

# MOTHER INDIA

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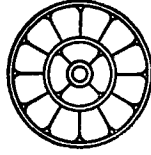
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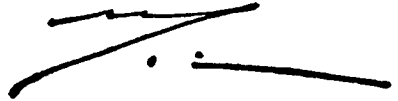


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail.”

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## OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE—8

### EXTRACTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO'S WRITINGS

*(Continued from the issue of October 1983)*

#### **Indian Culture and the Life of Man**

...the principle, the essential intention of Indian culture was extraordinarily high, ambitious and noble, the highest indeed that the human spirit can conceive. For what can be a greater idea of life than that which makes it a development of the spirit in man to its most vast, secret and high possibilities,—a culture that conceives of life as a movement of the Eternal in time, of the universal in the individual, of the infinite in the finite, of the Divine in man, or holds that man can become not only conscious of the eternal and the infinite, but live in its power and universalise, spiritualise and divinise himself by self-knowledge? What greater aims can be for the life of man than to grow by an inner and outer experience till he can live in God, realise his spirit, become divine in knowledge, in will and in the joy of his highest existence? And that is the whole sense of the striving of Indian culture.

The system of Indian culture is another thing. A system is in its very nature at once an effectuation and a limitation of the spirit; and yet we must have a science and art of life, a system of living. All that is needed is that the lines laid down should be large and noble, capable of evolution so that the spirit may more and more express itself in life, flexible even in its firmness so that it may absorb and harmonise new material and enlarge its variety and richness without losing its unity. The system of Indian culture was all these things in its principle and up to a certain point and a certain period in its practice. That a decline came upon it in the end and a kind of arrest of growth, not absolute, but still very serious and dangerous to its life and future, is perfectly true, and we shall have to ask whether that was due to the inherent character of the culture, to a deformation or to a temporary exhaustion of the force of living, and, if the last, how that exhaustion came.... The misfortunes of India have been considerably exaggerated, at least in their incidence, but take them at their worst, admit that no nation has suffered more. If all that is due to the badness of our civilisation, to what is due then the remarkable fact of the obstinate survival of India, her culture and her civilisation under this load of misfortunes, or the power which enables her still to assert herself and her spirit at this moment, to the great wrath of her critics, against the tremendous shock of the flood from Europe which has almost submerged other peoples? If her misfortunes are due to her cultural deficiencies, must not by a parity of reasoning this extraordinary vitality be due to some great force in her, some enduring virtue of truth in her spirit? A mere lie and insanity cannot live; its persistence is a disease which must before long lead to death;

it cannot be the source of an unslayable life. There must be some heart of soundness, some saving truth which has kept this people alive and still enables it to raise its head and affirm its will to be and its faith in its mission.

India developed the spiritual mind working on the other powers of man and exceeding them, the intuitive reason, the philosophical harmony of the Dharma informed by the religious spirit, the sense of the eternal and the infinite. The future has to go on to a greater and more perfect comprehensive development of these things and to evolve fresh powers, but we shall not do this rightly by damning the past or damning other cultures than our own in a spirit of arrogant intolerance. We need not only a spirit of calm criticism, but an eye of sympathetic intuition to extract the good from the past and present effort of humanity and make the most of it for our future progress.

... the right thing for India [is], not to imitate Europe, though she well may learn from western experience, but to get out of her stagnation by developing what is best and most essential in her own spirit and culture.

The peculiarity of Indian culture lies only in this distinction that what is vague or confused or imperfectly brought out in most other cultures, it has laboured rather to make distinct, to sound all its possibilities, to fix its aspects and lines and hold it up as a true, precise, large and practicable ideal for the race. The formulation may not be entirely complete; it may have to be still more enlarged, bettered, put otherwise, things missed brought out, the lines and forms modified, errors of stress and direction corrected; but a firm, a large foundation has been laid down not only in theory, but in solid practice. If there has been an actual complete failure in life,—and that is the one point left,—it must be due to one of two causes; either there has been some essential bungling in the application of the ideal to the facts of life as it is, or else there has been a refusal to recognise the facts of life at all. Perhaps, then, there has been, to put it otherwise, an insistence on what we may be at some hardly attainable height of our being without having first made the most of what we are. The infinite can only be reached after we have grown in the finite, the eternal grasped only by man growing in time, the spiritual perfected only by man accomplished first in body, life and mind. If that necessity has been ignored, then one may fairly contend that there has been a gross, impracticable and inexcusable error in the governing idea of Indian culture. But as a matter of fact there has been no such error. We have seen what were the aim and idea and method of Indian culture and it will be perfectly clear that the value of life and its training were amply recognised in its system and given their proper place. Even the most extreme philosophies and religions, Buddhism and Illusionism, which held life to be an impermanence or ignorance that must be transcended and cast away, yet did not lose sight of the truth that man must develop himself under the conditions of this present ignorance or impermanence before

he can attain to knowledge and to that Permanent which is the denial of temporal being. Buddhism was not solely a cloudy sublimation of Nirvana, nothingness, extinction and the tyrannous futility of Karma; it gave us a great and powerful discipline for the life of man on earth. The enormous positive effects it had on society and ethics and the creative impulsé it imparted to art and thought and in a less degree to literature, are a sufficient proof of the strong vitality of its method. If this positive turn was present in the most extreme philosophy of denial, it was still more largely present in the totality of Indian culture.

There has been indeed from early times in the Indian mind a certain strain, a tendency towards a lofty and austere exaggeration in the direction taken by Buddhism and Mayavada. This excess was inevitable, the human mind being what it is; it had even its necessity and value. Our mind does not arrive at the totality of truth easily and by one embracing effort; an arduous search is the condition of its finding. The mind opposes different sides of the truth to each other, follows each to its extreme possibility, treats it even for a time as the sole truth, makes imperfect compromises, arrives by various adjustments and gropings nearer to the true relations. The Indian mind followed this method; it covered, as far as it could, the whole field, tried every position, looked at the truth from every angle, attempted many extremes and many syntheses. But the European critic very ordinarily labours under the idea that this exaggeration in the direction of negating life was actually the whole of Indian thought and sentiment or the one undisputed governing idea of the culture. Nothing could be more false and inaccurate. The early Vedic religion did not deny, but laid a full emphasis on life. The Upanishads did not deny life, but held that the world is a manifestation of the Eternal, of Brahman, all here is Brahman, all is in the Spirit and the Spirit is in all, the self-existent Spirit has become all these things and creatures; life too is Brahman, the life-force is the very basis of our existence, the life-spirit, Vayu, is the manifest and evident Eternal *pratyakṣam brahma*. But it affirmed that the present way of existence of man is not the highest or the whole; his outward mind and life are not all his being; to be fulfilled and perfect he has to grow out of his physical and mental ignorance into spiritual self-knowledge.

Buddhism arrived at a later stage and seized on one side of these ancient teachings to make a sharp spiritual and intellectual opposition between the impermanence of life and the permanence of the Eternal which brought to a head and made a gospel of the ascetic exaggeration. But the synthetic Hindu mind struggled against this negation and finally threw out Buddhism, though not without contracting an increased bias in this direction. That bias came to its height in the philosophy of Shankara, his theory of Maya, which put its powerful imprint on the Indian mind and, coinciding with a progressive decline in the full vitality of the race, did tend for a time to fix a pessimistic and negative view of terrestrial life and distort the larger Indian ideal. But his theory is not at all a necessary deduction from the great Vedantic authorities,

the Upanishads, Brahmasutras and Gita, and was always combated by other Vedantic philosophies and religions which drew from them and from spiritual experience very different conclusions. At the present time, in spite of a temporary exaltation of Shankara's philosophy, the most vital movements of Indian thought and religion are moving again towards the synthesis of spirituality and life which was an essential part of the ancient Indian ideal.

To develop to the full the intellectual, the dynamic and volitional, the ethical, the aesthetic, the social and economic being of man was an important element of Indian civilisation,—if for nothing else, at least as an indispensable preliminary to spiritual perfection and freedom. India's best achievements in thought, art, literature, society were the logical outcome of her religio-philosophical culture.

India has lived and lived greatly, whatever judgement one may pass on her ideas and institutions.

The ancient and mediaeval life of India was not wanting in any of the things that make up the vivid interesting activity of human existence. On the contrary, it was extraordinarily full of colour and interest. ...those who see only from a distance or fix their eyes only on one aspect, speak of it often as a land of metaphysics, philosophies, dreams and brooding imaginations, and certain artists and writers are apt to write in a strain as if it were a country of the Arabian Nights, a mere glitter of strange hues and fancies and marvels. But on the contrary India has been as much a home of serious and solid realities, of a firm grappling with the problems of thought and life, of measured and wise organisation and great action as any other considerable centre of civilisation. The widely different view these perceptions express simply shows the many-sided brilliance and fullness of her life. The colour and magnificence have been its aesthetic side; she has had great dreams and high and splendid imaginations, for that too is wanted for the completeness of our living; but also deep philosophical and religious thinking, a wide and searching criticism of life, a great political and social order, a strong ethical tone and a persistent vigour of individual and communal living. That is a combination which means life in all its fullness, though deficient, it may be, except in extraordinary cases, in the more violent egoistic perversities and exaggerations which some minds seem to take for a proof of the highest vigour of existence.

In what field indeed has not India attempted, achieved, created, and in all on a large scale and yet with much attention to completeness of detail? Of her spiritual and philosophic achievement there can be no real question. They stand there as the Himalayas stand upon the earth, in the phrase of Kalidasa, *prithivyā iva mānadaṇḍaḥ*, "as if earth's measuring rod", mediating still between earth and heaven, measuring the finite, casting their plummet far into the infinite, plunging their extremities



into the upper and lower seas of the superconscient and the subliminal, the spiritual and the natural being. But if her philosophies, her religious disciplines, her long list of great spiritual personalities, thinkers, founders, saints are her greatest glory, as was natural to her temperament and governing idea, they are by no means her sole glories, nor are the others dwarfed by their eminence. It is now proved that in science she went farther than any country before the modern era, and even Europe owes the beginning of her physical science to India as much as to Greece, although not directly but through the medium of the Arabs. And, even if she had only gone as far, that would have been sufficient proof of a strong intellectual life in an ancient culture. Especially in mathematics, astronomy and chemistry, the chief elements of ancient science, she discovered and formulated much and well and anticipated by force of reasoning or experiment some of the scientific ideas and discoveries which Europe first arrived at much later, but was able to base more firmly by her new and completer method. She was well-equipped in surgery and her system of medicine survives to this day and has still its value, though it declined intermediately in knowledge and is only now recovering its vitality.

In literature, in the life of the mind, she lived and built greatly. Not only has she the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita, not to speak of less supreme but still powerful or beautiful work in that field, unequalled monuments of religious and philosophic poetry, a kind in which Europe has never been able to do anything much of any great value, but that vast national structure, the Mahabharata, gathering into its cycle the poetic literature and expressing so completely the life of a long formative age, that it is said of it in a popular saying which has the justice if also the exaggeration of a too apt epigram, "What is not in this Bharata, is not in Bharatavarsha (India)", and the Ramayana, the greatest and most remarkable poem of its kind, that most sublime and beautiful epic of ethical idealism and a heroic semi-divine human life, and the marvellous richness, fullness and colour of the poetry and romance of highly cultured thought, sensuous enjoyment, imagination, action and adventure which makes up the romantic literature of her classical epoch. Nor did this long continuous vigour of creation cease with the loss of vitality by the Sanskrit tongue, but was paralleled and carried on in a mass of great or of beautiful work in her other languages, in Pali first and Prakrit, much unfortunately lost, and Tamil, afterwards in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and other tongues. The long tradition of her architecture, sculpture and painting speaks for itself, even in what survives after all the ruin of stormy centuries. Whatever judgment may be formed of it by the narrower school of western aesthetics,—and at least its fineness of execution and workmanship cannot be denied, nor the power with which it renders the Indian mind,—it testifies at least to a continuous creative activity. And creation is proof of life and great creation of greatness of life.

But these things are, it may be said, the things of the mind, and the intellect, imagination and aesthetic mind of India may have been creatively active, but yet her outward life depressed, dull, poor, gloomy with the hues of asceticism, void of will-

power and personality, ineffective, null. That would be a hard proposition to swallow; for literature, art and science do not flourish, in a void of life. But here too what are the facts? India has not only had the long roll of her great saints, sages, thinkers, religious founders, poets, creators, scientists, scholars, legists; she has had her great rulers, administrators, soldiers, conquerors, heroes, men with the strong active will, the mind that plans and the seeing force that builds. She has warred and ruled, traded and colonised and spread her civilisation, built polities and organised communities and societies, done all that makes the outward activity of great peoples.

*(Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Vol. 14, pp. 172-87)*

*(To be continued)*

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## STARS

STARS! Burning silver flowers!  
 Eternal burn the secrets of the nights of Time.  
 A god walked in those fields  
 And left behind his fiery footprints.  
 Your pale-blue intensities mirror  
 The inner heart-space  
 And diamond the way to distant infinities,  
 And yet are you but a handful  
 Of glittering gems strewn  
 In the raven-black hair of Eternity.

RUPA

## ONE'S SELF AND ONE'S MILIEU

FROM A TALK OF THE MOTHER ON NOVEMBER 14, 1956

*Mother, how can one conquer the desire to appear good in the eyes of others?*

OH Lord!... To appear good in others' eyes, to have public approval? Is that it?

First, the best way is to ask oneself why one values others' approval. For what particular reason, because there are many reasons... . If you have a career and your career depends on the good opinion others have of you, then that's a utilitarian reason. If you have a little, or much, vanity and like compliments, that's another reason. If you attach great value to others' opinion of you because you feel they are wiser or more enlightened or have more knowledge, that's yet another reason. There are many others still, but these are the three chief reasons: utility, vanity—usually this is the strongest—and progress.

Naturally, when it is a reason of progress, the attitude is not quite the same, for instead of trying to make a good impression, one must first endeavour to know the impression one is actually making, in all humility, in order to profit by the lesson this gives. That is quite rare, and in fact, if one isn't too naive, one usually attaches importance only to the opinion of those who have more experience, more knowledge and more wisdom than oneself. And so that leads us straight to one of the best methods of cure. It is precisely to come to understand that the opinion of those who are as ignorant and blind as ourselves cannot have a very great value for us from the point of view of the deeper reality and the will to progress, and so one stops attaching much importance to that.

Finally, if one is sincere one desires no other approval except that of one's teacher or one's guru or of the Divine Himself. And that's the first step towards a total cure of this little weakness of wishing to make a good impression on people. Now, if the movement comes from a motive of utility, the one I spoke of first, the question does not arise here, for here we do not depend upon the opinion others have of us, either for living or for our development. So there remains the most frequent instance, the one most difficult to cure: that kind of small, very foolish vanity which makes you like to be complimented and dislike being criticised. So the best way is to look at yourself, to see how very ridiculous you are, how petty, paltry, stupid and all that, to laugh a little at yourself and resolve to do without the compliments of others.

That is all I have to offer.

It is obvious that if it is a matter of yoga, of yogic discipline, an indispensable preliminary condition is to free oneself from this little stupidity of wanting to be appreciated by others. That is not the first step on the path, it is one of the first steps in the preparation for being able to enter on the path. For so long as one needs to be appreciated and complimented, one is a slavish being and a deplorable weakling.

Indeed, it is better not to care at all about what others think of you, whether it is good or bad. But in any case, before reaching this stage, it would be less ridiculous to try to find out the impression you make on others simply by taking them as a mirror in which you see your reflection more exactly than in your own consciousness which is always over-indulgent to all your weakness, blindness, passions, ignorance. There is always quite a charming and pleasant mental explanation to give you a good impression of yourself. But to conclude, when you have the chance of getting information that's a little more trustworthy and reliable about the condition you are in, it is better not to ask the opinion of others, but only to refer all to the vision of the guru. If you really want to progress, this is the surest path.

There we are. Is that all?

*Mother, I had a question. The control of one's own movements and the control of the vast life around oneself—are these interdependent?*

Self-control and the control of what surrounds you?... That depends on your standpoint. The police superintendent, for instance, has a certain control over the circumstances around him, but he doesn't usually have much self-control! (Laughter)

What exactly do you want to know?

*To understand the meaning of "control over the vast life around it".<sup>1</sup>*

Oh! it is a phrase from the book.

It is quite obvious that one must first begin by self-control, otherwise one has no effect on the surroundings except to increase the confusion.

*To give an example, Vivekananda had no control over his own anger, but he had great control over the life around him.*

This is the first time I've heard that. He had no control over his anger? Who told you that story?

*It is in his biography.*

Did he say it himself? Is it authentic, this story?

*(Another disciple) Yes, sometimes he used to get carried away.*

<sup>1</sup> "It is thus by an integralisation of our divided being that the Divine Shakti in the Yoga will proceed to its object; for liberation, perfection, mastery are dependent on this integralisation, since the little wave on the surface cannot control its own movement, much less have any true control over the vast life around it."  
(*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 172).

But he knew it himself?

*Yes, he knew it.*

Anyway, he did not have a "great control" over his surroundings: he had a great influence, which is something very different. One can't control outer matter if one does not control inner matter, for they are the same thing. But he had an influence, which is quite different. It is not a mastery, it is an influence. That is, he could awaken certain movements in others, but he could not control them, it was they who had to control themselves with the awakening, it was not—I say "he", it can be anyone you see, it is a general rule.

Besides, it is childishly simple, for mastery means the knowledge of handling certain vibrations; if you know how to handle these vibrations you have the mastery. The best field of experimentation is yourself: first you have the control in yourself and once you have it in yourself you can transmit the vibration to others, to the extent you are capable of identifying yourself with them and of thus creating this vibration in them. And if you cannot handle a vibration in yourself, you don't even know the procedure; you don't even know what to do, so how can you manipulate it in others? You may encourage them by words, by an influence over them, to do what is needed to learn self-control, but you cannot control them directly.

To control something, a movement, is simply to replace by one's presence, without words or explanations, the bad vibration by the true one. This is what constitutes the power of mastery. It does not lie in speaking, in explaining; with words and explanations and even a certain emanation of force, you may have an influence on someone, but you do not control his movement. The control of the movement is the capacity to oppose the vibration of this movement by a stronger, truer vibration which can stop the other one... I could give you an example, you know, a very easy one. Two people are arguing in front of you; not only are they arguing, but they are on the point of coming to blows; so you explain to them that this is not the thing to do, you give them good reasons for stopping and they come to a stop. You will have had an influence on them. But if you simply stand before them and look at them and send out a vibration of peace, calm, quietude, without saying a word, without any explanation, the other vibration will no longer be able to last, it will fall away of itself. That is mastery.

The same thing applies to the cure of ignorance. If you need words to explain something, that is not true knowledge. If I have to say all that I do say for you to understand me, that is not mastery, it is simply that I am able to exercise an influence on your intelligence and help you to understand and awaken in you the desire to know and discipline yourselves, etc. But if by looking at you, without saying anything I am not able to make the light enter into you, the light which will make you understand, I won't have mastered the movement or the state of ignorance. Do you understand this?

So I can tell you with certainty that at least in this matter, if it is historically correct that Vivekananda had movements of anger which he could not control, that is, that he was carried away either in word or action, well, in this matter he was incapable of controlling those around him. He could only awaken similar vibrations in them, and so probably justify their weakness as regards this. He could say to them in so many words, "Above all, don't fly into a temper", but that is no use at all. It is the eternal "Do what I say, not what I do." But that has no effect.

*(Questions and Answers, 1956, pp. 348-353)*

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## IN THY EMBRACE

In thy sweet, calm and deep embrace  
 I spent the whole long starry night.  
 Time's tardy footsteps were not traced  
 Till dawn arose, a gold surprise.

I gazed into Thy eyes, they fused with mine,  
 Soul's silent ecstasy each atom stilled.  
 To be merged in Thee and be completely Thine,  
 Fibre and nerve with wondrous lustre filled.

O Lord of compassion, Master of all time,  
 Withdraw not ever from me Thy Grace sublime.

LALITA

# AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

RECOLLECTIONS BY SAHANA

*(Continued from the issue of October 1983)*

## Sri Aurobindo's Letters

ALL fear ought to be cast out. This movement of fear belongs to a still unchanged part of the vital which answers to the old ideas, feelings and reactions. Its only effect is to make you misinterpret the Mother's attitude or the intention in her words or looks or expression. If the Mother becomes serious or has an ironic smile, that does not in the least mean that she is angry or has withdrawn her affection, on the contrary, it is with those with whom she is most inwardly intimate that she feels most free to become like that—even to give them several chidings. They in their turn understand her and do not get afraid or upset,—they only turn to look inside themselves and see what it is on which she is putting her pressure. That pressure they regard as a privilege and a sign of Grace. Fear stands in the way of this complete intimacy and confidence and creates only misunderstanding; you must cast it out altogether.

22.5.1932

If you accept your weakness which means accepting the thing itself—some part of your nature accepts it and to that you yield—then what is the use of our telling you what to do? That part of your vital will always be able to say—"I was too weak to carry it out." The only way out of it for you is to cease to be weak, to dismiss this sentimental and sensuous part of you, to call down strength to replace its weakness and to do it with a settled and serious purpose. If we cannot get you who have had some foundation in the sadhana to overcome this element in you, how do you expect us to get X to do it who says he has no foundation but is still floating?

8.6.1932

The experience you write of in today's letter shows clearly the only way of safety against these attacks, to get back to the close and happy connection, the psychic openness to the Mother which had been so long the foundation of your sadhana and the cause of the great progress you were making.

Do not listen to the clamour of the adverse vital force which has been attacking you, its reasonings or its wrong emotional suggestions—it only wants you to fall from happiness, to suffer and to descend into a lower consciousness and lose progress.

Get back into the true spirit of love and closeness, surrender and confidence and Ananda and remain there—then in due time all problems and difficulties will solve themselves as the light and power of the Truth descend into the still weak and obscure parts of the nature.

13.6.1932

It is again the old vain imagination prompted by an uprising of the dissatisfied desires of the vital nature. The Mother had no idea of an ironical smile and there was no reason why she should show any irony. There was nothing that you had written that was wrong and there was nothing that you had done. But evidently the old wrong attitude of desire must have been waiting for its opportunity and it gave the opportunity also for the old vital to rise and indulge in its accustomed movements. It is this vital that suggested to you the ironic smile and made your mind accept it so that it might have an excuse for its movements. It is also evident that it was the pressure of the desire coming up from below that removed the Ananda. The psychic Ananda and the desire of the complaining and clamouring vital cannot go together; if desire comes up, the Ananda is obliged to draw back—unless you reject the desire in time and refuse to make any compromise with it. Especially when the Mother was giving you wideness and peace and intense Ananda, it was irrational in the extreme to give room to an external desire and sacrifice all that for its sake.

It is well that this time you did not continue to justify the demand and desire and made a movement quickly to recover. But next time it arises—if there is a next time which ought not to be,—you should throw it away at once instead of harbouring it even for a moment. It is only so that you can have a continuous and unbroken progress.

P.S. Of course your experiences were perfectly genuine—there was no exaggeration. 26.12.1932

Men are always mixed and there are qualities and defects mingled together almost inextricably in their nature. What a man wants to be or wants others to see in him or is sometimes on one side of his nature or in some relations can be very different from what he is in actual fact or in other relations or on another side of his nature. To be absolutely sincere, straightforward, open is not an easy achievement for human nature. It is only by a spiritual endeavour that one can realise it—and to do it needs a severity of introspective self-vision, an unsparing scrutiny of self-observation which many sadhaks and yogis even are not capable of and it is only by an illumining Grace that reveals the sadhak to himself and transforms what is deficient in him that it can be done. And even then only if he himself consents and lends himself wholly to the Divine working. 30.3.1933

It is likely to be fundamental and definite. But in these matters even after the liberation one has to remain vigilant—for often these things go out and remain at a far distance waiting to see if under any circumstances in any condition they can make a rush and recover their kingdom. If there has been an entire purification down to the depths and nothing is there to open the gate then they cannot do it. But it is only after one has been a long time free that one can say “Over, it is all right for ever.”

16.5.1933



Why should you decide beforehand that your birthday is spoiled? You have only to throw off all these undesirable ideas and feelings which proceed from a still imperfectly purified part of the external being and take the right attitude which you should always have when you come to the Mother. There should be no idea of what others have or have not—your relation is between the Mother and yourself and has nothing to do with others. Nothing should exist for you but yourself and the Divine—yourself receiving her force flowing to you.

To secure that, better do not spend the time at your disposal in speech—especially if anything of the depression remains with you, it will waste the time in discussing things which cannot help the true consciousness to predominate. Concentrate, open yourself and let the Mother bring you back to the psychic condition by what she will pour into you in meditation and silence. 16.5.1933

*(To be continued)*

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## ANGELUS

AND we, one day, shall be as these  
 Who move without a movement's sound—  
 Whose gentle sight but beauty sees,  
 And touch a Golden Peace surrounds.

And Love's expectant joy beholds  
 In them the coming of the King—  
 Whose sovereignty but Freedom holds  
 And rule a lasting treasure brings.

And we, one day, shall be as these  
 Whose seamless robes from Light are spun,  
 Upon whose brow a jewel reveals  
 Their Sonship with the King's begun.

PAUL BARIBAULT

# THE STORY OF A SOUL

BY HUTA

(Continued from the issue of October 1983)

## The Mother's Message

This is the  
interesting story of  
how a being discovered  
the Divine Life



(28)

ON 28th January 1957 in the morning the Mother sent me a card which illustrated a striking view of MATS USHIMA—"Pine Island". It was accompanied by these lines:

"For painting I am sending you today a nice bird that you can do on a pale green background. Here is also a book on perspective. It is not the one I spoke of,

but this one is in English (the other one is in French) and easier than the other. You may find it useful. By copying the sketches you can learn much about perspective."

I took a chair, placed the bird which was made out of bull's horn in the middle after putting a pale green cloth as background.

First I drew the bird on the canvas board. Then I rubbed it off gently so that I could see only faint lines.

I kept colours and brushes ready to commence the painting. Late in the afternoon I finished it.

The Mother saw my work in the evening in her room at the Playground. Amusement quivered in her voice as she said:

"Well, the head of the bird is nice, its eyes are living, one wing is all right, but the other is not what it should be."

And she laughed lightly.

But I knew what I had done. My bird looked as if it was standing with an elegant black skirt on!

People think painting is very easy and one can apply patches of colours here and there at random, and then the painting is done. But what the Mother was teaching me was something new and exceptional. And for that I had to struggle hard. I believed that the basic knowledge of painting was essential and that was why I had to learn so many things.

I told the Mother: "My headache still persists. I really tried to relax and open myself to your Force according to your advice. But you know what happens each time I try to do so. My head gets full of vagrant thoughts. The more I try to concentrate the more I think of other things. What to do? Many strange things have been happening to me ever since I came here."

I found her a great deal amused, but although the ready laughter sprang to her eyes she said with perfect gravity:

"Child, now I will teach you a breathing exercise to cure your headache."

Then she started giving regular beats with her right hand on her lap. There were five beats. During them she slowly breathed in, lifting the diaphragm and lowering her head, closing all orifices. She held her breath for the duration of the next five beats. After that, five beats more and she breathed out very slowly through her nostrils.

She explained that not only for a headache but also for any other pain or discomfort this exercise would be useful. While doing it, one had to make the in-drawn air circulate as if with an inner force as well as with an inner peace and concentrate

on the suffering part and direct the power of the exercise there. She added that if during the exercise one mentally repeated a Mantra—say, “OM”—the exercise would become more effective. It might be repeated according to one’s need, and the number of beats could also be gradually increased as convenient.

Then the Mother asked me to do the exercise in front of her. I did so, though not as accurately as she had done.

After receiving various flowers and a kiss on my forehead I took my leave.

At night I practised the exercise with the repetition of the Mantra “OM”. But unhappily, my mind was taken up with countless thoughts which I had tried to suppress. And I was not patient with the exercise. I wanted an instant result which was unreachable!

Eventually I gave up every effort and inwardly prayed to the Mother that if she wished to cure me, she would do so despite my lack of receptivity.

Nevertheless, I was highly interested in the Mantra “OM.” Sri Aurobindo has written in the Cent. Ed., Vol. 23, pp. 745-6:

“OM is the mantra, the expressive sound-symbol of the Brahman Consciousness in its four domains from the Turiya to the external or material plane. The function of a mantra is to create vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realisation of what the mantra symbolises and is supposed indeed to carry within itself. The mantra OM should therefore lead towards the opening of the consciousness to the sight and feeling of the One Consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the causal plane above now superconscious to us and, finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence. The last is usually the main preoccupation with those who use the mantra.

In this yoga there is no fixed mantra, no stress is laid on mantras, although sadhaks can use one if they find it helpful or so long as they find it helpful. The stress is rather on an aspiration in the consciousness and a concentration of the mind, heart, will, all the being. If a mantra is found helpful for that, one uses it. OM if rightly used (not mechanically) might very well help the opening upwards (cosmic consciousness) as well as the descent.”

Swami Satchidananda has said about the Mantra OM with an imaginative insight into the psychological atmosphere:

“In the Himalayas, you often hear OM chanting. Everything chants OM in the Himalayas. The river says OM. Even the jungle animals roar OM. You can hear the OM sound everywhere. It vibrates every cell of your body. It creates a special rhythm in your system and you are sent into an ecstatic mood.”

Sri Aurobindo has given a translation from the Sanskrit in Cent. Ed., Vol. 12, p. 289:

“OM is the imperishable Word, OM is the Universe, and this is the exposition of OM. The past, the present and the future, all that was, all that is, all that will be, is OM. Likewise all else that may exist beyond the bounds of Time, that too is OM.”

*Mandukya Upanishad*

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Early in the morning Champaklal—one of the Mother’s attendants—brought a card from her along with a bouquet of white roses. She had written on it:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,

Here are nice flowers and sweet birds—the picture comes from France.

My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are constantly with you to help and guide you.”

Sometimes I went to the Balcony Darshan of the Mother and sometimes I could not make it because of my late waking.

After my bath, puja and breakfast, once again I started to paint the bird which the Mother had sent me a few days before.

This time I painted the bird from another angle. The Mother liked the result.

Previously she had recommended two books which she had said were very useful for artists. Now she brought a piece of paper on which she had written the names of the books. They were as follows:

1. Fitz Schider, An Atlas of Anatomy for Artists (Second American Edition), Dover Publications, INC copyright 1954. 920 Broadway, New York 10, N.Y., U.S.A.
2. An Atlas of Animal Anatomy for Artists by Ellenberger, Baum and Dietrich.

Later I got these books through my people. I appreciated their help in the Mother’s work.

Once again the Mother and I did together the breathing exercise. Then we had a quiet meditation. She gave me many flowers—all colours, shapes and fragrances. I returned to Golconde. I used to take a painting in a cardboard box. For, it was wet and I did not want the Mother’s fingers to get stained. So in one hand the box and in the other the flowers and the object I had painted: that is how I went. God alone knew what the people thought who were waiting near the Mother’s room for their interviews.

It was a distribution day. The Mother gave toffees to people. As usual during the distribution the music of the great composers played on soothingly.

Previously the Mother used to send cards through either Pavitra or Nolinida or Amrita or Dyuman. But now Champaklal brought them.

The Mother sent me a pretty card together with these words:

“Here is a Japanese picture painted on a very thin sheet of bamboo.

I am sending you also the pink dahlia for painting.

My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are constantly with you.”

Since she did not mention the background I painted the flower on a white background.

When the Mother saw the painting in the evening her eyes lit up with admiration. She said:

“You are progressing steadily. It is good.

The Consciousness and Force are there. They need the proper instrument through which they can act.

If the instrument is not receptive and good, then they cannot possibly express themselves.

For example, a great musician has a piano but owing to the bad notes he cannot possibly play on it in spite of his wonderful talent.

Similarly the Divine Force, the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Grace cannot work if the instruments are not proper.”

While I was still with the Mother, she suddenly started hiccupping. She laughed softly and said:

“You see, I will stop it just now by the breathing exercise.”

It really stopped! This was incredible! Then she asked me to do the exercise. I did so. She was watching and nodding her head. Afterwards she took my hands into hers and concentrated for a while and then gave me flowers. I went to Golconde and did not go again to the Playground. For, there would be the French class in the courtyard of the Playground. There the children and adults used to put questions to the Mother and she answered.

It was the last day of January 1957. In the morning as usual I received a card from the Mother, displaying a ship sailing on the sea, four sea-gulls hovering over it. She had written on the card:

“Here are some nice birds sent by the Divine Grace to bring the message of love and blessings, and assurances of success in your enterprises both artistic and spiritual.”

I was moved by her promising words and silently thanked her from my heart.

Sri Aurobindo has written in *Art: Revelation of Beauty*:

“It is in the service of spirituality that Art reaches its highest self-expression.”

In the evening the Mother saw me in her room at the Playground. The weather was considerably better. In the Playground many children were doing their gymnastics quietly without making any noise. I got the feeling how wonderfully every one grew under the Wings of the Divine Consciousness!

The Mother and I meditated for a few minutes. Then she told me that she would send me a vase for painting.

After that we went to the French class. There I did nothing except practise perspective. Still I could not restrain drawing peoples' faces which came out as caricatures.

Whenever the Mother's gaze met mine we both smiled at each other.

After the class I went to collect the flowers given by her. When I was about to step out of her room, the Mother was entering it. She led me back inside, put an arm gently round me as she picked flowers from the tray and gave them to me. She had the habit that first she smelt a flower then she made me smell and once again she smelt approvingly. She kissed my cheek and said, “Au revoir.”

That very night once again I read the card which the Mother had sent me in the morning. Tears of gratitude rolled down my cheeks.

The Divine Grace is limitless. Indeed what Sri Aurobindo has written in his Cent. Ed., Vol. 23, p. 610 is unforgettable:

“It is not indispensable that the Grace should work in a way that the human mind can understand, it generally doesn't. It works in its own 'mysterious' way. At first usually it works behind the veil, preparing things, not manifesting. Afterwards it may manifest, but the sadhak does not understand very well what is happening; finally, when he is capable of it, he both feels and understands or at least begins to do so. Some feel and understand from the first or very early; but that is not the ordinary case.”

The Mother has written in her Collected Works, Vol. 14, p. 101:

“The Grace is something that pushes you towards the goal to be attained. Do not try to judge it by your mind, you will not get anywhere, because it is something formidable which is not explained through human words or feelings. When the Grace acts, the result may or may not be pleasant—it takes no account of any human value, it may even be a catastrophe from the ordinary and superficial point of view. But it is always the best for the individual. It is a blow that the Divine sends so that progress may be made by leaps and bounds. The Grace is that which makes you march swiftly towards the realisation.”

It was a fine morning of the new month—1st February 1957. A lovely card came from the Mother together with these lines:

“Bonjour to my dear little child, to my sweet Huta,

I am sending you the vase of which I spoke yesterday. On a white background it will look very nice.

Enclosed the money for February.

My love and blessings and Presence of the Divine Grace are constantly with you.”

It was a Japanese vase with black stripes on it. I painted it with great difficulty because of my persistent headache.

The Mother saw the painting in the evening. She said:

“You must not draw stripes just straight. Observe very carefully. You see, the strokes must be given in curves in order to show the roundness of the vase. Otherwise it will not take a proper shape and the true effect.”

Then she did sketches of the vase in front of me and showed how to bring out the roundness of it.

The Mother was extremely precise in making me understand the details of each object till I grasped the technique.

The morning that followed, the Mother sent me a card depicting the flower Balsam. Underneath she had written “Generosity.” She continued on the same card:

“I am so sorry that still this nasty headache is coming back and back to you, but one day *surely* we shall find a way to prevent it from coming. Meanwhile do not lose courage and remain as quiet as you can.

My love and blessings and the Presence of the Divine Grace are always with you.”

In the evening the Mother received me warmly. She inquired about my health. She concentrated a little and then massaged my forehead. Her tender and magical touch soothed me. She said sympathetically:

“Old habits come over and over again. But by practice they can be avoided and gradually they can be stopped.

“You become miserable because you are dissatisfied and often you open the doors of your heart to welcome the adverse force. Then naturally you can get nothing except suffering. Sri Aurobindo says that in people there is a being which is very much attached to suffering. So it is understood that people themselves are the cause of these things. The Divine is not at all responsible.”



This reminds me of a few verses of *Savitri*, Bk. 6, C. 2, p. 454:

“O mortal who complainst of death and fate,  
Accuse none of the harms thyself hast called;  
This troubled world thou hast chosen for thy home,  
Thou art thyself the author of thy pain.”

That night I kept awake till a late hour. I had been thinking and thinking endlessly to find a way out but could not succeed. I felt like a mouse in a barrel! Nevertheless, I determined to be always frank with the Mother. For, it was she alone who could cure me of all the illnesses both physical and psychological.

The next morning a card came from her, showing the flowers Pansies. Below them she had written:

“Thoughts turned towards the Divine—a certitude of beauty.”

On the same card she had inscribed:

“Nothing can discourage the Divine in its all-compassionate Mercy.  
“My blessings and love and the Presence of the Divine Grace are always with you.”

Obstacle after obstacle came and blurred my consciousness. The hostile forces took full advantage of the strife between my inner and outer beings. All this made me very sick.

In the evening I did not go to the Mother, because I was too much perturbed. The inferior forces wanted me to stop painting, because they knew that this very thing would lead me to my goal. So they constantly attacked my body one way or another. I was so blind that at that time I could not possibly think straight. For I felt as if I had been tortured by incongenial occupations.

It was difficult for me to eat properly and sleep peacefully.

The morning that succeeded, the Mother sent me a pretty card accompanied by these words:

“My love is with you, working to free you from all evil, and to bring to you health, strength, peace and joy; my blessings are with you, the Presence of the Divine Grace is with you always.”

Everything seemed to me so devious and inscrutable. Just to forget the pain and sorrow, I tried to alter the Japanese vase with black stripes.

The evening approached. At last I abandoned my unproductive thoughts, washed my face, changed my dress, took the painting and went to see the Mother in her room at the Playground.

She looked at me compassionately. She soothed me gently, stroking my brow, I felt tears smarting in my eyes. I could not say anything. For, she knew everything. I opened the box and showed her the altered painting. She liked it and said:

“Tomorrow I will send you a crystal basket to paint.”

Then she gave me flowers and kissed me on my forehead.

I could not attend the French class. I went to Golconde, to the sanctuary of my room and shed a few silent tears. I skipped my dinner and sat in my arm-chair unprepared for the sudden feeling of dismay that overtook me, and tears streamed down my cheeks. I felt so lonely and lost. I remembered my own people who were very far from me.

Eventually I fell asleep and had dire dreams full of looming menace.

The next morning I received from the Mother a card illustrating the flower Zinnia—“Endurance. Going to the very end of the effort without fatigue or relaxing.”

She had written on the card:

“I am sending you the crystal basket of which I spoke.

“À tout à l’heure. I am going down for blessings at 10 o’clock.

“My love and blessings and the constant Presence of the Divine Grace never leave you.”

I went to the Meditation Hall downstairs in the Ashram and saw the Mother in her high-backed chair, looking magnificent in her coloured sari and the glittering crown. The decoration around the chair added to the glory of the day.

The Message, with a translation by Sri Aurobindo from the Rigveda, was:

“Saraswati brings into active consciousness in the human being the great flood or great movements, the Truth-Consciousness itself, and illumines with it all our thoughts.

*May purifying Saraswati with all the plenitude of her forms of plenty, rich in substance by the thought, desire our sacrifice.”*

I painted the crystal basket. The Mother viewed it in the evening and said:

“Paint a few lines paler in order to give the effect of the glass.”

Then she went into a profound meditation. When she awoke, I saw her eyes lustrous with a dreamy tenderness. She spoke serenely:

“I want you to do something new. You must try to do the *Future Painting* in the New Light.

“There is a reason why I always ask you to paint mostly on a white background. It is an attempt to express the Divine Light without shadow in the *Future Painting*. But everything will come in its own time.

“In the *Future Painting*, you must not copy blindly the outer appearance without the inner vision. *Never* insert peoples’ ideas into your mind and their advice too regarding the *Future Painting*. Do not try to adopt the technique either of modern art or of old classical art. But *always* try to express the true inner vision of your soul and its deep impression behind everything to bring out the Eternal Truth and to express the glory of the Higher Worlds.

“Truth is behind everything. For, the Divine dwells in flowers, trees, animals, birds, rivers as well as human beings—in fact, in every creation of Nature.

“You must have the psychic touch to see and feel the vibrations, the sensations and the essence of the Truth in everything and that Truth is to be expressed in the *Future Painting*.

“To paint perfectly well is not an easy thing. It certainly takes time. But by the growth of consciousness you can have inspirations, intense vision, delicacy of colours, harmony and subtlety of true beauty. Then you can surely express wonderful things in painting, otherwise painting will be a lifeless confusion.

“The growth of consciousness is essential for doing marvellous paintings.”

I was simply dumbfounded to hear her statement about the Future Art. I told the Mother: “Without seeing the Divine Light how can I paint it?” She laughed softly and said:

“Child, it will come.”

On my way to Golconde I was thinking that light without shadow was equal to light without obscurity. It was the vibrations of pure light which could give life and colour to every scene in painting.

The Mother has stated beautifully in the booklet *Art: Revelation of Beauty*, p. 13:

“If you want art to be the true and highest art, it must be the expression of a Divine World brought down into this material world.”

Dwelling of the Divine in everything reminds me of Sri Aurobindo’s translation of the lines in *Taittiriya Upanishad* I. 10, Cent. Ed., Vol. 12, p. 324:

“I am He that moves the Tree of the Universe and my glory is like sweet nectar in the strong, I am the shining riches of the world, I am the deep thinker, the deathless One who decays not from the beginning.”

It was late at night. I was still brooding over all that the Mother had told me in the evening. Now it was more apparent that I had to learn numerous things from various angles in painting in order to step into the unknown domain of the secret and higher worlds where I could release lavishly, freely, my imaginations, reveries and inspirations to express exactly what the Mother wished me to. But now all seemed vague and uncertain.

The play of colour, the subtle infusion of light, the transcendent spontaneity, the magical changes of Nature, realism and visions were all I had to put on canvas boards with vibrant strokes of brushes.

I was perfectly aware that it was not going to be easy, but life now beckoned me along strange paths which I must follow. There was no turning back since I had committed myself to the spiritual life.

*(To be continued)*

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# THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THE INDIAN SPIRIT

(Continued from the issue of October 1983)

From Kathleen Raine

I HAVE begun taking Sri Aurobindo's Isha Upanishad a few pages at a time. It is very impressive and revealing.

I was most interested in all you had to say in your letter both about the Upanishads, and about the movement in India towards writing in English. What you write about the *actual words* of the Upanishads, "the quality and rhythm of the individual words, and the ensemble at once massive and intense of revelatory significance which the words make by conveying the inner vibration, the life-thrill of the spiritual state expressed" is I am sure true. I have heard Arabinda Basu recite passages in Sanskrit, and I recognise—just faintly—that resonance which seems to fill everything and yet to be infinitely remote. Yes, sacred words indeed. Luminous words, from the "overhead planes". That sense of a deep mystery of which words are only an indication, but of which they are at the same time a part, has been almost lost in the West. I read lately a book on a Sufi saint (Ahmad al-'alwai) that describes the Sufi mysticism of names and even of letters. It is clearly something we have lost.

Your illustration of the resonance of Vedantic utterance from Wordsworth gave me great delight. Surely that is the very quality in him that is great, and I am glad you find in Wordsworth something of the Indian soul. You ought to publish something on Wordsworth on the lines of your most revealing letter. Believe me I love him enough to value what you have written.

I agree with you that the Aurobindo translation you quote does convey more of the sense of marvel than the Yeats, especially the second sentence. But the archaisms in the first sentence, "shines not", "flash not", and "shineth" are not really possible in modern English, and are "poetic" in a bad sense.

Now as to my point about feeling that Indians write English as a foreign language. You write of the superb correspondence of Sanskrit words to meanings that are not so much defined by them as made resonant in them. In the case of Sanskrit their precision is perhaps (I speak in ignorance) greatest in the metaphysical level, least in the natural. Now the English language is just the opposite; its beauty lies in its ability to convey the very nature of England, its woods and flowers and weather and animals and people with their peculiarly English attitudes. Take away this "local habitation and a name" and what is "the crow makes wing to the rooky wood" or "a violet by a mossy stone Half hidden from the eye, Fair as a star when only one Is shining in the sky", that conveys the precise cold spring twilight of the *north* of England? You may use English abstract terms, or such international and empty words as 'telegraph-operator' or 'bulldozer', but is that English? Yes, I mean exactly what

Middleton Murry says, that Indian poets writing in English employ the words for uses they were never born for, since words cannot be separated from the particular group-soul, grown on a certain kind of earth, under certain skies, and conversing for centuries upon certain themes (Catholic Christianity up to the Renaissance, and other mentalities since then) with people of a certain shared kind and quality, class or caste. A world-language would be no language at all—at least to poets it would be no language at all. I have often day-dreamed of learning Gaelic in order to have a language more limited than modern English, now spread so very thin and shallow all over the world.

Oddly enough I have talked of this with Herbert Read, who expressed a view quite opposite to the one you quote. He said poetry is of all things the most localised speech.

But if the impulse in India to write poetry in English is really so strong, I suppose that in time a sort of “silver” English might be produced, comparable to Latin as a world-language. Even so, the world conditions are different; the Church needed hymns in a language understood in all countries; but nowadays it is the scientists and the imperialists and the press-mongers who want a world-language, and the advertisers of industrial products, and the power-seekers, and in a word the destroyers. Well, there it is. I see very little hope for the future of English poetry in any country, truth to say; and how much longer will the world itself last?

However, while we are here we must do our best.

Did I send you my *Collected Poems*? If not, please tell me and I will do so.

(1.11.1961)

### From K. D. Sethna

Do send me your *Collected Poems*. I have read a bit of your poetry here and there, but I should like to have all of your work with me so that I may gather the full sense of your reading of life's beauty and terror both within and without, your soul's probing of

This world you with the flower and the tiger share.

Your letter shows that at the moment you are very much aware of the tiger—even outside Blake's poem. For you speak of “the destroyers” who are our masters today, and you ask: “How much longer will this world itself last?” But do you know why there is everywhere the feeling of the world's end? If I may speak as an aspirant of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Yoga of the Supermind, this feeling is not merely because of the threat of nuclear war. That threat has not created this feeling but only sharpened it to a sort of objective sensation. Really the feeling has been there for quite a time, born of subjective factors: it is due to an inner perception, vague and vast, that Man the Mind is played out. This perception reflects an evolutionary turning-point that is now upon us. If the earlier stages of evolution could have res-

ponded, with anything like our own self-consciousness, to the previous crises of God's unfoldment on earth, the same *angst* as ours would have been there when Life was first about to break from Matter, and Mind from Life: the dust would have trembled with a sudden fear of dissolution of its inertia, the living cells would have been shot with a painful apprehension of deadly danger to their blind desire. But if they could have known that a greater birth was preparing in their depths in answer to a pressure from the hidden heights of being, they would have realised that however intense their anxiety, their anguish, they really were not going to be destroyed but transformed. Man today is in such dire travail because Superman is being born: only, he does not see what has descended from above to help the Divine Wonder break forth from below: hence the feeling of a return of chaos and old night.

Not that diabolical forces are absent, not that actual darkness is a mere illusion. There are always anti-evolutionary agencies eager to make the turning-points spell death instead of new birth. But they fall into their true proportions when viewed against the luminous Powers that are the ultimate lords of destiny. Europe does not see that the nuclear age is also the age of Sri Aurobindo and that human history seems at an end because it has served its full purpose and must give place to a golden tale on earth of the more-than-human. It is finished in both senses of the term: it has no further hope or meaning because it has reached its fulfilment and is no longer necessary. Even the presence of the atomic horror is but an inverted reflection of the Omnipotent's secret arrival. A German historian of atomic developments—I forget his name—has entitled his book: *Brighter than Ten Thousand Suns*: the title is a genuine flash of inspiration, for it comes to fit the nuclear conflagration from the Gita's phrase about the Supreme Reality that is the Inner Cosmos. The Transcendent Light has manifested with Sri Aurobindo, imprinting the Superman in earth's subtle spaces, and this Splendour of eternal life is imaged ignorantly in the Hydrogen Bomb Explosion which the adversary powers are threatening to make an instrument of eternal death.

I, small and insignificant in myself but blessed with the rare good fortune of having known Sri Aurobindo and the Mother intimately for years, make bold to assure you that all shall be well with the world these two have made their home and that in spite of the menacing destroyers you may gaze tranquilly into the future, for the future will never be theirs. I do not prophesy that everything will be smooth and safe in a short while. The time of a turning-point in evolution is never a comfortable one, to say the least; but—also to put it mildly—a turning-point, that leads the Supermind in, cannot result in the "tiger" preventing the "flowers" from sharing "this world" in which you find yourself.

Now to our literary problem. I am glad you agree with me about the Sri Aurobindo translation of the Upanishads as compared to the Yeats. But I am surprised at your remarks: "The archaisms in the first sentence, 'shines not', 'flash not' and 'shineth' are not really possible in modern English and are 'poetic' in a bad sense." Of course I am aware—and most certainly was Sri Aurobindo also aware—that archaisms

are to be avoided. But that is a rule for general practice and cannot apply to special occasions. If in the last part of my letter you look at what Yeats has made of Tagore you will observe that he has introduced archaisms galore of which I myself have expressed disapproval: "embraceth", "cometh" (twice), "spreadeth", "reigneth" and the absolutely gratuitous "o'er". Whether Yeats has used his archaisms well or ill, the fact that he thought fit to scatter them with a free hand proves that in his opinion they could be appropriate even today to a mood and manner like the *Gitanjali's*. How then could you criticise a rare occurrence of them in a translation of the ancient hieratic Upanishads? At least at certain places they are bound to be congruous. Our judgment should depend on where and how and why they come in. We may note that Sri Aurobindo has not suddenly obtruded an archaism in "shineth": it has been prepared by "shines not" and "flash not". Besides, it is surely not put in for its own sake: there is a definite rhythmical necessity. The phrase "and by His shining all this shineth" has a run of sibilants where a further final s would be a distinct cacophony. As for "shines not" and "flash not", I feel they are demanded by the compact intensity of the revelatory movement. Wouldn't we have a thinning of the atmosphere of seerhood if one wrote: "There the sun does not shine" or "There these lightnings do not flash"? Sri Aurobindo's rendering is not positive prose, either: it is prose-poetry and its needs are different. Moreover, as far as I know, such expressions are still a natural part of poetry. Why do you say they are "poetic" in a bad sense? Walter de la Mare employs them as well as the "eth"-end:

Speak not—whisper not—  
Here bloweth thyme and bergamot.

Edith Sitwell,<sup>1</sup> who in one place writes—

And the Sun does not care if I live in holiness—

writes also in another:

For the Sun cares not that I am a simple woman.

C. Day Lewis<sup>2</sup> gives us:

Others may reap, though some  
See not the winter through,

and again:

<sup>1</sup> *An Old Woman.*

<sup>2</sup> *Tempt Me No More.*



Though song, though breath be short,  
 I'll share not the disgrace  
 Of those that ran away  
 Or never left the base.

You will mark that the archaisms are not only in the imperative mood where they may be thought to come more naturally: they are also in the indicative, and there they go indiscriminately with the first person or the third, the singular number or the plural. They occur even when the subject is much more commonplace and the speech far lower in intensity than in the Aurobindonian Mantra about the Transcendent Divine.

It strikes me that you tend at times—rare times—to be somewhat rigid in your attitudes, not plastic enough to the diversity of fact or possibility. The position you take up about English poetry and Indian writers is once more too partial, too doctrinaire. Please forgive the rashness of a non-Englishman trying to set right an Englishwoman of genius pronouncing on her own tongue; but I can't help feeling you are so steeped in distinctive Englishness that you read it even where it is not there except in the most superficial sense. Thus all poetry written by Englishmen seems to you distinctively English just because it was written in England and in the tongue with which you have associated your own distinctive Englishness. But actually what you take to be the *differentia* of the group-soul that has formed in England does not tinge the whole of English poetry: it affects only a portion of it. The portion affected is perhaps a domain exclusive to English writers, but a far greater mass of expression is not typically English, separated from all other countries by the special psychological interchanges among Englishmen for centuries within a definite area of persistent scenery and climate. Outside a small stretch of their work English poets are not Englishmen packed with the sense of England but human beings and terrestrial watchers.

Much of the Englishness you speak of is merely a matter of certain national interests, historical habits, popular stock-responses, subtle temperamental "slants", sensitive mirror-moods. Fine examples of sensitive mirror-moods are the lines to which you have referred: Shakespeare's

Light thickens and the crow  
 Makes wing to the rooky wood,

and Wordsworth's

A violet by a mossy stone,  
 Half hidden from the eye!  
 — Fair as a star, when only one  
 Is shining in the sky.

Such lines breathe the atmosphere of English hours and seasons and occasions. The words catch with imaginative fidelity what is local and typical. But would you claim that English poetry cannot with equal effect mood-mirror what is exotic or what is universal? Can you point to anything locally and typically English about Shakespeare's

There's husbandry in heaven;  
Their candles are all out,

or

my way of life  
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf,

or—still to draw upon *Macbeth* from which your own quotation came—

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

And just as Wordsworth's English can convey "the precise cold spring twilight of the north of England" it can communicate the scenic posture of the Simplon Pass which has nothing to do with any part of the British Isles:

The immeasurable height  
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,  
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
And in the narrow rent, at every turn,  
Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
The rocks that muttered close upon the ears,  
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside  
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
And giddy prospect of the ravening stream,  
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens....

Here is superb poetry plucked from the heart of the thing described. I find no sign in it of all that you consider intrinsically bound up with the English language—"the very nature of England, its woods and flowers and weather and animals and people with their peculiarly English attitudes." Of course, the passage has no description of animals or people, but if they had been there they would have had no more Englishness about them than the inanimate objects. As for the general attitude towards whose articulation the lines mount up, we may easily note that it is as far as possible from being peculiarly English, for the verses after those quoted run:

Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—  
Were all like workings of one mind, the features

Of the same face, blossoms upon the tree,  
 Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
 The types and symbols of Eternity,  
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

This is the characteristic Wordsworthian speech that brought a new note into English poetry. I have already dwelt on its essential Indianness, its fundamentally Vedantic vision, and you have been kind enough to comment: "Your illustration of the resonance of Vedantic utterance from Wordsworth gave me great delight. Surely that is the very quality in him that is great, and I am glad you find in Wordsworth something of the Indian soul. You ought to publish something on Wordsworth on the lines of your most revealing letter. Believe me I love him enough to value what you have written." I may add that even when Wordsworth is not markedly Vedantic his attitude does not always express a recognisable English mind. If the lines about the violet by a mossy stone are of the English soil, it is with all earth's little growths and in the depths of the wide world's dreaming heart that the end of the Immortality Ode is rooted:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

And if the solitary star to which the fair Lucy is compared shines in the dusk of a northern English sky it is from every place on our globe at nightfall that we can find in the heavens Wordsworth's simile for Milton's sublimity of soul:

Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart...

Evidently there are two kinds of English poetry—that which is charged with the sense of England and that which is independent of the country. Your letter says: "You write of the superb correspondence of Sanskrit words to meanings that are not so much defined by them as made resonant in them. In the case of Sanskrit their precision is perhaps (I speak in ignorance) greatest in the metaphysical level, least in the natural. Now the English language is just the opposite; its beauty lies in its ability to convey the very nature of England...." Aren't you overlooking the second kind of English poetry that I have illustrated—the second kind that has two varieties, one filling with a foreign air, the other belonging to the universal mind in this or that aspect? In Wordsworth, I may say, both the English countryside and foreign scenery get repeatedly washed in the Upanishadic light. And the universal mind too is strongest in its Indian aspect in which this mind is itself its own object of knowledge or enjoyment by an in-drawing of the consciousness to a sealed spirit-slumber or an open-eyed soul-wakefulness, enabling one to "see into the life of things". Wordsworth's poetry not only exceeds, as all great poets' work does, the group-soul: it also

reveals how near England and India can be in the inspired sight and sound of English verse.

What then am I to make of your statement: "Yes, I mean exactly what Middleton Murry says, that Indian poets writing in English employ the words for uses they were never born for; since words cannot be separated from the particular group-soul, grown on a certain kind of earth, under certain skies, and conversing for centuries upon certain themes (Catholic Christianity up to the Renaissance, and other mentalities since then) with people of a certain shared kind and quality, class or caste"? Surely English words were never "born" for such Vedantic uses as Wordsworth has put them to? This should show that Middleton Murry's dictum is unacceptable as it stands. The fact is that the words of a language are never born once for all with an aptness to just one type of outlook and attitude, character and temperament. The mentality of a group is itself an evolving phenomenon and words are constantly getting reborn. Their rebirth is not confined to the group's development, either; they take on new uses in the midst of novel patterns of experience under the "plastic press" of many an original individuality. And particularly is this true of English words, for the English group-soul itself is of a most diversified oneness. Thus there is such a heterogeneity in it that there is no persistent tradition of literary expression, of style. Style in English is a thousand different things; the personal element is rampant. English literature is not so much a nation speaking in a single recognisable voice as a crowd of men commingling their idiosyncratic accents. And some of these individuals are so uncommon that at first sight they hardly seem English in their expression, and yet they stand as genuine creators of English literature. Spenser was acknowledged to be a great English poet in his own day: his instrument, however, was so variegated and multi-turned with the obsolete, the rare, the coined, the foreign that he was accused by Ben Jonson of writing no language by writing too many. Milton is the supreme name in English poetry after Shakespeare, but the English language is said to have sunk under him. The English of Thomas Browne is a splendid freak. Carlyle's English, no less admirable, teems with Germanisms; and we may legitimately speak, though still with admiration, of Meredithese in prose and Hopkinsese in verse; and the glorious Henry James with his complicated qualifications and figurative proliferations builds his sentences as no other Englishman has ever dreamt of doing. Mind you, all of them are writing "naturally", not setting about their business with a theoretician's mania like Joyce.

One may suggest that English words were born anew and born different with each of these creative eccentrics. Nor is the reorientation to be defined in purely stylistic terms. It is a mental change of colour that is mostly at work. The whole history of English literature is marked with such changes. To speak of English words as being English-minded in one clear seizable way—especially to speak of them thus in the realm of poetry—appears to miss their actual life-process. Has the English Muse one definite basic psychology? When the Romantic Movement caught English poets, did not all the hoary-headed classicists find the result un-English in

temper as well as style? How bewildered was even Matthew Arnold by the un-English ethereality that ran riot in Shelley! And what about the pre-Romantic who called himself "English Blake"? Are his "embryo ideas" and "unevolved images" and "vague mystic grandeurs"—to quote Housman's well-known phrases—English in the Murryesque sense? To hark back to Wordsworth: is it English of him to poetise the exaltations of pantheism? Can we dub the exotic fantasy and kaleidoscopic symbolism of *Kubla Khan* typically English? Is the early Yeats English—Yeats of the dim poignancies and the rich obscurities? Nobody can affirm that the average Englishman has the foggiest notion of what AE is singing about; yet many of AE's poems have been praised by discerning critics like Earnest Boyd and Monk Gibbon—they are a living language, English written by an Irishman with the soul of an Indian. Can we or can we not stamp as English the Bible's poetic passages with their lavish oriental imagination, their gorgeous Hebraic religiosity? The English language is the most composite in the world—influences Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Danish, French, Italian, Greek, Latin and Hebraic have gone into its making as well as its mind. It has a capacity to assimilate everything, it can take any hue of thought, shade of suggestion, glow of feeling, pattern of experience and turn them into truly English effects—that is, effects achieved with perfect adequacy by English words. What has happened in the past can happen again. If a notable command of the English language and a thorough knowledge of English poetical technique could be at the disposal of Indian inspiration, I see no reason why memorable English poetry should fail to be produced. Still less is failure to be expected when already the Indian spirit has started moulding the words through English poets themselves.

"There ain't no sich person" as English poetry with one simple and uniform body and soul!

I believe Herbert Read is mistaken if he holds, in any seriously restrictive sense, the opinion you quote from him, that poetry is of all things the most localised speech. Were he dead right, it would be impossible for any man even to appreciate, leave aside compose, poetry in a foreign tongue—much more if that tongue belonged to antiquity. Gilbert Murray and C. M. Bowra would be Greek scholars to little purpose. They would be eternally shut off from the art of Homer and Sophocles not only because they were not born of Greek fathers and mothers but also because the Greek of Homer and Sophocles stopped being spoken centuries ago and is attached to no existing locality which a Hellenophile might adopt in the hope of being Hellenised. And what about Arberry with regard to Arabic and Persian, or Waley with regard to Chinese? I am sure a sensitive mind can get past all localities and penetrate any group-soul in at least its wide and deep human aspects. After all, a group-soul is not something dissociated from the world-soul out of which all group-souls emerge and in which all are one; nor is it so unique as not to share many a movement of sensation and reverie and speculation with the souls of other groups. Besides, individuals are at the same time part of a group-soul and entities on their own with a power to reshape the trend of the group to which they belong, a power also to overleap that

group and vibrate in natural affinity with another or else hold together in one heart the life-rhythms of more than a single group. A speech is never so localised as to be hermetically sealed from the polymorphous potentialities of the individual mind anywhere on earth. And this for the simple reason, among many, that literary creation from whatever place breaks loose from its historico-geographical context and becomes a world in itself in which everything has been subtilised to imaginative values: a direct approach to it, independent of physical barriers and racial differences, is open to anyone's sympathetic and artistic imagination. Even your "violet by a mossy stone" gets transplanted to a new soil common to all humanity's "inward eye" and, provided one knows the denotation of each of the three terms in the phrase, their combination can quicken sufficiently for the imaginative foreigner if he is not "duller"

than the fat weed  
That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf—

the weed that belongs to nobody's actual world and yet can spring into life for whoever is not dead to poetry. Similarly, the star sole-shining over Wordsworth's "untrodden ways/Beside the springs of Dove" can strike home in its purely poetic setting to the non-Englishman who is capable of reflecting and enjoying even a glimpse from nowhere like Keats's

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale  
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
Far from the fiery noon and eve's one star...

I may not be able to visit England again in a maturer state than when I did for three months at the age of six, much less be able to get domiciled there; I certainly cannot wangle an English parentage for myself! But I have lived so intensely in the floating and world-voyaging England that is English literature, shared so vividly the exultations and agonies of all its creative geniuses and known so intimately even the slightest genuine quiver and glimmer of the expressive urge in most poets from Langland to Vernon Watkins, that I have hardly ever met a cultured Englishman with whom I could not discuss on equal terms the niceties of substance and form in English prose or verse. I am sure there are many non-Englishmen who have known with a keen inwardness the language and literature of your country. Else how could a writer, some time back, in the *John O'London's Weekly*<sup>1</sup> say: "It is a curious fact that the best short history of the English language is written by a Dane, Dr. Otto Jespersen. It is still more curious that the most popular short history of English Literature is also of foreign authorship—in this case by the Frenchmen Cazamian and Legouis"? And I have noted Harold Acton, in an issue last year of the *London Magazine*,<sup>2</sup> calling Professor Mario Praz "the author of some of the most illuminating

<sup>1</sup> 28th August, 1960, p. 490, col. 1.

<sup>2</sup> May 1960, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 70.

criticism of our literature produced by a foreign scholar (*Poeti inglesi dell Otto Cento, Storia della letteratura inglese, Secentismo e marinismo in Inghilterra*, to which Mr. Eliot has paid tribute)." Well, if one could get into the very heart of a foreign work and appreciate its organic art no less than its intellectual content, the possibility is bound to arise that one may kindle up with that heart as from within oneself and start creating—the foreign tongue shooting forth from one's own fire. Should Herbert Read, by considering poetry the most localised speech, wish to be prohibitive and exclusive of the likes of me who venture to use English for creative ends, he would have to impute to us an inability to take even the first step which might, not unnaturally, lead us to be ourselves genuinely poetic. In other words, he would have to deny us any real appreciation of style and technique and artistic shape and verbal felicity and rhythmic suggestion in English: he would have to declare for ever beyond us the feel of the many-motined fiery-blooded flesh of English poetry, the form that answers to the true voice of feeling, and concede us only the pleasure of licking the bare bones of thought abstracted from what must be for us the mere dead weight of the body's beauty. Is he prepared to go to such an extreme?

Perhaps he will have to go to another extreme also. To poetise his own speech to the utmost, he should completely localise it with the Yorkshire dialect instead of taking the creative edge off it with the standard idiom of South-eastern England. The blurred ground-bass of the Yorkshire articulation may make more appealing music, but I am sure he will not be sired away by it from the less fascinating sound of the English which provides him with a greater range of intellectual gesture and which all his compatriots can follow with ease.

The sole legitimate sense in which I can think of poetry as the most localised speech is that in order to be a poet one should follow those turns of imaginative and emotional language which would be most natural to the life led in a certain place, for then this language would be at its most direct, at its keenest. But the piece of art should be, as far as possible, a self-contained fact, and the phrases should function to the full without leaning on any acquaintance in the reader with local psychology or scenery or linguistics. A reader acquainted with these things will get an extra tang out of the poem, but will it be of something intrinsic to the poem's art? And would not even its relevance in any way depend on whether the imaginative and emotional speech-turns natural to the place-life were concerned with that life itself rather than with broader visions and issues? To my mind the truer definition would be not that poetry is the most localised speech but that it is the speech most individualised and particularised in the midst of its appeal to the world-soul.

Herbert Read is a writer I have immensely admired, for his style as well as for his insight and his nobility of mind. One little book of his has become a special companion to me: *A Coat of Many Colours. The Meaning of Art* is also a valued possession. And I have crystallised many points for myself from his *English Prose Style*. But I am sorry that at one place in it he has let his Englishness run away with him. He sets out to illustrate how authors could be perfect in the formation of their sen-

tences and yet neglect the wider all-embracing sweep of the paragraph. He suggests that Conrad and Santayana are particularly liable to this fault because of their foreign extraction. He brings up from Santayana a paragraph which appears to be just a series of good sentences instead of a sustained harmonious whole and he attributes the defect to the writer's being a Spaniard. Sensing that perhaps he has overstepped the limit he draws back a little and admits that even Emerson who was no foreigner in the strict sense has paragraphs lacking in rhythmical life. Evidently, apart from poor writing capacity, it is, as Read too realises, a certain type of thinking—either a monotony or a jumpiness of idea-movement—that misses being a good paragraphist: an Englishman's writing English or a foreigner's doing it has no bearing on the matter, provided the foreigner is as accomplished a practitioner of English prose as the author of *The Last Puritan* or that of *The Mirror of the Sea*. In fact, another of Read's citations from Santayana is as competent in paragraphing as anything penned by Read himself—and that, too, in the rather difficult *genre* of the branching metaphor.

Please do not take me to mean that it is an easy job for a Pole or a Spaniard or an Indian to be a good writer in English; and where so subtle an art as poetry is concerned—an art in which even English aspirants mostly fall short—the successful foreigner is bound to be a rarity indeed. I, along with you and Read, would certainly advise a man to write poetry in his own native tongue; but I would hesitate to define “native tongue” always or merely in terms of his nationality. There are people who are very efficiently bilingual and a few who, though non-English, have so been educated that the English language has not only got under their skin but is their sole medium of exquisite or powerful or profound expression. Especially this last small company of Indians is, in my eyes, destined to form authentic part of the creators of English poetry and, contrary to what you are prepared to grant, their tones will not make only such “silver” as English might grow into as a world-language comparable to Latin in Europe's Middle Ages or to Greek in Western Asia at the beginning of the Christian Era. Not handled for merely practical interests, not revolved in the mouth for purely intellectual purposes, but held in the very heart and infused into the blood-stream, their English will flow as “golden” as it can be with

The light that never was on sea or land.

(9.II.1961)



## HOW TO SPELL

LET's begin with the bad news.

If you're a bad speller, you probably think you always will be. There are exceptions to every spelling rule, and the rules themselves are easy to forget. George Bernard Shaw demonstrated how ridiculous some spelling rules are. By following the rules, he said, we could spell *fish* this way: *ghoti*. The "f" as it sounds in *enough*, the "i" as it sounds in *women*, and the "sh" as it sounds in *fiction*.

With such rules to follow, no one should feel stupid for being a bad speller. But there are ways to improve. Start by acknowledging the mess that English spelling is in—but have sympathy: English spelling changed with foreign influences. Chaucer wrote "gesse," but "guess," imported earlier by the Norman invaders, finally replaced it. Most early printers in England came from Holland; they brought "ghost" and "gherkin" with them.

If you'd like to intimidate yourself—and remain a bad speller forever—just try to remember the 13 different ways the sound "sh" can be written:

<i>shoe</i>	<i>suspicion</i>
<i>sugar</i>	<i>nauseous</i>
<i>ocean</i>	<i>conscious</i>
<i>issue</i>	<i>chaperone</i>
<i>nation</i>	<i>mansion</i>
<i>schist</i>	<i>fuchsia</i>
<i>pshaw</i>	

### Now the good news

The good news is that 90 percent of all writing consists of 1,000 basic words. There is, also, a method to most English spelling and a great number of how-to-spell books. Remarkably, all these books propose learning the same rules! Not surprisingly most of these books are humourless.

Just keep this in mind: If you're familiar with the words you use, you'll probably spell them correctly—and you shouldn't be writing words you're unfamiliar with anyway. USE a word out loud, and more than once—before you try writing it, and make sure (with a new word) that you know what it means before you use it. This means you'll have to look it up in a dictionary, where you'll not only learn what it means, but you'll see how it's spelled. Choose a dictionary you enjoy browsing in, and guard it as you would a diary. You wouldn't lend a diary, would you?

### A tip on looking it up

Beside every word I look up in my dictionary, I make a mark. Beside every word I look up more than once, I write a note to myself—about WHY I looked it up.

I have looked up “strictly” 14 times since 1964. I prefer to spell it with a *k*—as in “stricktly.” I have looked up “ubiquitous” a dozen times. I can’t remember what it means.

Another good way to use your dictionary: When you have to look up a word, for any reason, learn—and learn to *spell*—a *new* word at the same time. It can be any useful word on the same page as the word you looked up. Put the date beside this new word and see how quickly, or in what way, you forget it. Eventually, you’ll learn it.

Almost as important as knowing what a word means (in order to spell it) is knowing how it’s pronounced. It’s *government*, not *goverment*. It’s *February*, not *Febuary*. And if you know that *anti* means against, you should know how to spell *antidote* and *antibiotic* and *antifreeze*. If you know that *ante* means before, you shouldn’t have trouble spelling *antechamber* or *antecedent*.

### Some rules, exceptions, and two tricks

I don’t have room to touch on *all* the rules here. It would take a book to do that. But I can share a few that help me most:

Some spelling problems that seem hard are really easy. What about *-ary* or *-ery*? Just remember that there are only six common words in English that end in *-ery*. Memorize them, and feel fairly secure that all the rest end in *-ary*.

cemetery	monastery
millinery	confectionery
distillery	stationery
	(as in paper)

Here’s another easy rule. Only four words end in *-efy*. Most people misspell them with *-efy*, which is usually correct. Just memorize these, too, and use *-ify* for all the rest.

stupefy	putrefy
liquefy	rarefy

As a former bad speller, I have learned a few valuable tricks. Any good how-to-spell book will teach you more than these two, but these two are my favourites. Of the 800,000 words in the English language, the most frequently misspelled is *alright*; just remember that *alright* is all *wrong*. You wouldn’t write *alwrong*, would you? That’s how you know you should write *all right*.

The other trick is for the truly *worst* spellers. I mean those of you who spell so badly that you can’t get close enough to the right way to spell a word in order to even FIND it in the dictionary. The word you’re looking for is there, of course, but you won’t find it the way you’re trying to spell it. What to do is look up a synonym—another word that means the same thing. Chances are good that you’ll find the word

you're looking for under the definition of the synonym.

### Demon words and bugbears

Everyone has a few demon words—they never look right, even when they're spelled correctly. Three of my demons are *medieval*, *ecstasy*, and *rhythm*. I have learned to hate these words, but I have not learned to spell them; I have to look them up every time.

And everyone has a spelling rule that's a bugbear—it's either too difficult to learn or it's impossible to remember. My personal bugbear among the rules is the one governing whether you add *-able* or *-ible*. I can teach it to you, but I can't remember it myself.

You add *-able* to a full word: adapt, adaptable; work, workable. You add *-able* to words that end in *e*—just remember to drop the final *e*: love, lovable. But if the word ends in two *e*'s, like agree, you keep them both: agreeable.

You add *-ible* if the base is not a full word that can stand on its own: credible, tangible, horrible, terrible. You add *-ible* if the root word ends in *-ns*: responsible. You add *-ible* if the root word ends in *-miss*: permissible. You add *-ible* if the root word ends in a soft *c* (but remember to drop the final *e*!): force, forcible.

Got that? I don't have it, and I was introduced to that rule in prep school; with that rule, I still learn one word at a time.

### Poor President Jackson

You must remember that it is *permissible* for spelling to drive you crazy. Spelling had this effect on Andrew Jackson, who once blew his stack while trying to write a Presidential paper. "It's a damn poor mind that can think of only one way to spell a word!" the President cried.

When you have trouble, think of poor Andrew Jackson and know that you're not alone.

### What's really important

And remember what's really important about good writing is not good spelling. If you spell badly but write well, you should hold your head up. As the poet T. S. Eliot recommended, "Write for as large and miscellaneous an audience as possible"—and don't be overly concerned if you can't spell "miscellaneous." Also remember that you can spell correctly and write well and still be misunderstood. Hold your head up about that, too. As good old G. C. Lichtenberg said, "A book is a mirror: if an ass peers into it, you can't expect an apostle to look out"—whether you spell "apostle" correctly or not.

JOHN IRVING

# INTEGRAL PSYCHOLOGY INHERENT IN INTEGRAL YOGA

IN THE WORDS OF SRI AUROBINDO

## Prefatory Note

PSYCHOLOGY is a most dynamic science. Though yet so young it has created a vast body of knowledge covering a wide field of life, individual and social, normal and abnormal, educational and cultural, industrial and vocational. Above all, it has given an approach, the psychological approach, to entire human living, because man is essentially a psychological fact.

But the modern science of psychology is yet very unsure of itself and its vast body of knowledge tells us an enormous lot about the reactions of personality to the environment but not of what personality itself is. Gardner Murphy, an eminent contemporary psychologist, says, "Nobody knows anything much about the nature of man. We are in a position to raise a great many questions, to raise questions perhaps so grave and so fundamental that we begin to wonder if we even have a method for approaching an ultimate solution."

Jung was a bold Western psychologist. He persistently inquired into the meanings of yogic and religious experiences and came to the conclusion that there is surely a 'Centre' in personality besides the ego, behind the various 'polarities' or dualities of life.

If psychology is to prove equal to its numerous tasks and explain life effectively it must become sure of what man is. But then it must inquire into the nature of man in an unhampered way (without assumptions) and reach the entire truth of the matter.

Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis of Yoga* and his *Letters on Yoga* (3 vols.) are works on yoga, not directly on psychology. The aim here is understanding life with a view to achieving its perfection. This normative attitude of self-education and self-perfection provides the very test of verification, which is so much insisted upon by science. And yoga aims at going to the heart of the matter, it does not limit itself to the phenomenon of mind only or its reactions to the environment.

The psychologist will have to adjust himself to this approach of yoga and not insist on his own terminology. If he is able to do so, he might find in the following excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's *Synthesis* and *Letters* an account of human personality which might give him a clarity and a certitude which he very much needs and seeks. A general reader, if he gets a sound foundation as to what man is, would be able to pursue self-education and self-perfection more confidently.

INDRA SEN

### Definition and the Integral Scope of Psychology<sup>1</sup>

Psychology is the science of consciousness and its states and operations in Nature and, if that can be glimpsed or experienced, its states and operations beyond what we know as Nature.

It is not enough to observe and know the movements of our surface Nature and the superficial nature of other living creatures just as it is not enough for Science to observe and know as electricity only the movements of lightning in the clouds or for the astronomer to observe and know only those movements and properties of the stars that are visible to the unaided eye. Here as there a whole world of occult phenomena have to be laid bare and brought under control before the Psychologist can hope to be master of his province.

Our observable consciousness, that which we call ourselves, is only the little visible part of our being. It is a small field below which are depths and farther depths and widths and ever wider widths which support and supply it but to which it has no visible access. All that is our self, our being; what we see at the top is only our ego and its visible nature.

Even the movements of this little surface nature cannot be understood nor its true law discovered until we know all that is below or behind and supplies it—and know too all that is around it and above.

For below this conscient nature is the vast Inconscient out of which we come. The Inconscient is greater, deeper, more original, more potent to shape and govern what we are and do than our little derivative conscient nature. Inconscient to us, to our surface view, but not inconscient in itself or to itself, it is a sovereign guide, worker, determinant, creator. Not to know it is not to know our origins and the origin of the most part of what we are and do. And the Inconscient is not all.

For behind our little frontal ego and nature is a whole subliminal kingdom of inner consciousness with many planes and provinces. There are in that kingdom many powers, movements, personalities which are part of ourselves and help to form our little surface personality and its powers and movements. This inner self, these inner persons we do not know, but they know us and observe and dictate our speech, our thoughts, feelings, doings even more directly than the Inconscient below us.

Around us too is a circumconscient Universal of which we are a portion. This circumconscience is pouring its forces, suggestions, stimulus, compulsions into us at every moment of our existence.

Around us is a universal Mind of which our mind is a formation and our thoughts, feelings, will, impulses are continually little more than personally modified reception and transcription of its thought-waves, its force-currents, its foam of emotion and sensation, its billows of impulse.

Around is a permanent universal Life of which our petty flow of life-formation that begins and ceases is only a small dynamic wave.

<sup>1</sup> *The Hour of God*. Last para from *The Life Divine* (1955), p. 667.

We become aware, in a certain experience, of a range of being superconscious to all these, aware too of something, a supreme highest Reality sustaining and exceeding them all, which humanity speaks of vaguely as Spirit, God, the Oversoul: from these superconscious ranges we have visitations and in our highest being we tend towards them and to that supreme Spirit. There is then in our total range of existence a superconscience as well as a subconsciousness, overarching and perhaps enveloping our subliminal and our waking selves, but unknown to us, seemingly unattainable and incommunicable.

### **The Nature of Consciousness<sup>1</sup>**

Consciousness is not, to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the force of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative actions, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of Yoga, e.g., a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in the being, the Self or Purusha.

Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence. It is there even when it is not active on the surface, but silent and immobile; it is there even when it is invisible on the surface, not reacting on outward things or sensible to them, but withdrawn and either active or inactive within; it is there even when it seems to us to be quite absent and the being to our view unconscious, and inanimate.

Consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. It can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; it can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Chit but also Chit Shakti.

Consciousness is usually identified with mind, but mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all the possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all the gradations of colour or human hearing all the gradations of sound—for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human ranges with which the normal human has no contact and they seem to it unconscious,—supramental or overmental and submental ranges.

The gradations of consciousness are universal states not dependent on the outlook of the subjective personality; rather the outlook of the subjective personality is determined by the grade of consciousness in which it is organised according to

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, Series I, pp. 97-8, 100, 100-1, 102-3.

its typical nature or its evolutionary stage.

It will be evident that by consciousness is meant something which is essentially the same throughout but variable in status, condition and operation, in which in some grades or conditions the activities we call consciousness can exist either in a suppressed or an unorganised or a differently organised state; while in other states some other activities may manifest which in us are suppressed, unorganised or latent or else are less perfectly manifested, less intensive, extended and powerful than in those higher grades above our highest mental limit.

Consciousness has no need of a clear individual "I" to dispose variously the centralising stress,—wherever the stress is put the "I" attaches itself to that, so that one thinks of oneself as a mental being or physical being or whatever it may be. The consciousness in me can dispose its stress in this way or the other way—it may go down into the physical and work there in the physical nature keeping all the rest behind or above for the time or it may go up into the overhead level and stand above mind, life and body seeing them as instrumental lower forms of itself or not seeing them at all and merged in the free undifferentiated Self or it may throw itself into an active dynamic cosmic consciousness and identify with that or do any number of other things without resorting to the help of this much overrated and meddling fly on the wheel which you call the clear individual "I". The real "I"—if you want to use that word—is not "clear individual," that is, clear-cut limited separative ego, it is as wide as the universe and wider and can contain the universe in itself...

As the consciousness in us, by its external concentration or stress, has to put all these things behind—behind a wall or veil, it has to break down the wall or veil and get back in its stress into these inner parts of existence—that is what we call living within; then our external being seems to us something small and superficial, we are or can become aware of the large and rich and inexhaustible kingdom within. So also consciousness in us has drawn a lid or covering or whatever one likes to call it between the lower planes of mind, life, body supported by the psychic and the higher planes which contain the spiritual kingdoms where the self is always free and limitless, and it can break or open the lid or covering and ascend there and become the Self free and wide and luminous or else bring down the influence, reflection, finally even the presence and power of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

### Yoga and Psychology<sup>1</sup>

Yogic methods have something of the same relation to the customary psychological workings of man as has the scientific handling of the natural force of electricity or of steam to the normal operations of steam and of electricity. And they, too, are formed upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis and constant result. All Rajayoga, for instance, depends on this

<sup>1</sup> *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1958), pp. 5-6, 603, 589, 712-13.

perception and experience that our inner elements, combinations, functions, forces, can be separated or dissolved, can be new-combined and set to novel and formerly impossible workings or can be transformed and resolved into a new general synthesis by fixed integral processes. Hathayoga similarly depends on this perception and experience that the vital forces and functions to which our life is normally subjected and whose ordinary operations seem set and indispensable, can be mastered and the operations changed or suspended with results that would otherwise be impossible and that seem miraculous to those who have not seized the rationale of their process. And if in some other of its forms this character of yoga is less apparent, because they are more intuitive and less mechanical, nearer, like the yoga of Devotion, to a supernal ecstasy or, like the Yoga of Knowledge, to a supernal infinity of consciousness and being, yet they too start from the use of some principal faculty in us by ways and for ends not contemplated in its everyday spontaneous workings. All methods grouped under the common name of Yoga are special psychological processes founded on a fixed truth of Nature and developing, out of normal functions, powers and results which were always latent but which her ordinary movements do not easily or do not often manifest.

We see, then, what from the psychological point of view,—and Yoga is nothing but practical psychology,—is the conception of Nature from which we have to start. It is the self-fulfilment of the Purusha through his Energy. But the movement of Nature is twofold, higher and lower, or, as we may choose to term it, divine and undivine. The distinction exists indeed for practical purposes only; for there is nothing that is not divine, and in a larger view it is as meaningless, verbally, as the distinction between natural and supernatural, for all things that are natural. All things are in Nature and all things are in God. But, for practical purposes, there is a real distinction. The lower Nature, that which we know and are and must remain so long as the faith in us is not changed, acts through limitation and division, is of the nature of Ignorance and culminates in the life of the ego; but the higher Nature, that to which we aspire, acts by unification and transcendence of limitation, is of the nature of Knowledge and culminates in the life divine. The passage from the lower to the higher is the aim of Yoga; and this passage may effect itself by the rejection of the lower and escape into the higher,—the ordinary view-point,—or by the transformation of the lower and its elevation to the higher Nature. It is this, rather, that must be the aim of an integral Yoga.

All Yoga proceeds in its method by three principles of practice; first, purification, that is to say, the removal of all aberrations, disorders, obstructions brought about by the mixed and irregular action of the energy of being in our physical, moral and mental system; secondly, concentration, that is to say, the bringing to its full intensity and the mastered and self-directed employment of that energy of being in us for a definite end; thirdly, liberation, that is to say, the release of our being from the narrow and painful knots of the individualised energy in a false and limited play, which at present are the law of our nature. The enjoyment of our liberated being which



brings us into unity or union with the Supreme, is the consummation; it is that for which Yoga is done.

...the whole method of Yoga is psychological; it might almost be termed the consummate practice of a perfect psychological knowledge.

...an ordinary psychology which only takes mind and its phenomena at their surface values, will be of no help to us; it will not give us the least guidance in this line of self-exploration and self-conversion. Still less can we find the clue in a scientific psychology with a materialistic basis which assumes that the body and the biological and physiological factors of our nature are not the starting-point but the whole real foundation and regards human mind as only a subtle development from the life and the body. That may be the actual truth of the animal side of human nature and of the human mind in so far as it is limited and conditioned by the physical part of our being. But the whole difference between man and the animal is that the animal mind, as we know it, cannot get for one moment away from its origins, cannot break out from the covering, the close chrysalis which the bodily life has spun round the soul, and become something greater than its present self, a more free, magnificent and noble being; but in man mind reveals itself as a greater energy escaping from the restrictions of the vital and physical formula of being. But even this is not all that man is or can be: he has in him the power to evolve and release a still greater ideal energy which in its turn escapes out of the restrictions of the mental formula of his nature and discloses the supramental form, the ideal power of a spiritual being. In Yoga we have to travel beyond the physical nature and the superficial man and to discover the workings of the whole nature of the real man.

*(To be continued)*

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## BE THOU MY GOD

Be thou my God, O Love  
 That is born where all things end.  
 Be thou my life and laughter's springs.  
 Be all to me and more than earth can bear.  
 Send me a call, that we on earth may share  
 Thy potent immensity  
 That comes from Thy reign above.

A. P.

## THE MOTHER'S GRACE

ONCE in a while, after a long lapse of time we read an article or a storyette about how the Mother's Grace came to a person; perhaps it healed a dangerous ailment or saved someone from an accident. I wish people would come out more with such writings. Why people fight shy to write about the Mother's workings and Her Grace is still not understandable.

Right from the beginning I had very close contact with the Mother and I took delight in observing how Her force acted or Her Grace went out in a most unpredictable way. It all started with flowers. At Pranam She would very carefully choose flowers for each one of us according to our needs. And the flowers in the Ashram are not known by their botanical names but by names the Mother gave them. I had always wanted to ask the Mother: "Are the names given your own discrimination or do the flowers themselves reveal to you that particular quality?" But alas, who knew that She would go away so soon, and not only this one question but so many others would remain to this day unasked and unanswered.

Now if we collected all these stories of the Mother's Grace we could have a delightful volume that would not only be amusing but very instructive as well. The department of Physical Education some years back brought out a volume, a compilation of all the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had said about our body, its functioning, its capacity and its utility in the future. How many have the time or the capacity to go through all the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo? Here in a nutshell one gets all one wants to know about the body. Most of the compilations are useful. Vijaya's compilations are very valuable work. Lizel Herbert has done a good job in compiling all the names of flowers given by the Mother. Amal Kiran's *Our Light and Delight* is extremely enlightening. Here he does not quote from the Mother or Sri Aurobindo but records his own contacts with the Mother.

The Mother, it seems, actually reserved certain things for certain persons. Unless that particular person arrived and certain things happened She did not release Her force and Her grace. That done, the thing desired was accomplished. "When I allot a person a work I always give him the capacity to do it," the Mother often said. So we can bring out a delightful volume called the *Encyclopaedia of the Mother's Grace*.

Everyone has seen the Mother's flag. It was ready on paper when Sanat and I first arrived. And we heard that She hoisted Her flag on the first Independence Day from Her balcony. But Her car did not have a flag. If She wished it She had only to express Her wish to Pavitra. All spiritual personages in India use their own flags. It is called 'Jhanda'. So the Mother would not have violated any rule of Government if She had used a flag on Her car. But no, it was reserved for someone to put a flag there.

When we came to Pondicherry in our official capacity we found the Consulate General did not have a car. Our car would not arrive for another four or five days.

Yet it was imperative that we should call on the Haute Commissaire at once. When the Mother came to know of our problem She at once offered Her Ford to us. But the problem was not solved yet: there must be a flag of the Government of India wherever we went. And the Mother's car did not have the mast. So Pavitra was called and under Abhayasingh's expert handling a mast was fixed on the bonnet within a few hours.

Some days later the Mother arrived at the tennis ground, with Her bonnie blue flag a-flutter on Her car. Sanat and I felt like laughing out loudly in sheer joy and unalloyed happiness. Afraid of being misunderstood we controlled ourselves and politely smiled when the Mother came by and smiled knowingly. This bit of grace was reserved for us.

Soon the Republic Day arrived and we had a big function at the Consulate. In the morning Mrs. Charu Dutt and others came to see the flag hoisting ceremony. Sanat was on the terrace and I was inside ready to sing the National Anthem on the microphone as desired by Sanat. My drawing-room was all blue already. Suddenly, as I started singing, the whole room became a scintillating blue and gold. I thought the Mother was there. I had to forcefully withdraw my consciousness from this lovely vision lest I should spoil the singing. Later I quietly repeated:

Mother, I bow to Thee,  
Rich with Thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with Thy orchard gleams,  
Mother, I bow to Thee.

CHAUNDONA BANERJI

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## YOGA OR BHOGA?

PONDICHERY has become synonymous with Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Many people are coming here in search of something very precise, a closer approach to Their teaching and to Them.

Some, however, are tourists and in the organized trip there is also the Pondi stop, as a 'curiosity'. Some are the French-nostalgic people to whom the town provides a sentimental yearning for the past.

One of the latest pilgrims was a friend of mine, a scientific researcher, who came here in order to contact 'yogis' who could disclose the method of how to accelerate their hearts (it seems almost easy) and how to slow them down (very difficult). According to some Western scientists, this 'contact' would be of great help to the modern technique of 'Biofeedback' (known for 10 years in America) which is a kind of 'physiological control' technique.

Then came to my knowledge the Seminar of 'Yoga-Therapy' organized by the Indian Academy of Yoga last December in Madras. 'Yoga Therapy', rightly understood, would include the training of the consciousness, a psychological refinement and elevation to a certain degree accompanying whatever outward mode and means of a special kind may be employed. But the overwhelming stress on that mode and means threatens to vitiate the venture. Is Yoga becoming like the advertisement of "take daily this syrup to strengthen yourself"? The images conjured up by such things sets astir something in my head to write about Yoga. I feel provoked by the 'misappropriation' of a discipline which has developed itself in a special milieu as a profound mystical science. I have been asked: "Are you prepared to convince people?" Not at all: this is not a 'sermon' but the aim is, perhaps, to goad, to stimulate people to rehabilitate the true value of things, particularly since the values are not crude stuff of the worldly domain.

To begin with a small oddity: "Why 'Academy of Yoga'?" Would it not be more coherent to adopt Sanskrit names for such high-learning institutions?—that is to say: Vishva Vidyalaya, Kendra, etc. It is fashionable now to revive true Hinduism and of course to stimulate the revival of the Sanskrit language. Well, then, why not take on every occasion the positive side of this 'frond-wind', this 'Movement' encouraging the adoption of Sanskrit instead of being only a political exploiter, a vote-collector?

Is it for the sake of being 'up-do-date' with Yoga that we need now to transfer Yoga to an 'Academy'? And to use Yoga as a therapy in an external sense? Both are corrupted terminologies in form and in substance. 'Academy' identifies itself with academic teaching, projects us immediately to the philosophic speculation of the Aristotelian logic, to scientific research, to pure science, the realm of rational knowledge: in a word, just the diametrical opposite of Yoga. 'Therapy' is intended to take us at once into the sphere of things like 'allopathy' and put things on a par with 'electro-shocktherapy', 'X-Rays therapy', etc., etc. It seems a misnomer in the Yogic

context. At the above mentioned Seminar, a Swami rightly points out: "...science is beginning to ponder on the concept that control of the physiological processes to alter brain waves, heart rate, muscle tension may lead to the dissolution of illness and provide a permanent cure. As Yoga made these claims for thousands of years, the eyes of science have focussed on Hatha Yoga, mainly in the form of Asanas. But should we approach the citadel of Yoga for the mundane purpose of physical health? If the physical side of Yoga is emphasised on individuals through their unprepared minds, then that action of imposition will become just another part of the suppressing routine of their everyday life. Force, applied on the body to dominate it by will, forms a duality of one part being suppressed, the other part suppressing. This will inevitably lead to the splitting of the personality into two segments, commonly known as schizophrenia."

At the same Seminar there was the statement on Yoga Chikitsa<sup>1</sup> with an almost exclusive emphasis laid on correct diet, fasting, herbology, spinal and postural manipulation, forgetting the psycho-spiritual connotation inevitable to the word 'Yoga'.

Somebody hit the truth very effectively when he said: "Yoga Chikitsa is a remedial science as old as the concept of Yoga itself. There is only one disease, duality. Its cure is a return to Universal Oneness. However abstract this Dwaita-adwaita concept<sup>2</sup> may be, it must be the basis of Yoga Therapy as well as Yoga itself. Yoga Chikitsa should not be separated from the mainstream of Yoga proper or it will suffer the fate of most divided sciences. Yoga Chikitsa without Yoga is an absurd anomaly. Yoga Therapists must be deeply involved in a Yogic way of life themselves and be a very fine example of morality and ethics as taught in Asthanga Yoga or Raja Yoga. As Yoga Chikitsa is considered a modern alternative medical system, it must truly offer an alternative life style to that of modern hedonistic medicine. If Yoga Chikitsa is used only within the materialistic medical systems of today, it will fail..."

Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: "No Yoga can be satisfying which does not, in its aim, reunite God and Nature in a liberated and perfect human life or, in its method, not only permit but favour the harmony of our inner and outer activities and experiences in the divine consummation of both." He continues: "...the true and full object of Yoga can only be accomplished when the conscious Yoga in man becomes, like the subconscious Yoga in Nature, outwardly conterminous with life itself and we can once more, looking out both on the path and the achievement, say in a more perfect and luminous sense: all life is Yoga."

The Mother was asked: "What is it that you call 'the basis of equality in the external being'?" She replied: "It is good health, a solid body, well poised; ...when you are very quiet, well balanced, very calm, then you have a solid basis and can receive a large amount of forces." In another paragraph She said: "...the origin of the microbes and their support lies in a disharmony, in the being's receptivity to the adverse forces...I told you first of all that illness—without any exception—is

<sup>1</sup> Chikitsa = healing.

<sup>2</sup> Dwaita = dualism, dualistic Vedanta. Adwaita = non-dualistic Vedanta: One Existence, Monism.

the expression of a break in equilibrium.”

“Establish a greater peace and quietness in your body,” Sri Aurobindo tells us, “and that will give you the strength to resist attacks of illness.”

Seneca, at the beginning of his *De ira*, denounces the agitation of the soul as the origin of illness.

This is the concept of ‘healing’, better to say, of prophylaxi through Yoga. Yoga is not merely a curative method, it can also be essentially preventative. If one considers Yoga Therapy as a ‘curative system’ alone, the whole nature of Yoga will be misrepresented and we become the distorters of this high discipline.

It has been scientifically proved that the asanas of Hatha Yoga can improve a pathogenic state of health: physical exercises have been considered always, in any civilization, as a way to keep the body fit. The ‘cult’ for gymnastics in the Greco-Roman culture is well known and the Latin motto “*Mens sana in corpore sano*” shows it.

The many aspects of Yoga include a physiological hygiene which is superior to many well-combined gymnastics and obviously the body will be kept much more healthy. But we would still be within the concept of a ‘split’ and the Yoga-practice would be ineffectual without the inmost meaning, the concept on which Yoga is based. Yoga combines the bodily with the spiritual in an extraordinarily complete way.

In the light of Yogic philosophy man is considered an entity whose components are interacting and cannot operate separately: body, life-force, mind (intelligence), soul (inner consciousness).

We have to go back to the Milesian school (at least 600-500 B.C.), where the aim was to discover the essential nature or real constitution of things; the attunement between things. The pre-Pythagorean sages were more close to the ‘monism’ of the East, to the Veda-notion of science, religion and philosophy. The big ‘split’ took place later on in Western philosophy. The Seminar of last December evinced the urge to re-dimension Yoga. Many people today are anxious to promote a better attitude, a conscious and true knowledge of Yoga. Scholars and scientists in India who are familiar with it, who have lived since their boyhood according to the tradition of their families, must be very much concerned about the misuse, the counterfeit, of Yoga, and eager to reinstate the lost ancient beauty.

The Government of India also has recognised ‘Yoga Education’ and ‘Yoga Chikitsa’. Well, it means that now Yoga should permeate all the strata of our society, here and abroad where the ‘passers-by’ of India have been the boosters of an erroneous, degraded Yoga. In Paris or in Philadelphia, Pa., to open a Yoga Centre is a good, sure investment for business.

Many of these ‘contortionists’ of good will who shake, jump, twist, revolve and rotate, whirl and swirl sometimes to a ludicrous, dangerous extent, are convinced in their childish way that such a dispersion of energy is the ‘top of yogilike life’. If they really live a life of antiyoga...or Bhoga, enjoyment, self-indulgence, it is of secondary importance!

Will it be the central, absolute aim of the 'Indian Academy of Yoga' to instil in their disciples the awareness of this 'mystical science'? Will the 'Indian Academy of Yoga' be the emanation of the Vishva-Vidya and work under its aegis? Vishva means the Spirit of the external universe the 'all'; Vidya means knowledge in its highest spiritual sense, the consciousness of Unity.

I was not present at the Madras Seminar but I have read some reports of distinguished people; I have met some of them who came afterwards to Pondicherry and the general concern was that Yoga cannot be dealt with as an academical subject: Yoga is not only a philosophy, not only a scientific matter of research, not only a technique but all these and more: *Yoga is a way of life*. This Aurobindonian axiomatic truth should be repeated countless times to every neophyte whose knowledge of Yoga is merely rhetorical.

Yoga is not a subject of exams; a testing of ability and knowledge: Yoga transcends the measurable of science. Science proceeds by separation, division, fragmentation: categorizes and discriminates, that means experiments. Yoga does not require chemical reagents of the laboratory test. Science can witness and check the effect of Yoga: that is all. Yoga is the expression of the 'intuitive mind'; Yoga is 'joining': it is, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "...union of the soul with the immortal being and consciousness and delight of the Divine; a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and union of the human individual with universal and transcendent existence."

Patanjali has treated Yoga as a system of philosophy, one of the six 'Darshanas' (self-revelation of the Deity to the devotee), the six systems of orthodox Indian philosophy.

Western science and philosophy are just at the opposite pole to the mystical origin and concept of Yoga. Also we know that modern scientists are trying to make 'parallels' between the world of 'physics' and the 'monistic' idea of 'science-philosophy-religion'. In this agitated, confused, excruciated world man is longing towards the higher vibrations of a divine harmony. For many, I think, Yoga presents the final hope, 'The Last Shore'!

Dr. C. G. Jung, whose name is now a household word, wrote: "When a religious method recommends itself as 'scientific', it can be certain of its public in the West. Yoga fulfils this expectation"—and "...quite apart from the charm of the new and fascination of the half-understood, there is good cause for Yoga to have many adherents. It offers the possibilities of controllable experiences and thus satisfies the scientific need for the 'facts' and besides this by reason of its breadth and depth, its venerable age, its doctrine and method, which include every phase of life, it promises undreamt-of possibilities." But, as Sri Aurobindo reminds us, "Yoga is towards God not man." To ignore the central psychological content of Yoga is to ignore the very heart of it.

Yoga has been always a Science of the Supraphysical, with its own method of observation, experiment and verification. Moreover, in the Indian tradition there

has never been any contrast between Yoga and Science. Someone has written memorably that if Yoga is not a negation of life and no opposition to the aim of Science, we can hope that a unified contribution of Yoga and Science will be the highest help for mankind in the future.

We belong to a generation of bold scientific discoveries, technological progress; we have challenged the laws of Nature, defied ourselves by defying God: our ventures are numberless. But in the last scientific exploit of this century the target of the human mind has been overbalanced at the same time that it has been broadened. Many discoveries have confirmed several simple pronouncements of the ancient Rishis: we are participating in the 'rediscovery' of old axiomatic truths which did not require to be demonstrated. Evolution theory, in a general sense, though not as Science now elaborates it, was very old in India; the atom was known to the Veda-seers.

At the present, man is busy 'joining' the macrocosm and the microcosm, seeking information in the field of the subquanta. Here strange prospects are opening up. "The stream of knowledge," Sir James writes in *The Mysterious Universe*, "is heading towards a nonmechanical reality; the Universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine." Well, the Atom-age looks likely to come out of Veda-Scriptures. We are calling back for help the past wisdom of mankind's history; its numberless discoveries made more intuitively than through sophisticated gadgets, than as the products of a constant observation of Nature.

East-West began together the long march of civilization; then the 'intuitive' mind gave place to the 'rational' and Western civilization began to explore another path of knowledge: perhaps its cycle of 'insight perception' was over and for millennia both developed in complete isolation, rather secluded, rather opposed, because they have ignored and misjudged each other. Actually they have many elements in common—philosophy and spirituality—which are easy to detect today by a deep, concerted study.

For Yogananda the East-West understanding was the highest aim of his life and his last wish was for: "...all men to come to know that there exists a definite scientific technique (it must be taken as a yogic discipline) of Self-realization for the overcoming of all human misery." And he made Yoga the base of his life-teaching.

What I have written here is not in the spirit of a fanatic attitude to mock, reject and depreciate the intrinsic value of Science, to overlook the technological progress of the West whose benefits all of us are enjoying: the only intention is to see that the real image of Yoga is maintained and to repeat here the warning of Sri Yogendra Ji: "It is not Yoga that has failed India but India that has failed Yoga."

It is not by bringing Yoga down to a commercialized level that its true combination with Science can be achieved. Brought forth in the highest sense of each, Science and Yoga can work for the Man of the Future ready to investigate and create the osmosis of the two worlds: the material spiritualized and the spiritual materialized.

MARIA LUISA



# IGNORANCE: ITS ORIGIN, ITS LOGICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY AND ITS PURPOSE

## A CRITICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF THE NIRVISHESHA ADWAITA OF SHANKARA AND THE INTEGRAL ADWAITA OF SRI AUROBINDO

*(Continued from the issue of September, 1983)*

Sri Aurobindo has logically shown that mind can never solve a supramental problem. Newton's laws of motion and gravity, a great discovery indeed, could not explain the erratic revolution of Mercury round the Sun. Einstein's theory of Relativity, including a treatment of gravity, explained it. Science is ever-progressing and the law is not different with spiritual experience. A wider spiritual experience solves a problem with a higher logic.

Sri Aurobindo now shows why mind cannot explain the mystery of manifestation. Says the sage-seer, "Mind cannot possess the infinite, it can only suffer it or be possessed by it: it can only lie blissfully helpless under the luminous shadow of the Real cast down on it from planes of existence beyond its reach. The possession of the infinite cannot come except by an ascent to those supramental planes nor knowledge of it except by an inert submission of mind to the descending message of truth-conscious reality"<sup>1</sup>. "Mind, as we know it, is a reflective mirror which receives presentations or images of a pre-existent truth or fact, either external to or at least vaster than itself. It represents to itself from moment to moment phenomenon that is or has been. It possesses also the faculty of constructing in itself possible images other than those of the actual fact presented to it, that is to say, it presents to itself not only phenomenon that has been but also phenomenon that may be: it cannot, be it noted, represent to itself phenomenon that assuredly will be, except when it is an assured repetition of what is or has been. It has, finally, the faculty of forecasting a new modification which it seeks to construct out of the meeting of what has been and what may be, out of fulfilled possibility and the unfulfilled, something that it sometimes succeeds more or less exactly, sometimes fails to realise but usually finds cast into other forms than it forecasted and turned to other ends than it desired or intended."<sup>2</sup> "Mind may divide, multiply, add, subtract but it cannot get beyond the limits of this mathematics. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it loses itself in a foreign element, it falls from its own firm ground into the ocean of the intangible, into the abysses of the infinite, where it can neither perceive, conceive,

<sup>1</sup> *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142

sense nor deal with its subject for creation and enjoyment."<sup>1</sup>

But this does not mean that mind has no capacity for truth at all. But the truth it finds is not the body of the truth but reflections and images of the body of the truth of a higher level of consciousness so that mind can never know truth concretely and the truth it discovers is secondary and limited. Hear the scientist of consciousness speak with his seeing language: "Mind has a power also for truth; it opens its thought-chamber to Vidya as well as to Avidya and if its starting-point is Ignorance, if its passage is through crooked ways of error, still its goal is always knowledge; there is in it an impulse for truth-seeking, a power even though secondary and limited of truth-finding and truth-creation."<sup>2</sup> Here we find the anatomy of mind laid bare, perhaps better than any psychologist could have done. Hence mind is incapable of explaining the existence of the universe, for it is neither a faculty of knowledge nor an instrument of omniscience, it is an instrument seeking knowledge but never getting it. The real or the truth expresses itself intermediately in what we call an ideal. This ideal is caught by the mind first and then the real is taken by storm, by a *saltus*. Here lies the reason why mind sees the human existence as disjointed and as an imperfect reality, or in other words as an illusion, "for Mind is a passage, not a culmination,"<sup>3</sup> and therefore its office "is to translate always infinity into the terms of the finite, to measure off, limit, depiece,"<sup>4</sup> and hence it never knows except as in a glass darkly. This is due to the way taken to reach the One, affirming it like Shankara or negating it like the Buddha. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the experience of the Adwaitin in his own inimitable style: "For at the gates of the Transcendent stands that mere and perfect Spirit described in the Upanishads, luminous, pure, sustaining the world, but inactive in it, without sinews of energy, without flaw of duality, without scar of division, unique, identical, free from all appearance of relation and of multiplicity—the pure self of the Adwaitins, the inactive Brahman, the transcendent Silence. And the mind when it passes those gates suddenly, without intermediate transitions, receives a sense of the unreality of the world and the sole reality of the Silence, which is one of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which the human mind is capable. Here, in the perception of this pure Self or of the Non-Being behind it, we have the starting point for a second negation,—parallel at the other pole to the materialistic, but more complete, more final, more perilous in its effect on individuals or collectivities that hear its potent call to the wilderness,—the refusal of the ascetic." It is this revolt of the Spirit that dominated the Indian mind, and the cosmic illusion has become the soul of its spiritual thought, although Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbarka and others tried vainly to combat it logically. They failed, because their spiritual experience was not greater than Shankara's and so logically they are nowhere near Shankara, for all had a spiritual experience that is partial while Shankara's is

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 196-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 245-6

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 153

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

primary, though not integral, and so their logic fizzled out before his master dialectic.

Sri Aurobindo tells us, "These are achievements of the spiritual mind in man, they are movements of the mind passing beyond itself but on its own plane, into the splendours of the spirit. Mind, even at its highest stage far beyond our present mentality, acts yet in its nature by division, it takes the aspects of the eternal and treats each aspect as if it were the whole truth of the eternal being and can find in each its own fulfilment."<sup>1</sup> Thus Shankara took his spiritual experience of Nirguna Brahman as the one and whole truth and therefore Brahman and the world fell apart and these had to be related logically by a Maya that exists epistemically and does not ontologically, to explain which Shankara had to labour writing a preface to his commentary on the Brahma sutras,—a preface that does not exist in the original Brahma sutras compiled by Vyasa. The genius of Sri Aurobindo, referring to Shankarites, compressed this preface called *Adhyasa*, superimposition, in a few sentences: "To them mental maya or perhaps an overmind is the creatrix of the world and a world created by mental maya would indeed be an inexplicable paradox and a fixed and yet floating nightmare of conscious existence which could neither be classed as an illusion nor as a reality."<sup>2</sup> This is exactly the Maya of Shankara. It floats on Brahman having no connection whatever with Brahman, having been superimposed on Brahman and therefore it is real only epistemically and unreal ontologically and is consequently a nightmare and a paradox. It is fixed, because it is not progressive and evolving, and it is a conscious existence, because it is originated by a conscious being, according to Shankara himself. Finally it is *anirvachaniya*, indefinable, because it is and is not. Sri Aurobindo shows clearly why at the level of the spiritual realisation of Shankara the universe and its relation to Brahman can be only explained as a superimposition that exists phenomenally and does not transcendentally: "The idea of an essentially unreal universe manifested somehow by an inexplicable power of illusion, the Absolute Brahman regarding it not or aloof and not affecting it even as it is not affected by it, is at the bottom a carrying over, an imposing or imputation, *Adhyaropa*, of an incapacity of our mental consciousness to that so as to limit it. Our mental consciousness when it passes beyond its limits loses at the same time or tends to have no further hold on its former contents, no continuing conception of the reality that which once was to it all that was real: we impute to absolute Parabrahman conceived as non-manifest for ever, a corresponding inability or separation or aloofness from what has become or seems now to us unreal; it must, like our mind in its cessation or self-extinction, be by its very nature of pure absoluteness void of all connection with this world of apparent manifestation, incapable of any supporting cognition or dynamic maintenance of it that gives it a reality—or, if there is such a cognition, it must be the nature of an *Is* that is not, a magical Maya."<sup>3</sup> Here we have a complete exegesis of the *raison d'être* for positing a Maya that is phenomenally and is not transcendentally,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 275-6.

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

for applying the fourth alternative of the logical quartet or *chatuskoti*, as Shankara did and had to do, for the consciousness that realised Nirguna Brahman was mental, however high it may be, although so passive as to let in that realisation. There is no reason to suppose this as conclusive. "There is no binding reason that this chasm must exist; what our relative human experience is or is not capable of is no test or standard of an absolute capacity; its conception cannot be applied to an absolute self-awareness; what is necessary for our mental ignorance in order to escape from itself cannot be the necessity of the Absolute which has no need of self-escape and no reason for refusing to cognise whatever is to it cognisable."<sup>1</sup> How correctly, fully and yet very succinctly the Master has put Shankara's superimposition, *Adhyasa*, and has also explained why Shankara had to bring it in at the level of his spiritual experience. After all this, can any pandit or professor of Advaita Vedanta have the cheek to say that Sri Aurobindo has not correctly understood Shankara? Some thinkers admit the insolubility of the mystery without trying to give an explanation, as Shankara tried to do. Such is the Buddha. Sri Aurobindo himself says that. "Certain thinkers have declared that the problem is insoluble, it is an original mystery and is intrinsically incapable of explanation, only the facts and the process can be stated;—...all we have to do is to recognise the facts and find a means of escape out of the ignorance through knowledge but into what is beyond both knowledge and ignorance."

So Sri Aurobindo has shown logically that there must be a Consciousness higher than the highest reaches of mental consciousness that is above the overmind, that alone can link the Cosmos with the Absolute through the higher consciousness. This consciousness is philosophically also necessary, not only logically, because a consciousness beyond overmind must be of a different plane from the mind, in other words it must be a supermind, an active consciousness of Sachchidananda itself that can turn the key in the lock of the static truth of Sachchidananda so that it can "loose forth" itself as the cosmos, and that is the clue to this original, all-originating ignorance that has no beginning and that has been the despair of the sages and saints who have pronounced extinction or escape as the only course left for humanity. *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo's Epic, hymns this despair typically: "To be was a prison, extinction the escape"—and that is the verdict when "Sages exploring the World-Ocean's vasts,/ Have found extinction the sole harbour safe," because it appears as if "An error of the gods has made the world,/Or indifferent the Eternal watches time". So there is a philosophical necessity too of an active consciousness above mind.

This philosophical necessity leading to the necessity of ignorance is formulated by Sri Aurobindo. "Existence is Consciousness and there can be no distinction between them, Consciousness is Bliss and there can be no distinction between them. And since there is not even this differentiation there can be no world. If that is the sole reality, then the world is not and never existed, can never have been conceived: for the indivisible consciousness is undividing consciousness and cannot originate divi-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, Vol. 2, p. 421.

sion and differentiation.”<sup>1</sup> So there cannot be a world. But there is a world, be it phenomenally even, and this phenomenal appearance has to be explained. As C. E. M. Joad in *Introduction to Modern Philosophy* says, “The task of making a real unity generate an apparent diversity is not less than that of accounting for its generation of a real diversity. Unity in fact can no more account for error than for diversity.” Shankara explained the apparent diversity by Maya, how successfully we have seen and will further see in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s way of accounting for real diversity from a real unity, which is as difficult. According to Shankara, Nirguna Brahman *per se* cannot generate either real or apparent diversity, that is the world. But says Sri Aurobindo, “This is a *reductio ad absurdum*. We cannot admit it, unless we are content to have everything as an impossible paradox and an unreconciled antithesis.”<sup>2</sup> To resolve this paradox and reconcile the antithesis and make a synthesis of all, a transcendent, active consciousness above the overmind consciousness is philosophically and logically necessary for a real world to come into being.

Now Sri Aurobindo presents his experiential view of Ignorance. He probes into the problem with his seer-vision and digs on to bare the root, and shows why the tree of Ignorance has been planted, with what divine purpose, in this soil of the Omniscient One,—a purpose that till now in the history of philosophy has not been hinted at even by any philosopher or founder of religion all of whom accepted ignorance as a settled fact of life with no necessity to look for an origin.

P. KRISHNAMURTY

(*To be continued*)

<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 151.

# THE CAT THAT REFUSED TO TEACH

## A FOLKTALE FROM PONDICHERRY

ONCE there lived a wild cat in a forest. He was very friendly with a dog. They fished together, hunted together, strolled together and slept together. The cat was very timid but cunning while his friend the dog was proud and outspoken.

The dog always boasted of the many tricks he knew. "I know at least a hundred different ways of escaping my enemies, the *Narikuravars*,"<sup>1</sup> said the dog, with an air of pride. "You know, they catch dogs and chain them. We are expected to be their watchdogs and hunters, thereby losing our freedom."

"The *Narikuravars*! My God!" exclaimed the cat. He added after a pause: "They kill and eat us. We should be always on the alert... why don't you teach me one of your tricks to escape the *Narikuravars*?"

"Certainly, when I'm free and have nothing else to do," said the dog. "But how have you managed to escape from them so far? You must know at least one or two if not a hundred tricks like me!"

The cat was about to reply. But a sudden sound of footsteps stopped him. Frightened he climbed up a nearby mound. He saw at a distance a gang of *Narikuravars* coming. They carried javelins, nets and traps.

The cat jumped down and in a hurry told the dog: "Run, my friend... Run for your life... The *Narikuravars* are coming. Run and disappear. Use one of your tricks."

"What about you?" asked the dog, panic-stricken.

"Don't worry about me... The only trick I know will certainly save me." The cat said so and scampered up a tree and disappeared in the foliage.

The dog took to his heels, barking all the way. The *Narikuravars* chased him. He was rounded up and trapped in a net.

The cat on the tree-top didn't in the least stir for fear of being killed by the *Narikuravars*.

Several days passed. There was no sign of the dog. But one day he returned, but as a slave. He had a belt fastened to his neck.

When they both met, the dog asked the cat: "Will you please teach me your trick—climbing a tree? Had you taught me earlier I would have saved myself... But it is not too late now... I have escaped from the *Narikuravars*... Please teach me your trick."

"No! I won't," the cat bluntly refused.

The dog demanded an explanation. The cat answered: "If I teach you my trick, you will also climb a tree with me... That I don't mind. But the moment you see the *Narikuravars* you can't resist the temptation of barking. And when you bark you betray not only yourself but also me. I'll have no safety if you are by my side."

<sup>1</sup> *Narikuravars* : gypsies; wandering hunters, moving about on foot and making camps from time to time, and earning a living by selling animals and birds.

The dog became angry. He pounced on the cat to kill him. But the cat ducked and scampered up a tree.

“By hook or by crook I’ll learn your trick. I will not hesitate to eat even your excreta if I can learn through it,” the dog challenged and disappeared.

Even today, the cat for fear that the dog would learn his tricks digs a hole, eases himself and shoves earth into the hole, concealing his excreta. And dogs do not like cats.

*Collected and retold by P. RAJA*

## BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

**Deep Footprints:** Poems by *Minnie N. Canteenwalla*. Published by Nariman F. Canteenwalla, Bombay 1983. Price. Rs. 25/-

If Sri Aurobindo says that someone is “surely a born poet”, what does it imply?

His comment on an early poem by the author of this collection gives us a hint: “There are just a few slight mistakes in the rhythm and turns of language” ... and “the one serious blunder” he points out is a faulty ‘turn of language’. An inherent sense for power and beauty of rhythm and expression therefore seems to be one of the marks of a ‘born poet’.

If we look more closely at the poem which elicited this comment, we may find a further indication: a sense of the mystery and significance lying beyond the surface physical appearances, yet evoked by them, the poet’s eye and heart that are touched by a deeper, richer meaning, for which his rhythmic speech is a powerful means of expression, and from which his intenser command of language flows.

Another characteristic of the ‘born poet’ which cannot be so easily gathered from a single example, but which emerges from this collection as a whole, is the spontaneous impulse to turn to poetry at any and every moment.

It is not rare for people to be inspired to effective verse by the ardours of adolescence, but much rarer to keep the authentic spark and voice alive through all the humdrum pressures of ordinary adult life. Minnie Canteenwalla was obviously able to do so, and moreover to refine and perfect her gift. The poems in this collection are arranged more or less in chronological order, from the early masterpiece which gives the volume its title and the first poem sent to Sri Aurobindo, to the late “Journey’s end”, which appropriately closes the sequence. This enables us to see how she followed Sri Aurobindo’s initial advice: “Let her remain true to the spontaneity of her gift and allow it to develop from within.”

As the ardent young girl matures into wife and mother, and meets the pains and delights of life, we find that the “slight mistakes in the rhythm and turns of language” grow rarer, the expression becomes more powerful, the speech richer, more varied and forcefully compact.

In the original poem sent to him, Sri Aurobindo detected some ‘echoes’ of the European poets Christina Rossetti and Heinrich Heine.<sup>1</sup> In the later ones it is easy for us to catch echoes of the expression of Minnie’s poet-brother Amal Kiran. It is hardly surprising that she should be influenced by the work of one with whom she had such a close and affectionate relationship, especially since he is himself a poet

<sup>1</sup>EDITOR’S NOTE: Actually, Minnie had read neither. But there is a curious fact in connection with Christina. A picture of her by her brother Dante Gabriel drawn from a certain angle was shown to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, side by side with a photograph of Minnie’s taken some time before the poem had been written. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother declared the resemblance between the two in everything—the facial profile, the way the hair had been done, the general posture of the head and body—to be remarkable.



of such power. Nevertheless this influence is not more than an echo, the voice which speaks through these pages is unique, and sings its own song.

Its recurring themes are, first, a thrilled response to the beauties of Nature—the sea, the hills, the forests, or the more intimate loveliness of a garden, a flower; second, the rich affections of her woman's heart pouring out towards the members of her family and her animal friends; third, and most dominant, enriching the whole volume with a deep soul-glow, her *bhakti* towards her Gurus, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This last is the element that brings profundity and power to the nature poetry as well as to the family poems, and carries the writer up to occasional peaks of sustained perfection, as in the flawless sequence of poems on pages 82-85, two to the Mother, two to Sri Aurobindo and two on herself as a disciple, 'Surrender' and 'Inner Whispers'.

This beautifully presented volume is brought out as a tribute to Mrs. Canteenwalla, who passed away last August, by her family, and is a fitting memorial to one who mirrored so much of her deeper life throughout the years in these poems. A long introduction by her brother K. D. Sethna, Amal Kiran of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, is full of biographical interest and intimate insight. The lovely late poem 'Album' (p. 116) sums up the whole course of her inner life from light to light... our only regret is that no photograph from it graces this volume; but word-pictures are plenty and will delight all artist-souls. Her family's fulfilment of Mrs. Canteenwalla's last request has answered a plea expressed in a poem of 1972, which we quote in full to give some hint of the voice that pervades these pages:

*Where you have walked* (p. 92)

The earth made sweet with your footprints  
 Where you have walked these many years—  
 The sunshine blessed by your shadow—  
 The roses, within your sight, sparkle like unshed tears  
 Of some deep-hidden joy!  
 The light about you is a blissful caress!  
 O make me a part of your roses' fragrance,  
 A part of this soil filled with your tenderness!

SHRADDHAVAN