine in Matter, that is to say, His dispersion in Matter, which justifies the sacrifice of Matter to the Divine and makes it obligatory; for it is one and the same reciprocal movement. It is because the Divine has given Himself in Matter and scattered Himself everywhere in Matter to awaken it to the divine consciousness, that Matter is automatically under the obligation to give itself to the Divine. It is a mutual and reciprocal sacrifice.

And this is the great secret of the Gita: the affirmation of the divine Presence in the very heart of Matter. And that is why, Matter must sacrifice itself to the Divine, automatically, even unconsciously—whether one wants it or not, this is what happens.



Only, when it is done unconsciously, one doesn't have the joy of sacrifice; while if it is done consciously, one has the joy of sacrifice which is the supreme joy.

The word "sacrifice" in French has slightly too narrow a sense, which it doesn't have in the original Sanskrit; for in French sacrifice implies a sort of suffering, almost a regret. While in Sanskrit this sense is not there at all: it corresponds to "self-giving".

*Sweet Mother, here it is written: "All are linked together by a secret Oneness." Ibid., 98.*

*What is this secret Oneness?*

It is precisely the divine Presence.

Because the Divine is essentially one, and yet He has sub-divided Himself apparently in all beings, and in this way recreated the primordial Oneness. And it is because of this divine Oneness—which, however, appears fragmented in beings—that the Unity is re-established in its essence. And when one becomes conscious of this, one has the joy of the consciousness of the Oneness. But those who are not conscious—what they miss is the joy of consciousness. But the fact remains the same.

Sri Aurobindo says: the Oneness exists; whether you are aware of it or not, it exists, in reality it makes no difference; but it makes a difference to you: if you are conscious, you have the joy; if you are not conscious, you miss this joy.

*But how can a sacrifice be made when one is unconscious?*

It is made automatically.

Whether you know it or not, whether you want it or not, you are all united by the divine Presence which, though it appears fragmented, is yet One. The Divine is One, He only appears fragmented in things and beings. And because this Unity is a fact, whether you are aware of it or not doesn't alter the fact at all. And whether you want it or not, you are in spite of everything subject to this Unity.

This is what I have explained to you I don't know how many times: you think you are separate from one another, but it is the same single Substance which is in you all, despite differences in appearance; and a vibration in one centre automatically awakens a vibration in another.

*So, no effort is to be made to improve the sacrifice, there is no need to make an effort?*

I don't understand this conclusion at all.

If you are happy to be unhappy, that's all right, it is your own affair; if you are content to be unhappy and to suffer and remain in the ignorance and inconscience you are in, stay there. But if this does not satisfy you, if you want to be conscious and

you want suffering to cease, then you must make constant efforts to become conscious of the sacrifice and to make your sacrifice consciously instead of unconsciously.

Everything turns around the consciousness, the fact of being or not being conscious. And it is only in the supreme Consciousness that you can attain the perfect expression of yourself.

But that the Oneness exists, even if you feel just the opposite, is a fact you can do nothing about, for it is a divine action and a divine fact—it is a divine action and a divine fact. If you are conscious of the Divine, you become conscious of this fact. If you are not conscious of the Divine, the fact exists but you simply are not conscious of it—that's all.

So, everything turns around a phenomenon of consciousness. And the world is in a state of obscurity, suffering, misery, of... everything, all it is, simply because it is not conscious of the Divine, because it has cut off the connections in its consciousness, because its consciousness is separated from the Divine. That is to say, it has become unconscious.

For the true consciousness is the divine Consciousness. If you cut yourself off from the divine Consciousness, you become absolutely unconscious; that is exactly what has happened. And so, everything there is, the world as it is, your consciousness as it is, things in the state they are in, are the result of this separation of the consciousness and its immediate obscuration.

The minute the individual consciousness is separated from the divine Consciousness, it enters what we call the inconscience, and it is this inconscience that is the cause of all its miseries.

But all that is, is essentially divine, and the divine Oneness is a fact, you can't do anything about it; all your unconsciousness and all your denials will change nothing—it is a fact, it's like that.

And the conclusion is this, that the true transformation is the transformation of consciousness—all the rest will follow automatically.

There we are, that's all.

*Sweet Mother, what part in us sets itself against a total renunciation?*

It is as if you asked me, "What is unconscious in us?" But in fact, everything is unconscious except the Divine. And it is only when one can unite with the Divine that one re-establishes the true consciousness in one's being. The rest is a kind of mixture of semi-consciousness and semi-unconsciousness.

Anything else? No?

*(Turning to a disciple)* Oh! he is longing to speak!

*Mother, there is a magnificent sentence!*

Ah! only one?

*“Each existence is continually giving out perforce from its stock...” and Sri Aurobindo adds, “And always again it receives something from its environment in return for its voluntary or involuntary tribute.” (The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 98.)*

Yes, that is what I was just saying. And then?

*Does one receive from one’s environment or only from the Divine?*

Oh! from both.

*Because here it is written: “it receives from its environment.”*

Yes! Because Sri Aurobindo says there is a oneness in Matter, a oneness in the manifestation, a oneness in substance, and that there is necessarily an interchange.

In fact, this is what we have said more than fifty thousand times: that all is the Divine and that consequently all is *One*; that it is only your consciousness which is separated and in a state of unconsciousness because it is separated; but that if you remove this unconsciousness and this sense of separation, you become divine.

*But in ordinary life, in one’s environment, what one receives is not always what one gives.*

Oh! but you must not understand things so superficially.

(Another disciple) *Does the inconscient aspire to become conscious?*

No. It is the Divine in the inconscient who aspires for the Divine in the consciousness. That is to say, without the Divine there would be no aspiration; without the consciousness hidden in the inconscient, there would be no possibility of changing the inconscient to consciousness. But because at the very heart of the inconscient there is the divine Consciousness, you aspire, and necessarily—this is what he says—automatically, mechanically, the sacrifice is made. And this is why when one says, “It is not *you* who aspire, it is the Divine, it is not *you* who are conscious, it is the Divine”—these are not mere words, it is a fact. And it is simply your ignorance and your unconsciousness which prevent you from realising it.

(*Meditation*)

## THE DESCENT OF THE SUPERMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

THE MOTHER'S TALKS OF 1, 4, 8, 18 JANUARY AND 15 FEBRUARY 1969

IN the night it came slowly and on waking up this morning, there was as though a golden dawn, and the atmosphere was so light. The body felt: "Well, it is truly, truly new." A golden light, transparent and... benevolent. "Benevolent" in the sense of a certainty—a harmonious certainty. It was new.

There you are.

And when I say "*Bonne année*" to people, it is this which I pass on to them. And this morning, I have passed my time like this, spontaneously, saying: "*Bonne année, Bonne année.*" So...

\*

On the first, something truly strange happened.... And I was not the only one to feel it, some others also have felt it. It was just after midnight, but I felt it at two o'clock and the others at four o'clock in the morning. It was... last time I spoke to you a few words about it, but what is surprising is that it had absolutely no correspondence at all to anything I was expecting (I was expecting nothing), to other things which I had felt. It was something very material, I mean it was very external—very external—and it was luminous, with a golden light. It was very strong, very powerful; but even so, its character was a smiling benevolence, a peaceful delight and a kind of opening out into delight and light. And it was like a "*Bonne année*", like a greeting. It took me by surprise. It lasted, for at least three hours I felt it. Afterwards I was no longer busy with it, I do not know what happened. But I told you a word or two about it and I spoke of it also to two or three persons: they all had felt it. That is to say, it was *very* material. They all had felt it, like this, a kind of joy, but a joy friendly, powerful and... oh! very, very gentle, very smiling, very *benevolent*.... I do not know what it is. I do not know what it is, but it is a kind of benevolence, therefore it was something very close to the human. And it was so concrete, so concrete! as though it had a savour, so concrete it was. Afterwards I did not occupy myself with it any more, except that I spoke to two or three persons about it: all had felt it. Now, I do not know if it is mixed or if... It has not departed; one does not feel as though the thing came in order to go back.

It was much more external than anything I feel usually, much more external... Very little mental, that is to say, there was no feeling of a "promise" or... No, it would be rather... my own impression was that of an immense personality—immense, that is to say, for it the earth was small, small like this (*gesture, as though holding a small ball in her palm*), like a ball—an immense personality, very, very benevolent, which came for... (*Mother seems to lift this ball gently from the hollow of her hands*).

It gave the impression of a personal divinity (and yet it was... I do not know) who comes to help, and so strong, so strong and at the same time so gentle, so all-embracing.

And it was very external: the body felt it everywhere, everywhere (*Mother touches her face, her hands*), everywhere.

What has become of it? I do not know.

It was the beginning of the year. As if someone having the dimensions of a god (that is to say, someone) came to say "*Bonne année*", with all the power to make it a *Bonne année*. It was like this.

But what was it?...

So concrete...

I do not know.

It is... is it the personality—because it had no form, I did not see any form, there was only what it had brought (*Mother feels the atmosphere*), the sensation, the feeling: these two, sensation and feeling—and I asked myself if it was not the supramental personality... who will then manifest forms.

The body, this body, feels since that moment (the thing has entered into it everywhere, deeply), it feels much more joyous, less concentrated, more lively, in a happy, smiling expansiveness. For example, it is speaking more easily. There is a note—a constant note of benevolence. A smile, yes, a benevolent smile, and all that with a *great force*.... I do not know.

You felt nothing?

*I had a feeling of contentment that day.*

Ah! it is that. Yes, it is that.

Is it the Supramental personality?...that will incarnate itself in all those who have a supramental body....

It was luminous, smiling, and so benevolent *through powerfulness*; that is to say, generally in the human being benevolence is something a little weak, in this sense that it does not like battle, it does not like fight; but this is nothing of the kind! A benevolence that imposes itself (*Mother brings her fists down upon the arms of her chair*).

It has interested me because it is altogether new. And so concrete! Concrete like this (*Mother touches the arms of her chair*), like what the physical consciousness usually considers as "others", concrete like that. That is to say, it did not pass through an inner being, through the psychic being, it came *directly* upon the body.

What is it?... Yes, perhaps it is this. Since it came, the feeling of the body is a kind of certitude, a certitude as though now it was no longer in anxiety or uncertainty to know "What will it be? What will the Supramental be like? *Physically*, what will it be physically?" The body used to ask itself. Now it does not think of it any more, it is contented.

*Is it something that will suffuse the bodies that are ready?*

Yes, I believe so, yes, I have the feeling that it is the formation which is going to enter, going to express itself—to enter and express itself—to enter and express itself—in the bodies ... that will be the bodies of the supramental.

Or perhaps...perhaps the superman, I do not know. The intermediary between the two. Perhaps the superman: it was very human, but a human in divine proportions, I must say.

A human without weaknesses and without shadows: it was all light—all light and smiling and...sweetness at the same time.

Yes, perhaps the superman.

*(Silence)*

*I do not know why, for the last few moments I have been telling myself insistently: people who will not know how things have really occurred will say, when this supramental force will have entered the earth atmosphere, will have entered into them, they will say: "Ah well, it is 'we' who have done all that!"*

*(Mother laughs)* Yes, probably.

*It is we, it is our fine humanity that has flowered!*

Yes, surely. It is always like that.

That is why I say—I say that after all we are here, every one of us, and we have finally to face all the difficulties, but it is a Grace, for we, *we* shall know how—and we shall not cease to be, is it not so? We shall know how the thing was done.

\*

Did I tell you that I have identified this consciousness?

*When you spoke last time, you had identified it.*

Yes, but I had said "the supramental consciousness".

*Afterwards you had said "perhaps the superman".*

Yes, it is that. It is the descent of the superman consciousness. I had the assurance later on.

It was the first of January after midnight. I woke up at two in the morning surrounded by a consciousness, so concrete, and *new* in the sense that I had never felt it

before. And it lasted, absolutely concrete, present, for two or three hours, and afterwards it spread out and went about to find people who could receive it. And I knew that it was the consciousness of the superman, that is to say, the intermediary between man and the supramental being.

That has given to the body a kind of assurance and confidence. That experience has, as it were, stabilised the body and if it keeps the true attitude, every support is there to help it.

\*

The other day when X came, as soon as he entered (he was standing there), this atmosphere came, from here up to there (*Mother makes a semi-circular gesture in front of herself*), surrounded me like a wall. It was thick, it was luminous, and then, it was forceful! To me it was visible, it was very material, as though a rampart, nearly of this thickness (*gesture indicating about forty centimetres*), and it remained there all the time he was there.

So, it is very consciously active.

It is as though a projection of power. And it has now become a habitual thing.

There is within it a consciousness—a *very* precious thing—which gives lessons to the body, teaching it what it must do, that is to say, the attitude it must have, the reaction it must have.... I have already told you many a time that it is very difficult to find the process of transformation when there is no one to give you any indication; well, it was as though the reply; it came to tell the body: “Take this attitude, do this in this way, do that in that way”, and so the body is satisfied, it is completely reassured, it can no longer be mistaken.

It is very interesting.

It came as a “mentor”, it was *practical*, quite practical: “This thing must be rejected, that must be accepted; this must be made general, that...”; all the inner movements. And it even becomes very material in the sense that it says with regard to some vibrations: “This you must encourage”, to others: “That must be canalised”, to others again: “This must be removed.” Little indications like that.

(*Silence*)

In one of the old talks I had said (when I was speaking there in the Playground), I had said: “Surely the superman will be at first a being of power, so that he may defend himself.”<sup>1</sup> It is that, it is that experience, it came back as an experience; and it is because it came back as an experience that I remember that I had said it.

<sup>1</sup> “It would seem that the most conclusive and obvious aspect (of the supramental) and the one which will probably be the first to manifest—probably—will be the aspect of Power, rather than the aspect of Joy or Truth. For a new race to be founded on earth, it would necessarily have to be protected from other earthly elements in order to be able to survive; and power is protection—not an artificial

*Yes, you had said: It is Power that will come first...*

Yes, first Power.

*Because those beings will have to be protected.*

Yes, exactly so. Well, I have first had the experience for this body: it came like a rampart, and it was mighty! It was a mighty power! Altogether out of proportion to the apparent action.

It is very interesting.

And also this is why, now that I see the experience, I see that the result is much more precise, concrete, because the mind and the vital are not there. Because that takes their place—and with all this quiet assurance of knowing, which comes at the same time. It is interesting.

*(Silence)*

You have something to say?

*I was wondering how this consciousness will act individually, outside of you, for example.*

In the same way. Only, those who are not accustomed to observing themselves objectively will notice it less, that is all. It will pass as though through cotton, as it always does so. But otherwise it is the same.

*I mean to say: this consciousness will not act so much on the mind as on the body?*

I do hope that it will make one think correctly.

*Fundamentally it is a guide.*

Yes, it is a guide.

Well, it is a consciousness.

For me, *the* Consciousness limits itself to special activities, for special cases, but it is always *the* Consciousness; just as in the human consciousness it limits itself almost to nothing, so also in certain states of being, in certain activities, it limits itself to a

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power, external and false, but the true strength, the triumphant Will. It is therefore not impossible to think that the supramental action, even before being an action of harmonisation, illumination, joy and beauty, might be an action of power, to serve as a protection. Naturally, for this action of power to be truly effective, it would have to be founded on Knowledge and Truth and Love and Harmony; but these things could manifest, visibly, little by little, when the ground, so to say, has been prepared by the action of a sovereign Will and Power." (18 December 1957)



certain way of being in order to fulfil Its action: and I have very much asked It: "If I could be guided at every minute", because that gains time enormously, does it not?—instead of having to study, to observe, to...well, now I find that it has happened like that.

(*Silence*)

There is a very marked change in those who have been touched on the first of January: it is particularly...indeed a precision and a certitude that has entered into their way of thinking.

It was there (*Mother looks at the region of the heart*). It is curious, as though I was given the charge of putting it into contact with all those who come near me.

\*

This atmosphere, this consciousness<sup>1</sup> is very active, and active as a mentor, I have already said. And that continues. And then, for several hours in the early morning of one of these last days, it was... Never, never had the body been so happy; there was the complete Presence, absolute freedom, and a certitude: that had no importance—these cells, other cells (*Mother makes gestures to this side and that, indicating all bodies*), it was life everywhere, consciousness everywhere. Absolutely wonderful. It came without effort, it went away simply because...I was too busy. And that does not come at will—what comes at will is what may be called a "copy": it has the appearance, but it is not the Thing. The Thing...there is something which is altogether independent of our aspiration, our will, our effort...altogether. And this something seems absolutely all-powerful, in the sense that none of the difficulties of the body exist. Everything disappears at this time. But aspiration, concentration, effort...all that is to no purpose. It is the *divine sense*, yes, it is to have the divine sense. During these few hours (three or four), I understood absolutely what it was to have the divine consciousness in the body. And then this body here, that body there, that body there (*gestures to this side and that side and all around Mother's body*), it did not matter; it went about from one body to another, altogether free and independent, knowing the limitations and possibilities of each body—absolutely wonderful, I have never, never before had this experience. Absolutely wonderful. It went away because I was so busy that...And it did not go away because it came simply to show how it was—it is not that; it is because life and the organisation of life swallows you up.

I know it is there (*gesture behind*). I know it, but...but that, I understand, is a transformation. And clearly the persons, not a vague thing: clearly, that could express itself in this person, express itself in that person, express itself (*same gesture here and there*), clearly wholly. With a Smile!...

And then the cells themselves told of their effort to be transformed, and there was there a Calm....How to explain this? The body told of its aspiration and of its

<sup>1</sup> The superman consciousness.

will to prepare itself; and it did not ask, but made the effort to be what it ought to be: all that always with this question (the body does not put the question, it is...the environment, the surrounding—the world, as if the world put the question): “Will it continue or will it have to get dissolved?”...Itself, it is like this (*gesture of self-abandon, palms opened upward*); it says, “What Thou willest, Lord.” But then, the body knows that it has been decided and it is not to be told to it. It accepts, it is not impatient, it accepts, it says, “It is all right, it shall be what Thou willest.” But That which knows and That which does not respond is...something that cannot be expressed. It is...yes, I believe the only word that describes the sensation one has, is: it is an Absolute—an Absolute. Absolute. It is that, the sensation: of being in the presence of the Absolute. The Absolute: absolute Knowledge, absolute Will, absolute Power....Nothing, nothing can resist it. And then, it is an Absolute which is (one has this kind of sensation, concrete) of compassion! But by the side of that, all that we consider as kindness, compassion...pooh! it is nothing at all. That is Compassion with Power absolute, and...it is not Wisdom, it is not Knowledge, it is... It has nothing to do with our procedure. And it is That, everywhere. That is everywhere. And it is the experience of the body; and to That, the body gives itself entirely, totally, asking for nothing, nothing at all. Only one aspiration (*same gesture, palms opened upward*): to be able to *be* That, what That wants—to serve That; not even so: to *be* That.

But that state, which lasted for several hours, nothing similar to that happiness has this body ever felt during the ninety-one years it has been here upon earth: freedom, absolute power and no limits (*gesture here and there, everywhere*), no limits, no impossibilities, nothing. It was...all other bodies were itself. There was no difference, it was only a play of consciousness (*gesture as of a great Rhythm*) going about. That is all.

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## SUPERMIND DESCENT

### FROM NIRODBARAN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO ON 16 SEPTEMBER 1938

Q: By the way, you had better hurry up with your Supermind descent, Sir. Otherwise Hitler and Mussolini will gunfire it!

A: What has Supermind to do with Hitler or Hitler with Supermind? Do you expect the Supermind to aviate to Berchtesgaden? How the devil can they gunfire S! their aeroplanes can't even reach Pondicherry, much less the Supermind. The descent of S depends on S, not on Hitler or no Hitler.

Q: Things look damnably bad, what?

A: Bad enough unless Chamberlain finds a way to wriggle out of it.

## A POEM BY NIRODBARAN

### WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS

FROM a gold infinity Thou hast come on earth  
Wrapt with a veil of humanhood  
*And*  
(That) from the whirlpool of our mortal birth  
*Thou leadst us to*  
(We may grow into) thy vastitude.

*points upward to*  
Life's clay-born flame (wears like) a dim  
Star on the margin of the sky (;),  
*Whose* *behind*  
(The) fathomless beauty (on) the soul's blue rim  
*Breaks through the lids of secrecy*  
(Wakes with a heaven-stirring cry)

*in deep tranquil*  
And mirrors (on) the heart's horizon glass  
The timeless wonder of thy Face:  
*Thought and its*  
(All weary) shadows (of thought) fade and pass  
*diamond*  
From the memory of (its diamond) space.

*Our moment's breath seems now the beating wing*  
(We bear in every moment-breath a ring)  
*measureless*  
Of thy spirit's (passionless) desire:  
*thrills*  
Mortality (throbs) with thy God-awakening  
*the*  
And drinks (thy) wine of immortal Fire.

16.9.38

Q: 1st stanza

A: Obviously "growing" from a whirlpool is not easy.  
"leadst" is better.

Q: 2nd stanza—rhythm of 1st line?

A: All right except that *flame dim* is too rhymy perhaps. But what on earth is

this "wears like"? It is not English. Again why four feet?

Lord Christ! what a yell for beauty to emit! Besides, the correlation waking with a cry and mirroring is not very convincing. For heaven's sake do something about this. What is a horizon glass? Cousin of opera glass?

Q: "All drunken shadows of thought fade and pass."

A: "Drunken shadows"! If even shadows become bibulous and stagger, what will become of the Congress and its prohibition laws? Besides, Rajagopalachari is sure to pass a law soon forbidding the publication of any book with the words "wine" and "drunken" in it!

Why this tendency to misaccentuate "of"? It gets the weight of the accent in it usually only before an unaccented syllable e.g. "An empty shadow of delight."

(4th stanza) Moment-breath doesn't sound very English. And what is meant by bearing a ring in a breath?

Q: You may damn as many lines as you like and find as many rabid utterances as you may, but I can't every day go on looking at the void for a line! I have drunk 'the wine of Fire', and you see the result!

A: I have damned only one line and rearranged others. I have even 3 lined the wine of Fire.

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## THE SOUL

THE empyrean-amorous soul yearns for the heights  
 To kiss the feet of Infinity  
 And clasp the blaze of boundless lights  
 And dance with the sons of Eternal Harmony.

But it's too daring a spree for the unfledged mind,  
 Too ethereal a dream for the crawling heart.  
 A dwarf is the will of this earthly kind  
 That hugs the mire too vehemently to part.

Is not the soul like the bough of a tree  
 Which grows towards the sky and light?  
 But the mind and heart are never free,  
 Rooted in the depth of a pitch-black night.

The soul shall rise to god-like might and mirth  
 And man become a bridge twixt Heaven and Earth.

CHAITYA PURUSHA

## THE ASHRAM AND ITS LIFE

*(The following are a few reminiscences of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during the Mother's life-time by Sripad Damodar Satwalekar, one of the greatest Vedic scholars in living memory.)*

THE thing for which I was praying for the last fifty to sixty years, the dream I cherished all these years I see in living forms here. Perhaps after the Vedic age, for the first time, this kind of thing is being attempted. The whole process of Sadhana is based here on Vedic principles. My heart overflows with joy to see that all that is hinted at in the Vedas is trying to find its fulfilment here in one way or another.

Here we can see spirituality taking a true form. Nowhere in the Veda is there the gospel of Sannyasa. Everywhere we come across prayers for prosperity, fire and force, tejas and ojas, even material things. Nowhere one sees the scene of poverty, nobody living the life of a destitute, passing his days at the foot of a tree, clad in rags with total renunciation of material things. Escape from the world and its concerns and passing one's days in inert contemplation of the All-High—these things are far from the Vedic way of life. In the Vedic age, kings like Janaka ruled kingdoms; Rishis like Vasistha stood behind kings to give them counsel. The Rishis never betook themselves to the forest, renouncing the world. These things belong to the dark period of India. I see today that the Mother insists on prosperity not austerity. She does not want to leave the world to its fate but to endow it with opulence governed by spirituality. The world itself has to be changed. Here one finds the Vedic age being reborn. No material thing has to be shunned or scorned. Everything is trying to find its own legitimate place.

Do you know the real cause of the fall of India? I attribute it to two things:

We despised the material world in order to turn to the spiritual, gave more importance to luck than to labour and reduced our women, that is to say half the society, into a benumbed mass.

What a pity! The country which gave birth to the idea of woman as Shakti, the country which gave to gods four to eight hands in the pages of the Puranas but visioned the goddesses as having a hundred and eight hands, that very country relegated women to a lower level than that of men and deprived them of the right to read the Veda and, worst of all, shut them up within the four walls of the family, lowering their status in society to being cooks and child-bearing machines.

I have been praying for years and years: Oh Lord! Grant that our women may rise again to their rightful place as in the days of yore.

What we see being done in the country today for the advancement of women is far from advancement in its true sense. It is here that I see happy signs of true progress. It is here that the Mother seems to have taken upon herself to raise the status of women.

IT IS HERE, I REPEAT, THAT I SENSE THE VEDIC IDEAL TAKING FORM.

*(After returning home, Satwalekar wrote to the Ashram:)*

I feel here like a "prabasi", one far away from home, a sojourner. Every morning I have balcony "Darshan" and not a day passes without my feeling the Mother's presence.

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## MOTHER

I WILL not grow restless,  
I will not grieve:  
Whatever You give me, Mother!  
I will receive.  
I will not knock at Your door  
And ask You to give me more,—  
I will be silent, Mother!  
Dawning and eve.

I will not be troubled,  
Sad or depressed:  
Whatever You grant me, Mother!  
I know is best.  
Why should I ever be tearful?  
I shall be ever cheerful  
Knowing full well that You, Mother!  
Will do the rest.

I will not ever murmur,  
Ever be stirred:  
I will be blithe and merry, Mother!  
As a blue bird;  
The earth might dry and crack  
And all the sky grow black,  
And the world break;—but You will,  
Mother!  
Not break Your Word.

I will always be happy,  
Always be filled  
With the immense faith, Mother!  
That you shall build  
This body and mind and soul  
Into a perfect whole  
Image of Beauty such, Mother!  
As You have willed.

I will always remember  
That You are mine,  
That I am Yours, Mother!  
Each curve and line  
Of my poor human shape  
Hopes some day to escape  
Its human substance, Mother!  
And grow divine.

Some day this heart will lose  
Its beats and, instead,  
Live only by the sound, Mother!  
Of Your dear Tread:  
Some day I will surely  
Love You perfectly, purely,  
Yea, and without it, Mother!  
Know I am dead!

## THE MOTHER ALL-PRESENT

### AN ANECDOTE

ONE day as soon as I approached the Mother for Pranam on the staircase She suddenly went into a trance.

I was surprised and kept standing with my hands folded and it was perhaps after more than ten minutes that She suddenly opened Her eyes and said, "Oh! I am sorry I kept you waiting for such a long time but I couldn't help it. I had a sudden call from a devotee in Brazil and I had to go there."

There was no opportunity to argue, discuss or question the Mother although I very much wanted to know more, but there was a long queue behind me.

I was not satisfied and to be truthful I did not believe the Mother.

I was thinking and thinking, then it dawned upon me that if thousands of such Gathas (गाथाएँ) of the Puranas could be believed by millions, the Mother's going to Brazil to help a devotee in distress might also be true.

SURENDRA NATH JAUHAR

(From *The Call Beyond*, November 1979, p. 9.)

### A PRAYER

O MOTHER, thou art the heart of my heart and the light of my eyes. I have taken refuge at thy feet and my life has found solace and peace.

When I have fear at the cry of the storm, I hide my face in thy lap. In the miraculous stream of the sweetness of thy smile, thou lavest all my mind's impurities.

Hard is the path I tread, very difficult and slippery, and at every step chains weigh heavy upon me that I have forged with my own hands. But when I call thee, crying "O Mother", what a strength fills my heart! Thou removest all obstacles and liftest up a blazing lamp in the darkness.

The sages and the seers stand baffled before thy infinity and thy mystery. Numberless are the poets who have been blest by singing thy glory in their rhythms. But I, O Mother, have nothing, I have no power of sadhana, I have no magnificence of knowledge. I can only pour out all my heart to thee and love thee.

LALITA

# **AT SRI AUROBINDO NIVAS—BARODA**

## **IN THE MEDITATION HALL ON 3rd OCTOBER 1979**

### **A VISION RELATED BY CHAMPAKLAL**

A GRAND luminous golden Figure was descending slowly from a great height. The golden rays emanating from Him spread everywhere. As He was alighting, His body reflected different colours. The speed of the shifting colours was so fast that it was not possible to name them. But it was a delightful and wonderful sight!

When this majestic Being landed on the ground, He was of a lucent snow-white colour. He gazed all around and looked at everyone there. He then advanced towards each individual, just stood a while in front of all, one by one. As He moved on, there was nothing in His hand. But as He approached each person, a glowing Asana (Seat) of dazzling snow-white light emerged from the palm of His hand and settled underneath each individual! The most surprising thing was that none of those sitting there moved at all from their seats. All sat very peacefully upon their brilliant beautiful Asanas—His gift to one and all, His special grace to each and everyone.

After some time, I saw all the persons bathed in a bright Light. But all were not in the same colour—some in gold, some in silver, some in blue or pink and so on—in different radiant hues. It was a superb and magnificent spectacle.

The Being disappeared and nothing was left but Light—snow-white Resplendence pervaded everywhere. And all the time, a soft, melodious and elevating music was heard. The music stopped and the vision vanished.

## **AN EXPERIENCE ON 29 FEBRUARY 1972**

### **A LETTER TO THE MOTHER**

AT MEDITATION this morning I tried to go within, and felt as if I were in the dome of a temple. There was a pale golden light pouring from above, which changed into deeper shades of gold, then rose-pink and orange, as it descended below.

My body was felt as something below. The higher I tried to climb the more intense grew the light. And I felt that something in the head had opened, and there was wideness, peace and coolness above. I wanted the meditation to go on much longer, and just a few seconds before the gong was sounded I saw a pale gold light turn into a fire with many tongues and rise upward from the heart. Then the gong was sounded, but it took me some time to get into the body and to make it move.

The physical mind was not quite silent, still this experience went on side by side.

Now what is left of the experience is a peace and a cool feeling from the top of my head down to my nose...

May they remain with me!

A SADHIKA



# THE TRUTH WE SERVE

## THE DIVINE MOTHER AND INDIA

THE return of the birth-anniversary of the Mother on February 21 marks the beginning of a new year for *Mother India*. We started our career in 1949 with the light of this great day in our eyes and our whole aim was to see with the help of that light the nature of every world-movement and to judge all events as they manifested or retarded the secret Truth which that light represents. The Truth we have sought to serve is the presence of the Divine in the human, the presence that India throughout her history has regarded as the master-key to human progress and fulfilment.

Because India, more than any other country, has been afire with a sense of the Divine and because there has been down the ages a persistent cultural consciousness with this sense as its centre, we Indians in our collectivity should feel that through space and time we are held together by a supra-individual being which is not only our nationhood, the one self of our myriad Indianness, but also a dynamic delegate of the Divine. An emanation of the Supreme Creative Force, instinct with a special mission of the Infinite and the Eternal to raise mankind to the highest and harmonise all life: this is how we must intuit the reality we have so often spoken of in our patriotic moods as Hind Mata. Unless we are aware of living within such a national being, unless we stir to such a presiding genius, we shall never give our culture its full power and our dream of a fairer world will never tend completely to materialise. To be scattered individuals with great aims and capacities will be all our lot: we shall lack the inner cohesion without which no collectivity can come to total fruition and make its most effective cultural mark on the world.

The development of a national awareness of a mighty Mother, who is a face and figure of the infinite Divine, side by side with the development of an individual awareness of the authentic Person within us who is a flame of the Eternal—a double psychological growth towards godhead is the ideal for which our periodical has worked. That growth has an extreme world-importance. There is at present, because of many causes, a general decline of values and a general confusion of mind all over the earth. In India this state of affairs has a critical significance obtaining nowhere else. Not that the Indians are in comparison with other peoples more demoralised or distracted. But India has been in history the home of the immensest aspiration and the intensest search after the Good, the Beautiful and the True. The dimming of the fire in the hearts of her inhabitants and the paling of the light in their minds are, therefore, the gravest of tragedies and most to be fought against. For, if Indians can bring forth the real genius of their country the world's degeneration will be halted: the hope of the future is in the renascence and resurgence of essential India.

All the more powerful will be her influence because her genius is not only the typical idealist of the Divine but also a multi-mooded idealist, holding something of all national souls, functioning with an assimilative capacity which makes her as diverse

in expression as she is single in motive. She can be all things to all men and so her uplifting force will be everywhere the most creative. And today even her inherent omni-effectivity is rendered more concentrated because, as a result of a long and pervasive impress on her by the Western mind through her past British rulers, she is a meeting-ground of the East and the West, and the consciousness with which she works is profoundly Asiatic with yet a strong European colour. In rising victorious over the tide of decadence and debasement now sweeping across the earth she will epitomise in every respect the entire humanity's victory.

But how shall we defeat this dangerous tide? Or, to put it more positively, how shall we grow in spirituality? Paradoxically the answer is: "Not only by overcoming all that has been looked upon as unspiritual but also by getting beyond what at the present day we take to be spiritual." The fact is that our current ideas about spirituality are inadequate and the inadequacy is itself a portion of the harm wrought by the dangerous tide we have to defeat. We talk of India's ancient wisdom, but we conceive it in terms that do it scant justice. So when we think of giving a new vitality, a contemporary life, to this wisdom we go no further than morality and religion. We never stop to ask: "What is meant by India's ancient wisdom?" Surely the most pointed answer is: "The Upanishads and the Gita." There are various interpretations of these scriptures, but no interpretation can have any value if it denies that these scriptures put before us a life of direct concrete experience of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine. This experience must be distinguished from the merely moral frame of mind. One can be a great mystic, a great Yogi as well as a highly moral person. But to be a practitioner of a moral life—however that may be conceived—does not necessarily make one a great mystic, a great Yogi. To be a knower of Brahman, Atman, Ishwara and let that supra-intellectual knowledge issue in a life lived in the light of a more-than-human consciousness is something far greater than to be a moralist following certain set principles of conduct by means of will-power and fellow-feeling. The moral life in itself can be a fine thing, but it cannot be compared in greatness to the mystical life—the life of a Krishna, a Chaitanya, a Mirabai, a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda. Nor can we deny that it is the mystical life, the Yogic spirituality, that is the aim and ideal of the Upanishads and the Gita, the vibrant luminous essence of India's ancient wisdom.

When we add religion to morality we do bring in something more that is valuable, but mere religion cannot be put on a par with God-realisation. Religion at its best is a mental and emotional acceptance of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine. It can be a good preparation for the truly spiritual life, just as the practice of moral virtues could be. But to be religious, no matter how highly, is not the same thing as to know the unitive life, the state of inner union with a more-than-human, a divine reality that brings a light, a bliss, a power, a love the purely mental and emotional acceptance of God can never compass. To have faith in God and even to listen to an "inner voice" is to encourage and practise the ordinary religious temper and the ordinary moral conscience. A man of unusual calibre may encourage and practise these things in an

unusual way, but they still remain, for all their intensification, within the domain of ordinary morality and religion and never cross the barrier between them and God-realisation.

Here a very common misuse of terms must be exposed. Much glib talk is going on about what is called Karma Yoga and about the high place given it in Indian scriptures. Popularly, Karma Yoga is supposed to be the doing of work with trust in God, a keen sense of duty and as much disinterestedness as possible. And the motive behind it is believed to be service of mankind. But one may inquire: "How does such action become Yoga?" Yoga means union—with the Divine; where is any room here for the unitive life? What we have in such action is yet a mixture of religion and morality. The true Karma Yogi is aflame with aspiration to unite with the Eternal and the Infinite. Service of mankind is only a means to an end for him. It is a means towards the mystical experience by enlarging one's scope of action beyond the small individual ego and, when the mystical experience is reached, service of mankind is a means to express it in the world. But this service is not the only means. And true Karma Yoga is done fundamentally by a threefold process: (1) there is a deeply devoted inner offering of one's actions to the Supreme Lord—a constant remembrance and consecration; (2) there is an inner detachment not only from the fruit of one's actions but also from the actions themselves, an ever-increasing detachment until the infinite desireless impersonal peace of the Atman, the one World-Self that is an ever-silent Witness or Watcher, is attained and a spontaneous superhuman disinterestedness becomes possible; (3) there is, through this attainment and through complete surrender of one's nature-parts to the Lord, the Ishwara, the transmission of a divine dynamism, a superb World-Will from beyond the world, in all one's actions. God-realisation is the essence of Karma Yoga as of all other Yogas.

Without this God-realisation a man cannot give a new vitality, a contemporary life, to India's ancient wisdom—for he will not at all embody that wisdom at its purest and profoundest. This is not to refuse greatness to him, but it is not the greatness ancient India upheld as the top reach of the human soul. If India has anything to give humanity at present, it would be that wisdom in a form suitable and applicable to modern needs, that wisdom with a further development of its potency in certain directions. But in the absence of that wisdom the greatness one may achieve in oneself and induce in others is certainly never what ancient India considered the highest achievement in life and what modern India in tune with her inmost being could charge with appropriate new values and offer as the highest achievement.

Of course, all men cannot be Yogis in the full sense. But there must be a clear recognition of what genuinely constitutes the Indian ideal and in some way or other the ordinary existence must be brought into touch with it. Also, there must be whole-hearted acknowledgment of the actualisation of the ideal in those who have dedicated themselves for years to it. And towards these rare souls the mind of the nation must turn more and more. On the other hand, we must take care not to allow the Godward aspiration to end in a total neglect of earth. Earth's concerns are part of

the scheme of things and the supreme Creative Force has not produced either an inexplicable illusion or an incomprehensible blunder in setting up the tremendous cosmos within which life agonises and exults, strives and falls and rises, presses forward as though some mysterious perfection urged it from behind and allured it from beyond. If by spirituality we understand a renunciation of the world's various calls and an impoverishment of life to the bare minimum we diminish in a different way its significance as much as we do when we take it to connote nothing else than morality and religion. Spirituality is at the same time a direct going of the human to the Divine and a direct coming of the Divine to the human.

If we Indians are to march in the van of the world and fulfil a mission which no other people can accomplish, we must feel that our genius is a dynamic world-transforming spirituality which lives in a concrete contact and communion with a perfect Being, Consciousness, Power and Bliss. All events and movements must be evaluated by reference to one standard: "Do they, however remotely, tend towards the increase of such spirituality?" The phrase, "however remotely", has some importance. For, all happenings do not have an easily perceptible connection with the Spiritual Truth. There are plenty of intellectual questions, social issues, political problems, economic situations that seem far away from matters mystical. The apparent far-away-ness should not lead us to regard them as irrelevant and to decide them with considerations within a narrow and isolated sphere. If the Divine is the centre of things, there can be nothing on even the remotest periphery without an invisible radius running out towards it. We must find the radius and discern in the peripheral object the point at which contact is made or refused. The point is difficult to fix, but it is always there and certain broad indications can help us.

The Divine has three simultaneous poises of being: the transcendent, the universal, the individual. The point of contact with the transcendent Divine is in general distinguishable by the sense of freedom, the sense of the inexpressible beyond formulas, the sense of the absolute perfection that puts "a yonder to all ends" while holding for each term its legitimate climax and consummation. The universal Divine is suggested generally by the sense of wideness and equality, the sense of unity-in-multiplicity, the sense of a greatly diversified yet persistent order. The general sign of the individual Divine is that of plastic form, the sense of adventurous variation without losing balance, the sense of numerous initiatives that compete and yet avoid mutual destruction. We must develop insight enough to mark the Divine at general play in any one of the poises or in a combination of more than one or in all at once, and according to the strength in which there is the play and according to the measure in which the threefold integrality is approached we must pass judgment.

Of course, things are never to be taken at their surface value; many an undesirable force masquerades under attractive guises. Also, nothing should be studied in disparate sections—a whole view must be taken so that all the sections fall into their proper places and the complete nature of a force emerges. The labour of discovering whether there is or there is not a point of contact, no matter how subtle, with the

spiritual goal of mankind calls for intellectual no less than intuitive examination. To that labour *Mother India* has pledged itself and it puts no limits to the field which is to be examined.

To help itself in its labour and become a force of action for world-change, it directs both mind and heart to whatever in this land of India most manifests the light of the Supreme Being, Consciousness, Power and Bliss. And that is why, on the occasion of starting another year of serving to the best of our ability the Truth of truths that is the Divine's presence within the human, we join our obeisance to that of thousands who, whether in India or abroad, thrill to the day of Darshan—February 21—when for hours, as on three other days in the year, a stream of people used to pass reverently under the calm yet compassionate eyes of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother up to the end of 1950 and thenceforth until 1973 to meet those of the Mother alone on the material plane with the Master invisibly but potently active beside her—companion descents of the Divine Grace, whose life-work was a sustained yoga to bring about for earth

What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope,  
 A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,  
 A Will expressive of soul's deity,  
 A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,  
 A Joy that drags not sorrow as its shade.

EDITOR

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## CORRECTION

In the January *Mother India* the feature entitled "The Psychic and the Supramental Being: From a Talk of the Mother" mentions a name instead of X for the person whose psychic being the Mother saw in front of her. It has been ascertained that this name is not the right one. The editor alone is responsible for the misinformation.

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## NOSTALGIA

HAPPINESS was created here—  
We lived the most creative lives,  
Her footsteps echoed everywhere  
And where She touched the whole creation thrives.

Harmony was created too,  
Our hearts were one with the Ideal—  
Each day our hope was born anew  
When from Her hands the Truth we came to feel.

Love was created from Her eyes,  
Her gaze was one divine embrace  
Which lifted earth to meet the skies  
In realisation here of Heaven's Grace.

Shall we recapture once again  
The seeds of Bliss She first had sown?  
Or shall we sing the old refrain:  
'This is mine, and what is mine I own?'

There are two persons deep within—  
The one looks back on a golden past,  
The other to the future is kin,  
To which She made Her Promise fast:

That They would here remain a part  
Of this terrestrial atmosphere  
Until the psychic-transformed heart  
Was here in man established strong and clear.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

# THE REVISED EDITION OF *THE FUTURE POETRY*

## NEW-WRITTEN OR CORRECTED MATTER

*(Continued from the issue of January 1980)*

*(The revision of Chapter II comprises major changes and additions to the first three paragraphs, and small additions or alterations to every other paragraph except the seventh and the last.)*

## CHAPTER II

### The Essence of Poetry

WHAT then is the nature of poetry, its essential law? what is the highest power we can demand from it, what the supreme music that the human mind, reaching up and in and out to its own widest breadths, deepest depths and topmost summits, can extract from this self-expressive instrument? and how out of that does there arise the possibility of its use as the *mantra* of the Real? Not that we need spend any energy in a vain effort to define anything so profound, elusive and indefinable as the breath of poetic creation; to take the myriad-stringed harp of Saraswati to pieces for the purpose of scientific analysis is a narrow and barren amusement. But we stand in need of some guiding intuitions, some helpful descriptions which will serve to enlighten our search; to fix in that way, not by definition, but by description, the essential things in poetry is neither an impossible, nor an unprofitable endeavour.

We meet here two common enough errors, to one of which the ordinary un-instructed mind is most liable, to the other the too instructed critic or the too intellectually conscientious artist or craftsman. To the ordinary mind, judging poetry without really entering into it, it looks as if it were nothing more than an aesthetic pleasure of the imagination, the intellect and the ear, a sort of elevated pastime. If that were all, we need not have wasted time in seeking for its spirit, its inner aim, its deeper law. Anything pretty, pleasant and melodious with a beautiful idea in it would serve our turn; a song of Anacreon or plaint of Mimnermus would be as satisfying to the poetic sense as the Oedipus, Agamemnon or Odyssey, for from this point of view they might well strike us as equally and even, one might contend, more perfect in their light but exquisite unity and brevity. Pleasure, certainly, we expect from poetry as from all art; but the external sensible and even the inner imaginative pleasure are only first elements. For these must not only be refined in order to meet the highest requirements of the intelligence, the imagination and the ear; but afterwards they have to be still farther heightened and in their nature raised beyond even their own noblest levels, so that they may become the support for something greater beyond them; otherwise they cannot lead to the height on which lives the Mantra.

For neither the intelligence, the imagination nor the ear are the true or at least the deepest or highest recipients of the poetic delight, even as they are not its true or highest creators; they are only its channels and instruments: the true creator, the true hearer is the soul. The more rapidly and transparently the rest do their work of transmission, the less they make of their separate claim to satisfaction, the more directly the word reaches and sinks deep into the soul, the greater the poetry. Therefore poetry has not really done its work, at least its highest work, until it has raised the pleasure of the instrument and transmuted it into the deeper delight of the soul. A divine Ananda,<sup>1</sup> a delight interpretative, creative, revealing, formative,—one might almost say, an inverse reflection of the joy which the universal Soul felt in its great release of energy when it rang out into the rhythmic forms of the universe the spiritual truth, the large interpretative idea, the life, the power, the emotion of things packed into an original creative vision,—such spiritual joy is that which the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who are prepared to receive it. This delight is not merely a godlike pastime; it is a great formative and illuminative power.

The critic—of a certain type—or the intellectually conscientious artist will, on the other hand, often talk as if poetry were mainly a matter of a faultlessly correct or at most an exquisite technique. Certainly, in all art good technique is the first step towards perfection; but there are so many other steps, there is a whole world beyond before you can get near to what you seek; so much so that even a deficient correctness of execution will not prevent an intense and gifted soul from creating great poetry which keeps its hold on the centuries. Moreover, technique, however indispensable, occupies a smaller field perhaps in poetry than in any other art,—first, because its instrument, the rhythmic word, is fuller of subtle and immaterial elements; then because, the most complex, flexible, variously suggestive of all the instruments of the artistic creator, it has more—almost infinite—possibilities in many directions than any other. The rhythmic word has a subtly sensible element, its sound value, a quite immaterial element, its significance or thought value, and both of these again, its sound and its sense, have separately and together a soul value, a direct spiritual power, which is infinitely the most important thing about them. And though this comes to birth with a small element subject to the laws of technique, yet almost immediately, almost at the beginning of its flight, its power soars up beyond the province of any laws of mechanical construction: and this form of speech carries in it on its summits an element which draws close to the empire of the ineffable.

Poetry rather determines its own form; the form is not imposed on it by any law mechanical or external to it. The poet least of all artists needs to create with his eye fixed anxiously on the technique of his art. He has to possess it, no doubt; but in the heat of creation the intellectual sense of it becomes a subordinate action or even a

<sup>1</sup> Ananda, in the language of Indian spiritual experience, is the essential delight which the Infinite feels in itself and in its creation. By the infinite Self's Ananda all exists, for the Self's Ananda all was made.



mere undertone in his mind, and in his best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it altogether. For then the perfection of his sound-movement and style come entirely as the spontaneous form of his soul: that utters itself in an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word, even as the universal Soul created the harmonies of the universe out of the power of the word secret and eternal within him, leaving the mechanical work to be done in a surge of hidden spiritual excitement by the subconscious part of his Nature. It is this highest speech which is the supreme poetic utterance, the immortal element in his poetry, and a little of it is enough to save the rest of his work from oblivion. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya!*

This power makes the rhythmic word of the poet the highest form of speech available to man for the expression whether of his self-vision or of his world-vision. It is noticeable that even the deepest experience, the pure spiritual which enters into things that can never be wholly expressed, still, when it does try to express them and not merely to explain them intellectually, tends instinctively to use, often the rhythmic forms, almost always the manner of speech characteristic of poetry. But poetry attempts to extend this manner of vision and utterance to all experience, even the most objective, and therefore it has a natural urge towards the expression of something in the object beyond its mere appearances, even when these seem outwardly to be all that it is enjoying.

We may usefully cast a glance, not at the last inexpressible secret, but at the first element of this heightening and intensity peculiar to poetic utterance. Ordinary speech uses language mostly for a limited practical utility of communication; it uses it for life and for the expression of ideas and feelings necessary or useful to life. In doing so, we treat words as conventional signs for ideas with nothing but a perfunctory attention to their natural force, much as we use any kind of common machine or simple implement; we treat them as if, though useful for life, they were themselves without life. When we wish to put a more vital power into them, we have to lend it to them out of ourselves, by marked intonations of the voice, by the emotional force or vital energy we throw into the sound so as to infuse into the conventional word-sign something which is not inherent in itself. But if we go back earlier in the history of language and still more if we look into its origins, we shall, I think, find that it was not always so with human speech. Words had not only a real and vivid life of their own, but the speaker was more conscious of it than we can possibly be with our mechanised and sophisticated intellects. This arose from the primitive nature of language which, probably, in its first movement was not intended,—or shall we say, did not intend,—so much to stand for distinct ideas of the intelligence as for feelings, sensations, broad indefinite mental impressions with minute shades of quality in them which we do not now care to pursue. The intellectual sense in its precision must have been a secondary element which grew more dominant as language evolved along with the evolving intelligence.

For the reason why sound came to express fixed ideas, lies not in any natural and inherent equivalence between the sound and its intellectual sense, for there is none,—

intellectually any sound might express any sense, if men were agreed on a conventional equivalence between them; it started from an indefinable quality or property in the sound to raise certain vibrations in the life-soul of the human creature, in his sensational, his emotional, his crude mental being. An example may indicate more clearly what I mean. The word wolf, the origin of which is no longer present to our minds denotes to our intelligence a certain living object and that is all, the rest we have to do for ourselves: the Sanskrit word *vrka*, "tearer", came in the end to do the same thing, but originally it expressed the sensational relation between the wolf and man which most affected the man's life, and it did so by a certain quality in the sound which readily associated it with the sensation of tearing. This must have given early language a powerful life, a concrete vigour, in one direction a natural poetic force which it has lost, however greatly it has gained in precision, clarity, utility.

Now, poetry goes back in a way and recovers, though in another fashion, as much as it can of this original element. It does this partly by a stress on the image replacing the old sensational concreteness, partly by a greater attention to the suggestive force of sound, its life, its power, the mental impression it carries. It associates this with the definitive thought value contributed by the intelligence and increases both by each other. In that way it succeeds at the same time in carrying up the power of speech to the direct expression of a higher reach of experience than the intellectual or vital. For it brings out not only the definitive intellectual value of the word, not only its power of emotion and sensation, its vital suggestion, but through and beyond these aids its soul-suggestion, its spirit. So poetry arrives at the indication of infinite meanings beyond the finite intellectual meaning the word carries. It expresses not only the life-soul of man as did the primitive word, not only the ideas of his intelligence for which speech now usually serves, but the experience, the vision, the ideas, as we may say, of the higher and wider soul in him. Making them real to our life-soul as well as present to our intellect, it opens to us by the word the doors of the Spirit.

Prose style carries speech to a much higher power than its ordinary use, but it differs from poetry in not making this yet greater attempt. For it takes its stand firmly on the intellectual value of the word. It uses rhythms which ordinary speech neglects, and aims at a general fluid harmony of movement. It seeks to associate words agreeably and luminously so as at once to please and to clarify the intelligence. It strives after a more accurate, subtle, flexible and satisfying expression than the rough methods of ordinary speech care to compass. A higher adequacy of speech is its first object. Beyond this adequacy it may aim at a greater forcefulness and effectiveness by various devices of speech, by many rhetorical means for heightening the stress of its intellectual appeal. Passing beyond this first limit, this just or strong, but always restrained measure, it may admit a more emphatic rhythm, more directly and powerfully stimulate the emotion, appeal to a more vivid aesthetic sense. It may even make such a free or rich use of images as to suggest an outward approximation to the manner of poetry; but it employs them decoratively, as ornaments, *alamkāra*, or for their effective value in giving a stronger intellectual vision of the thing or the thought it describes

or defines; it does not use the image for that profounder and more living vision for which the poet is always seeking. And always it has its eye on its chief hearer and judge, the intelligence, and calls in other powers only as important aids to capture his suffrage. Reason and taste, two powers of the intelligence, are rightly the supreme gods of the prose stylist, while to the poet they are only minor deities.

If it goes beyond these limits, approaches in its measures a more striking rhythmic balance, uses images for sheer vision, opens itself to a mightier breath of speech, prose style passes beyond its normal province and approaches or even enters the confines of poetry. It becomes poetical prose or even poetry itself using the apparent forms of prose as a disguise or a loose apparel. A high or a fine adequacy, effectivity, intellectual illuminativeness and a carefully tempered aesthetic satisfaction are the natural and proper powers of its speech. But the privilege of the poet is to go beyond and discover that more intense illumination of speech, that inspired word and supreme inevitable utterance, in which there meets the unity of a divine rhythmic movement with a depth of sense and a power of infinite suggestion welling up directly from the fountain-heads of the spirit within us. He may not always or often find it, but to seek for it is the law or at least the highest trend of his utterance, and when he can not only find it, but cast into it some deeply revealed truth of the spirit itself, he utters the *mantra*.

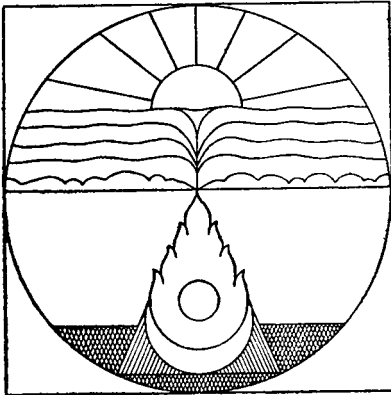
But always, whether in the search or the finding, the whole style and rhythm of poetry are the expression and movement which come from us out of a certain spiritual excitement caused by a vision in the soul of which it is eager to deliver itself. The vision may be of anything in Nature or God or man or the life of creatures or the life of things; it may be a vision of force and action, or of sensible beauty, or of truth of thought, or of emotion and pleasure and pain, of this life or the life beyond. It is sufficient that it is the soul which sees and the eye, sense, heart and thought-mind become the passive instruments of the soul. Then we get the real, the high poetry. But if what acts is too much an excitement of the intellect, the imagination, the emotions, the vital activities seeking rhythmical and forceful expression, without that greater spiritual excitement embracing them, or if all these are not sufficiently sunk into the soul, steeped in it, fused in it, and the expression does not come out purified and uplifted by a sort of spiritual transmutation, then we fall to lower levels of poetry and get work of a much more doubtful immortality. And when the appeal is altogether to the lower things in us, to the mere mind, we arrive outside the true domain of poetry; we approach the confines of prose or get prose itself masking in the apparent forms of poetry, and the work is distinguished from prose style only or mainly by its mechanical elements, a good verse form and perhaps a more compact, catching or energetic expression than the prose writer will ordinarily permit to the easier and looser balance of his speech. It will not have at all or not sufficiently the true essence of poetry.

For in all things that speech can express there are two elements, the outward or instrumental and the real or spiritual. In thought, for instance, there is the intellectual idea, that which the intelligence makes precise and definite to us, and the soul-idea,

that which exceeds the intellectual and brings us into nearness or identity with the whole reality of the thing expressed. Equally in emotion, it is not the mere emotion itself the poet seeks, but the soul of emotion, that in it for the delight of which the soul in us and the world desires or accepts emotional experience. So too with the poetical sense of objects, the poet's attempt to embody in his speech truth of life or truth of Nature. It is this greater truth and its delight and beauty for which he is seeking, beauty which is truth and truth beauty and therefore a joy for ever, because it brings us the delight of the soul in the discovery of its own deeper realities. This greater element the more timid and temperate speech of prose can sometimes shadow out to us, but the heightened and fearless style of poetry makes it close and living and the higher cadences of poetry carry in on their wings what the style by itself could not bring. This is the source of that intensity which is the stamp of poetical speech and of the poetical movement. It comes from the stress of the soul-vision behind the word; it is the spiritual excitement of a rhythmic voyage of self-discovery among the magic islands of form and name in these inner and outer worlds.

*(To be continued)*

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## THE CLOUD MESSENGER

### A NEW TRANSLATION OF KALIDASA'S *MEGHADUTA*

*(After the Introduction in the issue of January 1980)*

FROM splendour exiled and the keen delight  
Of deity, for duty's breach compelled  
By his lord's bitter curse from touch and sight

Of her he loved, a lonely Yaksha quelled  
A year's long sorrow in his burdened breast  
In hermit groves of Rama's Mount where welled

Pure waters by chaste Sita's bathing blessed  
And where trees clasped the earth with gentle shade  
That once God's banished body had caressed.

On those far slopes the arid months had weighed  
In slow train on the lover's pining heart  
And bared his withered wrist till then arrayed

In bands of gold, when presaging the start  
Of joyous rain a cloud appeared on high,  
Embracing the great peak as when in sport

A mighty elephant stoops down to try  
Its strength against a stream-bank. On that source  
Of moist Desire, whose ardent cyclic cry

It wakes in Earth's parched bosom, long by force  
Fierce tears suppressing, the proud Yaksha gazed  
In troubled silence, for the quiet course

Of happiest thoughts with change may be amazed  
At sighting of a cloud: when yearned-for limbs  
Are far what inner tumult must be raised!

The month at hand when with wild passion brims  
The rain-kissed world, impelled by desperate care  
For that frail precious life sustained on dreams

Of him alone, in hope the cloud might bear  
 Across the wide-flung lands reviving news  
 Of his well-being, he kneels now to prepare

A noble offering for his guest and strews  
 Fresh summer blossoms, suddenly grown glad  
 And bidding joyful welcome. Of what use

For such a task a cloud, that only made  
 Of smoke, light, wind and water cannot feel  
 The sense of living speech? Not to be stayed

By dull reflection, he shapes his high appeal—  
 To those aflame with love no different face  
 Do sentient and insentient things reveal:

“O worthy scion of the world-famed race  
 Of lofty Thunderheads, chief minister  
 Of Heaven’s all-bounteous lord, striding vast Space

In shapes of thy desire! Thee I implore,  
 Far-sundered from my spouse by Fate’s decree,  
 As suppliant for thy aid: to bow before

The great of soul, though grant they not our plea,  
 Is blessing richer than all light success  
 At baser hands! Ever, O cloud, to thee

They turn whom Sun or severed Love oppress  
 With tedious fire, nor oft dost thou withhold  
 Thy swift relief; convey thou wilt no less

The soothing speech of love I now unfold  
 To her rent from whose side my master’s wrath  
 Has cast me here. Where dwell the Lords of Gold,

To Alaka’s high city climbs thy path  
 And mansions that in moonlight from the head  
 Of Shiva’s trance eternal dreamlike bathe.

As thou with this dear charge the ways dost tread  
 Of viewless Wind, sweeping back tangled hair

To watch thy flight, lone travellers' wives will shed

Despair at last; for when thy forces tear  
 Full-armed the torrid skies, what man would still  
 Neglect his mistress' tears—unless he share

My plight, indeed, slave to another's will?  
 And she, for whom thou seekst that realm where tower  
 The peaks divine, surely breathes there until

My glad return, to count of day and hour  
 Devoted, chaste and pure—oftenest, bound  
 By Hope the heart of woman, a frail flower

That else might fall, yet through grief most profound  
 Of parted love clings on to Life's firm stem.  
 Favouring signs thy journey will surround

As gentle breezes on their steady stream  
 Waft thee to her: close on thy left will cry  
 The faithful rain-lark, seized with joy extreme

At sight of thee; and forming in the sky—  
 For through thy union do their wombs conceive—  
 Into bright garlands, the hen-cranes will fly

Charmingly near thee. As thy thunders cleave  
 With welcome violence the air and make  
 Fertile the mushroomed earth, king-swans will leave

At once their summer haunts, for Manas Lake  
 Frenzied with yearning; to thy mission's end,  
 To crystal Mount Kailas, each crimson beak

With lotus fibres stored, they shall attend  
 On thee, thy comrades of the heavens. So now  
 Exchange a parting clasp with this dear friend,

This noble crag that on his ancient brow  
 Treasures the memory of the sacred feet  
 Of Sita's lord; always when he and thou,

After long months, embrace in passion sweet  
 Of brotherhood, he hails thee through a mist  
 Of tears with warmth and tenderness replete.

Yet must thou hence depart: when thou hast kissed  
 Farewell and on thy distant way dost soar,  
 Thou shalt on many gracious summits rest,

Wearied, and shalt from many streams that pour  
 Delicious waters quench thy aching thirst,  
 Regaining strength and fullness; but before

Thou dost proceed across the lands, hear first  
 Thy fitting path, O cloud—thereafter learn  
 The nectarous words by thee to be rehearsed.

*(To be continued)*

RICHARD HARTZ

NOTES

Yaksha (line 4) one of a class of demigods, attendants on their lord Kubera, the god of wealth. They are human-like in form and psychology but are normally exempt from mortal afflictions and lead a life of ideal enjoyment in the mythical city of Alaka, beyond the Himalayas.

Rama's Mount (line 6): a mountain in central India, south of the Vindhyas. Rama, incarnation of Vishnu the divine Preserver, sojourned here with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana during his forest-wanderings in exile from Ayodhya before Sita was carried off by Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka.

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by

**K. D. Sethna**

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## THE POET AND HIS DAIMON

(Continued from the issue of January 1980)

2

IF, like the inmost Marlowe's reincarnation in the Miltonic Sublime, the Soul within Shelley's soul could have repeated its essential *nisus* through a fit instrument, we should have had a poetic plenitude such as Shakespeare manifested. Not, however, Shakespeare's substance of drama nor his style's vibrant contact with the life-force. But, as I have hinted before, Shelley's daimon, like Shakespeare's, was in its own way one with its instrument and more than any other poet's was it capable of artistic abundance. Almost all that it touched became glorious, not by a massed incandescence of vital energy but by a rich rippling light of idealistic passion and spiritually suggestive thought. If there had been, later, any poet who could have held a kindred passion and thought in a fluent and ever-maturing freshness, Shelley's genius would not have failed of self-completion. That it tried, more than once, strikes me as plausible.

Swinburne had a supernormal fluency, a rapture of lyric rhythm, a plunging iridescence, which were a large and beautiful mould wherein, assimilating new attributes, Shelley's growth might have proceeded. He had even psychological affinities—a fusion of the romantic attitude with Greek culture, the resurgent idealism of a Prometheus, a love of intellectual and political freedom, a revolt against conventional morality and religion, a sense of the universal Spirit's plastic press. With so much in common between him and the older poet, it may seem amazing why the essential Shelley could not be continued and fulfilled in him. Some enrichment was inevitable, and it was in the direction of a more complex and comprehensive, a more orchestral lyricism. Shelley's magic had been simple in prevailing tones yet it had never lacked an implicit complexity, for it had never been simple in the Wordsworthian or the ballad manner. Its structural diversity and artistic manipulation of sound-effects had contained a living seed of the Swinburnian harmony. In Swinburne this seed sprouted in a royal fulfilment. But Shelley was not just fluent and lyrical; he was in addition always inspired with regard to his meaning, while Swinburne diluted too often his own, thus checking the growth that might have happened.

A serious technical difference helped to magnify this obstacle: his iridescence tended to be a haze because over and above his weakness of intellectual effort his words were not seldom subdued to a general harmonic scheme with too little particularisation for themselves: they scarcely assumed a definite and expressive outline, they were hastened with a swirl of vague adjective-colour along the impatient winding polyphony of his verse. Though this trait was not quite absent from Shelley—perhaps Arnold was moved to his protest on account of it—it was in truth on rare occasions that he was vague and void: what was mistaken for indefiniteness was his deli-

cate perception and imaginative subtlety or, as in *The Witch of Atlas*, his sometimes exclusive play with themes far from the human and the palpable. On the psychological side, the one grave discrepancy which vitiated all resemblances, however notable they might be, was that Shelley was not only aware of the universal Spirit nor merely content to feel and enjoy and increase its urge towards Love and Loveliness: he was vehemently athirst for an ideal and entire perfection, he was pursued by an extreme hunger for some luminous super-world, he was a man smitten with desire for Eternity in its own authentic thrill—in short, he was a mystic in disposition. Swinburne could not fulfil this essential *nisus* towards mysticism.

Shelley had not the definite mystic experience, but the tendency for it was ingrained in him, as proved by various long rhythm-rolls and short song-snatches, ranging from *Prometheus Unbound* to the fugitive yet unforgettable "I can give not what men call love." Perhaps the most unexpected and implicitly beautiful summary of it is in the *Skylark*. Oppressed by a sense of mortal finitude which serves as a bar against his spirit, condemned to care and piteous pining for "what is not", all his love and aspiration an exquisite pain, a cry of heart-shattering sweetness, the man in Shelley strains wonderingly up to the skylark's "keen joyance" and "unpremeditated art", its "flood of rapture so divine." By a symbolic flash he discerns through the skylark's high and happy moments of unfettered gladness a possibility that each moment of life could bring such an experience if we had a vision which would enable us, as he imagines it enabling the bird in that strange soar, to "deem" of death "Things more true and deep/Than we mortals dream". For, death to us incarnate creatures captive in a multitudinous woe seems a crowning misery whose terrible shadow haunts our whole life; but if we could have that vision, our hearts would sing and soar unhampered by pain and above death's shadow. So Shelley yearns for a mystic self-liberation, an "unbodied joy", a discovery by which one can live and yet be as if bodiless and beyond limitation, knowing life as a divine freedom and death a misfortune and a dreadful darkness to those alone who have not achieved this freedom. Where in Swinburne was to be found such a cry for spiritual insight? Swinburne knew the subtle earth-soul, even more the sea-soul; but Shelley had a transcendental vein in him besides the pantheistic, an aching eye towards Plato's Archetype as well as a dissolving gaze into Spinoza's Substance.

It is to Francis Thompson we must turn for a recurrence of Shelley's transcendental touch—with important discontinuities in form, Thompson being a somewhat fanatical adherent to the Roman Church, yet with so basic a connection that whenever he writes about Shelley the tone is as if he were dealing with an essential part of himself. The connection is basic because in Shelley's mind Plato of the *Symposium* and Dante of the *Paradiso* interfused: he burned with a spiritual idealism of thought, the lips of his love carried a flame-kiss from the fragmentary human heart to the Absolute Sun of Eternity. What, however, was still imprecise in him Thompson made clear and definite. Shelley's Intellectual Beauty with its awful command to his daimon from behind the veil became to Thompson the Hound of Heaven, a tremendous Lover with

a grip as of flesh. What in a more personal mood Shelley had pictured, in the colourful transports running through *Epipsygidion*, as his all-consummating Archetype come down on earth, Thompson saw at a more authentic pitch of mysticism as the resplendent face of a Divine Virginity whom the child in him called Mother and the man in him Love. Thus Shelley's inmost attitude was matured.

There were also other factors conducive to a necessarily novel yet at bottom organic evolution of Shelley's genius. With Shakespeare as *hors concours*, Thompson stands with Shelley unparalleled for image-opulence, a never-ceasing dance and glitter of fancies, figures, fantasies—mists of dream, interblended hues of natural sight, sudden vistas of intimate revelation. His language is often steeped in the Shelleyan fire and rainbow and at its best seems borne on an uncontrollable wave. No better proof of remarkable openness to Shelley's daimon can be cited than Thompson's *Buona Notte*. In her last letter to Shelley, Jane Williams wrote: "Why do you always talk of never enjoying moments like the past? Are you going to join your friend Plato, or do you expect I shall do so soon? Buona Notte." Shelley was drowned two days after; and in Thompson's verses the poet's spirit addresses Jane while his body is tossing on the waters of Spezzia:

Ariel to Miranda:—Hear  
This good-night the sea-winds bear;  
And let thine unaquainted ear  
Take grief for their interpreter.

Good-night! I have risen so high  
Into slumber's rarity,  
Not a dream can beat its feather  
Through the unsustaining ether.  
Let the sea-winds make avouch  
How thunder summoned me to couch,  
Tempest curtained me about  
And turned the sun with his own hand out.  
And though I toss upon my bed  
My dream is not disquieted;  
Nay, deep I sleep upon the deep,  
And my eyes are wet, but I do not weep;  
And I fell to sleep so suddenly  
That my lips are moist yet—could'st thou see—  
With the good-night draught I have drunk to thee.  
Thou canst not wipe them; for it was Death  
Damped my lips that has dried my breath.  
A little while—it is not long—  
The salt shall dry on them like the song.

Now know'st thou that voice desolate,—  
 Mourning ruined joy's estate,—  
 Reached thee through a closing gate.  
 'Go'st thou to Plato?' Ah, girl, no!  
 It is to Pluto that I go.

This is no imitation, Thompson catches the very essence of Shelley in one aspect, there is a free and living tone which makes it genuine. The man who could write like that had something of Shelley in his own heart.

Elsewhere too, though more charged with his individual attributes, Thompson's poetry has often a Shelleyan undertone which again and again sings out, and it is an organic undertone, so to speak—as naturally Thompson as it is Shelley. A fine instance, in a single line, is

Tangle the tresses of a phantom wind.

Here is another, speaking about the heart's swift brightnesses

Whose robes are fluent crystal, crocus-hued,  
 Whose wings are wind a-fire, whose mantles wrought  
 From spray that falling rainbows shake to air.<sup>1</sup>

Or read the following—a yet finer coalescence of the two poets:

From cloud-zoned pinnacles of the secret spirit  
 Song falls precipitant in dizzying streams;  
 And, like a mountain-hold when war-shouts stir it,  
 The mind's recessèd fastness casts to light  
 Its gleaming multitudes, that from every height  
 Unfurl the flaming of a thousand dreams.

Even the Thompson who hurls forth the opening rhythms of *The Hound of Heaven*—

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

<sup>1</sup> I take this and the preceding quotation after Mr. Mégroz who also discusses Shelleyan affinities in his admirable study: *Françis Thompson: The Poet of Earth in Heaven*.

Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,  
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after—

even this Thompson is not in fact so far from Shelley as we might imagine: he has no locutions alien to the poet of *Prometheus Unbound*—the latter may not have used them all but they are in his vein; that “labyrinthine ways of my own mind” which Thompson’s admirers have made much of has actually been anticipated in the Shelleyan phrase—“the deep and labyrinthine soul.” There is a flash of power in Shelley often overlooked, and some of Thompson’s moments offer the sole points of comparison with it. I recall one passage which comes rather close to the tone we find recurring in *The Hound*. After Thompson’s fleeing soul has in vain sought security within its own self, sued

to all swift things for swiftness,  
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind,

craved the fellowship of all Nature-moods and human joys and found that nothing would save it from that pursuing voice and is at last forced to yield, the conquering Power reveals to it life’s deepest secret—the strange relentless love of God for man. The end of the poem sums up the whole theme beautifully:

Halts by me that footfall:  
Is my gloom after all,  
Shade of His Hand, outstretched caressingly?  
‘Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,  
I am He whom thou seekest!  
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.’

The passage from Shelley which I have in mind depicts at the start quite the opposite process: the soul is now the seeker after an ideal Loveliness which is eluding it:

And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,  
I would have followed, though the grave between  
Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen:  
When a voice said:—‘O thou of hearts the weakest,  
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest.’  
Then I—‘Where?’—the world’s echo answered ‘where,’  
And in that silence and in my despair,  
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew  
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew  
Whither ’twas fled, this soul out of my soul;  
And murmured names and spells which have control  
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;

But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate  
 The night which closed on her; nor uncreate  
 That world within this Chaos, mine and me,  
 Of which she was the veiled Divinity...  
 Then as a hunted deer that could not flee,  
 I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,  
 Wounded and weak and panting.

A certain force and idea-turn here strikes one as similar to Thompson's and the close by a sudden *volte-face* brings in an image analogous to that of hound-pursuit.

I do not suggest that Thompson's style is all Shelleyan, but that elements exist in the older poet which, brought into greater play, could grow a real strand in what we regard as Thompson's peculiar tensions of tone. His vivid and headlong massiveness, too, is not something of which Shelley was incapable. Lines large in rhythm as well as intrepid are to be met with in the *Ode to the West Wind*; and the *Prometheus* has here and there a fiery volume, so to speak, reminiscent of Thompson's hound-movement and his thunder in subsequent odes: a memorable comparison between rushing snow and Prometheus's defiance of false godheads is put into Asia's mouth—

The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,  
 Thrice-sifted by the storm, had gathered there  
 Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds  
 As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth  
 Is loosened, and the nations echo round,  
 Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

The stanzas with which Demogorgon, the personation of Truth's hidden eternity, is made to close the drama yield also a proof of Shelley's power in the same direction—most in the lines:

Love, from its awful throne of patient power  
 In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour  
 Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,  
 And narrow verge of craglike agony, springs  
 And folds over the world its healing wings.

The special tinge which Thompson often gave to Shelley's power was a certain dithyrambic gorgeousness and to his subtlety a curious imaginative entanglement. In doing so, he brought a verbal daring which revived and invigorated archaisms, unfolded "purple" rarities, tossed about new-minted coin with a masterful hand. He has a way with words which reminds one of the Elizabethans' poetic enterprise and richness. He has not in his language the Elizabethan's quiver of the very stuff

of sensation; but he has their burning grandiloquence and their vivid complexity. He is a genius who has put like the great masters his stamp upon poetic diction. No-body writing after him can ignore the Thompson-effect—a bursting splendour, an ingenious swirl of hue and harmony. On almost any page he provides examples:

The long laburnum drips  
Its honey of wild flame, its jocund spilth of fire

is a Thompson-effect; these lines about the rose—

Lo, in yon gale which waves her green cymar,  
With dusky cheeks burnt red  
She sways her heavy head,  
Drunk with the must of her own odorousness;  
While in a moted trouble the vexed gnats  
Maze, and vibrate, and tease the noontide hush—

are again a Thompson-effect; so also are the blank verses:

Though I the Orient never more shall feel  
Break like a clash of cymbals, and my heart  
Clang through my shaken body like a gong,

and the famous flight from the Hound:

Across the margent of the world I fled,  
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,  
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars,  
Fretted to dulcet jars  
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.

More subdued though as typical are lines like

Or if white-handed light  
Draw thee yet dripping from the quiet pools,  
Still lucencies and cools,  
Of sleep, which all night mirror constellate dreams.

Sometimes there is a complex figure:

I pleaded outlaw-wise  
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,

Trellised with intertwining charities.

Or the complex and the magnificent combine in a superb passage:

Oh! may this treasure-galleon of my verse,  
 Fraught with its golden passion, oared with cadent rhyme,  
 Set with a towering press of fantasies,  
     Drop safely down the time,  
 Leaving mine isled self behind it far  
 Soon to be sunken in the abysm of seas  
 (As down the years the splendour voyages  
 From some long ruined and night-submerged star),  
 And in thy subject sovereign's havening heart  
 Anchor the freightage of its virgin ore;  
     Adding its wasteful more  
 To his own overflowing treasury.  
 So through his river mine shall reach the sea...

In all these quotations there are several phrases that have a ring of Shelley, and a few lines even seem to issue from his pen:

Draw thee yet dripping from the quiet pools...  
 Of sleep, which all night mirror constellate dreams;  
  
 Soon to be sunken in the abysm of seas;  
  
 As down the years the splendour voyages.

Some others interblend the two poets, the Shelley-note still appreciable:

Lo, in yon gale which waves her green cymar;  
  
 Still lucencies and cools;  
  
 Trellised with intertwining charities;  
  
 Leaving mine isled self behind it far;  
  
 And in thy subject sovereign's havening heart  
 Anchor the freightage of its virgin ore.

In these mixed moments, the Thompson-note has something of Keats—a strain



which is more marked when Shelley's is quite subdued, as in the description of the rose and the "vexed gnats", Thompson reaching there a perfection of what is called natural magic. The line,

Oh, may this treasure-galleon of my verse

belongs also to the Keatsian group, and

Clang through my shaken body like a gone

as well as

From some long ruined and night-submerged star

has an undertone from *Hyperion*. Elsewhere too, in Thompson's verse, the Keats-note is repeatedly sounded—one might almost say he has assimilated Keats as much as Shelley; but his basic temperament is more akin to the latter, both in its mystical attitude and its plethora of successive images, so that the Keatsian element works under the stress of a Shelleyan inspiration, while both are taken up into a style which as a living whole is Thompson sheer and unique.

If his style were not individual, Thompson would not be the great poet that he is; but his greatness holds a special interest inasmuch as there was a subtle yet dominating stress in it showing him to be a fruitful starting-point for a further growth of Shelley's daimon.

I do not deny that several affinities other than that with Keats and the Elizabethans are traceable which cannot be called Shelleyan. That Keats and Shelley could intermingle without the least catastrophic consequence is evident, since both had a strong dash of Spenser: I could even undertake to show that one influence on the verse of *Hyperion* came from *Prometheus Unbound*. In the latter poem the Miltonic turn also is not absent, while the Shakespearean tone which, again, Keats sometimes practised, Shelley had expressed his intention of assimilating more successfully than in his *Cenci* and there is no reason to doubt that, with a greater maturing of his poetic thought-process, he would have done so. Thompson's style, therefore, was not on that side a development inimical to Shelley's daimon. What about the Crashaw-element so strong in Thompson at times? It was no obstacle either, for if Crashaw most resembled any poet it was, apart from Thompson, Shelley himself and to a lesser extent Blake. Donne and Patmore now remain: they are present—though more in the psychology than in the actual language of the style—in Thompson's later Odes; but with neither of them was he so much "a brother in song" as with Shelley—at least no great poetic outburst under their influence can be found to compare with his excellence at other times. The famous *Anthem to Earth* rises to authentic splendour of Thompson-effect where it has very little of their characteristic movement. All the same, when we inquire how it was that Thompson failed to take the Shelleyan element further to any sovereign fulfilment, these ancillary resemblances must be

given their due place, for the particular promise with which he started got hampered by them.

Another hampering factor was Thompson's bent for rhetoric—rhetoric in an admirable conflagration at his best, but his best then was rather rare. And it was in the rhetorical vein that his mysticism also got far from Shelley's breadth: it seemed cast in a rigid mould, a too narrowly Christian temper, as much static as ecstatic, not flexible and comprehensive enough for Shelley's spirit which had been kindred to the Indian consciousness, whether moved by a pantheistic or a transcendental longing. The Christian temper affected Thompson's powerful sense of Nature also: he had a distinct pantheistic emotion, yet whenever the rhapsodical slipped into the rhetorical it was sicklied o'er with a vision of the death's-head everywhere in too unpantheistic a way for the essential Shelley's wistful and even sad but never morbid outlook. Thus even Thompson's mysticism, while making Shelley's more maturely definite, brought in limitations.

In the sphere of style, a certain overloading of words, a too thick surge or too nebulously rich spray of sound, an exaggerated intricacy or explosiveness of image-rush were defects attendant upon the Shelley-coloured qualities that he developed. The development was unquestionable: he intensified by his bold and splendid dithyrambic movement Shelley's exoticism, creating a texture of word and image most oriental, and in doing so he enriched and widened the expressive range of Shelley's essence. This was a gain as undeniable as bringing Shelley's mysticism to a focus, but, just as a narrowing down in psychology happened there, so here the mistake he committed was to allow his style to become either brightly diffuse and haphazard or turbidly dazzling—two extremes which always are to be feared by the oriental penchant. At least the second extreme could have been avoided if he had thrilled more with a lyric flow; and this insufficiency told against the Shelleyan genius in him: he had an impetuous flow which that genius could take wonderful advantage of, but it was not markedly lyrical. He was a passionate and sonorous artist at times; still, the unfailing lyric grace which could have made his fluency more continual and more in tune with Shelley's daemon was not his *forte*. What gave the last and heaviest blow to his Shelleyan promise was that he not merely lacked the lyric cry which Shelley had sinuously melodised and Swinburne orchestrated: his fluency itself for all its odic power worked by fire-spurts soon consuming themselves and he had not a sustained gift of building with a large and symmetrical hand. The spacious energy which fashioned *Prometheus Unbound* and rendered *The Cenci*—however wanting in personal life—a feat of dramatic construction, could discover no crowning outlet through a fine yet sporadic strength.

Thus Thompson failed as Swinburne did, though for different reasons. Nevertheless, a side of Shelley got developed in him too, despite accompanying defects. And I venture to prophesy that if ever some poet carries on the Shelleyan *misus*, he would incarnate the poetic gains that *misus* has acquired through Thompson no less than Swinburne. In trying to find a new lease of activity, Shelley's genius kept growing

and its fresh attributes should be now one with its nature and, if some fluent mould were found, there would be poured in it a manifold harmony together with a plastic melodious stream and, besides the harmonic surge, an oriental audacity of colour, an adventurous and creative and re-shaping word-passion. There would be interwoven with his uniqueness something of the original Shelley, something of Swinburne, something of Francis Thompson. But he must fight free, on the one hand, of an inclination to dilute his meaning and haze off his expressive units and, on the other, of a lapse into unorganised though abundant thought-stuff and objectionably archaic or precious or new-fangled word-surprise. And if in addition to a full and controlled and sculptured grace he proves capable of a vast architectural inspiration, he would accomplish in his own mystic domain what even a Shakespeare, sovereign of the life-force, might envy.

(Concluded)

K. D. SETHNA

### Questions to Sri Aurobindo

1. Is my essay up to the mark?
2. Does the theory I have expounded and illustrated in this article hold water? As part of literature it may be perfectly legitimate, but is there any chance of its being true?

### Sri Aurobindo's Answers

1. Yes.
2. What is exactly your theory? There is one thing—influences—everybody undergoes influences, absorbs them or rejects, makes them disappear in one's own developed style or else keeps them as constituent strands. There is another thing—Lines of Force. In the universe there are many lines of Force on which various personalities or various achievements and formations spring up—e.g. the line Pericles-Caesar-Napoleon or the line Alexander-Jenghis-Tamerlane-Napoleon—meeting together there—so it may be too in poetry, lines of poetic force prolonging themselves from one poet to another, meeting and diverging. Yours seems to be a third—a Daimon or individual Spirit of Poetry migrating from one individual to another, several perhaps meeting together in one poet who gives them all a full expression. Is that it? If so, it is an interesting idea and arguable.

17-2-1935

## THE ARTS AND THEIR INTERRELATIONS

*(Continued from the issue of January 1980)*

ONE never knows in advance just what the capabilities of a certain art or medium are. One false idea of ancient aesthetics was that each art had its definite limits, which no artist had a right to pass over. Some people thought that painting should not try to represent successive movements of action, but only one single moment. However, artists have usually violated those restrictions. In the twentieth century, the school of painting called Futurism tried to show different moments in an action. The motion picture emphasizes the succession of moments of action and in that way is able to tell a story in its own way, sometimes more vividly than a printed novel or short story.

The arts do not always change together historically. Sometimes one goes off on a certain line while another lags behind or goes on a different line. Motion picture films in the United States are, on the whole, comparatively realistic. Some experiments have been made in abstract and fantastic films but on the whole they have not spread very far. Perhaps this is because the film in the United States is a mass medium, a popular art for the millions, and because most people prefer realistic art in our time. On the other hand, painting and sculpture have gone off on the path of abstraction, at the opposite extreme from realism. This is not true of all painting or sculpture, for there are conservative wings in all the arts. It is true of the kind of painting which is called *avant-garde*—that is, the more radical, experimental wing.

There is, in the United States as in other countries, a small but growing elite of artists and appreciators who make a special study of form and style in the arts. They are interested in specialized problems, such as how an artist can express a certain mood in pure line and colour without any representation. The interest in such art is spreading through the American public and now reaches many millions. Exhibits of abstract art are shown in all cities, and people argue about its merits or demerits. But one can hardly say that the taste for it is as widespread as that for realistic films and for sentimental pictures on magazine covers and grocery calendars. Both the aesthetician and the cultural historian try to trace these various movements and to find out what causes them.

There is much interest today in twentieth-century American arts. These are being studied from all points of view—those of the specialized historian, the cultural historian, the critic, and the aesthetician. It is always hard to understand or evaluate properly the arts of our own time. We are too close to them, and we cannot see them as clearly as we can see the movements of a century or two ago. We are apt to feel more strongly about those of our own day. Some of us hate modern art while others are enthusiastic about it. People in general feel towards it in a more partisan way than they do towards the old masters. This makes it hard to arrive at a fair appraisal. Nevertheless, a few facts are fairly obvious.

For one thing, it seems that certain arts are more strongly emphasized in our cul-

ture than others are. There has always been a strong interest in the industrial and useful arts in America. A great deal of our constructive genius has gone into improving the designs of automobiles and airplanes, of public and commercial buildings, factories and homes. We take pride in our functional architecture, furniture, and clothing. This includes, not only the engineering and practical side of the product, but also its visual appeal. Special effort has been given to coordinating the work of the engineer and the designer in producing a joint product, such as an automobile, which will work well and also please the eye, while at the same time selling for a moderate cost. Our furniture, utensils such as fountain pens and typewriters, our kitchen and bathroom equipment, has all been redesigned in this way.

Today, Americans are much concerned about city and regional planning—what the French call “urbanism”. We have much to learn along this line, and our tradition of individual freedom restrains us from planning socially as much as European cities do.

The American tradition is also opposed to much governmental aid to the arts or control of the arts. Almost everything is left to private initiative, to individuals or institutions. This has its values, but it also raises the question of who is going to support and patronize the arts. One answer to this question is found in endowed institutions such as art museums. Another is in the great development of the arts of mass communication, such as motion pictures, radio, and television, along with magazines, paperbound books, and newspapers of large circulation. Here the artistic element in them is supported by large corporations, mostly for commercial advertising. Gone or almost gone are the days when the artist depended on the church or a noble family for his commissions. Today he may be employed by a large urban corporation, and his work may be reproduced or broadcast for millions of people.

There is also a wide popular market for fiction in the form of novels and short stories. Part of this is for the general public and part—a small part still—is for the small avant-garde who like difficult, esoteric types of literature. Poetry, which used to be regarded as a major art and perhaps the greatest of all arts, is not so in fact in America today. We still reverence the great poets of the past, but we do not write much poetry as compared with our output in other fields. The American public takes little interest in contemporary poetry, except for a few famous poets such as Robert Frost. Why is this true? That is a problem for aesthetics and cultural history.

Hardly any field of thought can be found in which there is so much disagreement and dispute as in aesthetics and cultural history. This confuses some readers, who like a subject which is neatly organized like mathematics. Others find it challenging and stimulating for the same reason. Endless argument rages over values in art, as it has raged ever since the days of Plato and before him. What standards of value do we use, and have they any real justification? Is there any way to settle differences of taste? Is everyone entitled to his own preferences or are there some general, objective ways for deciding what is good and what is bad art, what is great and what is trivial? Standards

are especially needed in dealing with a contemporary movement such as abstract or non-objective painting, where extravagant claims are made by dealers and critics and everyone seems in doubt as to how to judge real quality. People also wonder where art will go next. After abstractionism, what then? No one knows. Prediction seems to be hard or impossible in the arts, even though it succeeds in some degree with the weather and the business cycle.

There are many conflicting theories about art history and aesthetics. Some of them are bound up with one's general political and intellectual philosophy of life. Marxism, for example, has its own theory of art and art history. It regards all styles in art as the result of social and economic conditions. It regards most contemporary experimental art of the Western countries—such as Cubism and Abstractionism—as symptoms of decadent, bourgeois capitalism. It holds that good art must appeal to the people, and that modern art in the West is unhealthy because it deals with formalism and irresponsible individual expression. Soviet painting is much more realistic and in that way more conservative. It shows scenes of farmers and workers, usually in a happy, cooperative mood, and thus attempts to strengthen the Communist regime.

On the other hand, art in the Western democracies is dominated by the ideal of art-for-art's sake and freedom for both the artist and the appreciator. In the Western democracies, it is generally felt that art is at its best when it is allowed to follow its own natural course, even if this displeases some people at the time. Those who admire modern art consider it healthy and progressive. They feel that even though it lacks some kinds of traditional beauty, it is working out new, valuable types of modern form and expression. They deny the Marxist view that it expresses a decadent social order. To outside critics, contemporary Russian art seems to be tiresomely reactionary. It lacks the experimental spirit and is forced to repeat old forms. Some of the smaller Communist countries, such as Poland and Yugoslavia, are more experimental and progressive in the arts.

Western aesthetics does not insist that all abstract or experimental art is good. Abstract art sacrifices many important values. Sometimes it eliminates so much that there is very little left. As in other styles of art in the past, only a few examples may turn out to have lasting value. Meanwhile, there is room for many different styles and for competition between them.

Whatever one's taste and opinion in art may be, aesthetics is today the principal field for discussing such problems objectively. More and more this is done, not with emotion and dogmatism, but with a desire to discover the facts and then base our value judgements upon them. Aesthetics does not promise to give final answers, at least for the present, but it is trying with success to throw some light upon fundamental problems in this field.

The arts have tremendous power to influence people's minds and emotions. They are already being used to influence thought and action in the commercial field. Advertising psychology is making scientific use of the popular arts to sell its products. It is placing subtle but powerful "hidden persuaders" in what we see and hear. Hitler

and other dictators have made scientific use of the arts to sway people's minds and emotions in their own interest. Very often the arts are used for militaristic and partisan purposes rather than for public welfare. Intelligent people see the need to examine the psychological effects of the arts, almost in self-protection. Moreover, they are curious about the nature and the power of the emotional stimuli which pour in upon us at every waking moment of the day.

Art is a two-edged sword which can be used for good or for bad. It can be used to enrich and beautify our lives and to spread ideals of mutual respect and cooperation. It can also be used to foment national, racial, and religious antagonism. Scholars and scientists in aesthetics are trying to discover the facts about this powerful agency in modern civilization and to lay them before the public. Scientific knowledge and control of the arts is increasing rapidly, whether we like it or not. Such knowledge can be used to free and encourage creative work in the arts and to bring its advantages more effectively to all people. The radio and the magnetic tape are already bringing great music to a wider public than ever before. But much remains to be done. Art and science in cooperation, not as rivals, can accomplish wonders in the coming times. They can improve the quality of life for everyone, and strengthen the spirit of friendly understanding among all countries of the earth.

*(Concluded)*

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## FAITH

I'LL shut my eyes,  
keep a faith so blind  
that the tangle of the mund  
disappears—instead, to soul-vision hold  
Your Truth-fulgent face  
and let its white fire  
all darkness efface.

I'll cling to the silence—  
reason unheard—  
Just so Your Word  
will sing its magic chants,  
like woven streams of Light,  
and to avid gaze unfold  
a perfect world's delight.

From beyond the golden Void there wafts  
Your fluted call sublime—  
an all-compelling chime—  
and those that dare must leap  
into the splendour of the sun,  
across the deepest chasms,  
to the all-embracing One.

“U”



## POEMS BEFORE AND AFTER

(Continued from the issue of January 1980)

### OFFERING I: DIVINE PERFORMANCE—MAY 1979

LIKE a lion emergent, from His lair  
Through a rift in the sky...there!  
*God effulgent IS.* Where  
Do we look? If we observe, what lingers?  
Negative after-image? Distortion? *We are not free.*  
We sit and bend our heads to embroider small cloth  
With blind and diligent fingers  
While God comes forth...GOD COMES FORTH  
And embroiders the Universe with wonders we never see.

*Inconscient night*  
*Veils HIM from our sight.*  
*Coagulated Light, or frozen Divinity, we*  
*Reduce to Absolute Zero in Sun-less frigidity.*

We make lace,  
French knots and roses,  
Fingers nimble.  
With airs (and Grace)  
Perhaps we wear a Golden thimble  
Against Life's pricks,  
The needle-sticks;  
Or, looking down our noses  
Bent to the grinding ground  
(What there is to be found?)  
We explain HIM from a book!  
Our glance is  
Down...and all around *God dances!*  
Why, why do we not *look?*  
Involved in limiting romances  
We turn from the Fiery Kiss...the Ecstatic embrace.

Myopic eyes used for minutiae...IS IT too  
Much...too far away, the Magnificent Pose?  
We seek the small modalities, eyes narrowed, indrawn face,  
And *unabashed*, on Infinite Toes

God describes His illumined Hieroglyphics through  
His illimitable Space.

*Everywhere, with infinite ease  
God dances  
And All advances  
In the Universal Plan.*

*Talking, talking, talking of our Divinities,  
We freeze.  
We sit making knots and crosses,  
(How many in a Life's span?)  
Impervious to the Fire, to the Great Forces,  
Grounded in our rigidities.*

We tie, in intricate condensations,  
Strings to make a Macramé;  
Record the small events, our conversations,  
A life-time hanging on a wall.  
There...there are all  
The births and marriages  
And deaths and the miscarriages  
Of Love and Faith and Trust and Truth and Justice  
(Too difficult to practice)  
We perpetrate—perpetuate each day;  
Tied, all tied neatly for the wall.  
We can enjoy them there, recall  
With satisfaction,  
(Why look higher?)  
Something well done

When one thinks to look  
Or point out to one's neighbors or one's friends  
(Spoken in the appropriate tone)  
And we can cook  
*It doesn't need the Passion or the Fire*  
Such tales to concretize abstractions  
And so confuse  
The meanings and the ends.  
Why do we refuse  
HIS GLORY and HIS PASSION?  
Are we so ration-

Al or are we blind...or dead?  
*WITHIN, ABOVE, BELOW, BEHIND, AHEAD*  
 GOD IS. He is writing *YOU* as he writes  
 Through His infinitudes of space with quills of light,  
 Explaining His Mysteries in the Universal Book.  
 Read Him. *YOU are there!*      LOOK.

*Yuga upon Yuga, age on age,  
 God has contracted  
 To play His Flaming Lila  
 On the Universal Stage;  
 And from His Great Tome  
 He has enacted  
 Only the first page.*

*Aum Selah Aum*

ELIZABETH STILLER

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# THE WINTER OAK

## A SHORT STORY

*At the request of readers we are reproducing from an old issue of Mother India this exquisite short story by a Russian writer, to whom now as before our acknowledgments are due.*

"MAY I come in?"

A small figure, in battered felt boots covered with melting snow-flakes, stood in the open doorway of the school. His reddened face glowed as if it would burst; the eyebrows were white with frost.

"Late again, Savushkin," said Anna Vasilyevna. Like most young teachers, Anna liked to be strict, but now an almost plaintive note sounded in her voice.

Considering the matter settled, Savushkin quickly slid to his place. Anna saw him shove his oil-cloth school-bag into the desk and, without turning his head, ask something of the boy next to him.

Savushkin's lack of punctuality annoyed Anna; it somehow spoiled the fine opening of the day for her. The geography teacher, a small dried-up old woman, had once complained to Anna about Savushkin often being late to lessons. She complained of others things too—the children's inattentiveness, their much too boisterous behaviour. "Those first morning lessons are so trying," she said. "They may be, for incompetent teachers who do not know how to hold the interest of their pupils," thought Anna disdainfully, and offered to change hours with the old woman. She felt a prick of conscience now: the old teacher had doubtlessly sensed the challenge in Anna's offer.

"Is everything clear?"

"Yes," chorused the children.

"Very well. Then give me some examples of nouns." She was taking a lesson in "parts of speech".

There was a short silence and then someone said haltingly: "Cat."

"Correct," said Anna, recalling that last year, too, "cat" had been the first example. After that, examples poured in like a stream: window...table...house...highway.

"Correct," Anna assured them. The children were joyfully excited. It amazed Anna to see such joy at the discovery of a new aspect in long-familiar words. At first the choice of examples embraced every-day tangible things: cart, tractor.... From the back desk a fat boy called Vasya kept repeating in his thin voice, "Chicken, chicken, chicken."

But then someone said hesitantly: "Town."

"Good," encouraged Anna.

"Street...victory...poem...play..."

"Well, that's enough," said Anna. "I can see you understand it."

The voices died down reluctantly, only fat Vasya's "chicken" still came from the back of the room. And then suddenly, as if aroused from sleep, Savushkin stood up behind his desk and shouted eagerly:

"Winter oak!"

The children laughed.

"Quiet, please!" Anna brought her palm down hard on the table.

"Winter oak," repeated Savushkin heedless of the laughter around him or of Anna's orders. There was something peculiar in his manner. The words seemed to have burst out like a confession, like some glorious secret which could not remain unshared.

Annoyed and uncomprehending, Anna asked, barely controlling her irritation: "Why 'winter oak'? 'Oak' is enough."

"Oh, an oak is nothing. A winter oak, that's different."

"Sit down, Savushkin. That's what coming in late leads to. Oak is a noun and what the word 'winter' in this case is we have not studied as yet. You will come to the teacher's room during the main interval."

"Now you'll catch it," whispered somebody behind Savushkin.

Savushkin sat down smiling to himself, not in the least put out by the teacher's strict tone. A difficult boy, thought Anna.

The lesson continued.

"Sit down," said Anna when Savushkin entered the teacher's room. With evident pleasure the boy sank into a soft arm-chair and rocked a few times on its spring.

"Will you please tell me why you are always late for school?"

"I really don't know, Anna Vasilyevna," he said with a gesture of surprise. "I leave home an hour before school."

There were many children who lived much farther away from school yet all of them got there on time.

"You live in Kuzminki, don't you?"

"No, I live on the sanatorium premises."

"Aren't you ashamed, then, to tell me you leave home an hour before school? It's fifteen minutes from the sanatorium to the highway, and no more than half an hour's walk down the highway!"

"But I don't never go down the highway. I take a short-cut through the forest," Savushkin said earnestly.

"Don't ever go," Anna corrected him mechanically. Why did children have to lie? she thought unhappily. Why couldn't Savushkin tell her simply "I'm sorry, Anna Vasilyevna. I stopped to play snowballs with the kids," or something else equally straightforward. But the boy said no more and just looked at her out of his large grey eyes as if wondering what else she would want of him.

"It's a sad business, Savushkin. I'll have to talk to your parents about it."

"There's only my mother, Anna Vasilyevna," Savushkin said softly.

"I'll have to come to see your mother then," said Anna.

"Please do, Anna Vasilyevna. She'll be so glad to see you."

"I doubt that. What shift does she work on?"

"The second. She goes to work at three."

"Very well then. I finish at two. We'll go together right after lessons."

Savushkin led Anna Vasilyevna along the path that started right at the back of the school. As soon as they entered the forest and the heavy snow-laden fir branches closed behind them they found themselves in a different, enchanted world of peace and quiet. Now and then magpies and crows flew from tree to tree shaking the spreading branches, knocking off dry pine cones and occasionally breaking off a brittle twig. But the sounds were short-lived and muffled.

Everything was white. Only high up against the blue sky the dainty lacework of birch tops stood out as if sketched in with India ink.

The path followed a frozen brook, now right down along the bank, now climbing up a steep rise. Occasionally the trees fell back revealing a sunlit clearing criss-crossed with hare's tracks that looked like a watch-chain pattern. There were larger tracks too, shaped like shamrock. They led away into the densest part of the woods.

"Elk's tracks," said Savushkin, following the direction of Anna's gaze. "Don't be afraid," he said, reading an unspoken question in her eyes.

"An elk?"

"No. No such luck," sighed Savushkin. "I've seen elk-droppings, though."

"What?"

"Dung," Savushkin explained, embarrassed.

Diving under a twisted willow the path ran down to the brook again. The surface of the brook was in parts covered with a thick layer of snow, in parts its icy armour lay clear and sparkling, and there were spots where unfrozen water stood out in dark blotches like evil eyes.

"Why hasn't it frozen there?" Anna asked.

"Warm springs. Look, you can see one coming up right there. Plenty of these springs here," Savushkin explained eagerly, "that's why the brook never freezes right through."

They came to another unfrozen stretch, with pitchblack but transparent water.

Anna began to throw handfuls of snow into it. Thus time passed. They were deeply engrossed in the mysteries of the forest.

Savushkin trod on ahead, bending slightly and throwing keen glances around. Anna followed behind.

The winding path led them on and on. There seemed to be no end to all those trees and huge snowdrifts, to that enchanted silence and sun-speckled twilight.

Suddenly a bluish-white patch gleamed ahead. The trees grew sparser. The path rounded a nut-bush and a vast clearing flooded with sunlight opened up before their eyes. The trees stepped humbly aside and in the middle of the clearing in spark-

ling white garment stood an old oak, tall and majestic like a cathedral.

"The winter oak!" gasped Anna. She reverently approached the tree and stopped under its glittering branches.

Unaware of the tumult in his teacher's heart, Savushkin got busy with something at the foot of the trunk, treating the magnificent tree with the familiarity of a long-standing friendship.

"Come here, Anna Vasilyevna," he called. "Look!" He pushed aside a large lump of snow with earth and old grass clinging to its under-side. A little ball plastered with decayed leaves lay in the hollow below.

"A hedgehog!" cried Anna.

"See how well he hid himself?" And Savushkin carefully restored the protective covering of earth and snow over the immobile hedgehog. Then he dug at another spot and revealed a tiny cave with icicles hanging at its opening. It was occupied by a brown frog, its tightly-stretched skin shiny as if it were lacquered.

Savushkin touched the frog. It made no movement.

"Isn't he a sly one?" laughed Savushkin. "Shamming dead. But just watch him leap as soon as the sun warms him up a bit".

He guided Anna on through this world he knew so well. There were numerous other tenants in and around the oak: bugs, lizards, insects. Some hid among the roots, others in the deep cracks of the bark. Thin, withered, apparently lifeless, they hibernated there all through the winter. Fascinated, Anna watched this hidden forest life, so little known to her.

"Oh, mother'll be at work by now!" came Savushkin's anxious voice.

Anna looked at her watch. A quarter past three. She felt trapped. Ashamed for her human failings and inwardly begging forgiveness of the oak she said: "Well, Savushkin, this only proves that a short-cut is not always the best way to choose. You'll have to go along the highroad from now on."

Savushkin looked down and did not reply.

Heavens! isn't this the clearest proof of my incompetence, thought Anna.

The morning lesson flashed in her mind. How dull and lifeless were her explanations, how utterly devoid of feeling. And she was teaching the children their native tongue, so beautiful, so rich in shades, colour and meaning! An experienced pedagogue, indeed!

"Thank you, Savushkin, for the lovely walk," she said. "I don't mean what I've just told you. Of course, you can take the forest path to school."

"Thank you, Anna Vasilyevna," Savushkin blushed with pleasure. He wanted to promise his teacher then and there that he would never be late again, but checked himself, for fear of failing his word. He only raised his collar and, pulling down his hat, said:

"I'll see you back to school."

"No, don't. I'll find the way myself now."

He looked at her in some doubt, then picked up a long stick, broke off its thinner

end and offered it to Anna.

"Take this," he said, "if an elk comes your way, just hit him on the back and he'll run for all he's worth. Though better not hit him, just raise the stick at him. He might take offence, you know, and leave the woods for good."

"Don't worry, I shan't hit him," she promised.

She took a few steps back, then stopped and turned to take one last look at the winter oak, tinged with pink by the setting sun. A small dark figure stood at the foot of the trunk: Savushkin did not go home. He stayed to guard his teacher's way if even from a distance.

And suddenly Anna knew that the most wonderful being in that forest was not the winter oak but this small boy in battered felt boots and patched clothes, the son of a "shower nurse" and a soldier killed in the war. She waved her hand to him and went on her way.

GURI NAGIBIU

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## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Bhagavadgita in the Light of Sri Aurobindo.** Edited by Maheshwar. Distributors: SABDA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-605002 India. Pp. XII+270. Price: Rs. 20/-.

‘THE Mahabharata’, one of the two great epics of India, contains the famous ‘Bhagavad Gita’ or ‘Song of the Blessed Lord’. It is a long dialogue between the hero of the epic, Arjuna, and his charioteer and guru, Krishna, one of the many avatars of Vishnu, the God of Protection according to Hindu mythology. This great devotional classic, eighteen chapters on the whole, represents the essence of Hinduism. It is precious as a treatise on Philosophy, Ethics and Religion. But at the same time it is a lovely poem of wonderful charm and perennial interest. The song teaches a means of approaching the Lord. “It is the practice of training and concentrating the mind called *Yoga*, which is literally *yoking*, the resultant control of the mind makes union with God possible.”

This religious gem of Sanskrit Literature has been translated more than forty times and commented on by many Acharyas and scholars beginning with Adi Shankara of the 9th century. But ‘The Gita’ had to wait till the 20th century for the arrival of an uncrowned monarch of Indo-English literature, Sri Aurobindo, poet, critic, philosopher, scholar, thinker, nationalist, humanist and above all a great seer and Yogi, to unravel its real significance to the present-day world.

Sri Aurobindo, like all other translators and commentators old and new, did not leave us a sloka-to-sloka translation and comment. But he bequeathed to posterity his interpretation in forty-four essays collected under the title *Essays on the Gita*, one of his five key works, the other four being *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. The essays are “luminous interpretations of the famous Bhagavad Gita, not as a philosophical doctrine but as a practical guide to the highest spiritual life”

Maheshwar, the editor of this book, has done a tremendous work indeed at the bidding of the Mother Divine. To begin with, I can do no better than quote the words of Maheshwar *verbatim* from his humble Preface to this book. “A very large number of the verses have been freely rendered in English by him (Sri Aurobindo) in the *Essays*, quite often profusely and without quotation marks, some have been summarily translated, some simply interpreted, some just hinted at in passing and some not even mentioned. The work of preparing a sloka-to-sloka translation on the basis of the *Essays*, therefore, involved a variety of processes—receiving, adopting, culling, spinning, trimming, grafting and constructing and so on—some of these processes involving even risk, though each one giving a thrill. . . The notes following the translations of the slokas are all excerpts from the *Essays on the Gita*. The term ‘notes’, therefore, fails to signify the real import or the purpose these excerpts have; they are more than notes and form an integral part of the total reading of the ‘Bhagavad Gita In The Light Of Sri Aurobindo’.” Unless one reads the *Essays on the Gita* first and then the book under review, one may not be able to see what great pains Maheshwar has

taken and how many midnights he has spent beside his table-lamp. Success approaches those who are very industrious.

Sri Aurobindo's 'Our Demand and Need from the Gita' (*Essays on the Gita*, First Series, Essay One, pp. 1-8) and 'The Message of the Gita' (*Essays on the Gita*, Second series, Last Essay, pp. 553-75) form a foreword and afterword respectively to the eighteen chapters of the 'Bhagavad Gita'. Unlike the many commentators of yore and a few of recent times, Sri Aurobindo seeks in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from the metaphysical form, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity.

Sri Aurobindo is dead against all those polemic commentators who laboured to turn the Gita into a weapon of offence and defence against other schools and systems. He considered the Gita as "a great opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of that supreme religion. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision". The great seer opines that the Gita should not be read to contradict and to confute but to bring 'help and light'. He never wishes this great scripture to rest as a monument of the past: it must have actual force or vital impulse for the future.

What is meant by action done as yoga? What is the essence of this self-control? What is the real significance of *dharma* and *adharma*? What is the function of an Avatar? In what sense does the Gita speak of 'knowledge'? How to obtain the perfect fruit of the Yoga? Who is a perfect sage? What are the qualities of a perfect Yogi? What does Krishna mean by his "I" and "Me"? What are the conditions of knowledge, the marks and signs of the man whose soul is turned towards the Inner Wisdom? What is the significance of the Shastra?

If we put on airs as though we knew the answers, Sri Aurobindo will surprise us. His answers are unexpected. To cite an example: if 'Equality' is called Yoga, what then does 'Equality' mean? To many commentators it means disinterestedness. But to Sri Aurobindo it is "a state of inner poise and wideness which is the foundation of spiritual freedom".

*Buddhi, samādhi*, sacrifice, the higher self and the lower self are a few of the innumerable terms that take different shades—each most accurate—as they glide out from the auriferous pen of Sri Aurobindo.

The concluding essay 'The Message of the Gita', high in import and deeply informed with spirituality, seems at the outset to be the gist of the entire eighteen chapters of the Gita in just twenty pages. But as one probes into the essay one finds an original light from Sri Aurobindo, born of his own many-sided God-realisation that is able to lay bare the core of a great revelation of the past, turn it towards the contemporary world and meet the eternal needs of the human soul.

To read this whole book is not only to become wise but also to wing the new wisdom with an intense and profound joy.

P RAJA