SRI AUROBINDO

WITH Whose BIRTHDAY THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA COINCIDES
THE FLAG
OF INDIA'S SPIRITUAL MISSION
(See Second Editorial)

* 
BLACK represents GOLD
GREY represents SILVERY BLUE
THE MESSAGE OF AUGUST 15

It is a symbolic act of fate that India, the land known through the ages for her spirituality, is celebrating her Independence on the very date on which falls the birthday of her greatest living Master of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo will be 78 on August 15. He stands for that deepest and highest Independence, the freedom of the soul from the shackles of mortal ignorance, the liberation of the human into the Divine Consciousness. But it is worth remembering that he was once in the van of political life—the universally acknowledged leader of Bengal in revolt against Lord Curzon's scheme to partition that province. A close friend of 'Thakur's, a friend whom Thakur was always eager to consult, he shaped the nationalist mind of India at a critical period and the stamp he put upon it is still visible in spite of various changes that have taken place.

Side by side with his political activity he had been practising Yoga for several years. A stage of development was reached when he felt that his mission was to strike out a new path of spiritual growth that would not only lead the mortal consciousness to the Infinite and the Eternal but also bring a dynamic divinity to the world for completely transforming the vichar's life. He is a sort of the lonely Beyond: his aim is to effect a top-to-toe change in human nature, so that man the mental being may be henceforth a supramental one. The Ashram in Pondicherry that has sprung up around him is a scene of multifarious activity, a field for a hundred talents and aptitudes—two of diverse types developing by a series of inner Yoga experiences and by the expression of those experiences in outer life. The Ashram is a glowing focus of India's innate spirituality, fraught with immense possibilities of irradiating the entire life of the nation.

The Eyes of the World on Sri Aurobindo

Eyes all over the world are awakening to this centre of light. The India Government's Ministry of External Affairs has been receiving enquiries from individuals and institutions abroad, especially from America, about the aims and activities of the Ashram in Pondicherry. Even arrangements are being discussed now for taking documentary films of the Ashram. And recently the Government ordered, for use in Indian Embassies in foreign countries, forty sets of Sri Aurobindo's Collected Poems and Plays as well his philosophical exposition of his Yogic vision of the world, The Life Divine, about which Aldous Huxley has remarked in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy: "I consider it a book not merely of the highest importance as regards its content, but remarkably fine as a piece of philosophical and religious literature." Eager minds in both England and the U.S.A. are turning to the Aurobindonian thought: two universities in the former—Stanford and Cornell—have prescribed Essays on the Gita and The Life Divine respectively as part of post-graduate study. In India, too, Benares University has put Sri Aurobindo on its syllabus. The move, in the West no less than the East, to suggest his name for the Nobel Prize is perhaps the interest testimony to the growing recognition of him as a world-figure of far-reaching significance.

But there was, and is, to very lately, a tendency amongst us to confuse the significance of Sri Aurobindo to the realm of Yoga and philosophy and literature. It was not sufficiently realised that his so-called retirement from public life or even his comparative aloofness at present in the midst of his own Ashram implies no renunciation of the world's labour. Of course, visitors to the Ashram could never harbour the delusion that Sri Aurobindo had cut himself off from all earthly occupations. But the country at large was too much engrossed in leaders who seemed in more apparent ways to concern themselves with secular affairs. Two whole years of Independence had to elapse before the sense kindled up that in the strange fact of the birthday of Sri Aurobindo coinciding with the day of India's liberation there lay the clear pointer to Sri Aurobindo's being by his spiritual thoughts not only the secret force behind our freedom but also the one personality with whom our free future is bound up and who alone can be the architect of our true greatness.

It was indeed a sign of the times that when Pandit Nehru was recently in Calcutta a bundle of leaflets was thrown into his car, demanding of him to bring Sri Aurobindo back to Bengal. A still more lively portent is the decision taken in Bengal to celebrate on an all-India basis the birthday of Sri Aurobindo. A strong reception committee has been formed with eminent men as members. The committee has appealed to all people as also to public institutions, clubs or associations to come forward and co-operate and make the celebration a success worthy of Bengal. Here is the first distinct articulation of a new tendency in the country, trying to bring about a break-away from old moorings. Here is the dawn promising a wonderful day if only we could bethink ourselves—the dawn of an authentic vision of Sri Aurobindo's position in India—the position of a Rishi, a seer.

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of spiritual truth who brings to mankind the creative word, a bacteriologist, the mantras whose luminous power gives life the rhythm of a divine repute.

The Mission of a Master Rishi

The genuine Rishi is no mere poet of supernal mysteries; he lets loose upon the world through both his poetic utterance and his life-movement a spiritual force remoulding the world around him in the image of the Divine and reordering it into a harmony beyond the human. The Rishi is not the god who prides himself in heeding only the source a whole people's culture and civilization. Of course, he has always an intense nucleus of select disciples following the path of his yoga and without such a nucleus his work would never establish itself on earth; but his yoga must not be allowed to develop into the inner circle of a sect. Rishi's actions and his motives and, golding their motives and motions, make them serve in various manners the Light that is for ever. He extends his influence everywhere, diadems no function of the individual being, shires no responsibility of world-existence. He can be the leader in all the fields, give to each thing the right touch, set going each along the true line, lay the profound base and direct the lofty construction of every important scheme of secular growth.

Yes, Sri Aurobindo can be the nation's leader. But let us not commit the mistake of thinking that he must act like ordinary leaders, deliver an abundance of speeches, hurry from conference to conference. No doubt, a certain amount of ordinary leadership has to be accepted but we must leave a Rishi to act as he best knows how. Jayaprakash Narain once asked Sri Aurobindo to take Gandhiji's place. The request was reverent; yet when we ponder the nature of the leadership of the Maharajah and the Rishi, it is only the Rishi's with an entirely different orientation, and it does not stop short with the ideals set up by morality and religion. Sri Aurobindo does not wish to preach mere brotherhood and service and honest social behaviour. All these things are compassed by his work, but they transmit from them a meaning different from the one in which even the most moral and religious men live. Nor is a finely cultured mind—the artistic and the contemplative intellect, the consciousness of the poet-philosopher—the ultimate foundation of the Aurobindonian influence. Sri Aurobindo is indeed a poet-philosopher of a rare order, bringing a balanced beauty, a vivid wisdom; and the effort of the moralist and the religious man at detachment from gross animals desires and egoistic motives finds fulfillment in him; yet are they not his all-sufficient ends—they are only the means of his master-passion. His master-passion is not mental brilliance or the triumph of a human virtue. It is the sheer surpassing of the human level, the complete attaining of the Supreme Being and the direct expression of that Being in all the ways of our nature.

The Rishi's Threefold God-realisation

We must get an inkling of the authentic Rishi's fountainhead of influence we must try to grasp what India's scriptures have meant by the Supreme Being. First and foremost the Supreme Being is a mighty transcendence of time and beyond, an infinite Consciousness and Bliss inconceivable above the waxing and waning of the world's years. A splendid stanza of the ancient Upanishads translated with revelatory force by Sri Aurobindo enacts in words that sovereign status: "There the sun shines not and the moon has no lustre and the stars are blind; there these lightnings flash not nor any earthly fire. For all that is bright is but the shadow of His brightness and by His shining all this shineth." The Rishi who has attained union with the Transcendence carries, among things that fade, a smiling Eternity unbarred by any interruptions. While spelling out the realization we cannot apply our measure of moments and confine it within an age of seventy-eight or any other. The Spirit's timelessness pleads that in his fundamental self grows not old as men grow old who walk the earth, clutches the passing and the mortal in the Eternity that is above and life is not utterly the opposite of the changing and the phenomenal. When the Upanishads chant, "By His shining all this shineth," they do more than trace the source of our light from the Beyond. While spelling out the Transcendence, they mean to show us that the immensity of the Upanishads no sooner found tongue in the splendid stanza about the supra-cosmic "There" than it followed up with another as splendid about the cosmic "Here" of the Divine. In Sri Aurobindo's vibrant and wide-sweeping God-conception, the Sanskrit mantra reads: The Eternal is before us and the Eternal is behind us and to the south and to the north of us and above and below and extended everywhere. All this magnificent universe is nothing but the Eternal. The Rishi is inwardly one with a Cosmic Consciousness supporting with a limitless peace a limitless activity, a myriad variety of forms. Not the one body alone which we know as his makes the reality of him. It cannot circumscribe the far-reaching contiguity of his being and his becoming. In all quarters he feels the presence and work. He overspans the span of an individual life. The marshes of the centuries are not alien to him, the rising and falling and rising again of the endless energy around us is part of him in the union he has achieved with the Beauty of ancient days that is ever new.

Nor, when we have seen Rishihood in its cosmic aspect as well as in its transcendence, have we said last word about it. There is still another aspect—the individual. Our universe is not merely the occult omnipresence of the Divine: it is also intended to be His manifestation. The immense unity and the immense multiplicity are presentward to express in the cosmic formula a divine life developing from the individual soul-spark, the flame of the personal godhead, which is enshrined in creatures and which one of the Upanishads rendered by Sri Aurobindo sums up with intuitional intensity: "The Purusha that is within is no larger than the finger of a man; he is like a blazing fire that is without smoke; he is lord of his past and his future—he alone is today and he alone shall be tomorrow." An intricate evolution focussing itself in individuals and manifesting through their births of the individual soul is worked out from a beginning and a base that appear to be the opposite of everything divine. The Rishi is he who under the figure of his personality develops to the utmost the secret psyche around which mind and life-force and body are organised; he brings it to the fore, unfolds all his movements with its sublimities and its sweetestness, enters with its pure radiance into intimate enmolding relation with fellow-creatures. Moreover, he aspires to make the psyche a repository of the permanent Truth that is not what has come from which the life and the Rishi is himself, is not to be manifested by it. For in that Truth is the archetype, the pre-existent perfection of all that is here evolving; and the descent of this archetype into the psyche so that the mind and life-force and body organised around the soul may themselves become not only instinct with the soul's purity but also charged with the plenary knowledge and power and bliss whose delegate is the soul. The individual aspect of Rishihood is perhaps the most important of all, since in it the Divine's creativity is at its most potent for realisations. More than any by mystic in the past a stress is put upon it by Sri Aurobindo.

The Aurobindonian Message

He declares that Rishihood in former ages did not sufficiently realise the meaning of evolutionary spirituality. To throw an aureole about life's hours and suggest the personal Godhead through the human figure is not enough. A bound has been felt by all mystics, an irreducible imperfection in our members that compels us finally to drop them and look for the end of our soul's journey in a plane that is supra-terrestrial—like the Vedantic Brahma, the Brahman of the Vedanta, of the Brahman Vedanta. But how then shall we satisfy the hunger that every part of us has for its own perfection? A divine mind, a divine life-force, a divine body—these are what our nature craves for: unless they are achieved, the visionary travail of the soul and its inseparable task of creation has not the chance it needs for metamorphosis. Sri Aurobindo affirms that in the Transcendence there is a dynamic Consciousness waiting to incarnate on earth the ideality, the perfection, of all the parts of our complex being. Ever since man awoke to his own incompleteness and to a superhuman Presence within him the dream of a divine earth has haunted him. He has sought the elixir vitae along a multitude of paths. Disappointment has met him wherever he has searched; for, the right mode of searching has never been found by him. Even his spiritual masters have told him that though the terrestrial plane can admit the paradoxal lustre he cannot hope for an integral manifestation of it. But now comes Sri Aurobindo and proclaims to us after nearly forty years of indomitable increasing experiment in mysticism that the earth-divine would never have been set by the Divine except for an integral display and manifestation of Hinsself and that, however strange it may seem to us, a divine mind and life-force and body are a miracle inevitable, in the Yoga he is practicing today and imparting to those who dwell in his Aashram.

It may not be possible for all of us to be Aurobindonian Yogis and shrug him off to whatever degree he integral Rishihood. But we can surely keep in contact with his harmonious being, draw to us the revealing vision that he commands, feel the direction of his fatherly hand in our day-to-day groppings, whether in politics or nature or in the East and the West. With his voice we too raise our own exultation and inspiration all his creative powers and if men could consciously establish rapport with him they would lift themselves and their country to sterling greatness.

Broad and bright as the sun the message for India is written in the twofold momentousness that marks August 15.
THE TRUE FLAG FOR INDIA

Our flag is constructed rather than created.

Turkey and Pakistan have less inspiration in their ensigns, but in the crescent and star upon a crimson background and the crescent and star upon a background that is green these countries give adequate though mechanical voice to the Islamic sentiment and the Islamic causes, but there is little about India and her flag? No doubt, what we have designed is not without meaning; but it seems constructed rather than created. The three colours of green, white and saffron are said to represent generative production, disciplined coition, utilitarianism and the serious vengeance implicated in the progress of a country. The wheel in the middle is said to urge by its round shape, blue colour and twenty-four spokes the perfect and equal running of these processes; the sea-side and sky-side—in short, universal application of them to our lives, the sun shining day-in-day-out, the year-round need and validity for national well-being. The wheel is declared also to be representative of the march of man towards a higher standard of living: it suggests the cart-wheel, the potter’s wheel, the spinning wheel. All these interpretations have point; yet how little they strike one as bringing out the genius of India!

The flag appears to be an economist’s vision, concerned with the outer life and its beneficial, its profitable ordering. Of course, the wheel comes from a pillar erected by Asoka and carries a religious-ethnic association; we may, therefore, read in its message a strain of satya, chinnan and karuna—truth, non-violence and pity. Still, the level of the vision is not much uplifted; rather, the religious-association is pulled down for want of a genuine spiritual intuition irradiating it. Economics, however morally and humanitarians, can hardly do justice to the destiny of India. Surely, India’s categorically banum is not compassed by a vision of well ordered, peaceful and democratic outer life scrupulously achieved and vigilantly sustained. Even if we add more nuances of significance we do not bring out India’s soul. For instance, we may say that the three combined colours stand for the unity of the main divisions into which the communities of the country fall—the Hindus who revel in the animal’s softness and limn whose prophet favoured green, the Sikhs and Jains and Christians and Parsis who should get blended into a homogeneity like white which blends so many colours. Or else we may take green to be firmness and faith like the spontaneous clinging of green things to the soil, white to be probity and purity and harmlessness, saffron to be austerity and courage and sacrifice. And we may understand by the Asoka wheel the unerring and eternal law of karma which Buddha held to be the secret power in the interminable world-process. Even then the depths of India remain unexpressed.

NO TOUCH OF THE MYSTICAL REALISATION

There seems to be an attempt at embodying in the flag a thoroughly secular mood. No touch of the mystical is noticeable at all in India’s history is allowed. The only sense in which India can be secular without ceasing to be herself—the rising above creed and caste into essential spirituality and the practising of spirituality with an eye turned not merely towards the Beyond but also into the Here and Now, which is evidently overlooked. The inter-communal politico-religious tension of a particular period of our history has influenced overmuch the conception of our flag. An innermost essential influence is the viewing of India in terms of the worker, the labourer, the poor toiling majority: naturally such terms bring the economic values to the fore and make us see our country’s fulfilment in the right production, conservation and utilisation of outward life-resources. The choice of that Buddhist emblem, the Asoka wheel, is in keeping with both the secular mood and the labourer-emphasis. For, in the first place, Buddhism, by its denial of either a personal Godhead or a personal moral and its refusal of metaphysical explanations of existence on a purely psychological approach to self-perfection, functions with a sort of agnostic spirituality, a negative mysticism, and appears to do away with religion while accepting morality. In the second place, it aims at being a rule of life for the common majority, it purports to offer a mysteryless religion, a non-esoteric revelation which all can accept. In the first place, it puts a premium on poverty and service and encourages a levelling down of social distinctions to a classless primitiveness. Buddhism is in tune also with the virtues underlined by Gandhi whose personality powerfully colours the thoughts of our leaders—the virtues of non-violence and humanitarian fellow-feeling. The Asoka wheel is, therefore, considered to be as appropriate as an emblem of the India conception as it is blausfully forgotten that the heart and core of Buddhism is none of these aspects of Buddha’s message but the all-annulling all-transcending experience of Nirvana, an experience which throws away the entire universe as a trance or an illusion, an experience intense and essentially worldly and hence the absolute opposite of everything secular, everything connected with the outer life of mankind at large. It is also forgotten that Nirvana is so much above the head of the common man and so difficult of...
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attainment that mankind at large can never have anything to do with it. Buddhism, in a very important sense, is as little democratic as it is secular.

The Nature of the Indian Genius

It is, moreover, not fully in consonance with the Indian genius. That is why it is as good as defunct in the land of its birth. The genius of India can never be satisfied with a sort of agnostic spirituality and negative mysticism; nor with an endeavour at dissolving the variety and diversity of her mental and physical existence; nor, again, with setting at a discount the urge to realise a dynamic divinity, a spiritual and mystical light turned towards the flowering of noble and beautiful world-values. Non-violence and humanitarianism are also not the last word of the Indian ethical mind: a manifestation of God in humanity is the main ideal. Humanity is not a supreme value in itself, and non-violence and compassionate fellow-feeling are fine virtues but they are not the utter goal of the ethical life, the utter goal being nothing else than a general avasthavat, so to speak, that acts according to a spiritual and mystical truth within and which can even appear at times to be violent and ruthless, just as Sri Krishna appeared on the battlefield of Kurukshetra where humanity stood divided into an army of the Divine and an army of the Diabolic. Further, the Indian genius is not democratic in the superficial modern manner. The whole world is indeed to be envisaged by the individual's consciousness and the good of mankind at large has indeed to be worked for by every member of organised society; but the foundation of this democracy is in realising the God who is the One Superhuman in all that is human, and ever to this high, ever primary realisation the common mind is to be called, and each altruistic action must spring from that luminously altruistic experience. The true Indian democracy, therefore, must lay stress not on the mere common man, not on mankind as it is in the majority: it must lay stress on the man of God, the Saint and the Seer, mankind as it is in the finest few and as in the majority it ought to be.

In the light of the above considerations we cannot help feeling that the true flag of India is yet to be found. This does not mean we should fail to respect and love the enigm we have before us. The enigm is set up with the purpose of drawing our thoughts to the wonderful being of our country and when we lift our eyes to its flight above our heads we look not so much at the figure of the triumphant spirit of our motherland, "Jai Hind" or "Vande Mataram" as what our hearts cry out, and through the green and white and saffron and through the Ashoka wheel we move really towards that spirit. For the sake of that spirit which the flag-makers sought to catch and keep like a beacon for the Indian multitudes, we must always give the most fervent response of patriotism even though the pattern may be inadequate to our country's inner greatness, but the flow of our devotion must not drown the fact that extremely desirable is a pattern with deeper significances, with more inspiration from the soul of this country whose life-breath has been the Divine and the Infinite.

What the True Flag of India Should Be

Luckily, in our opinion, we do not have to cast about for the right pattern: we already possess it in the symbolisation made of India's spiritual mission by the greatest spiritual figure we have amongst us. The symbolisation by Sri Aurobindo uses a simple yet subtle combination of the three colours that we associate most with the overarching heavens—blue, silver and gold. It uses also the most beautiful and ancient Indian emblem of divine revelation, the lotus, but with a stylisation of it into a circle to create the impression of fullness and completeness; and there is a further packing of significances by making this circle concentric with two others within it of different dimensions, the innermost circle having nothing inside it while the middle has four divisions like petals and the outermost has twelve petallite divisions. Golden—suggestive of luminous sovereignty —against a background of silvery blue is the lotus here. The Seed-Shakti of the Divine Mother, creator of all, is pictured by the small centre in which all things seem to be held securely concentrated. Out of this, for primary creative powers are shown as breaking: these are Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahakalakshi, Mahasaraswati—goddesses-personalities of wisdom, puissance, harmonious beauty, flawsless organisation. These personalities are then depicted as putting forth twelve manifesting powers that work within the periodic time-process. The supreme infinity that is the all-containing and all-supporting Spiritual Self, the foundational mystery from which the Divine's creative and manifesting marvel stands out, is the background of silvery blue, in the centre of which the three-tiered lotus is placed. This silvery blue background is a square piece, each side of the square bearing to the diameter of the lotus the ratio of 6:125. This ratio gives the right balance: the four equal sides suggest a perfection of being, an omniscience for a world-structure that can face and meet all demands.

Here is a flag charged with India's authentic mission, the mission of rendering victorious the Divine Mother, the Infinite Self and Shakti. In this flag we have the suggestion not only of a sky with an ethereal lotus poised in it, but also of a stretch of water with an earthly lotus affloat. The ever-existing ideality above and the secret wonder that is to be revealed below are both compassed in a satisfying symbolisation. The full-blow circular lotus with two rows of petals seems to be the true inspired emblem which was hovering, so to speak, in the nation's inner mind but which through an insufficiently receptive imagination our leaders misconstrued as Asoka's' wheel. Here too is a wheel-like design, but suffused with a superb meaning attuned to the Rig-Veda which is hidden in the heart of man and which the Indian consciousness has heard down the ages. Foremost here of all suggestions by the wheel-like design is the Presence of God as intuit-ed by our country's Seers and Saints—the Presence of God within a lotus-chakra that is the centre of a luminous life on every level of the profound recesses of our subliminal and superliminal being. In the colours, too, though we may see several implications pertaining to our outer existence, the master implication by virtue of this particular pattern remains the Infinite and the Divine.

In Sri Aurobindo's flag of Mother India and her spiritual mission we have also the promise of India's unity. For, the genuine indefeasible unity which is only a sense in all men of the one God within, the God in whom alone are eternal liberty, equality and fraternity, the three greatest ideals that a country can pursue, the sole ideals that can make one harmonious country of all the countries constituting the world. If India wishes to be great by fulfilling her true genius and if she wishes to be the missionary of a world-union, no flag but this can ever be the symbol of her victorious emergence as an independent nation.

K. D. S.

Salutation to Sri Aurobindo

Poet and Priest of Integral Freedom

We salute you, Sri Aurobindo, Poet and Prophet of Integral Freedom. Yours was the first clarion-call of awakening that shook the somnolent skies of India. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You made the maratha of "Vandemataram" vibrate in the very cells of the country and baptised the nation in the fire of Mother-worship. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You proclaimed out of the pregnant hue of your spiritual life that India is rising not for herself but for humanity and that the Light she holds in herself is the Light which shall illumine the world. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You have evolved out of your own unique spiritual experiences and the experiences of the past the Integral Yoga for the integral being of man and promised to him an integral union with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

Your Supernal Light has dissipated the mists of illusionism and escapism and vouchsafed to mankind the glorious ideal of the Life Divine upon earth. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You have affirmed the ideal of human unity and paved the way for its fulfilment. Humanity shall live, as the supreme gods live, in perfect unity and harmony and peace—this is your message of God's decree. Sri Aurobindo, we salute you.

You have given us the certitude of an integral freedom—freedom of the soul and freedom of nature, to which the political freedom of the past is a prelude and a preliminary. Sri Aurobindo, Poet and Priest of the Integral Freedom, we salute you!
POEMS OF HOMAGE

On the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's Seventy-seventh Birthday on August 15

O Lone Emperor...

O lone Emperor of the deathless Name,
Enthroned on thy golden altitudes,
Eyeing the blind march of fallen earth
Through the wayless gulf of time... .
Gray pilgrims of the space-time uplift
To the unremored sky's indifference
And the masked gloom-titans of the abyss
Who await, with chaos, to deluge the world...
Descend, a diamond scimitar of the Supreme,
Lord of uncheck'd continents of power,
Unleashing all thy ivory steeds of light
And the overwhelming majesty of thy eagle-mind,
A lightning-blast of undaunted master-will,
To smite the veiled giant of the dark
And burn the all-pervading seed of death
And awaken the nocturnal cliffs of sleep
And release man's yearning for the vast.
O thou limitless conqueror and king,
Reveal the apocalypse of thy visage-sun!

Thy Countrymen Bow to Thee...

Thy countrymen, O Soul's warrior, bow to thee,
O Sage, who camest our deposed gloom to reclaim
With thy flame-mantra of Light and Liberty,
Kindled by the prowess of Sun no cloud could tame.

We know: the globe-wide darkness will diminish
Since thou art come with thy New Dawn's guarantee,
If we downcast our fear and sing the hymn
To the Spirit which through thy self burns radiantly.

O Poet of Ind who chantest like a King of kings:
"Over earth's shadows and Time's fool interludes
And life's frustrations and destiny's fatal flings
An Involute Being of deep compassion broods.

"The powers of hate and chains of lust and pride
And the ego's demon sway and Falsehood's harem,
Entailing the lunacy of suicide,
Are phantoms: only the love of God endures

"Who never has forsaken the land of Ind
But leans evermore her holy lust to bless
With His all-transfiguring touch, and humankind
Shall wake once more to the thrill of His care.""

If we had but faith in Immortality
Thy voice would waft us echoes from the heights,
Whose luminous Grace, thy swift epiphany,
Spurred us to freedom and then to fiercer flights.

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India's Sacrificial Fire...

India's sacrificial fire
In your high self has found its shrine:
The moverless brow of the universe
Implements your signature divine.
Earth's seed of blood upflamed in you
Nevermore to be quenched again
And its light soared higher day by day
Which gods from out the blue sustain.
In this dim land you came to pave
The swift white path to liberty
And the world its freedom shall attain
And kiss your feet in ecstasy.
The past dawns never tramelled your feet
Nor halted your march to the Future's noon,
And the whirl of Shiva's delivering dance
Imparts its rhythm to you alone.
Dauntless breaker of outworn moulds!
You slay the night like a sword of morn:
To rave tradition's mountain-walls
You, bane of sun, to us were born:
An emblem of the heavenly dare,
A wielder of thunder zone could tame:
The darkling maws of Fate's abyss
Were closed in fear when you, Lord, came.
O ocean of glow, life's fiery flood!
How shall Time's prison encloison you
To whom the cell was a trysting-place,
Where Krishna came your soul to woo!
Through Time you won to Timelessness
And temples flashed where dungeons fell
And these upheaved hearts' hymns as you
Burnt ascent glooms of tyrant Hell.
Hark, conchs are loud and light's in space—
Behold, upon our soil of pain
The King of Kings descends at last
With the Queen of Queens for ever to reign!
O Ind, whose destiny's leader is hailed
As the Leader of the universe!
Thy dust we hug and bring to the Twin
Our radiant hommage agleam with stars...

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Majesty Dawns Across the Skies

Majesty dawns across the skies,
Suns of Truth invade our night—
Over the curve of darkness flies
Regular, star of golden light.
Trance-held on horizons of Time
Involute gods aid now The Birth,
Heaven is silent, not a chime
Awakes the sleepiness of earth;
Even the birds are silent now
Under the magic spell of Dawn—
Reflected on His mighty brow
Bhadra's kiss to earth is born.
Dawn the golden mantle wearer
Opens worlds of Light and Bliss.
Inly and forever nearer
Bounds the Sun-god's fiery kiss
Vision of beauty, of rapture, of love!
Into Thy arms earth's spirit flies,
Into Thy Light that shines above
Nature stands captured in the skies.
Night is banished, Nescience slain!
Dawn proclaims Her victory—
Eternity rules our lives again:
O King, O Queen of Divinity!

-*

NISHIKANTO

Translated by Dilip Kumar Roy from the Bengali

NORMAN DOWSETT

*The first letters of alternate lines, from the first, spell MOTHER DIVINE; those of alternate lines, from the second, spell SRI AURORIBENDO.
Here, within a short compass, is a clear and complete survey of the fundamental temper and motive of Indian culture in its effective relation to the work of building a full and manifold life in the world. Indian spirituality, not only leading with a careful gradation the deep soul in man, but also subtly pervading, organically governing, variously evolving into its own high and wide consciousness and power his rational, ethical, aesthetic, scientific, occupational and political endeavour and thereby functioning that whole spiritual Indian is admirably shown by who, in the Indian idea of the one true, the deep foundation in man as a deep spiritual being is to Indian thinking the significance of life and the aim of human existence. That deeper and more spiritual idea of Nature and of existence is, I may add, though stated in however new and modern a language, the thing towards which a great deal of what is strongest and most potential of fruitful development in recent European thinking already turns with a growing impetus. Whether this turn is a relapse to "barbarism" or the high natural outcome of her own increasing and ripened culture is for Europe to decide; but always to India that idea of Self, God, Spirit and the moulding of man into that have been the fundamental power of her philosophy, religion, civilization. The formal turn and the rhythmical lines of effort of this culture have grown through two complete external stages. The first was the early Vedic in which religion took its formal stand on the natural approach of the physical mind of man to the Godhead in the universe, but the inner essence or the sacrificial fire of a the superessential truth, behind the form of outward religious worship and conception. The second was the Purana-Tantra in which religion took its outward stand on the deeper approach of man's psycho-physical mind to the Divine in the universe, but a greater initiation opened the way to the most intimate truth and living of the spiritual life in all its profundity and infinite possibility of uttermost sublime experience. A third stage has been long in preparation, its idea often cast out in limited or large, quiet or striking spiritual movements and potent new disciplines and religions, but not successful yet, because the circumstances were adverse and the hour not come, which will call the community of men to live in the greatest light of all and to find their whole life on some fully revealed power and grand uplifting truth of the Spirit. Not until that third stage, the hermetic churning has come into its own,—a thing not so easy as the religious reformer, the purist of the reason or the purist of the spirit constantly imagines and by that too hasty imagination falls short in his endeavour, can Indian civilization be said to have discerned the superessential, to have arrived at last where the fully functus officio, crowned and complete in its office of mediation between the man of nature and the Spirit. Twofold Association of the Natural with the Spiritual

Twofold Association of the Natural with the Spiritual

The past dealings of Indian religion with life must be more particularly judged according to the stages of its progress and in each age of its movement on its own basis. But throughout it has consistently held to two perceptions of great wisdom. First, it saw that the approach to the Spirit cannot be sudden, simple and immediate for all individuals or for the community of men, but must come ordinarily or at least at first through a progressive training, an enlarging of the natural life accompanied by an uplifting of all its motives, a growing hold upon it of the higher rational, psychological and ethical leading up to the highest spiritual law. But it saw too at the same time that in order that its greater aim might be fruitful and the character of its culture imperative, there must through and at every moment be some kind of insistence on the spiritual motive, which for the mass of men means some kind of religious influence. That was necessary in order that from the beginning some power of the universal inner truth, the real truth of our existence, might never cease to set on the summits of each evolving power of the human nature but put everywhere indifferently or in symbols behind the whole system so that its impression might fall in whatever degree on the man and as far as possible, increase in pervasion and take up the entire culture of the being. This was the aim and to a great extent, considering always the imperfections of our nature and the difficulty of the endeavour, it achieved its purpose. The world has been of extremely high value that for the Indian the whole of life is a religion. That was true of the ideal and to a certain degree and in a certain sense in the fact and practice; for no step could take in his inner or outer life without being reminded of a spiritual
existence, of something beyond the moment in time, in his individual ego, exceeding the needs and interests of his vital and physical being. That gave its tone and turn to his thought and action and produced the subtle undertow of passion and appeal and the greater readiness and the spiritual effort which are even now distinguishing marks of the Indian temperament. That readiness is in fact what we mean by the spirituality of the Indian people.

Provision for Differing Capacity and Nature

The idea of the adhikara has to be taken into careful account if we would understand the character of the Indian escape to the Godhead. In no other religious system we get a high-pitched spiritual call and a difficult ethical standard which is made imperative on all, but to which very evidently only the very few are able to give an adequate response. There are presented to us. It may also be graded according to the broadness of the mind, the worldliness, the religious and irreligious, good and bad, souls accepted and souls rejected, the sheep and the goats, the saved and the damned: all between is a confusion, a tug of war or an uncertain balance. This too crude and summary classification is the foundation of the Christian system of an eternal heaven and hell,—though the Catholic religion more humanely interposed a precarious chance of purgatory between that happy and that drear alternative. But Indian religion did not go about its work in that summarizing fashion. At this stage we reach the philosophical systems, the evolving souls, and sure of an eventual salvation by knowledge, love, or works, and all must feel, as the good in them grows, the ultimate touch and call of their highest Self, Spirit, Divinity. But actually in life there can be doubt and discomfort or not to be in one's mind, three or four distinct types which vary in their openness to the religious or spiritual appeal, influence or impulse. And practically this distinction may be said to come to a three-stage grading of the growing human consciousness—one crude, ill-formed, still outward, still vitally selfish and mindless, striving which is more developed and capable of a stronger and deeper psycho-spiritual experience, a riper make of mankind gifted with a more conscious aesthetic and ethical power of the nature; a third, the most developed of all, is ready for full spirituality, fit to receive the pure highest truth of God and of man's being and to tread the summits of divine experience. To meet the need of the first or type or level was provided all that supports the outward craving, the ritual, the social life, the moral law, all that pageant of attracting and compelling symbol with which Indian religion is so richly and profusely equipped, forming and indicative things which work upon the mind consistently and subconsciously and prepare it for an entry into the significances of the greater things that lie behind them. And for him too, for the vitally minded being, is all in the religion that calls on man to turn to a divine Power or powers for the satisfaction of his desires and his interests, but subject to the right and law, the Dharna. For him in the Vedic times the outward ritual sacrifice and at a later period all the religious forms and notions that clustered visibly around the rites and imagery of temple worship, festival and ceremony. These things seem to the developed mind to belong to an ignorant or a half awakened, half ignorant religion, and even their true function and spiritual value are by no means all that is needed for the religious life, and are indispensable to this stage of the development of the human being.

The second stage or type starts from these things, but goes behind them and is capable of understanding more clearly and consciously the psychological, truths, conceptions of the intelligence, the aesthetic indications, the ethical values and directions which Indian religion took care to place behind its system of values with them the outward forms of its system. This nobler type can go forward to a more deeply psycho-religious experience, grappling with the difficulties of the relations between the spirit and life, satisfy the rational, aesthetic and ethical nature, lead them upward towards their own height and train the soul and the mind for the full spiritual existence. This ascending type of humanity claims all that large and opulent middle region of philosophic, psycho-spiritual, ethical, aesthetic and emotional religious seeking which is the larger, more significant portion of the wealth of human spirit. At this stage we reach the philosophical systems, the subtle illuminating debates and inquiries of the thinkers, the noble reaches of devotion, the higher, amplier, aesther ideals of the Dharna, the psychological suggestions and urgings in the religion which draw men by their appeal and promise towards the practice of Yoga. But all these things opened and climbed to the luminous grandeur of spiritual truth and its practice was kept ready and its means of attainment provided for the third and greatest type of human being, the third loftiest stage of the spiritual evolution. This is the first light of spiritual knowledge when it is separated from veil and compromise and goes beyond all symbols and middle significances, the absolute and universal divine love, the beauty of the All-beautiful, the absolute sense of unity with all beings, universal compassion and benevolence, the religious law and the sacrifice, the perfect purity of the psychological into the spiritual unity or the spiritual ecstasy, these divinest things were the heritage of the human being ready for divinity and their way and call were the supreme significances of Indian religion, and

yoga. He reached by them the fruits of his perfect spiritual evolution, an identity with the Self and Spirit, a dwelling in or with God, the divine law of his being, a spiritual universality, communion, transcendent.

But distinctions are lines that can always be overpassed in the infinite complexity of man's nature and there was no sharp and unbridgeable divi-
only, a graduation, since the actuality or potentiality of the three powers exist in all men. Both the middle and the highest significances were near and present and pervaded the whole system, and approaches to the highest status were not absolutely denied to any man, in spite of a certain prohibition; but these prohibitions broke down in practice or left a sense that he had passed a certain point and was a sign of election. He had only to find the way and the guide. But even the direct approach of the adhikara, differing capacity and varying nature, sadhakara, was recognised in subtle ways, which it would be beyond my present purpose to enumerate. One may note as an example the significant Indian idea of the talka-dveetas, the special name, form, idea of the Divinity which each man may choose for worship and communion and follow after according to the attraction in his nature and his capacity of spiritual intelligence. And each of the forms has its outer initial associati-
ations and suggestions for the worshipper, its appeal to the intelligence, psy-}

Attesten to the Scientific and Philosophical Spirit

This carefully graded and complex system of religious development and spiritual evolution was linked on by a process of pervading intimate relation to that general culture of the life of India, and according to his capacity and the spiritual teacher and guide is expected to perceive and take account of the necessary gradations and the individual need and power in giving of help and guidance. Many things may be objected to this large method of action which is often misunderstood. But the principle of it and the main lines of the application embody a remarkable wisdom, knowledge and careful observation of human nature and an assured insight into the things of the spirit which none can question who has observed deeply and flexibly, who has experienced the experience of the obstacles and potentialities of our nature in its approach to the concealed spiritual reality.

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The Indian Spiritual Ideal—Continued from previous page

psychic sciences, and every instructor was in his degree respected as a guru or sarkar, a guide or preceptor of the human spirit. All knowledge was woven into one and led up by degrees to the one highest knowledge.

Development of the Ethical Life

The whole right practice of life founded on this knowledge was in the view of Indian culture a dharma, a living according to a just, understanding and right view of self-culture, of the knowledge of things and life and of action in that knowledge. Thus each clan and class and kind and species, each of soul, mind, life, body has its dharma. But the largest or at least most vitally important part of the dharma was held to be the culture and ordering of the ethical nature of man. This ethical man, contrary to the technically misguided notion of a certain type of critics, attracted a quite enormous amount of attention, occupied the greater part of Indian thought and writing not devoted to the things of pure knowledge and of the Spirit and was so far pushed that there is no ethical formation or ideal which does not reach in its highest conception and a certain divine abstraction of ideal practice. Indian thought took for granted,—though there are some remarkable speculations to the contrary,—the ethical nature of man and the ethical law of the world. It considered that man was justified in such and diplomatic means, and that it was necessary for the satisfaction and expansion of life, not but in obeying the dictates of dharma as the law of his being; for in all things there is a greater law, each has not only its side of interest and desire, but its dharma or rule of right practice, satisfaction, expansion, rule of his being. The Dharma is that which is fixed by the wise in the Shastra is the right thing to observe, the true rule of action.

First in the web of Dharma comes the social law; for man's life is only for his vital, personal individual self, but much more importantly for the community, though most importantly of all for the greatest Self one in himself and in all beings, for God, for the Spirit. Therefore first the individual must subordinate himself to the communal self, though by no means bound altogether to efface himself in it as the extremists of the communal idea imagine. He must live according to the law of his nature harmonised with the law of his social type and class, for the nation and in a higher reach of his being—this was greatly stressed by the Buddhists—harmonised with the dharma of his humanity. Thus living and acting he could learn to transcend the social scale of the Dharma, practise without injuring the basis of life the ideal scale and finally grow into the liberty of the Spirit, when rule and duty were of creation, but binding because he would then move and act in a highest free and immortal dharma of the divine nature. All these aspects of the Dharma were closely linked together in a progressive unity. Thus, for example, each of the four orders had its own social function and ethics, but also an ideal rule for the growth of the pure ethical being, and every man by observing his dharma and turning his action Godwards could grow out of it into the spiritual freedom. But behind all dharma and ethics was put, not only as a safeguard but as a light, a religious sanction, a reminder of the higher law of dharma; the law of the sadhave, noble, vivid and powerful, that the king himself charged the king himself with the duty of the Dharma of the nation and society. Society was placed under the sanction of the Rishis and the gods, protected from the violence of the great and powerful, given a socio-religious character and the king himself charged by dharma with the duty of the Dharma of the nation and society. The state and dharma were closely interwoven and raised by a similar opening beyond themselves to the heights of spiritual life.

God and even the desires and images of the sensuous life were turned by the vision into figures of a divine soul-expense. Few religions have gone further as this immense capacity to carry the entire nature of man in its large puritan and many-sided approach to the spiritual and the infinite.

Organisation of the Outer Life

Finally, there is the most outwardly vital life of man, his ordinary duty, political, social, and material being. This too Indian culture took strenuously in hand and subjected the whole body to the pressure of its own ideals and conceptions. Its method was to build up great shastras of social living, duty and enjoyment, military and political rule and conduct and empirical being considered third in importance. In no way did expan- sion, upend and the right art and relation of these activities, but on those motives, demanded by the very nature of the vital man and his action, was imposed the law of the Dharma, a stringent social and ethical ideal and rule—thus the whole life of the king as the head of power and responsibility was regulated by it in its every hour and function,—and the constant reminder of religious duty. In later times a Machiavellian principle of statecraft, that which has been always and is still pursued by most govern- ments and states, and chief of all by the king himself charged by dharma with the duty of the nation and society, was the most strenuously linked up at every point with the religious idea in the way the vital man can best understand, in the Vedic times by the constant reminder of the sacrifice behind every social and civic act, at a later period by reli- gious rites, ceremonies, worship, the calling in of the gods, the insistence on the subsequent results or a superreligious act of works. So great was this preoccupation, that while in the spiritual and intellectual and other spheres a considerable or a complete liberty was allowed to speculation, action, creation, here the tendency was to impose a rigorous law and authority, a tendency which in the end became greatly exaggerated and prevented the expansion of the society into new forms more suitable for the need of the spirit of the age, the Jupadharmas. A door of liberty was opened to the community by the provision of an automatic permission to changed custom and to the individual in the adoption of the religious life with its own higher discipline of freedom outside the ordinary social weft and warp of human life. A rigid direction of life and discipline of the social law, a larger noble discipline and freer self-culture of the ideal side of the Dharma, a wide freedom of religious and spiritual life became the three powers of the system. The steps of the expanding human spirit mounted through these powers to its perfection.

Final and Complete Fulfilment

Thus the whole general character of the application of Indian ideals to life became throughout of this one texture, the constant, subtly graded, subtly harmonised preparation of the soul of man for its spiritual being. First, the regulated satisfaction of the primary natural being of man sub- jected to the law of the Dharma and the ethical idea and besieged at every moment by the suggestions of religion, a religion at first appealing to his more outward undeveloped mind, but in each of its currents and diplomas and enriched on this nobling, then, but further, significant, armed with the indication of a profoundest spiritual and ideal meaning as its justification. Then, the higher steps of the developed reason and psychical, ethical and aesthetic powers closely interwoven and raised by a similar opening beyond themselves to their own heights of spiritual direction and potentiality. Finally, each of these growing powers was made on its own line of approach a gateway into his divine and spiritual being. Thus we may observe that there was creat- ed a Yoga of knowledge for the intellect and the science of gods, and the man, a yoga of works for the self-exceeding of the active, dynamic and ethical man, a Yoga of love and bhakti for the self-exceeding of the emo- tional, aesthetic, hedonistic man, by which each arrived to perfection through a Self-war, spiritual, God's direction of his own special power, as too a Yoga of self-exceeding through the power of the psychological being and even through the power of the life in the body,—Yogas which could be practiced in separation or in some kind of a relationship with or self-exceeding led to a highest self-becoming. To become one with universal being and all existence, one with the Self and Spirit, united with God completed the human evolution, built the final step of man's self-
I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soul to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the world earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twist the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my need since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;
For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope
That lead to a falling edge;
A fragment of Truth in his widest scope,
An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I cannot rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
"Thy hope is Chimera's head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
Thou shalt fall and thy work be dead."

"Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas
And bound to life's iron doom?"

"This earth is ours, a field of Night
For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the sacred Light
Or suffer a god's desire?"

"Come, let us slay him and end his course!
Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
And the curb of his wide white peace."

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mine and waste
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, "Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet,
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate."

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gods of mind
And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alley blind
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices silt;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God
Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
On my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twist the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ringed
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn
Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red statu-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its surrete roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a rainbow of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.
Let Endurance be your watchword: teach the life-force in you—your vital being—not to complain but to put up with all the conditions necessary for great achievement. The body is a very enduring servant, it bears the stress of circumstance tamely like a beast of burden. The vital being it is that is always grumbling and uneasy. The slavery and torture to which it submits the physical is almost inescapable. How it twists and deforms the poor body to its own fads and fancies, irritationally demanding that everything should be shaped according to its whimsicality! But the very essence of endurance is that the vital should learn to give up its capricious likes and dislikes and preserve an equanimity in the midst of the most tremendous conflagration that the conditions offer. When you are paid by creatures to the same level of ignorance as oneself are really worth nothing, they are just as worthless as the criticisms levelled at one. No matter from what pretentious source they derive, they are futile and empty. Unfortunately, however, the vital craves even for the most rotten food and is so greedy that it will accept praises from even the most embodiments of incompetence. I am reminded of the annual occasion of the opening of the Art Exhibition in Paris, when the President of the Republic inspects the pictures, eloquently dining conditions one is a landscape and another a portrait, and making platitudinous comments with the air of a most intimate soul-searching knowledge of Painting. The painters know very well how inept the remarks are and yet miss no chance of quoting the testimony of the Ashram to some disciples. But it has a general sheds light, in a simple, direct and dynamic way, of ridding common human nature of its crude momentousness of the spiritual work that is quietly Ashram of Integral Yoga.

This is a talk given by the Mother of Sri Aurobindo’s relevance and all can derive inspiration from it. It is a matter which must concern all who have the ideal desires and shallow arrogances. It conveys also the going on in the Pondicherry President to their genius. For such indeed is the vital in mankind, ravenously fame-hungry.

What, however, is of genuine worth is the opinion of the Truth. When there is somebody who is in contact with the Divine Truth and can express it, then the opinions given out are no mere compliments or criticisms but what the Divine thinks of you, the value it sets on your qualities, its unwerring stamp on your efforts. It must be your desire to hold nothing in esteem except the word of the Truth; and in order thus to raise your standard you must keep Agni, the soul’s flame of transformation, burning in you. It is noteworthy how when Agni flares up, you immediately develop a loathing for the cheap praises which formerly used to gratify you so much and understand clearly that your love of praise was a low movement of the untransformed Nature. Agni makes you see what a vast vista of possible improvement stretches in front of you, by filling you with a keen sense of your present insufficiency. The encomiums lavished on you by others so disgust you that you feel almost bitter towards those whom you would have once considered your friends; whereas all criticism comes in as a welcome fuel to your humble aspiration towards the Truth. No longer do you feel depressed or slighted by the facility of others. For, at the least, you are able to ignore it with the greatest ease; at the most, you appreciate it as one more testimony to your present unregenerate state, exciting you to surpass yourself by surrendering to the Divine.

Ask for the Light and the Truth

Nothing great is ever accomplished without endurance. If you try the thing of great things it is that you set yourselves like that against the weaknesses of the vital. Even today, the true meaning of our civilization is the mastery of the physical through endurance in the vital. The spirit of sport and of adventure and the dauntless facing of odds which is evident in all the fields of life is part of this ideal of endurance. In science itself, progress depends on the countless difficult tests and trials which precede achievement. Surely, with such momentous work as we have in hand in our Ashram, we have not any less need of endurance. What you must do is to give your vital a good beating as soon as it protests; for, when the physical is concerned, there is reason to be considerate and to take precautions, but with the vital the only method is a sound “kicking”. Kick your vital the moment it complains, because there is no other way of getting out of the petty consciousness which attaches so much importance to creature comforts and social amenities instead of asking for the Light and the Truth.

One of the commonest demands of the vital is for praise. It hates to be criticised and treated as if it were little of importance. But it must be always prepared for rebuffs and stand them with absolute calm; nor must it pay attention to compliments, to encourage the forgetting that each movement of self-satisfaction is an offering at the altar of the lords of falsehood. The beings of the subtle world of the life-force, with which our vital is connected, live and flourish on the worship of their devotees, and that is why they are always insuring new cults and religions so that their feats of worship and adulation may never come to an end. So also your own vital being and the vital forces behind it—th[at is to say,] flatten their ignorance—by absorbing the flatteries given by others. But you must remember that you are paid by creatures to the same level of ignorance as oneself are really worth nothing, they are just as worthless as the criticisms levelled at one. No matter from what pretentious source they derive, they are futile and empty. Unfortunately, however, the vital craves even for the most rotten food and is so greedy that it will accept praises from even the most embodiments of incompetence. I am reminded of the annual occasion of the opening of the Arts Exhibition in Paris, when the President of the Republic inspects the pictures, eloquently dining conditions one is a landscape and another a portrait, and making platitudinous comments with the air of a most intimate soul-searching knowledge of Painting. The painters know very well how inept the remarks are and yet miss no chance of quoting the testimony of the.

*Indian spiritual knowledge distinguishes three principles in man’s nature, each connected with a world of its own: the physical, the vital, the mental—and, behind these three and secretly guiding their evolution, it sees the true soul or the psychic principle. The development of which one or the other can ascend to the Divine and the Divine’s consciousness be brought into our nature. 

Feel a Joy in the Process of Realisation

Another remarkable sign of the conversion of your vital, owing to Agni’s influence, is that you face your difficulties and obstacles with a smile. You do not any more sit in sulk and sulk, lamenting over your mistakes and feeling utterly crest-fallen because you are not at the moment quite up to the mark. You simply chase away depression with a smile. A hundred mistakes do not matter to you: with a smile you recognise that you have erred and with a smile you resolve not to repeat the folly in the future. All depression and gloom is created by the hostile forces who are never so pleased as when throwing on you a melancholy cloud. Humility is indeed one thing and depression and disillusionment another: the former a divine movement and the latter a very crude expression of the dark forces. Therefore, face your troubles joyously, oppose with invariable cheerfulness the obstacles that beset the road to transformation. The best means of routing the enemy is to laugh in his face! You may grapple and tussle for days and he may still show an undiminished vigour; but just once laugh at him and lo! he takes to his heels. A laugh of self-confidence and of faith in the Divine is the most shattering strength possible—it disrupts the enemy’s front, spreads havoc in his ranks and carries you triumphantly onwards.

The converted vital feels also a joy in the process of realisation. All the difficulties implied in that process it accepts with gusto, it never feels gladder than when the Truth is shown it and the play of falsehood in its lower nature laid bare. It does not do the Yoga as if carrying a burden on its back but as if it were a very pleasurable occupation. It is willing to endure the utmost with a smile if it is a condition of the transformation. Neither complaining nor grumbling, it endures happily because it is for the sake of the Divine that it does so. It has the unshakable conviction that the victory shall be won. Never for an instant does it vacillate in its belief that the mighty work of Change taken up by Sri Aurobindo is going to culminate in success. For that indeed is a fact: there is not a shadow of doubt as to the issue of the work we have in hand. It is no mere experiment but an inevitable manifestation of the Supramental. The converted vital has a presence of the victory, keeps up a will towards progress which never turns its back, feels full of the energy which is born of its certitude about the triumph of the Divine whom it is aware of always in itself as doing whatever is necessary and infusing in it the unflagging power to resist and finally conquer its enemies. Why should it despair or complain? The transformation is going to be: nothing will ever stop it, nothing will frustrate the decree of the Omnipotent. Cast off therefore, all self-pity and weakness, and resolve to endure bravely awhile before the great day arrives when the long battle turns into an everlasting victory.
THE MOTHER

WHO WITH HER SPIRITUAL INSIGHT, COMPASSION
AND CREATIVITY PRESIDES OVER SRI AUROBINDO'S ASHRAM
SRI AUROBINDO’S ASHRAM
A PICTURE OF ITS AIDS AND ACTIVITIES

BY GABRIEL MONOD-HERZEN

For the classical Indian Yoga, the liberation of the human being is a victory won by the consciousness over nature; it is an escape from the circle of natural ties and presupposes a separation of our consciousness from our material, vital and mental personality as complete as the preservation of our physical life will allow.

Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, puts liberation as the very goal of the natural evolution of the being; it is the condition requisite for a transformation of the personality by a penetration of the spiritual force into its most material depths.

This new massage does not deny the value of the classical Yoga; rather it completes them. It takes their results as valid, but transforms their character and gives to the whole of life a new sense and a new value. The old Yogas aimed at the liberation of the consciousness from the bondage of material nature; Sri Aurobindo seeks a more complete victory, since his aim is to transform nature integrally by the descent of the Spirit into it.

And this result instead of being conceived as an act opposed to the movement of nature is on the contrary regarded as the very expression of the spiritual evolution.

In thus setting as the aim of our existence the ideal of a perfection to be realized in our material life, an ideal which in fact underlies our whole life and sustains it and makes it inwardly worthy of being loved, Sri Aurobindo gives once more a nobility to all the elements of our being, including our social tendencies.

The Ashram and the Mother

It has been often said that man is a social animal and in fact human groups organize themselves quickly enough into units whose tendencies are revealed by their structure. Sri Aurobindo’s disciples have not escaped from this law.

To say the truth, when Sri Aurobindo settled at Pondicherry in 1910 with four companions of past days, he had no desire to be a Guru, a spiritual teacher and had therefore no intention of creating an Ashram.

But his firm resolution was to follow whatever the path he found in the course of his Yoga to be the right one and to leave nothing in it undone. New-comers joined little by little the first companions. From four the number rose to ten and then to twenty-five. And the passion of patriotism which had moved the first of these men was transformed into an ideal of human perfection to be lived.

In 1920 a French lady who had found a need on her part to see spiritual perfection express itself in the material life came to live close to this group. Under her influence, the life around Sri Aurobindo organised itself and began to reflect the ideal animating him. In 1925, the disciples who were living in separate houses, found their life organising itself into something like a family grouping and in less than a year Sri Aurobindo decided to withdraw from all direct participation in the life of the community and entrusted his disciples to her who therefrom became the Mother. Thus the Ashram was formed.

Many-Faceted Freedom and Fulfilment

An Ashram is a community grouped around a teacher with a view to living according to a certain spiritual ideal. It is neither an association nor a monastery. An Ashram has no need of statutes and regulations; the directions of the teacher take their place. This could be dictatorship, but it is not, since everyone while accepting the rules which make of him a part linked harmoniously to the whole, retains nonetheless all his inner freedom.

This freedom manifests itself very strongly in the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo. It is a characteristic element of the atmosphere which is proper to it. Indeed, where the ideal is a renunciation of the world to the sole profit of the spirit, a certain uniformity takes shape among those living a diminished life. But here the ideal is a fulfillment in the very heart of the material being, an irradiation that must enter into every act. The personality, far from being reduced to a mere support, has to grow and become a more and more perfect expression of the spirit animating it.

When we compare, after an absence of some years, the life and attitude of the disciples of the Ashram at Pondicherry, what strikes us most is the growth that each personality has undergone according to its own nature. And this has happened in every field, that is to say, for almost every aspect of life; for the 600 and odd disciples of Sri Aurobindo who live in the 80 houses scattered about in the town form more than a village. Almost all the professions are represented there: cultivators, smiths, poets, mechanics, musicians and writers, artists and accountants. All is found there and everyone, as in an ideal republic, pursues his activities with joy.

The Joy of the Ashram Life

This joy is an essential character. It is so true, so strong that even when one passes a disciple in the street, one is struck by it. They are happy people.

There are certainly several causes for this joy, of which some are wholly internal, but among others two are predominant. First of all, this activity is not paid. The disciple receives everything from the Ashram, that is to say, from his teacher to whom he has given all when he came in. So there are no longer any “professions” in the ordinary sense of the term. There is an activity worked out because it has to be worked out and one endeavors to work it out perfectly, for perfection is the expression of the Divine; “Yoga”, says the Gita, “is skill in works.” (II.50).

In the second place, everyone carries out an activity which corresponds to his true nature, to the law of his own being. It is not rare to see a newly arrived disciple change his calling. One who was a singer becomes an accountant, the bourgeois a musician, the professor a poet, the official a peasant. These changes are never the result of tests, aptitude examinations, but always the fulfilment of an inner desire, of an urge which is the way of the true being seeking to harmonize its external activities with its own deepest reality. This harmony is a condition for happiness in the experiences of the Ashram proves it. It shows also that Sri Aurobindo is right when he sees in the simplest and most general tendencies of the human being, his desire for happiness and perfection, a crude and awkward expression of possibilities, that is to say, of the future stages of the evolution.

Inclinations, Ideals and Activities

This multiplicity of activities poses numerous technical questions and the Ashram solves them in a manner contrary to what is done in monasteries. For instance, it is the normal way for us first to establish a laundry and then to look for a laundress, but here it is done just the other way round. It is because a disciple shows a pronounced inclination towards an activity that a scope is given to it.

In this way, the Ashram has started, one after another, workshops for carpentry and furniture-making, for mechanics, a smithy, a bakery, a laundry, a farm, a press. In each and every one of these enterprises the work of management and supervision is entrusted to disciples. It is they who form a good part of the labour, the rest being taken from workmen outside. However, it is the disciples alone who are allowed to look after all that concerns food.

In a climate like that of India, questions of food take a primary importance. The Ashram has come to mean a diet at once simple, substantial and perfectly healthy. It is prepared with not only a rigorous cleanliness but also as much scientific efficiency as circumstances permit.

This is a point which distinguishes Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram from most other similar communities. In that of Mahatma Gandhi, for example, the simplicity of means, their purely Indian character in each activity, were traits deliberately willed. Here on the contrary, one sees the opposite tendency finding expression: machinery is gladly accepted and every technical progress is utilized as soon as that becomes possible.

A Unique Building Enterprise

One day the Ashram had a magnificent opportunity of constructing a building. It must be said that the growing number of disciples in a town as populated as Pondicherry creates a chronic housing problem. So the idea of lodging some fifty disciples in a large single house was enthusiastically welcomed when the generosity of a donor made possible the enterprise. It was decided to name the building Golconda.

The building, planned by the architect Antonin Raymond, consists of
Sri Aurobindo’s Ashram

Continued from previous page.

The Natural Flowering of Inner Divinity

With regard to the programme of study, it is striking because of the part (played in it by several languages) and because of the absence of all religious or philosophical teaching. The works or the thought of the Teacher of the Ashram are not expounded or commented upon.

It is the same with regard to the rest of the Ashram. That is a fact which surprises some of the visitors very much. These disciples of one and the same Master do not attend any common lectures nor follow a common programme of teaching.

It is because everyone of them has to discover and follow his own rule, to determine the kind of study which suits him best. Every disciple has daily the opportunity to be in the presence of the Mother. By letters addressed to the Mother every disciple can ask for the help he needs. Thus he follows his path in perfect liberty. Inner life and outer activity—two faces of the same single life—are thus different for different people and no hierarchy marks externally the stages of the path traversed.

Towards the end of every month, everyone informs by means of a note written to the Mother his material necessities for the following month. And on the first of the month, everyone receives, with the Mother’s blessings, what she considers truly necessary for him. But as the Indian custom requires that one should always have an offering in one’s hand when approaching the Teacher, everyone offers flowers to the Mother before he receives his requirements.

Flowers play a great part in the life of the Ashram. They are there in all the houses, whether in pots in the garden, or in the bouquet on the table. They offer their beauty and their fragrance every moment and imbue life with their symbol of the offering of the best of oneself.

For the great secret of the spiritual life is a complete self-giving to the Divine, not only in the silence of meditation but also in all the activities of a life which seeks to participate in all His modes of manifestation.

Translated from the French by Noloi Kasta Gupta.
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE
THE WORLD'S URGENT NEED TODAY
BY KENNETH WALKER

In this specially written article of deep significance the well known and THE DIAGNOSIS OF MAN underlines and impartially considers what can truly bring to the world the salvation for which the best minds at present are anxiously seeking.

I accept the invitation to contribute a short article to Mother India with pleasure. It gives me the opportunity of expressing my appreciation of that paper and of the great work being carried on in India of which it is an expression. But what happens in India may, and I trust will, have effects that extend far beyond the frontiers of that country.

India's Spiritual Riches and Responsibilities

The time and the place for the launching of a Crusade against the materialistic philosophy of the day are singularly well chosen. India has taken her place in the Commonwealth of Nations and she can speak with an authority that it would have been difficult for her to have assumed a decade or two ago. And there is no country in the whole world that has so just a right to speak with authority, for was it not India in possession of a culture at a time when the nations of Europe were in a state of barbarism? She has a magnificent spiritual heritage that, like all wealth, brings with it special responsibilities in her dealings with other nations. Up till now, the traffic in ideas has all been in one direction, from the West to the East. Britain has carried to India, in the past, much of her possessions in the way of scientific, economic and political knowledge, and India has profited from these materially. But India has possessions of much greater value than scientific knowledge, of which the whole world now stands in great need—spiritual knowledge and experience. It is to be hoped that in these critical years, when the future of mankind seems to be trembling in the balance, that traffic of ideas will be seen moving in the opposite direction, from the East to the West. But in order that this should occur, one thing is essential; that India should not succumb, as the West has succumbed, to the glamour of scientific and technical achievement, but should remain loyal to her ancient traditional knowledge. The secularization of Indian thought would be a world disaster.

Can the Catholic Church Save Mankind?

In his book, The Crisis of the Modern World, Ronel Gunter attributes the present chaos in the Western world to its having lost all connection with "traditional knowledge", and by this term he means such knowledge as is contained in the Vedas, the Tao and in the esoteric forms of Christianity and Mohammedanism. Knowledge of this kind flows over the artificial boundaries imposed by nationalism and creeds and serves the needs of the whole of humanity. Many people in the West acknowledge the truth of what Gunter has proclaimed, that it is only by a return to this traditional knowledge that mankind can be saved, but although they speak of the urgent need for a spiritual revival, they are unable to say how this can be brought about.

Gunter himself seems to place some hope in a resuscitation of the Catholic Church, but there are many who believe that if a spiritual revival should occur in the West, it will start outside, rather than inside, the Church. By her lack of true catholicism, the Catholic Church has discouraged many who otherwise would have looked to her for leadership. Those who, like myself, have taken part in the activities of the World Congress of Faiths, have noted that more difficulty is experienced in finding representatives of Catholicism for that body than representatives of any other religion. There is an exclusiveness and a rigidity in the views of that particular church that makes it difficult for me to believe that the Catholic faith will be the means of the Western world regaining contact with "traditional knowledge".

Will Science, Democracy and "National" Religion Sufficient?

But it must not be assumed that those who feel that disaster can only be averted by a spiritual revival are as yet anything but a minority. The idea that mankind is marching along the high road of progress has been shattered by recent events and we in the West no longer believe in Wells' prophetic dreams of a millennium a few centuries ahead of us. We have been disillusioned and we realize that all is not well with our world. But although we have diagnosed illness, our opinions differ as to the cause of the illness and the best means of healing it. There are some who are convinced that what the rest of us consider to be the cause—our blind worship of science and economics—should now be applied as a medicine. What the world really needs, they say, is to be properly organized and administered by the scientists and economists. There is another group that has implicit faith in an imitable elite called democracy, and yet others who prefer a mixture of these two remedies, labelled "Science in the service of Democracy". Let us plan a new world, they say, in which everybody will be equal and in which there will be no war. Religion has had its day and it has utterly failed us. It is for man to create for himself what he needs.

There are a few scientists who believe that amongst those needs religion still has some place, but it must be a man-made religion that appeals to his head. Julian Huxley is one of these and in Religion without Revelation he describes what sort of "religion" is needed to fit in with man's scientific requirements. As Akbar once called together a number of scholars and with their help concocted a synthetic religion, so would the writer of this book gather together a number of scientists, psychologists, theologians and poets and produce a satisfactory rational religion. It is likely that the result of this ersatz religion would be similar to that which followed the manufacture of a faith by Akbar.

I do not write this for the sake of irony and banter, but in order to emphasize how urgent is the Western world's need for that traditional knowledge from which it is now severed. The times are difficult and there are many who are inclined to lose hope, but there exists at least this favourable feature, that an increasing number of thoughtful people in the West are realizing our true state. They see that man cannot live by science and political institutions alone but that he also needs nourishment for the spirit. They know that world unity will never be brought about by treaties but that it must rest on a common basis of religion. And by religion they do not mean the more superficial trappings of rituals and formal creeds—both of which serve a purpose—but the great truths that meet the spiritual needs of all mankind, the truths that are embraced by the term traditional knowledge. It is for this reason that I look with hope at the work being done in Pondicherry and read with something more than interest my copies of Mother India.

Still Far Beyond

Beyond the beauteous veil of dew,
Open thy eyes, adream, awoos,
Where new transcendencies move through
The secret spaces of the moon.

Beyond the Sileno's covering,
The unbowed parties wait—
Each folded in its angel-wing—
From-begs-begs from the doors of Fate.

The blue vaults of the heavens divide,
Dream spirits pass in, one by one,
Earth radiances arise and glide
Into the kingdoms of the Sun.

But thou must pass still far beyond,
Above the terraced truths, and free
Thy soul from all but its last dream-bond
Into the ringed Eternity.

Mukti

What deep dishonour that the soul should have
Its passion moulded by a moon of change
And all its massive purpose be a wave
Ruled by time's gilded glamours that estrange
Being from its true goal of motionless
Eternity ecstatic and alone,
Pois'd in calm plenitude of consciousness—
A sea unheard where spume nor spray is blown!

Be still, oceanic heart, withdraw thy sense
From fickle lure of outward fulgences.
Clasp not in vain the coveted earth to appease
The hunger of thy God-profound
Not there but in self-rapturous suspense
Of all desire is thy omnipotence!

TEHMI.

K. D. SETHNA.
MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI

BY DILIP KUMAR ROY

AUGUST 15, 1949
MOTHER INDIA

This vivid and moving article, published now for the first time at full length, was written to complete the renowned author's portrait of Gandhi in his book AMONG THE GREAT which is going to be reprinted in an enlarged edition in Americas this year, along with a new interview (in 1943) with Sri Aurobindo.

Some Revealing Letters

After 1938 I had no occasion to meet Mahatmaji for nearly a decade. But I liked to write to him from time to time as he invariably answered my letters in his characteristic vein-genial, transparent and informal. Now that is no more I will append a few of his letters by way of sample. In one dated 8-4-34 he wrote:

“My dear Dilip, I am surprised that you have not received my letter. I wrote to you immediately after hearing from you and it was a fairly long letter I sent you. Your book ‘Anam’ I did glance through but the best use, I thought, I could make of it was to send it to Mahadeva who knows Bengali and who is, besides, a poet. I am not. But that does not prevent me from reading whatever you write. What you told me about the activity there in your branch interested me very much and the information that X had become a changed man in Pondicherry. I would like you to send me his poems. I hope you are keeping well and still singing. I often meet your pupils who sing to me and always remind me of the beautiful bhajans* that you used to sing for me.

Yours sincerely, M. K. Gandhi.”

In another dated 21-3-34 he wrote:

“Dear Dilip, It was a great grief to me that though I was in Pondicherry I was not able to see any of you. Anbhalal Sarashali gave me your letter of October only yesterday. It had gone with Bharati to Oxford. I wrote to you about your book when I received it. I hope you have got that letter. Do please write whenever you feel like writing. I am glad X is there. Has he given up drink altogether?

Yours sincerely, M. K. Gandhi.”

In 1936 I wrote to him asking him to comment if he could on some letters of Srimati Raisina Tiyabji, a mystic poet and composer and a devotee of Krishna. These letters with my replies I published later, along with the comments of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Krishnagop. I wrote to Mahatmaji that as he too was a devotee of Krishna I hoped he would be interested in such discussions, especially as these were by no means of a merely academic interest for us, seekers. But for once I failed to draw him out, for he wrote in his reply, dated 17-4-36:

“My dear Dilip, Mahadeva sent me your letters and enclosures only yesterday. I glanced through the very interesting correspondence between you and Raisina. I have perhaps a theory of my own about Krishna. I need not discuss it here as it is of no consequence. My opinion, however, is that the publication of the correspondence will make the confusion worse confused. I hope, with you, that we should meet some day. Then one can usefully discuss Krishna and many other things of common interest. And of course I should like once more to hear your music.

Love, M. K. Gandhi.”

In another dated 17-6-1945 he wrote:

“My dear Dilip, Your letter is tempting. The recollection of your voice tempts me, but I must resist all temptation and keep to the strait and narrow path as conceived by me.

I would not have written to you in Hindi as I do generally but I forbear for obvious reasons.

Love, Bapu.”

I don’t quite know what he meant by “obvious reasons,” but it is probable that he had come to know of my opposition to Hindi as the one language for inter-provincial intercourse. I never concealed from him my disdaine whenever I happened to be out of sympathy with his views. I held that it would be a great disaster for India if Hindi replaced English in our schools and colleges. There were many who misrepresented to him the motives behind my candid criticism of his outlook on life and things, but he never changed whatsoever; on, far less let such temperamental difference mar his kind affection for me with all my obvious limitations. But the most interesting letter I ever received from him—and also the most revealing was in answer to a long letter of mine in which I con-ceived to him my painted surprise—surprise because I felt that he could not see what was so obvious, and pain because it did pain me genuinely to see him pester out as a political leader. In my letter I had suggested that since his political manners—like the spinning-wheel, vicarious fasts etc.—had contributed more confusion than relief he might retire from politics for a while to practice Yoga (under a real Guru, who had vision and knowledge) till he could see his way a little clearer. I humbly pointed out to him—what most people felt though few ventured to express—that he had come to give us a weak lead in politics because it was not his métier, and because his line was social service, equipped as he was with all the great qualities that went to the make-up of a noble social reformer. I stressed his lack of real knowledge—jeana—of the Divine Reality and the vitiating movements of the human ego which were responsible for his signing his culture as a true leader of the multitude. To illustrate what I meant I quoted the following passage from Sri Aurobindo’s Satcharita O Yoga:

“In the world we act with the sense of egoism; we claim the universal forces that work in us as our own; we claim as the effect of our personal thought, freedom, force, virtue the transmutation, expansion, progressive action of the Transcendent in this frame of mind, life and action. This universalism brings to us the knowledge that the ego is only an instrument; we begin to perceive and feel that these things are our own in the sense that they correspond to our supreme self, transcend the Transcendent, not to the instrumental ego. Our limitations and distortions of our contribution to the working; the true power in it is the Divine’s. When the human ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and children, its power an infant’s groping, its virtues a pensioner’s impurity, and learns to trust itself to that which transcends it, that is its salvation.”

“Besides,” I wrote, “why not turn whole-hearted to sannasam—the real snyasas I mean—in order to achieve self-realisation since you believe in ‘suns’ which you once described to me as the ‘highest art’—even if you are not a snavsmy who was not the ideal way for people of the activist temperament, did often slip some who failed to see things in the proper perspective because of their constant activity without respite.”

I was like him not to have the temperament to conceive of the nityananda—surely not one of the least endurance traits of his character—and to reply in his usual tolerant way in a letter dated 16-7-1934:

“My dear Dilip, I have your letter and enclosures. The letter came into my hands only yesterday. It had gone first to Bombay and there by oversight re-mained with one of my helpers for some days.

My difficulty is fundamental. I do not believe that my present acti-vitaction is less conducive to self-realisation in the Divine than abstention would be. Snyasas is not cessation of all physical activity. It means to me cessation of all activity, mental or physical, that is selfish. If I could be convinced that cessation was the better way for me, I should adopt it at once.

Yours sincerely, M. K. Gandhi.”

* * * *

Benign and Buffeting Bapu

Although I travelled a great deal, somehow I never had an opportunity of meeting him again till it came suddenly in 1947, and in this way:

When India won its long-sought freedom on the 15th of August, 1947—especially momentous indeed for me—coincided with Sri Aurobindo’s birthday—I longed to have an opportunity of discussing with Gandhiji the significance of this remarkable coincidence. Of course see knew that it was no chance coincidence. We knew that Sri Aurobindo had been work-ing for India’s political emancipation, with great occult powers. But people outside his aura were mostly sceptical of the reality of such powers. I felt that Gandhi as a believer in mysticism was likely to understand something of such powers. For had he no, more than once, referred some seekers who approached him for information about Yoga and occultism to Sri Aurobindo and had not he himself sought an interview with Sri Aurobindo in 1934? I wanted to see him also for another reason: I had composed the music for the famous song “Vande Mataram” but rumour had it that Pandit Jawaharlal was going to record the song as the “national song” of India. We had all taken this bitterly to heart and so I wanted to secure, if I could, Gandhi’s approval of this great song set to my music which could be easily sung in chorus. So I wired him from Ahmedabad on 26-10-1947 requesting that he permit me to sing his music in my new tune at his prayer-meeting on the 28th evening. Our plane, however, reached Delhi just too late. So I rang him up and was given an appointment with him on the next morning at Birla House where he was staying.

I was in a curious psychological state on that unforgettable morning. Nearly a decade had elapsed since our last meeting. I wondered if he

* Devotional song.

†† used the word sanyasas in the modified sense of quiescent, not in the sense of complete cessation from all activity. For instance, Shankaracharyas or Vivekananda or Dyanand was sanyasas of this type, I pointed out.
would receive me as cordially as he used to of old. My heart misgave me because I no longer felt towards him as I had in the days gone by, and I knew that he knew of my changed outlook and orientation away from his own.

But the moment I saw him sitting there my fears were assuaged. He gave me his smile of welcome, the old, heart-warming smile which he knew I was not there to see. He knew I was not there to see his words. I felt moved and forgot my ideological antagonism to much that he had lately been preserving as infallible. I took a long look at him. He had indeed grown slightly older but he looked still as free and guileless as a full-blow rose. The same friendly interest to a friend lost and the same disarming laughter, the same glance of spontaneous trust and warm welcome!

A young lady was massaging his feet when I entered his living-room. He lay stretched on a mat. On seeing me he got up into a sitting position. I made him my obeisance in glad reverence and was a trifle surprised because not only could I find not a trace of constraint anywhere within me, but it almost seemed to me as if his unfortunate lead in politics of late were of very little importance! Also, he put me so utterly at my ease with a mere laugh that I felt as if there had been no hiatus of a decade since I had made his acquaintance last; it was almost as though I had met him only yesterday. In fact I was, if anything, a little more drawn by his baffling personality, and that also in a new way. For I realised, as never before, what a magic power he had of getting under the skin of others to feel the pulse of things. Let me give an instance.

I said, in passing, that I was so grateful because he had revised my talks with him and authorised me to publish them in my book, “Among the Great,” which had, as a result, made some impression in India and abroad. He summed at once his old mock-sermon tone and said, in kind irony: “Do you think that it was my great frame which did the trick?” And he burst out laughing at his own joke or, shall I say, chuckled, with a child-like glee. Although I knew wel his ways I was taken unawares by his manner of using the verb ‘insinuate’. I stumbled something helplessly and forgot all that I had rehearsed so carefully to break the ice. His eyes twinkled in evident amusement. But he went off at a tangent once again.

“Young book has made an impression,” he said kindly, “because it has value—not because I figured in it.”

This made me pull myself together and I made bold to counter it.

“But surely, Begumji,” I answered, “it’s you who are playing-acting at modesty now, not poor Dilip, since you can’t be nearly so unassuming as to be unawares that you are a theme that would glorify any tune.”

His repartee came quick enough.

“Wrong again,” he laughed, “for you made me into your pet theme to set your music to. You drew me out till I sang about music and art and aesthetics and God knows what else, for it’s long ago and I have long forgotten.”

We laughed out in chorus. That was Gandhiji all over, at once temping and baffling one when one went out to take his measure. Unfortunately, however, the fates were against me this time and we could not continue our merrymaking much longer. Lord Mountbatten was then in Kashmir and he asked me whether I could sing the “Vande Mataram” and “Hindustan Hamara” that evening at the prayer-meeting. He smiled and said:

“Yes, I had your telegram from Ahsanabad. But you gave me no time to wire back; so I could not have it conveyed to you that I have made it a rule to have only bhasaj sing at my prayer-meeting. And that’s why,” he added, to make light of it, “I was praying last evening at the prayer-meeting: ‘O Ram, may Dilip not heave into sight even now of all times.’ And he chuckled once more in glee.

As I laughed with him I admired how cleverly he had baulked me even of my right to disappointment. I said: “Quite understand, Begumji; but what about my singing there?”

“Here?” he asked as his eyes held mine. “You mean, just now?”

I nodded. “It won’t take more than ten minutes, I assure you.”

His face brightened. “Oh then it will suit me to perfection,” he said; then with a warning smile: “but there’s one condition: you’ll allow me to hear you while I stretch, for she hasn’t finished massaging my feet yet.”

“A bargain,” I answered, laughing. And I sang the two songs... He listened with rapt attention which more than compensated me for all the pains I had taken to thrust myself on him. I felt very grateful to him for his warm response and was delighted when he said:

“Your voice has improved very much. It was always rich with deep overtones but today it has gained a new vibrance of appeal—especially in the bass notes.”

I flushed and tried hard, though vain, to look modest (I suppose once a hero-worshipper always a hero-worshipper?) when he smiled very kindly at me and went on:

“And you look exactly as ever—not a day older since I saw you last ten years ago.” Then he looked at his watch and added: “You’ll come to the prayer-meeting this evening, won’t you?”

“But haven’t I prayed for that privilege already?”

“Yes, but that was for ‘Vande Mataram’. I want you to sing to me your beautiful bhajan there. I haven’t heard them for a long time, remember.”

“And I haven’t inflicted myself on you for an equal long time, remember,” I returned. And we both laughed.

As I returned home I caught myself wondering why he had made no comment on my tune of ‘Vande Mataram’. Had he missed it in the true ring? I was baffled. Little did I realise how calmly he was going to amends the same evening...
he heard the speech once more broadcast by the Delhi Radio the same evening I feel my report will be fairly trustworthy. This is how he started:*

"You have heard a very sweet song. But you ought to know something about the singer. His name is Dilip Kumar Roy. I met him first, years ago, in the Sassoon Hospital at Poona where I was convalescing after an operation for appendicitis. He then played two blajans accompanying himself on a tambura. This morning, too, he sang to me two famous national songs: the 'Vande Mataram' and 'Hindusthan Hamara' set to his own music. I liked them very much, especially the first one whose music and melody were very fitting to the spirit of the noble anthem. He has, as the saying goes, retired from the worldly life to practise Yoga at the feet of his great guru, the Rishi Aurobindo to whose Ashram he, and many others besides, have dedicated all they had in order to follow the spiritual life enjoyed by those at the Ashram. You should know that at Sri Aurobindo Ashram there is no distinction of caste or creed, race or religion. I heard this from the lips of the late Sir Akbar Hydari himself who told me that he used to go there every year as on a pilgrimage. Naturally Dilip Kumar is a child of the old block, having no prejudices, religious or sectarian. And though I am no connoisseur of music I may, I think, make bold to claim that very few persons in India—or rather in the world—have a voice like his, so rich and sweet and intense. And today his voice struck me as having grown even younger and richer than before. But I want now to direct your attention to the message of his song which you would do well to ponder deeply. For the song emphasises that the wealthy may possess everything on earth—wealth, glory, pomp and equipage—and yet remain intrinsically paupers, those who have his all in all. It is a high possession of God whom we only call by different names to be able to quarrel with one another more effectively. If you will all take a leaf out of this Book of Supreme Wisdom you will be able to shun all prejudices that must nether the harmony of peace nor the brotherhood."

He then went on to dwell at some length on the unhappy war that was being waged in Kashmir and wound up with: "Let us all lay to our hearts the refrain of the blajan which has been sung just now: that we all derive from one God who resides in us all, no matter by what name we choose to worship Him."

When, after the meeting, I conveyed to him my grateful appreciation, he beamend on me with his lovely smile and said: "You'll come tomorrow, won't you?"

"Well, Papaji, I'd love to, you know," I faltered out, "but—er—it's like this: I have already booked a seat on a plane and my friends expect me at Lucknow tomorrow afternoon."

"That's a pity," he said making a very face, "for I wanted to hear you sing the song 'ham aise dekhae wais' which you taught Sucheta Kripalani." That decided me. "How can one refuse you?" I laughed.

"That's the stuff to give to the likes of us," he returned at once as we all laughed out in chorus with him.

I had to stay in Delhi nearly a week.

The stenographer who took down his discourses daily called on me next morning and told me that when he had submitted to him his report the previous night Mahatmaji had reprimanded him for having written "Sri Aurobindo" instead of "Rishi Aurobindo" and then personally added the epithet "Rishi" before the Sage's name. This, naturally, made a deep impression on me and I wondered how I might best testify to him my deep gratitude. I cancelled my visit to Lucknow.

Next evening I arrived at Birla House a good quarter of an hour before time. The audience was a little bigger than on the evening of my first visit but the atmosphere was somewhat disquieting. I was told that a Sikh had registered an objection to Quran verses being inflicted on a predominantly Hindu audience and so it was on the cards that Gandhi might not hold the prayer at all. They pointed out to me the trouble until it was a Sikh steward with beard and sombre face. As I fixed him with my gaze, he looked up and our eyes met. Instantly he hoisted himself out of his seat and almost ran up to me in a breathless state.

"Sir!" he roared angrily. "You are a fool and so must adjudicate. I appeal to you on behalf of Hindus to be fair. Tell me, is it right, is it fair, to faint on us, Hindus, verses from the scriptures of those who have massacred us ruthlessly, desacrated our homes, outraged our women—yes, sadhus, who are not men but monsters, I say. Won't it be a slur on our honour and our manhood to have to listen after all to this to this abomination?"

I restrained him in the middle of his fiery speech.

"But quiet, my kind sir," I demurred, "for after having come here you shouldn't—"

"But why shouldn't I?" he flashed back. "I came here to hear Mahatmaji, not Quran verses."

"But you knew he insisted on reading the Quran verses. So the better course for you would have been to stay away since you feel as you do. In any case do sit down and let him come. It's for him to adjudicate for it's his meeting, not mine." Then placing my hand on his shoulder I added: "You'll at least hear me sing the name of God, won't you?"

"I'd loved to, provided you didn't bring in the Muslim God."

I couldn't help but laugh and answered: "But there's only one God, you know." "I do," he returned, "but countless Satans whom they worship."

"On Calm yourself, my friend," I replied but he told me he asked him to take his seat adding that I was going to sing of Krishna.

His face brightened. "Splendid!" he cried. "And I'll listen the whole night, for He is an authentic God." And he went back to his seat. It was not a moment too soon. For though he had his seat they all rose: Gandhi had just entered and immediately flanked by the ladies.

I knew Mahatmaji wanted me to sing the bhajan, "Ham ais dekhae waas". But as I looked down from the rostrum on the gathering I wondered whether any good purpose would be served by singing such a song in such an atmosphere of pent grievances. I could clearly see the excited face of the Sikh who had violently objected to the Quran verses and it was obvious to all but the willfully blind that he was but a mouthpiece of the common run who had suffered so grievously and that with the ineradicable feeling that Mahatma was a friend of the Muslims and not of the Hindus. And seeing it so clearly (probably because I lived far away from the turbid atmosphere of the work-a-day world, the political world of feuds and strife and irredeemable misunderstandings) I could not but feel that it was worse than useless that was so needlessly difficult—the reconciling of irreconcilables—by a means which almost guaranteed failure. Anyone who could feel the pulse of the country knew—which the newspapers tried vainly to hide—that people had been growing restless all over India among the Hindus. Also I wondered if Mahatmaji could have lost sight of this simple fact that where love was intense it turned into hatred almost overnight when frustrated or even thwarted. It was evident that those who had come to hear him loved him, but that was precisely why I gave my answer—"a veritable Nation's curseopedia which to the destitute sound like cruel irony. So I decided on another which, I thought, would be more acceptable to the audience especially as it invoked the name of Krishna. Here is the translation:*

_House in thy soul the fickleless lamp of love;_  
_O unclouded gaze, refresh the angel flame_  
_In the wonted temple of desire: nurse in faith's grove_  
_The memorial rose of peace no thorn may shame._

_Delivered from thy passions' lurid gleams_  
_And shadowing greeds, foes in the guise of friends,_  
_Know: in the deep of bash the sacred redeemer: _She is the vanguard to darkening aurora's howl. _Her children in gloom, thy Motherland mourns and sighs, _Play Beauty's fune: like Krishna thou art He. _If thou wilt wake—the world, e-qui-re, shall rise _And mitred priests of love sing with thee. _Hate never pays, though sorrowously partly; _Be poised in thy Self of love—incresed by free. _If love reigns who shall reveal the sky? _Soul's night is doom; her dawn—sure victory. _Be pledged to noble ways of the ancient Sun; _If love thou wast, let it be life—not love. _Shall clouds beseech thy star-dominion? _Up! time is fleeting!—the bugle calls above!_  

While I was singing the fourth verse I could not keep back a deep upsurge of sadness. It was not through such preachings and sermonisms that the world is likely to be regenerated. How to stave off the inevitable: love reigning? How can a creature like man win through, here and now, to citizenship of the Promised Land, a creature who—to quote from Sri Aurobindo's epic, "Senmira—is still but a link between the demi-god and the beast, he knows not his own greatness nor his aim; he has forgotten why he has come and whence; his spirit and his members are at war; his height breaks off too low to reach the skies, his mass is buried in the animal mire, and, above all, he would guide the world, himself he cannot guide, he would save his soul, his life he cannot save."

A sense of darkness crept upon me relentlessly which made me close my eyes till I partially succeeded in putting myself into the song, and in the third verse in particular, improvising on the flute of Krishna regenerat-
MY LAST WEEK WITH GANDHIJI—Continued from previous page

ing the unhappy world. When I opened my eyes I saw the eyes of the Sikh glistening with tears as he lifted them to mine. But to proceed.

Gandhiji spoke once more but in a sadder tone dropping his voice occasionally when it dwindled down to a whisper which even the microphone failed to amplify into audibility. He said,

"You have been a great and beautiful bхајан. But although its tune is simple, the trained voice of the gifted singer has imported into it a sweetness all his own. The message of the song has it that the true devotee's inner being should be converted into a veritable temple where the object of adoration could be love of all as incarnations of the Divine. This is necessary, for not till the heart is finally purified can we come to the vision which reveals the One in all and in all the One. So it is of the most urgent importance that you remind yourselves that till your minds and hearts have achieved this purity nothing has really been accomplished since as long as we have left our souls have become so many temples where true worship can be offered to the Supreme."

The meeting broke up and I walked slowly in line with Mahatmaji with a crowd following us. The old Sikh overturned me and made me the obes-  audor contemptible Mahatmaji warmly. The latter gave him a long look but it was a sad look he bestowed. When those in attendance on Mahatmaji shook off the others he halted and turned to me. "But you didn't sing that song," he said in a tone of gentle reproach.

"Surely you know why I didn't," I answered. Then as he only nodded I went on apologetically: "I thought the one I sang was a more appropriate song in the circumstances."

He lifted his eyebrows in his characteristic way.

"And didn't I drive its message home," he laughed. Then as we moved on, he added: "In one sense I am glad you didn't sing it this evening. In another I am sorry because you may be set on flying to Lucknow to-morrow and then I shall have missed hearing it from you." I laughed and said: "But I have cancelled my Lucknow trip."

He gave a chuckle. "Do you know I wished fervently that this might happen?"

"And how could anything not happen in our country which you wish to happen?"

"He dropped his eyes and said: "How I wish what you say in irony were true!"

I hastened to answer: "I only meant, Bapuji, that your wanting to hear me sing again did the trick. For after that I felt I simply could not do it any more." I added, "I couldn't leave without having expressed to you my deep gratitude for having referred to Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram with such appreciative reverence; and I must thank you especially for having gone out of your way to pay your homages to one who is a glory to India and is still so often grievously misunderstood."

He appraised me for a few seconds, his eyes raising kindness, then answered: "But how could I have done otherwise—not to give one so great his due?" He laughed and blessed me as I made him parting deep bow. I experienced an exaltation, and yet I felt a profound sadness—The catastrophic vision recurrs to me again and again....relentlessly.

This be so, I brooded, why must I sing what I was going to sing tonight:

"The light his soul has brought his mind has lost; All he has learned is soon again in doubt; And then the shadow of his thoughts, 

The light he brought has brought his mate to me;  All he has gained is gone to the earth and Time.

There every prayer is self-satisfied, None bode him when he goes away,"

* From Savitri—Book III, Canto IV—Sri Aurobindo.

There life is fashioned in wonds of Truth 
And some is pervaded in illusion's play, 
Outsider are selfish clamos there, 
Exiled the sense of thine and mine, 
No owner rules, no slave obeys, 
Nor heat ever dogs the Light Divine.

Tis not a poet's fairly tale, 
This world of kindred play: 
It waits in every heart to be won, 
Our last incredible victory.

But I had to sing it all the same when, after the prayer, Gandhiji made me a sign. While I sang, my sadness gave place little by little to resigna- tion if not joy. But the respite was brief, for the upsurge of my melodramatically drowned my excitement as on one sweep our souls have become so many temples where true worship can be offered to the Supreme."

"The prayer, therefore went on as usual. Sri Dilip Kumar Roy sang the bхајан, whose first line, Gandhiji said, meant that the devotees belonged to the land where there was neither misery nor sorrow. Gandhiji explain- ed that in his opinion it had a double meaning. The one was that they belonged to a country—that is, India—in which there was neither misery nor sorrow. He could not recall a time when there was neither misery nor sorrow in India. The first meaning, therefore, was an aspiration of the poet. The second meaning, he added, referred to the body to which its abode. Thus the soul inhabited a body which was, in the language of the Gitа, the abode of true religion and not the abode of fleeting passions. The condition attached to the success of the pursuit was that the owner of the abode was free from the six noted enemies whose names were anger, malice, greed, passion etc. The blissful state was capable of attainment by everyone. And if that happened on any appreciable scale, the poet's dream of India would be quickly realised. . . ."

After the meeting I was left to the last obeisances on the lawn. He looked at me tenderly with his gentle eyes and said:

"It was good, that song,"

"I know you had a special liking for it,"

"When do I hear you next?"

"I regret, Bapuji," I said apologetically, "but you have kept me for nearly a week. I must leave tomorrow for Calcutta."

He smiled. "Well, well! If you must, you must and there's an end of it. But I will miss you tomorrow evening at my prayer-meeting."

When I left him, my whole being was indeed awash. I was moved by him as I never before. And though I tried hard, I could not shake off the suggestion that I would never see him again. But although this thought made me feel more for him, I knew it had nothing to do with the overwhelming impression he had made on my mind, and the fact that I could not account for my being swept off my feet in spite of myself only added to the sum total impression he had left on me. For I could not truly deny that I was irrevocably out of sympathy all along the line with his political lead during the last few unhappy years of his life and that I had gone out of my way to visit him with a definite motive. I remembered also that I had done so rather conscience-stricken lest paying him a personal homage at the present time—and particularly at his prayer meeting—should botoken a kind of insincerity. Furthermore, I had feared to catch the contagion of his political ideology. Nevertheless, he had not charmed away my gnaw- ing sense of guilt by a mere touch of his magic personality and even put me under a deeper debt by being kinder to one who was finding it difficult not to judge him more adversely with time? He was too sensitive by nature not to have missed my spontaneous ardour of old and yet he bore me more readily than ever to lavish his abiding affection on one who had definitely grown recalcitrant. I was indeed somewhat of a startling expe- rience for a born egotist like myself and it made me see him in an entirely new light, as it were, which not only enhanced the value of his personality in my eyes but made me feel a profound sympathy with his growing sense of frustration and inner isolation accruing from his deepening disench- antment. No wonder he loved the fairly tale song despite his inability to see in it any gospel save that of an individual salvation here and there. As I reclined musing in the aeroplane I recaptured as in a clear vision his frail figure. I saw his face, lonely and wistful, caught the echo of his laughter fraught with pain, and as I visualised him thus from a new perspective a unique line of the great Bhavabhuti recurred again and again to my mind: Bajrapadi katharni nirvad kusumadphi: 

Harder than the trump of doom 
Yet softer than an opening bloom.
THE PROBLEM OF PROBLEMS

BY RISHABHCHAND

If India is not to drift upon the flood of time or toss about in the cross-currents of contemporary ideologies, she must decide once and for all what is the raison d'être of her soul and how best she can fulfil it. For, she has, indeed, a soul, an inmost core of existence, which is indestructible and which has been seeking to manifest itself through the long centuries of her eventful history. It is this soul she has all along even in the dark periods of discomfiture and decay. Conquered, depoisoned, humiliated, even half-converted, she has persisted with an invincible faith and patience till her ageless culture and her exhaustless vitality have asserted themselves in a splendid burst of new creation. A chequered career has been hers, through many a trial and vicissitude, many an advance and recoil; but there has always been behind her efforts and ordeals, if we have vision to perceive, an ineluctable destiny, a firm but flexible purpose which has been progressively fulfilling itself through all the changes and chances of her existence.

India's Aspiration and Quest

What is that destiny and that purpose? The purpose was voiced and the destiny outlined in the ringing words of a Yogi ages ago—"What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal?" That has been the constant cry of the soul of India, its unfailing aspiration and quest. It does not necessarily imply a renunciation of the world and its objects and a turning of one's back upon life and its activities, but it means a probing by that soul, of the depths of its own being and discovering there the truth which makes life meaningful and the world a promising field of self-fulfilment. The truth, the reality, the essence, the substantial, the ultimate sense and significance first, and then the study of the self-development of that reality in Time and Space and the development of its significance and the accomplishment of its purpose—this has been the invariable trend of the thought and feeling of the true children of India. Even in the days of decline when, their vision dimmed, they have run after the ephemeral objects of the world and coveted the picknick pieces of life, they have always reverted, perhaps with the exaggerated ardour of a recovered faith, to the master passion of their national existence—the truth, the reality, the eternal essence. Politics, society, education, culture, everything has been accepted and developed, but only to express this fundamental urge or the inner experience resulting from it. This irrepressible urge of the soul of India is the truth of its soulsearch and the key to its life-fulfilment.

Today when there is a country-wide convulsion following the first flush of freedom, a healing and ferment in the national body politic and much hope and confused seeking, it is imperative that the captains of the nation should ever round to the right perspective and steer the barque in the right direction. For if a wrong direction is taken out of sheer ignorance, impiety or inbreed egotism, the freedom that has been won may well turn out to be a new bondage. The triumphs and achievements of the present may not all be a sure index to the rightness of the vision and the impeccability of the policies followed in the government of the country. It is not unwise that they flare up and flash for a moment only to be followed by an enquiring gloom of defeat and despair. A strong hand, a masterful action is, of course, the secret of political success, but if the action done has not sprung from a clear knowledge or a calm reflection and harmonious feeling, but is a result of muddled thought and momentary impulse, the success achieved may prove worse than a failure. Nothing is more delusive than the plundria of the world and it will be suicidal to rend them the righteousness of one's judgment and action.

The Character of Our Greatest Leaders

The one outstanding fact of resurgent India is that the great pioneering and dynamic personalities born during the last 150 years or so have been invariably men of unquestionable religious and spiritual culture. If these illustrious sons of India are the heralds of her destiny, then the nature of that destiny can very well be known by a close study of their thoughts and activities. They are the landmarks in the history of the country.

Ram Mohan Roy who awoke India and shook her out of her age-long lethargy and distraction, was an inspired man with spiritual vision and power. The world knows only of his outer efforts and achievements, but little of his inner life which was nourished on the honey-dew of divine communion. The spirit of the Upanishads shaped and sustained the lofty idealism of this intrepid social and religious reformer who had also in him a strong vein of Tantricism and an apostolic fervour.

Keshav Chandra Sen was an ardent devotee, brimming over with spiritual emotion and eclectic idealism, and, can, by no manner of means, be called a rationalist or rationalist.

Ramkrishna Paramahaos was a towering spiritual genius who proclaimed the pre-eminence of the Spirit and never concealed his disgust of the worldly pursuits unassociated to the Divine. He came as an epitome of all that was potent and productive in the highest cultural traditions of the country.

Swami Vivekananda, the vithle monument of Ramkrishna, laid down the large lines of the Indian Renaissance and may be justly called the father of most of the progressive movements of modern India. His whole personality was steeped in the aroma of the Spirit, and if there has ever been, since the time of the Buddha, a man whose every accent breathed the freedom of his soul and every action the purity and intensity of his patriotism, it was Swami Vivekananda.

Dayanad Saraswati, an indomitable Sannyasi and social reformer, drew all his strength and missionary zeal from the Vedas and infused a new revivalist spirit into the hearts of his countrymen.

Then came Sri Aurobindo who first made the voice of the Spirit ring out in the midst of the clamours of politics and taught anew the love and worship of India as the Mother. Politics was at once electrified and nationalism exalted into a sacred creed.

The Far Call

I was invited by the post-graduate students of the Calcutta University to give a lecture-demonstration under the aegis of the Vice Chancellor. The subject was: "Points of Contact between Indian and Western Melodies"; the date: January 30, 1948. I had just sung a German Wiesenlied of Curschmann:

So schlaf in Ruh! so schlaf in Ruh! Die Sterne leuchten hell und klar. Es kommt von dort der Engel-schar.
Die Angelus le. Mein Kindlein da! Nun schlaf und schlaf und schlaf in Ruh!

I then proceeded to describe how close in spirit this melody was to the plaintive and other-worldly vein so grateful to the Indian soul when, suddenly the news came, a bolt from the blue, that Gandhi had just been shot dead in Delhi by a fanatic. The song was dissolved and a boy went hysterical. Gloom descended on us all.

On my way back home I was struck by a coincidence: the song I had composed and was going to sing was a mystic dialogue between Mother and Child:

"I will now sleep in thy love's deep And toy so more with things that pail. I have at last heard thy far call!"

Without thy dream sought wilt redeem Nor hearts sing like a waterfall." "O come to me I'll croon for thee My coral eadred lullaby And heal thine soul with rain of sky. For thee I went at Heaven's gate For which I made thee pine and cry." "I never knew thou wouldst etude My life of dust with thy star-shine And shower thy boon, O Mother mine! I only cried when none replied And deemed remote thy Grace Divine." "But I know still what thou must will, So and I lingered day and night To help thee home—my way last sprit! When darks now come, thou clarest the gloom, O hail—reclaim thy deep birth-right!"

I had fever that night and heard myself singing again and again in my dream:

Mother India—Continued from previous page

Without thy dream sought wilt redeem Nor hearts sing like a waterfall. "O come to me—I'll croon for thee My coral eadred lullaby And heal thine soul with rain of sky. For thee I went at Heaven's gate For which I made thee pine and cry. "I never knew thou wouldst etude My life of dust with thy star-shine And shower thy boon, O Mother mine! I only cried when none replied And deemed remote thy Grace Divine. "But I know still what thou must will, So and I lingered day and night To help thee home—my way last sprit! When darks now come, thou clarest the gloom, O hail—reclaim thy deep birth-right... Deep birth-right... Deep birth-right...
THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM AND INDIA

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

I

English and French are the two languages that hold and express today the culture of humanity at its best and at its largest. They are the two international languages recognised as such and indispensable for all international dealings: and although to be internationally minded one would do better to possess both, still as things stand at present, they appeal to two different groups, each in its own way and each has its hemisphere where it is prevalent, almost as a second mother tongue. Geographically, America and the British Commonwealth (including India) belong to the English sphere, while the European continent, South America and a good half of Canada are more at home in French. In Asia, the eastern part looks more to English, while the western part (Turkey, Syria, even Persia and Afghan-istan) seems to lean more towards French.

Almost till the end of the last century French was the language of culture all over Europe. It was taught there as part of liberal education in all the countries and a sojourn in France was considered necessary to complete the course. Those who were interested in human culture and wished to specialise in belles lettres had to cultivate a more or less intimate acquaintance with the Gallic Minerva. English has since risen to eminence, owing to the far-flung political and commercial net that the nation has spread; it has become almost an indispensable instrument for communication between races that are not English and even far from England. Once upon a time it was said of an European that he had two countries, his own and France; today it can be said with equal or even more truth that a citizen of the modern world has two mother-tongues, his own and English.

Even then, even though French has been ousted from the market-place, it holds still a place of honour in the cultural world, among the elite and the intellectuals. I have said French rules the continent of Europe. Indeed even now an intellectual on the Continent feels more at ease in French and would prefer to have the French version of a theme or work rather than the English. Indeed, it may be in fact that the two languages appeal to two types of mentality, each expressing a characteristically different version of the same original truth or fact or statement. If you wish to have your ideas on a subject clear, rational and unambiguous, you must go to French. French is the language par excellence of law and logic. Mental presentation, as neat and transparent as possibly can be is the special aid French language brings to you. But precisely because it is intellectually so clear and neat, it has often to avoid or leave out certain shades and nuances or even themes which do not go easily into its logical frame. English is marvellous in this respect, that being an illogical language it is more supple and pliant and even rich and through its structural ambiguities can catch and reflect or indicate ideas and realities, rhythms and tones, which are untranslatable. French is as it has been pointed out by French writers themselves, is less rich in synonyms than English. There each word has a very definite and limited (or limiting) connotation and words cannot be readily interchanged.

English, on the other hand, has a richer, almost a luxuriant vocabulary, not only in respect of the number of words, but also in the matter of the variation in the meaning a given word conveys. Of course, double entendre or suggestiveness is a quality or capacity that all languages that claim a status must possess: it is necessary to express something of the complexity or "polyphonism", as it is sometimes termed, of the human consciousness. Still in French that quality has a limited, if judicious and artistic, application; in English it is a wild growth.

French expresses better human psychology, while metaphysical realities find a more congenial home in the English language. This is not to say that the English are born metaphysicians and that the French are in the same manner natural psychologists. This is merely to indicate a general trait or possible capacity of the respective languages. The English or the English language can hold no candle to the German race or the German language in the matter of metaphysical abstruseness. German is rigid, ponderous, if recondite. English is more flexible and has been used and can be used with great facility by the mystic and the metaphysician. The English with regard to their language and letters have been more open to external influences; they have benefited by their wide contact with other peoples and races and cultures.

The stamp of mental clarity and neat psychological or introspective analysis in the French language has been its asset and a characteristic capacity from the time of Descartes—through Malebranche and Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists—right down to Bergson. The English are not by nature metaphysicians, in spite of the Metaphysicians; but greatness has been thrust upon them. The strain of Celtic mysticism and contact with Indian spiritual lore have given the language a higher tension, a deeper and longer breath, a greater expressive capacity in that direction.

But French seems to have made ample amends for this deficiency (in the matter of variety of experiences especially in the supra-rational regions) by developing a quality which is peculiar to its turn of psychological curiosity and secular understanding—a refined sensibility, a subtle sensiveness, an alert and vibrant perception that puts it in contact with the inner (even though not so much the higher), almost the hidden and occult movements of life. That is how mysticism—la mystique—comes by a back-door as it were into the French language.

It seems natural for the English language to dwell on such heights of spiritual or metaphysical experience as AE gives us:

A spirit of unsullied will
Through light and darkness moving still
Within the All to find its own
To be immortal and alone.

(Endurance).

THE PROBLEM OF PROBLEMS—Continued from previous page

earth. When Sri Aurobindo retired, Mahatma Gandhi stepped into the field of politics. He claimed no spiritual vision and power, but his eclectic ethics and extraordinary earnestness and will-power brought into the stuffy and turbid atmosphere of politics a strong, bracing air of self-discipline and fearlessness. If the country made colossal strides towards freedom and won it under his leadership, it was due not so much to the force and subtil- A spirit of unsullied will
te of its politics as to the magnitudo of a moral idealism which informed it and the fire of sacrifice which imparted to it a rare glow and intensity. But since his departure, much as India has thronged abroad on many fronts, in her heart of hearts she is confused and vacillating. Evidently she is casting about for a more seeing leadership and a more determined direction on the lines of her individual genius.

This uninterrupted stream of spiritual or religious inspiration illustrates the native trend of the national soul and we have learnt our history in vain if we have failed to take stock of it. Wave after wave of foreign cultures have rolled over India, submerging most of her surface civilization but not one has been able to touch the immemorial core which has ever re- mained immune, impregnable, unassailed.

Tendencies Today and the True Direction

Today there is a strong tendency, here and there articulate, but mostly implicit, among the political leaders of India, to fight shy of spirituality, run down religion and proclaim India a secular state ready to march shoulder to shoulder with the sister states of Europe and America towards the harmony, peace and prosperity of a socialistic Utopia. Spirituality has become sus-
The Language Problem and Mother India—Continued from previous page

It can dare even such mystic summits as Sri Aurobindo discloses:

Ehre is now girdled with trance and Heaven is put round her for vestare.
Wings that are brilliant with late sleep at Eternity’s gate.
Time waits, very, the Lightening that kindles, the Word that transfigures.
Space is a stillness of God building his earthly abode.

(As Collected Poems II. p. 363)

But French too in her own inimitable way gives us glimpses of a beyond and elsewhere, as in these well-known lines of Baudelaire:

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d’enfants,
Doux comme les hanois, verts comme les prairies,
Et d’autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants.
Ajust l’expansion des choses infinies*

(Properadivi).

of this exquisite passage reverberating with the sense of awe and intimacy in the presence of the infinite unknown:

O Conscience immobile et serine,
Tu veilles aux confins du monde
Comme un Sphinx d’éternité.
Et pourtant à certains Tu lures Ton cœur moderne des vents qui soufflent souvenirs qui choisit sans préférer, exécute sans désirer.†

†—Prières et Méditations de la Mire.

In other words we can say in a somewhat crudely general manner (in grosso modo) that if English soars high, French dives within: if English is capable of achieving the heavens of the Spirit, French enters as easily at the intimacies of the soul (âme). It is these intimacies or soul touches that form as it were the inner lining to the mental clarities that give French its external structure; while in English as a counterpart to its spiritual altitudes we meet on the other side a luxuriant objectivity of sense perception. Thus the two languages are in a way strangely complementary, and in a perfect human culture both have to be equally attended to, given equal importance, if completeness or integrity is our aim.

II

French and English being given the place of honour, now the question is with regard to the vernacular of those who do not speak either of these languages. We have to distinguish two categories of languages: national and international. French and English being considered international languages per excellence, the others remain as national languages, but their importance need not be minimized thereby. First of all, along with the two major international languages, there may be a few others that can be called secondary or subsidiary international languages according as their growth and acquire a high status. Thus Russian or an Asiatic, even an Indian, language may attain that position, because of wide extension or inherent value or popularity or for some other reason. Indeed, a national language cultivated and enriched by its nationals can force itself upon the world’s attention and fairly become a world language. One Tagore was able to give that kind of world importance to the Bangali language.

It may be questioned whether too many languages are not imposed on us in this way and whether it will not mean in the end a Babel and ineffectiveness. It need not be so and it is not going to be so. We must remember the age we are in, its composite structure, its polyphonic nature. In the ancient and mediavals ages, the ages of separations and exclusiveness, of clans and tribes and religions, even in the later age of states and nations, the individual group-consciousness was strong and sedulously fostered. Languages and literatures grew and developed more or less independently and with equal vigour, although always through some kind of give and take. But the modern age has been made so inextricably one, ease of communication and free interchange have obliterated the separating boundaries, not only geographical but psychological. The modern consciousness has so developed and so is circumstance that one can very easily be bilingual or even trilingual; indeed one has to be so, speaking and writing with equal facility not only one’s mother tongue but one or more adopted tongues. Modern culture means that.

Naturally I am referring to the educated or cultivated stratum of humanity, the élite. This restriction, however, does not vitiate or nullify our position. The major part of humanity is bound and confined to the soil where they are born and bred. Their need is not beyond the assistance of their vernacular. A liberal education, extending even to the masses, may and does include acquaintance with one or two foreign languages, especially in these days, but in fact it turns out to be only a nodding acquaintance, a secondary and marginal acquisition. When Latin was the

lingua franca in Europe or Sandkrit in India, it was the élite, the intelli-

gentia, the Brahmin, the cleric, who were the trustee and guardian of the language. That position has virtually been taken in modern times, as I have said, by English and French.

The cultivation of a world language need not mean a neglect or dis-
couragement of the national or regional language. Between the two, instead of there being a relation of competition, there can be a relation of mutual aid and helpfulness. The world language can influence the local language in any of its growth and development and vice versa can also be enriched in the process. The history of the relation of English and the Indian languages, especially Bengali, is an instance in point. A question has been raised with regard to the extent of that influence, involving a very crucial problem: the problem of Indian writers in English. It is said Indians have become clever writers in English because of the English domination. Now that India is free and that domination gone, the need of English will be felt less and finally it may even totally disappear from the Indian field. What has become of the Persian language in India? There were any number of Indian writers in Persian, but with the disappearance of the Muslim rule the supremacy, even the influence, of that imperial language has disappeared. At the most, English may remain as the necessary medium for international affairs—that is to say, just learnt by a comparatively few for the minimum business transaction. The heart of the country cannot express itself in that foreign tongue and no literature of the Indo-Anglian type can grow permanently here.

But this is judging the present or the future by the past. Mankind is no longer exclusively or even mainly national in its outlook; it cannot remain so if it is to progress to the next step, the next step to the future. Mankind overpasses the nationalistic stage and attains something of the international consciousness and disposition, it would be possible and even natural for a few at least among the educated to express themselves in and through the wider world language, not merely as an instrument of a business deal, but as a vehicle of literate and aesthetic creation.

There are certain external—social and political—circumstances in existence today and will be more and more in evidence to come with the lapse of time which tend to corrodorate and strengthen that possibility. A language learnt for commercial or diplomatic transaction cannot remain limited to that function. Those who intend merely to learn may end very probably by cultivating. And then it has been suggested that in the march of evolution towards world unity, there is likely to be an intermediate stage or rump where nations with special affinities or common interests will group together, forming larger collectivities: they will be free asso-
ciations of free nations, the Commonwealth as it has been termed. If India is to link herself specially to the English-speaking group, the English language will not cease to be an acquaintance but continue to be or develop into a very good friend.

It may be urged that a foreign language, in order that it may be the medium of literary expression even for the few, must have some living contact with the mass; it must be the kind of atmosphere is needed where the few can breathe and live the language in daily contact. Even for an individual when he takes to a foreign tongue, it is necessary in order to be perfectly at home and master in that language that he should live some time (seven years is the minimum given by a French critic) in the country of the language adopted. In India, now that the British are gone, how can that atmosphere or influence be maintained? English letters may yet flourish here for a few years, because of the atmosphere created in the past; but they are sure to dwindle and fade away like flowers on a plant without any roots in a sustaining soil. Indeed English was never a flowering from the mother soil, it was something imposed from above, at best grafted from outside. Circumstances have changed and we cannot hope to eternalize it.

Against this argument we repeat what we have sug-
gested, a national language flourishes in one way, an inter-
national language flowers in another way. The atmosphere, if not the soil, will be in the new international consciousness, the inner kind of atmosphere. That will become a more and more vivid, concrete and active reality. And minds open to it, soaked in it, will find it quite natural to express themselves in a language that embodies that spirit. In this way, English, even though it might have lost a good deal of its external dominion in India, can still retain psychologically its living reality there, in minds that form as it were the sandbanks of a new international age, with just the minimum amount of support needed from external circumstances and these are and may be available. And it would not be surprising, if not only English but French too in a similar way finds her votaries from among the international set in our country.

All this, we repeat again, need not be and will not be at the cost of the national language or languages, rather the contrary.
XI. TOWARDS A NEW WORLD

(a) INDIA’S SPIRITUAL CULTURE

We saw in the last essay that ours is a problem of ends and purposes; it is certainly not one of merely finding the right means to attain an end supposed to be self-evident to all. We are as ignorant of ends and purposes as we are of the means to apply to realize what we think to be the right ends, and it is this ignorance of ends which makes us pursue false ends. If we could have a true vision and knowledge of the real goal of life, we would be able to co-operate with the underlying purpose of existence and create a better world. It is this end that will determine the means we shall employ to attain it. We therefore came to the conclusion that the metaphysical need for creating a new world-view must be one which can show this purpose. We then saw that such a metaphysical could only be a spiritual metaphysics—one created upon the foundation of a spiritual realisation and consequently having its very roots in Reality*, and not any intellectual metaphysical system merely based upon the findings of physical science and biology; only such a spiritual metaphysics can give rise to a living religion and a true ethic.

We have so far seen in bare outline the kind of non-anthropomorphic yet theo-centric world-view needed, and the spiritual metaphysics—having as its goal the New-birth of Humanity into the Spirit and the divination of man—which will serve as the West believes in its science, and the Religion of a Divine Humanity arising from it. Now before we proceed to see the type of ethic we need, one that can receive its sanction from such a metaphysics, we shall see what part India has to play in the New World Order, because it is India that has to give men a new world-view.

India and the New World Order.

When we stated in the second essay that India must become the torch-bearer of the New World Order, because with her rich store of spiritual and psychological knowledge, she is eminently fitted to help mankind to take the next step in its evolution, and play the leading part in solving the present crisis of our civilization, we were neither voicing a patriotic sentiment nor trying to live in the glories of the past. In spite of the outer turbulent conditions, there is a spiritual force working in India today, more potent and irresistible than any yet felt in her consciousness; she has today an all-comprehending and integral spiritual knowledge and luminous vision the like of which she has never attained in her great past.

She has a spiritual metaphysics which can give rise to the kind of world-view mankind needs today; and she can best serve the world not by merely giving it, but by herself creating a spiritual culture on a basis of such a metaphysics. This she can only do by realising the Spirit herself and making it the governing principle of her life. After she has done this, she must become a radiating centre of its Light, Power and Bliss, and help in the regeneration of man and his final divinization.

That is the reason why she must not attempt to create for herself the Western type of culture; she must not only be careful to see that she does not get torn by pseudo-religious strife, but must also be careful not to shut up in so-called secular formulas borrowed from European culture, a culture which some of the finest minds in the West are trying to rejuvenate by infusing it in Vedantic strains. She can surely assimilate from the world whatever does not run counter to her aims and ideals, and all that is conducive to her development, but her culture must be essentially spiritual. She has much to learn from the West, especially the right ordering of her physical existence, but whatever she takes she must transmute by making the Spirit its formative power.

The ideal of the modern Western rationalistic-utilitarian-hedonistic culture is that of materially well provided beings living in a perfectly functioning economy. Even in the face of mental and physical suffering and is convinced that by reason and science it can establish the empire of man over nature and ultimately create on earth an ideal society. It does admire and encourage intellectual and aesthetic creations, but its mind is essentially pragmatic—it is haunted by the idea of necessity. It worships Life and not the Spirit, and often even mistakes the Life-force for the Spirit, and mind for the soul. With the exception of a few mystics and saints, post-medieval Europe has not been Spirit-conscious, it has been Life-conscious. Even before, its psychological bent was not very much different. Consequently it has created a culture that reflects its own inherent nature and consciousness. The philosophies that have influenced its civilization have been materialistic, vitalistic or idealistic, but never truly spiritual. It must not be supposed from this that there have been no spiritual tendencies in the West except among scattered individual mystics—there have been a few spiritual movements, but they did not succeed; they could not get a response from minds whose natural bent was pragmatic, especially so when Spirit and Life were admitted to be irreconcilable enemies. This is why, as we saw, the message of Christ was not understood by Europe and only the ethical side of his teaching was stressed and the mystical side ignored.

When we turn to India we find that she has never accepted any interpretation of life other than the spiritual. She has never been satisfied with the appearances of things but has always known that the material cannot be properly understood without a true knowledge of the psychic and the spiritual, that the finite can only be understood in its relation with the Infinite, and the temporal in its relation with the Timeless Eternal. She found that man as he knows himself was only a part of his real self, that his true being was far greater and much more complex than it appeared on the surface, and that behind his outer consciousness there were other deeper and higher ranges, at the summit of which was the Supreme Truth. She saw that man was no child of nature; that his Being is not in nature itself but in a basis, and this basis is the Supreme Reality, which is the source of all our experience and is the substratum of all our consciousness. She saw that her true self was a part of the One Divine Self who is the self of all.

That is why the culture she has created in the past has been a spiritual one. After five years of subjugation she is finding her feet again and is making an effort to regain her right place in the world; but she will only be able to do so by once again contacting the Spirit and creating for herself a spiritual culture.

Such a culture affirms that the Ultimate Reality is a Divine Being, Lord of all existence, and regards the cosmic manifestation as an emanation and projection of His Being and as existing in Him, and man as a soul and towards His Being. His Being transcends in Nature; it can be lifted to a higher and superior level of consciousness to a higher one and to transform him from a rational animal into a highly developed intellectual and ethical being, and finally into a divinised being. Then it declares that the Supreme is not only a Transcendent Reality but is also the Indwelling Divine Person who lives in the inmost recesses of all beings, and that by surrendering to His influence and guidance man can partake of His Divine Consciousness and learn to live as “The eternal portion of the Divine.”

The Spiritual Ethic.

We know now what type of metaphysics is needed for a new theo-centric world-view and the kind of religion such a metaphysics will give rise to. The next question is that of a new ethic—one that has a real sanction. Man’s rules of conduct follow the curve of his own evolutionary ascent. In the early stages of his evolution he instinctively obeys the moral law given by his prophet or law-giver as an indisputable fact—its sanction is given by an extra-cosmic Personal Deity who is pictured as a glorified man having the same faults and foibles, and who punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous. This may be called an Anthropomorphic Ethics. As he develops in himself a social conscience—a sense of co-operation and mutual aid, and finds a need to bridge the strong aggressive type who instead of co-operating with the weaker tries to subjugate him, he erects a moral code which will ensure a social equilibrium. The sanction for this is social utility. This is a Social Ethic. This code also like the first imposes an external control on the individual.

When he evolves further, and his mind comparatively frees itself from the bondage of his concupiscient nature, and as he learns not to be the helpless slave of his desires and passions, he tries to act according to what he thinks is right, good and just; he lays before himself a categorical imperative and tries to find the highest Truth and the highest Good and attempts to create an ideal ethic. This urge to find the absolutes of the true and the good has behind it the demand of the inner soul which secretly guides the outer man and endeavours to lead him to a divine life upon earth. Such an Idealistic Ethic in its inner truth is not a Benthamite balancing between the rewards accruing from good and evil deeds, but is an attempt made by evolving man towards growing into a perfect and divine nature. And this is the real sanction for an Idealistic Ethic—that it acts as a refining and a sublimating influence on a man’s being and prepares him for a greater life. Good always leads him power to a higher and a divine nature which will be above the bondage to the lower nature, whilst evil keeps him securely anchored to it so that he is hindered from attaining a spiritual consciousness and nature.

*For the difference between a spiritual metaphysics and an intellectual one refer to last essay: “The Need of a New World-View.”

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* Refer to Essay IX. “The Failure of the Religion of Humanity.”
a growth into which alone can give him knowledge, power, freedom and bliss.

But even this Idealistic Ethic is still an intellectual formula; it may be a plastic one and not a rigid moral rule, but it cannot be called an absolute ethic—it can only be an interstitial ethic. When an absolute application is given to such an ethic it often becomes a distortion of the original truth it was supposed to contain. It does not have within it enough light and knowledge to serve at all times and under all conditions.

Only a Spiritual Ethic can be an absolute ethic—a law of right action that is not regulated by rules and formulas but one that has as its central movement a spontaneous truth-action incurred from a truth-perception which sees each thing in its right relation with other things and can trace behind appearances the inner cause to its outer effect. Such an ethic can be none other than action done from a spiritual consciousness, or rather, action done in Yoga—that is, in union with the Divine. When by a conquest of desire, conversion of consciousness, and total self-surrender man attains constant union with his Divine Creator and learns to act each moment and in each thing no longer according to the dictates of his ignorant mind but in obedience to the Divine Will, he is said to act in Yoga.

In such a Yogic action, he does not have to mentally discriminate between good and evil and right and wrong—the All-seeing and All-knowing Divine Presence who envelops and penetrates his whole being guides all his thoughts and actions. This is the true Spiritual Ethic, an ethic that is rooted in Truth, grounded in Reality and which can be made operative in actuality. When one reaches the highest Truth-plane of the Divine Reality and attains a gnostic vision of all existence, then one apprehends the realities, the seed-truths, and realizes that our human values are their distorted reflections in earth-life. Of course this Spiritual Ethic is not one which all men can practice; but one has to begin somewhere; till men reach a state of consciousness when they will be able to practice such an ethic, they should endeavour to approach towards the realistic Ethic, the tenets of which will be given to them by those who have attained constant union with the Supreme, and who are consequently fitted to be the guides of those who aspire to live a divine life.

A Spiritual Psychology.

So now our new world-view has a spiritual metaphysics, a religion and an ethic; but these only point the way to the ultimate goal—they do not show how one can actually attain it. For this we need a new Psychology—first, a new knowledge which can reveal the whole working of a man's personality, the psychological structure of his being with all its levels and all the ranges of his consciousness—its depths and widenesses as well as its heights. It must be a psychology that takes its stand on the spiritual metaphysics, for when certain fundamental questions like the descent of the self from its Transcendent Source into Nature, or its evolution through various lives, are discussed, psychology will merge into metaphysics. Needless to say this psychology will have to avoid the tendency of some of the modern Western systems to take up one aspect of a man's soul or his consciousness, generally the darkest or the most turbid, and to try to explain by it his whole nature and the entire field of his activity.

It must also be able to show the working behind the urges of a man's natural being, like the power-urge, the sex-urge and the safety-urge, as well as those of his inner soul-being—the urge to seek the highest truth, good and beauty, and the aspiration to seek God and to attain divine perfection.

Then this psychology must have its practical side—it must lay down a scientifically formulated spiritual discipline by following which scrupulously man can harmonise his inner and outer nature, integrate his whole personality round his true being—his soul-being, and then attain a higher level of consciousness and nature. It must also give the workings of the process by which his mental, vital and physical nature can be transmutated by the alchemy of the Spirit.

Finally it must show man how to actualise and make operative in his life the truths revealed by the metaphysics, so that his religion does not remain lip-worship but becomes a path that leads towards God-realisation and divinisation.

Only by possessing such a metaphysic, ethic and psychology will it be possible to understand the problem of collective living. It is only on such a foundation of the Spirit that it will be possible to create a just system of social relationships in which the individual will find his right place in the collectivity and will work for the good, and in which the collectivity will realise itself through the development of the individual who will become the spearhead of its evolutionary movement.

When man will learn to live not on his surface but within his depths, when he is one with the Divine within, he will be able to contact all things and beings in their depths, and know definitively as a fact of experience that some beings are also like him emanations of the Divine, and have descended into Nature for a common purpose—to manifest God in life. When man will realise this a true inner oneness will be attained by the human race, and only then will it be possible to create a greater life upon earth—a life lived in God and for God.

(b) THE SOLUTION

Such a Gnositic vision of the Integral Divine Reality would declare that the world is a manifestation of this Reality, and therefore real—neither an illusion, Maya, nor some inferior phenomenal existence super-imposed upon a featureless, silent, Impermanent Absolute. If the world is real and an unwavering projection of the Divine, it follows that there must be some purpose for which it was manifested—it cannot be taken as the expression of some irresponsible Creator.

As we have seen, the evolution process points towards the fact that this purpose is a growth of consciousness from the unconsciousness, or rather the stunned and involved consciousness of matter into divinised plant life, then into the unreflective and instinctive animal-life ending in rational man, who will finally develop into the fully aware divine being. That is why our spiritual metaphysics declare the advent of the God-man to be the next step in the evolutionary ascent of humanity.

This brings us to our final problem. As we have pointed out in the previous essay, the evolution of a spiritual metaphysic—that is, a metaphysic based upon a spiritual realisation—presupposes the existence of a spiritual metaphysician, a seer philosopher; and as our metaphysician we have assumed a realisation of the Integral Divine Reality, we must first have a seer who has attained such a realisation. Secondly, it must be shown how the truths revealed by this metaphysic can be dynanised and made operative in life; and since this metaphysic points towards the next evolutionary step human divinity has to take, it is absolutely essential that we must have one who can be the leader of the evolution of the new man-sent individual—one who by his own example can show that it is possible to transform the entire being of man, and can lead him to his destined goal. Such a leader must be one who accepts existing terrestrial conditions and conquers them by his spiritual power and himself becomes the Way through which men shall pass into the kingdom of the Spirit he must represent evolution of humanity trying to attain a higher level of consciousness, as well as the Divine Power working in the earth-existence to uplift man. Then, not only must he have the realisation of the Supreme Truth, he must also have the power to liberate Its Force upon the earth, for only such a sovereign Power can conquer the anarchic forces that at present hold sway over the world.
Such a highly realised being would very likely be the world-leader—the kind of spiritual guide that is wanted by mankind to lead it out of suffering, ignorance, falsehood and chaos, into the Light and Bliss and Immortality of the Spirit.

The only one today who can give us a complete philosophy of life, and become not only the world’s spiritual guide but also the leader of its evolution, and one who has already become a radiating centre of a tremendous spiritual light and power, is the seer—philosopher and Master of Yoga, Sri Aurobindo, of Pondicherry. Having assimilated the essence of all that is finest in the two cultures of the East and the West in all fields of human activity from the spiritual to the material, and having attained the realisation of the Integral Divine Reality, he stands before us today as the apotheosis of the spiritual endowment of the two great cultures of humanity and the leader of the new race. His whole life, spiritual development and his final realisation of the Supermind, the Gnostic Light and Creative Dynamics of the Divine, marks him out as a spiritual leader who can bridge the abyss that exists at present between Spirit and life, and create on earth a divine existence.

His words in The Synthesis of Yoga give us an assurance of that. Regarding the antimony between life and the Spirit, he writes, “So strongly has the idea prevailed, so much has it been emphasised by prevalent philosophies and religions that to escape from life is now commonly considered as not only the necessary condition but the general object of Yoga. No synthesis of Yoga can be satisfying which does not, in its aim, reunite God and man, and give to the human and perfected spiritual 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. For man is precisely that term and symbol of a higher Existence descended into the material world in which it is brought to the lower to transfigure itself and put on the nature of the higher and the higher to reveal itself in the forms of the lower. To avoid the life which is given him for the realisation of that possibility can never be either the indispensable condition or the whole and ultimate object of his supreme endeavour or of his most powerful means of self-revelment. It can only be a temporary necessity under certain conditions or a specialised extreme effort imposed on the individual so as to prepare a greater general possibility for the race.”

But then, one may ask, “How is it that Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual vision is so different from that of other saints and Yogas? How is it that he so emphasises the symbol of the ultimate goal of evolution is the growth of the inner man of humanity?” These questions are quite pertinent, for prophets and saints have come and gone but humanity has not been rid of evil, strife and suffering. What is this sovereign power whose radiating centre Sri Aurobindo has become on earth, which can conquer what has till now been unconquered?

In order to have a true understanding of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual vision and his world-views, we can do no better than learn from Sri Aurobindo himself, in his own words, the rationale of his Supramental realisation and his Yoga teaching. A few extracts from his writings are given below in which he states clearly and precisely his vision of Reality and the Cosmic purpose. Most of these are taken from letters written to his disciples.

“The Shambhur knowledge is, as your Guru pointed out, only one side of the Truth; it is the knowledge of the Supreme as realised by the spiritual mind through the static silence of pure Existence. It was because he went by this side only that Shambhur was unable to accept or explain the origin of the Universe except as illusion, a creation of Maya. Unless one realises the Supreme on the dynamic as well as the static side one cannot experience the true origin of things and the equal reality of the active Brahman. The Shakti, or Power of the Eternal becomes then a power of illusion only and the world becomes incomprehensible, a mystery of cosmic madness, an evil power. It is not the Eternal. Whatever verbal or ideative logic we may bring to this way of seeing the universe explains nothing; it only creates a mental formula of the inexplicable. It is only if you approach the Supreme through his double aspect of Sat and Chit-Shakti, double but inseparable, that you see the thing which is the basic experience of the inner man of humanity. This other side was developed by the Shaktas in Tantra. The two together, the Vedicant and the Tantric truth united, can arrive at the integral knowledge. . . .

In the Supermind these questions do not even arise; for it is the mind that creates the problem by creating oppositions between aspects of the Divine which are not really opposed to each other but are one and inseparable.

This Supramental knowledge has not yet been attained, because the Supermind itself has not been attained, but the reflection of it in intuitive spiritual consciousness is there and that was what was vividly realised in experience by your Guru . . . .”17

* In the ancient Indian system there is only one truism supramental, Sachchidananda. Or if you speak of the upper hemisphere as the supernal, there are three, Sat plane, Chit plane and Ananda plane. The Supermind could be added as a fourth, as it draws upon the other three and belongs to the upper hemisphere. These four planes did not distinguish between two quite different powers and levels of consciousness, even though the Vaishnavas and the Tantrics have jumped to it again and were sometimes on the verge of success. For the rest, this, I think, has been the upper limit of man’s known, known because this too is That-Varanam Kshatradhvaranam Vivasvadharvanam. This is Mind’s assurance of the Ignorance trying to know—Supermind is the Knower possessing knowledge, because one with it and the known, therefore seeing all things in the light of His own, His light, the light of the Soul of the World, the light of the Soul of the Universe. It is a dynamic and not a static power, not only a Knowledge, but a Will according to Knowledge—there is a Supramental Power or Shakti in the universe to manifest direct its world of Light and Truth in which all is luminously based on the harmony and Unity of the One, not disturbed by a veil of Ignorance or any disguise.”

“I mean by the Supramental, the Truth-Consciousness whatever above or in the universe by which the Divine knows not only his own essence and being but his manifestation also. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, by that the Self is known, the Divine Sachchidananda is known, but also the Truth of manifestation is known because this too is That-Varanam Kshatradhvaranam Vivasvadharvanam. This is Mind’s assurance of the Ignorance trying to know—Supermind is the Knower possessing knowledge, because one with it and the known, therefore seeing all things in the light of His own, His light, the light of the Soul of the World, the light of the Soul of the Universe. It is a dynamic and not a static power, not only a Knowledge, but a Will according to Knowledge—there is a Supramental Power or Shakti in the universe to manifest direct its world of Light and Truth in which all is luminously based on the harmony and Unity of the One, not disturbed by a veil of Ignorance or any disguise.”

It is the secret of this Supermind that the ancient seers did not know. It seems that they were aware of its existence and called it the “Truth hidden by a Truth where the Sun unyokes his horses,” but they had no idea of linking the power of the Truth down into the earth-consciousness as a stabilised power to transfer man. They knew the possibility of reaching this Truth, but they thought that it was not possible to return once passed through the gates of the Sun—the symbol of this Truth.

As Sri Aurobindo’s realisation is that of the Supermind, the goal of his Yoga is different from that of other Yogas. He writes: “The way of Yoga follows here has a different purpose from others—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that Divine Consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.”

Supermind, the New Emergent . . .

The emergence of the Supermind as a new principle in the earth-evolution, like Mind, Life and Matter before it, is inevitable according to Sri Aurobindo. He says that what were formerly involved and latent principles have emerged one after the other, the other evolving co-operation in themselves and in response to a pressure put upon them from their corresponding typical planes. These planes of Mind, Life and Subtle Matter are fixed and set. The last principle to emerge was Mind—when a pressure from the Mind-plane was exercised on its own principle involved and lying latent in animated and vitalised Matter, the latter responded and a contact was formed by which Mind became an operative power on earth. Now Supermind has to emerge and become established in earth-existence. All this time evolution had proceeded automatically, because there was no self-conscious being who could actively and consciously co-operate with its life, its inner urge. Man is exactly the type of being who can do so; by an intense effort he can consciously hasten his evolution to its higher points, to attempt to compress evolution into a single life-time, instead of it being a slow worn out process spreading over centuries, and to make the divinisation of man an actuality today instead of a dim hope in some distant future, that has occupied Sri Aurobindo for the past forty years. To make the Supermind act on its corresponding principle in earth-existence and make it emerge, some one who represents the earth-consciousness has to reach and make this his own being. Sri Aurobindo, through his own spiritual attainment, makes it possible for others to leap over the Supermind above and its involved derivative in the earth-consciousness possible. He acts as a bridge which spans the two ends of Being, joining its depths to its heights. In the following lines he discusses the emergence of the Supermind.

“The descent of the Supermind is an inevitable necessity in the logic of things and is therefore sure. It is because men do not understand what the Supermind is or realise the significance of the emergence of cons-
ciousness in a world of inconsistent Matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability. I suppose a matter-of-fact observer, if there had been one at the time of the unrelieved reign of inanimate Matter in the earth's beginning, would have criticised any premise of the emergence of life in a world of dead earth and rock and mineral as an absurdity and a chimera; so too, afterwards he would have repeated this mistake and regarded the emergence of thought and reason in an animal world as an absurdity and a chimera. It is in the same now with the appearance of Supermind in the stumbling mentality of this world of human consciousness and its reasoning ignorance."

"We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or Mind out of living forms, unless we accept the Vedic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life, Life a form of veiled consciousness. And there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case, the uncoercible impulsion of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the impetuous imperative by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind..."

"The material universe starts from the formal atom surcharged with energy instinct with the unformed stuff of a subconscious desire, will, intelligence. Out of this Matter apparent Life manifests and it delves out of itself by means of the living body the Mind it contains impressed within it; Mind also has still to deliver out of itself the Supermind concealed in its workings."

"The animal prepares and imperfectly prefigures man and is itself prepared in the plant as that too is foreseeably obscure by all that precedes it in the terrestrial expansion. Man himself takes up the miraculous play of the electron and atom, draws up through the complex development of the protoplasm all the life of sub-rietal things, perfects the original nervous system of the plant in the physiology of the completed animal being, consummates and repeats rapidly in his embryonic growth the past evolution of the animal form into the human perfection and, once born, rears himself from the earthward and downward animal proclivities, to the erect figure of the spirit who is already looking up to his farther heavenward evolution."

"We know now what this farther heavenward evolution is. Regarding the new race of Supramental beings, Sri Aurobindo writes: "Your statement about the supramental evolution is correct except that it does not follow that humanity as a whole will become supramental. What is more likely to happen is that the supramental principle will be established in the evolution by the descent just as the mental principle was established by the appearance of thinking Mind and Man in earthly life. There will be a race of supramental beings on the earth just as now there is a race of mental beings."

"What we propose just now is not to make the earth a Supramental world but to bring down the Supramental as a Power and established consciousness in the midst of the rest to let it work there and fulfill itself as Mind descended into life and matter has worked as a Power there to fulfill itself in the midst of the rest. This will be enough to change the world and to change Nature by breaking down her present limits."

The Leader of the Evolution.

In some letters written to one of his disciples Sri Aurobindo explains how his own Sadhana is connected with the earth-evolution."

"My point about my Sadhana was that my Sadhana was not done for myself but for the earth-consciousness as a showing of the way towards the Light, so that whatever I showed in it to be possible—inner growth, transformation, manifesting of new faculties, etc.—was not of no importance to anybody, but meant as an opening of lines and ways for what had to be done."

"My supramentalisation is only a key to opening the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile."

"I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution."

Such is the purpose Sri Aurobindo reads in the world manifestation. It is really very heartening to see that whilst we toil on with hope in our hearts for a better world to come, even though outwardly there seems to be no justification to entertain such hopes, there is at least some one who very quietly and silently works day and night unseenly to create that kingdom of God upon earth, and actually assures us that a glorious future and a divine life is our allotted destiny. In the face of darkness and despair he declares with authority—"In the world outside there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure to the exclusion of higher things, and a general expectation of worse and worse things awaiting the world. All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon for which those who know anything about the workings of the world-energy and the workings of the Spirit were prepared. I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is preparing behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming. Those who seek for the Divine have to stand firm and persist in their seeking; after a time, the darkness will fade and begin to disappear and the Light will come."

It is the manifestation of this Divine Light in our earth-existence that is the real solution for the crisis of our civilisation.

Whilst men wait and hope for the Light to come, Sri Aurobindo brings it daily nearer to them, and away from the tumult of life's superficial activities carries on his great work of the regeneration and divinisation of man, and he will not cease to do so

"Till the crescent dusk is lifted from man's soul.
And the morn of God have overtaken his night."

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Steed of Light

Fire-born steed of the supernal vastness
Burning with the whiteness of gold,
A mighty lightning from the celestial calm,
Sweeping the dark velvets of time
And treading of wayless sleep —
Thy rapturous feet stamping oblivion's
Twilight track of far shadowless space —
Drunk with a high majesty will,
Thou kindlest the multitudinous star-worlds
Glowing across life's prison-caves.
Overhead thine own splendour of famed speed!
Give me thy power of paeanless flight
To the unreched pinnacle of the Self,
Spurning all narrow fetters of the dust
And all in nocturnal nakedness.
To be lost in the sun's loneliness.

Esoteric Moon

Pozed on the edge of a long drawn-out ray,
Wafted on the perfume of a dream
She lay, abandoned to the stars' display:
Her mirrored beauty in a magic beam
Was caught, bathing with rapturous hue the earth
Sleeping beneath the canopy of night —
The night and stars paid tribute to her birth,
Painting a door for Her spectral light —
On high she rose across the vaulted sky,
Veiled in a secret loveliness That veiled the gleam in Her angelic eye,
Softening the power of Her to a sweet caress,
To something mortal nature could define
As mystic, holy, sacred and divine.

Romen.

Norman Dowssett.
One of our chief aims is to provide authentic answers to the many perplexing questions with which the common man is faced. This cannot be better done than by considering these questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writings and basing precise answers on them, because Sri Aurobindo is not merely a Master, a knower of Truths, but also the Final Spiritual Director of man-kind in the many trying situations that arise in the course of its day-to-day existence. Intermediately at least we have rather to recognize the old harmonious truth of Vedas—which also came by this way in its end, its Vedanta, to the practical functioning of the unity of the universe. In all these different planes of cosmic existence and therefore too of our own existence and in each of them the same powers, energies or laws must act in a different shape and in another sense and light of their effectuality. First, then, we are to see, that if Karma be a universal truth or the universal truth of being, it must be equally true of the only-born mental and moral worlds of our action as in our outward relations with the physical universe. It is the measure energy that we put forth which determines the mental effect—but subject to all the impact of past, present and future surrounding circumstance, because we are not isolated powers in the world, but rather our energy a subordinate strand and thread of the universal energy. The moral energy of our action determines similarly the nature and effect of the moral consequence, but subject too—to though this element the rigid moralist does not give sufficient consideration—in that to the degree that our self-sent and future surrounding circumstance. That is this true of the output of physical energy, needs no saying nor any demonstration. We must recognize these different types and variously formulate one universal Force which does not do to say from the beginning that the measure and quality of my inner being is some result of the output of a physical energy translated into mental and moral energies—for instance, that my dying or yield a certain action or suffering condition of a by fire and association cause of effect and present action the result of past action as future action will be the result of present action, all cause a working of energy and effect too a working of energy. The moral significance is that all the elements and putting of out of our experience are not within the control of our will, or contained in the physical form of my birth, or is the effect of my chemical elements or determined essentially and ultimately by the disposition of the constituent elements and entities. Whatever drafts my mental and moral being may make on the corporeal for itself supporting physical energy and however it may be affected by its borrowings, yet it is very evident that such a true use for other and larger purposes, has a superphysical meaning, evokes greater motives and significances. The moral energy is in itself a distinct power, has its own plane of karma, moves me even, and that characteristically, to overside my vital and physical nature. Forms of one universal Force at bottom—or at top—these may be, but in practice they are different energies and have to be so dealt with—until we can find what that universal Force may be in its highest purest texture and initial power and whether that discovery can give us in the perplexities of our nature a unifying direction.

Q. 2: What is the fundamental meaning of Karma?

A: Fundamentally, the meaning of Karma is that all existence is the working of an energy of action, and all an action and a building of things by that action,—an unbuilding too, but as a step to farther building— that all is a continuous chain in which every one line is bound indestructibly to the past infinity of numberless links, and the whole governed by the two forces, association of cause and effect, present action the result of past action as future action will be the result of present action, all cause a working of energy and effect too a working of energy. The moral significance is that all the elements and putting of out of our experience are not within the control of our will, or contained in the physical form of my birth, or is the effect of my chemical elements or determined essentially and ultimately by the disposition of the constituent elements and entities. Whatever drafts my mental and moral being may make on the corporeal for itself supporting physical energy and however it may be affected by its borrowings, yet it is very evident that such a true use for other and larger purposes, has a superphysical meaning, evokes greater motives and significances. The moral energy is in itself a distinct power, has its own plane of karma, moves me even, and that characteristically, to overside my vital and physical nature. Forms of one universal Force at bottom—or at top—these may be, but in practice they are different energies and have to be so dealt with—until we can find what that universal Force may be in its highest purest texture and initial power and whether that discovery can give us in the perplexities of our nature a unifying direction.

Q. 3: It is held by many that this law of Karma wholly determines and governs the evolution of the life and soul in the universe. Is this true?

A: The law or chain of Karma is only an outward machinery and cannot be elevated to a greater position as the sole and absolute determinant of the life-workings of the cosmos unless the cosmos is itself entirely mechanical in its character. But all is not Law and Process, there is also Being and work of the soul. There is not only a machinery but a Spirit in things, not only Nature and law of cosmos but a cosmic Spirit, not only a process of mind and life and body but a soul in the natural creature. If it were not so then there would be no birthright of a law for a law of Karma. But if the fundamental truth of our being is spiritual and not mechanical, it must be our self, our soul that fundamentally determines its own evolution, and the law of Karma can only be one of the processes it uses for that purpose: our Spirit, our Self must be greater than its Karma. There is Law, but there is also spiritual freedom: Law and Process are one side of our existence and their reign is over our outer mind, life and body, for these are mostly subject to the mechanism of Nature. But even here their mechanical power is absolute only over body and matter; for Law becomes more complex and less rigid, Process more plastic and less mechanical when there comes in the phenomenon of life, and yet more so this as when mind intervenes with its subtlety; an inner freedom already begins to intervene and, the more we go within, the soul’s power of choice is increasingly felt: for Prakriti is the field of law and proof, but the soul, the Purusha, is the field of the sanction, banishment, and even if ordi- narily it chooses to remain a witness and concede an automatic sanction, it can be, if it wills, the master of its life, Ishwara.

Q. 4: The modern scientific mind, while it recognizes the action of the energies, reduceth all to a determination by the physical energies of the universe. Is this not an arbitrary over-simplification of the complex workings of the many strands of the universal Nature? Is not the action of the law and natural law and moral nature largely independent of the rule of our bodily processes?

A: Being is no doubt one, and Law may be one; but it is perilous to be content with one type of determination, that what is determined will decide from that all other phenomenon however different in its significance and nature. In that way we are bound to distort truth into the mould of our own prepossession.
This is a Briton writing. Humanity was young when my forefathers left their home in the Indus basin, bringing with them on their long journey to this country—called “Albion”—their priests, bards, and musicians. The musicians brought their instruments, and among these the bagpipe. It is to be heard in the East, it remains the national instrument of Scotland, to a crew. They brought also the subly interwoven musical rhythms—like the turning of leaves, or the movement of great golden, happy, holy snakes sporting in water. Had they not done this, records of songs sung in India now by Sri Dilkumar Roy could not possibly come with so familiar a delight as they do to those Britons who know and enjoy the traditional Gaelic tunes.

They brought knowledge with them: amongst other things, of that white Fire, called Agni in the home-country, but here, I think, without a name. Since, perhaps, the time of the Druids, it has had little acknowledged worship, and yet its worship has always continued, and is not at all difficult to trace in the poetry, the hearts, and the customs of our people; for instance, in the fires they light and soberly dance around—soberly as a ritual—in Noverna and at times of national and international rejoicing. Such fires were made to celebrate victory over that “horror of great darkness” with which Nazidom threatened the world lately. In one small country town such a fire is built every November about the wooden figure of a man’s head: the rubbish is burned, the head is saved, to continue its symbolic purification through centuries. I would like to quote here the whole of Laurence Binyan’s lovely poem on the burning of rubbish in autumn. It is called The Burning of the Leaves and is to be found in a small volume of that name as well as the anthology Poems of Our Time.

Now is the time for the burning of the leaves.
They go to the fire; the nostril pricks with smoke.
Wandering slowly into the weeping mist.
Brimful and hallowed, rapped and rotten sheaves!
A flame seizes the smouldering ruin and bites
On stubborn stalks that crumble as they resist.
The last holystone’s fallen tower is dust:
All the spices of June are a bitter rock.
All the extravagant riches spent and mean.
All burn! the reddest rose is a ghost.
Sparks whirl up, to expire in the mist: the cold
Fingers of Fire are making corruption.
Now is the time for stripping the spirit bare.

There was a London priest who wrote on the burned wall of his bomb-ed church during the war: “O ye Fire and Heat, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever”—and this is how the Imagist poet “H.D.” hailed Agni. There is much purifying flame in the latest work of this poet.

...we must go forward,
We are at the crossroads,
The tide is turning;
and so:

let us go down to the sea,
gather dry sea-eed,
heap drift-wood,
use it as a light new fire
and is the fragrance
not unlike the new Sun
of regeneration.

What of the contained white flame?”—K. D. Sethna’s:
O smile of heaven locked in a seed of light,
O music burning through the heart’s dumb rock ...

Our poets, sons and daughters of those original wise Bards from the East, have never, quite, ceased to see it: always, after a temporary closing, someone’s eyes have pierced the heavy clay and found in the centre its burning inhabitant—that penetrating, moulding fiery fountain of perception active in all forms: that Fire “that looks like water, burning in a chalice”: that Fire which does so strongly and rapturously sparkle, bound and spiral up in and through the appearances of stick and stone, bird, beast, and man that the seers are often dazzled. But they go on looking. They are looking now. Increasingly, I believe, they are looking now.

This common path! It’s burning earth.
You, God the Creator that Angelo knew,
Wholly taking me, make it so.
Why? the path passes to what place?
I see.
Your Eyes are in my face.
It utters up to a crystal man,
A man of light, the first man,
Seemly here to assist man
Now man is to be what man can:

A golden-cystal, a fire-man
Making a fire-white Albion.
With what? With all he does and is;
Sighs to have; half knows;
With worship; and the power he calls “pain”—
A force he, widening, will use
As you the wind, the stream, the stone.

Rupert Brooke’s vision of the clear person inside the clouded, should not be forgotten. It is described in the poem called Dining Room Ten? A few friends are together; they laugh and talk, share food and find great delight in each other. Then comes the flash.

One instant I, an instant, knew
As God knows all . . . . .
I looked on your magnificence.
I saw the stillness and the light,
And you, august, immortal, white,
Holy and strange . . .

To-day the Welsh poet, Mr. Vernon Watkins, is writing of this holy and strange whiteness in the language of his home. Listen to the beginning of a poem he calls Music of Colours—White Blossom—

White blossom, white, white shell; the Lastrene Walking in the ear; white touched by souls Who know the music by which white is seen, Blinding white, from strings and armour, Until that is not white, seen at the two poles. Nor white the Scythian hills, nor Marsilia’s queen . . .

What, then, to this writer is “the music by which white is seen”? The seventh verse says:

If there is white, or has been white, it must have been When His eyes looked down and made the leper clean . . . .

And another way of saying that, of insisting on its “nowness”, of getting it past humanity into earth, is:

As I went through the falling night
The pain that was to kill me a new
Experience in my shoulder and side
I feared, I was ashamed of it.
How was I to deal with it if it grew?

‘Kneel!’ God in my substance said.
‘Kneel down: the triangular light I am Shall whitely descend; in that, my dove,
My spirit, as Time—end, inhabiting you.
Pass down your knees to the trees and mud
A Neasness, old to foreseeing love;
A strength longings has cried for loudly.’

I knew,
I felt leaves and a lamb
Nuzzle my will. A river ran

By like the orchestral act of a man . . .
A passing worm
Knew Wrongness too for a sweet form.
Awareness grew. The leaves, the lamb
Knew what it was in them song I AM: The pain, the dark, the rent women
Pull and proudly
Filled their shapes to the meot moon.

Here, to put beside Rupert Brooke’s; is Mr. Watkins’s vision of the divine inside the evolving person: this time in a child’s portrait. It begins an enchanting poem called Llewelyn’s Chariot.

‘Sun of all suns, seed of dandelion seeds,
Spring from the stem of delight and the starry course,
High at the hell of night, in the van of deeds,
A one-wheeled chariot you drive, and a headless horse.
Your Maker makes you his glory . . . .

‘Your Maker makes you his glory!’ That seems to me something rather like the whole purpose of the Evolution described in six words.
Should it not also be the proper salutation of all articulate beings to each other; and, beyond that, to whatever the minute brings? Saying such words—to a person, a thing, an event—the soul stands back in its own house, and the light from that gentle and strong place can show mind, heart and body the truth of this divine Alchemy that may otherwise whirl so perplexingly. This is one way—and a “sunlit path” indeed—to that “orchestral living” which will be our delight and peace and a continual growing wonder of rapture in what Sri Aurobindo calls “the Knowledge”, and it seems to me the Word which has supremely come through Sri Aurobindo’s lips from the home-country to us—the Colonials. It is the salvation I would wish to send echoing back through Mother India to India on her Independence Day, and to India’s, and our, great Teacher on his birthday.

“Your Maker makes you his glory!” O Flame, O Wine, your form has become conscious; you have discovered the One Light for the Many.“

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1. Macmillan & Co., Ltd.
6. The Lady with the Unicorn. Faber & Faber, 1948.
VISION AND REALISATION

Living and accurate expression of mystical and spiritual experience is rare. To convey the realities of this experience, in all their many-sidedness, and to show what the immense reaches of yogic evolution are, this series will present extracts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

O LORD, I am before Thee as an offering ablaze with the burning fire of divine union...

And that which is thus before Thee, is all the stoves of this house and all that it contains, all those who cross its threshold and all those who see it, all those who are connected with it in one way or another, and by close degrees, the whole earth.

From this centre, this burning nucleus which is and will be more and more penetrated with Thy light and love, Thy force will radiate over the whole earth, visibly and invisibly, in the hearts of men and in their thoughts.

Such is the certitude Thou givest me in reply to my aspiration for Thee. An immense wave of love descends upon everything and penetrates all. Peace, peace on all earth, victory, plenitude, marvel.

O beloved children, sorrowful and ignorant, and thou, O rebellious and violent Nature, open your hearts, tranquillize your force, it is the omnipotence of Love that is coming to you, it is the pure radiance of the light that is penetrating you. This human, this earthly hour is the most beautiful among all the hours. Let each, let all know it and enjoy the plenitude that is accorded.

O saddened hearts and anxious foreheads, foolish obscurity and ignorant ill-will, let your anguish be calmed and effaced.

This is the splendour of the new word that comes:

"I am here."

THE MOTHER

June 9, 1914.

—From Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.

O my Lord, my sweet Master, for the accomplishment of Thy work I have sunk down into the unfathomable depths of Matter, I touched with my finger the horror of the falsehood and insincerity, I have reached the seat of oblivion and supreme obscurity! But in my heart was the Remembrance, from my heart there leaped the call which could arrive to Thee: "Lord, Lord, everywhere Thy enemies are triumphant; falsehood is the monarch of the world; life without Thee is death, a perpetual hell; doubt has usurped the place of Hope and revolt has pushed out submission; Faith is spent, Gratitude is not born; blind passions and murderous instincts and a guilty weakness have covered and stilled Thy sweet law of Love. Lord, will Thou permit Thy enemies to prevail, falsehood and ugliness and suffering to triumph? Lord, give the command to conquer and victory will be there. I know we are unworthy, I know the world is not yet ready. But I cry to Thee with an absolute faith in Thy Grace and I know that Thy Grace will save us."

Thus, my prayer rushed up towards Thee; and, from the depths of the abyss, I beheld Thee in Thy radiant splendour; Thou didst appear and Thou saidst to me: "Lose not courage, be firm, be confident,—I COME."

THE MOTHER

November 24, 1931.

—From Prayers and Meditations of the Mother.

In moments when the inner lamps are lit
And the life’s cherished guests are left outside,
Our spirit sits alone and speaks to its gulls.
A wider consciousness opens then its doors;
Invading from spiritual silences.
A ray of the timeless Glory stoops awhile
To commune with our seized illuminated clay
And leaves its huge white stamp upon our lives.
In the oblivious field of mortal mind,
Revealed to the closed prophet eyes of trance
Or in some deep internal solitude
Witnessed by a strange immaterial sense,
The signals of eternity appear.

The truth mind could not know unveils its face,
We hear what mortal ears have never heard,
We feel what earthly sense has never felt,
We love what common hearts repel and dread;
Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient;
A voice calls from the chambers of the Soul;
We meet the ecstasy of the Godhead’s touch
In golden privacies of immortal fire.

Those signs are native to a larger self
That lives within us by ourselves unseen;
Only sometimes a holier influence comes,
A tide of mightier surgings bears our lives
And a diviner Presence moves the soul.


The universe removed its coloured veil,
And at the unimaginable end
Of the huge riddle of created things
Appeared the far-seen Godhead of the whole,
His feet firm-based on Life’s stupendous wings,
Omnipotent or lonely seer of Time,
Inward, inscrutable with diamond gaze.

Attracted by the unfathomable regard
The unsolved slow cycles to their fount returned
To rise again from that invisible sea . . . .

A vastness brooded free from sense of Space,
An Everlastings cut off from Time;
A strange sublime unutterable Peace
Silent rejected from it world and soul.

A stark companionless Reality
Answered at last to his soul’s passionate search:
Passionate, wordless, absorbed in fathomless hug,
Keeping the mystery none would ever pierce,
It brooded inscrutable and intangible
Facing him with its dumb tremendous calm . . . .

There was no mind there with its need to know,
There was no heart there with its need to love.

All person perished in its namelessness.
There was no second, it had no partner or peer;
Only itself was real to itself.

A pure existence safe from thought and mood,
A consciousness of unshared immortal bliss,
It dwelt aloof in its bare infinite,
One and unique, unutterably sole.

A Being formless, featureless and mute
That knew itself by its own timeless self,
Aware for ever in its motionless depths,
Uncreated, uncreated and unborn,
The One by whom all live, who lives by none.
An immemorable luminous secrecy
Guarded by the veils of the Unmanifest.
Above the changing cosmic interlude
Aboke supreme, immutably the same,
A silent Cause occult, impenetrable—
Infinite, eternal, unthinkable, alone.

The treatise known as The Cloud of Unknowing was written by an English mystic of the fourteenth century whose name has not come down to us. The idea of an English mystical teacher may seem a little surprising. But if it is true, as the Abbé Brémond has suggested, that there exists a close link between poetry and mysticism—poetry being one of those "profane" states of nature in which it is possible to mark some of the signs of the mystical states of the soul—it will not be quite so startling as a first glance may lead us to believe. For England has one of the richest poetic mines in the world, and poetry is the work of the feminine element in the being—the singing of Animas. Animas is passive, incorporeal, empyreal; she is the very essence.

In the fourteenth century—if we may borrow Claudel's parable—she and Animus were still living together in comparative harmony. But their divorce was approaching. The influence on men's minds of the medieval synthesis between contemplation and action still endured, but its power was waning, as the unity of Christendom was waning. Left alone after the Reformation to evolve their own form of Christianity, and being a people in whom the active, or masculine, element predominates, the English let Animus have his way. Even their reformers were not of the value of humanism, which sanctified his passion for action under the cloak of service, and produced the ever-active Christianity we have today. It was indeed, no mere act of theological antispeciation that rooted out from the Godhead all representation of the creative Cloud that "acquires transひとり, and now, almost as a fainthearted thrush, no longer seizes on the figure of the Virgin Mary, but the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual shien. Animas could not be quenched. She poured herself out in poetry and is still singing. It is from her inwardness, her secret inspirations of love that we have been framing in this essay. For she has taught us that the noble band of fourteenth-century English mystics lived and wrote, and among them the author of The Cloud.

Background, Author, Style

Their background was the violent and chaotic century—Dante's century—which was the Gloomy Century of the West, and the Great Black Plague, which swept Europe from the Crimes to Ireland, taking multitudes in its wake. England was interminably at war with France and the miseries of the time found vent in religious and social agitation. In The Vision of Piers Plowman—one of the most wonderful of English poems, with the most magical of all opening lines—mystical vision and an impassioned social consciousness pour itself into verse. It is perhaps symbolic that these two great fourteenth-century works, The Cloud and The Vision, are both virtually anonymous—fittingly in the case of the former, for the man who wrote it wished for himself "nought and "nourveau"; and in the case of Piers equally fittingly, because although it has been ascribed to Langland, in essence it is the cry and confession of a whole people. In some ways, the lines of the poem have common features. Both were written in the Middle English hallowed by Chaucer; both included an alliterative style that had come down to them from Old English, and a natural use of alliteration; both authors were mystics—one a poet on fire, the other a contemplative of the twin lights which work in man's soul. He tells his disciple that his life now "must always stand in desire," and he warns him that though God "asketh no help but only thyself," willing that "men but look upon him and let him alone." He is a "jealous lover and suffereth no fellowship, or...keth not to work in thee unless he be labouring with thee by himself." Likewise the young contemplative, when he has his heart with a meek stirring of love to his Creator, "must mean himself and none of his goods." In this meek stirring of love lies the core of The Cloud's teaching. For there are two principal working powers of the being, knowing and loving, and God is only comprehensible to love. When the author asks himself: What is God? he does not return, as did St Thomas Aquinas, a profound formula He who is, but with sovereign simplicity: "I know not...God himself can no man think. And therefore I would have all the thing that I can think, and choose to my love that thing that I cannot think. For why, he may well be loved, but not thought. By love may" He may never by the work of his understanding come to the knowledge of an unknown thing; the which is sought but by God. And because that he falleth in is nothing else but only God. And therefore I was that Saint Denis said: "The most godly knowing of God is that which is known by unknowing."

The Two Clouds

When he is lifted to god it experiences a darkness, or cloud of unknowing. It is this cloud that is between God and the contemplative that the soul must always, if it sees or feels God, experience him. "Hide...
An Unknown Cartographer of Heaven—Continued from previous page

in this darkness," he writes, "crying after him whom thou lovest." Though "unknown" usually expresses this "cumbrous cloud" between the soul and God, it sometimes means a state of being without knowledge, or, ignorance. In the process of concentration the soul must give itself to the inner work. It is the inward meditation of the intellect, in its own mental working, that must support the spiritual effort made by the soul. The author calls the will "the principal working power of the soul" and God "the highest willable thing." But it is plain that he means by will the activity of the psychic being, for he also refers to it as "the ghostly heart." "Least needly," he writes, "to this blind stirring of love in thine heart. I mean not in thy bodily heart, but in thy ghostly heart, the which is thy will. And beware that thou conceive not bodily that which is said ghostly." It would appear that in a "fallen" state man cannot recollect these stirrings in his will—an allegorical way of saying that it is the divided consciousness that separates man from God; but the perfected soul lives in a continuous being, aware every moment of its stirrings. He calls this "heeding the time," being in fact, self-aware. The work of the contemplative is "but a sudden stirring, as it were unadvised, speedily springing unto God as a spark from the coal." In the same way only "a dead man can be saved by grace." There is another "cloud" of the discourse is necessary and this is the cloud of forgetting, through which the soul is deemed, and in which all the creatures that ever God made, and in holding them under the cloud of forgetting," he describes the distracting effect of paying attention to thoughts that seem sacred, godlike and holy, following how the soul can be by being "scattered thou knowest not where." All thought, then, must be repressed. The soul must not allow itself to be haunted by the memory of sinner, nor, but, in contrary, the mind to the mind of all and most of all itself, "to rest evermore on this cloud of unknowing with a sharp dart of longing love." To assist its concentration the soul may utter one word—"that thou mayest have better hold thereon take thee but one word, one syllable"—but he also adds that the best prayer is "a ghostly cry . . . when it is in pure spirit, without special thought or any pronouncing of word; unless it be seldom, when for abundance of spirit it bursteth up into word." The author is careful to warn the disciple at some length to the soul" in the experience of the "love,

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thou spill all. Be thou but the tree, and let it be the carpenter; be thou but the house, and let it be the husband dwelling therein." Then may God send out a beam of ghostly light to touch the soul—but of this, he says, he dares not speak with his "blabbering fleshly tongue." Love all men as kin, for all must be "loved plainly and nakedly for God." All actions to God: "God is the father of poor man as rich and other good deed for God's love, bodily or ghostly, to any that hath need, let them be sure they do it unto Christ ghostly." Finally, how shall a man know when to pass from meditation to contemplation? He will know by the stirring of his heart and when this is high work. But most surely will he know his readiness when he feels that nothing he does is complete "unless this secret little love set upon the cloud of unknowing be in a ghostly manner the chief of all their work." It would be impossible to understand the teaching of The Cloud without special reference to the author's conception of grace. Man cannot be "knit to God" in love and will by nature, but only by grace. He is "made a god in grace" because the soul in union with God is "all one with him in grace, yet . . . full far beneath him in nature." Grace is the gift of God, by which he reforms the soul. The work of the contemplative can never be done by his own unaided power; it is "never gotten by study, but only by grace." The aspirant can do the spade-work with divine help, but the stirring of love "that is the work of God only." Grace to come contemplation is "in God" in whom the soul is brought, without any merit of the same soul." It is neither given for innocence nor withheld for sin. Take good heed that I say withholdeth, and not "sins." In the Cloud of Unknowing God adapts it to the ligament of grace, which, by virtue of reforming grace, is enabled to comprehend him by love, who is incomprehensible "to all created knowing powers . . . incomprehensible, I mean, by their knowing and not by their loving." A Wholeness of Outlook The Negative way of this fourteenth-century bhakta, with his emphasis on "ought" and "oughtness" and "sought" (anything) may seem at first sight austere and wholly reclusive. Nothing could be further from the truth. The author knows exactly where to lay the praying tongue; but he never cuts unnecessarily. The problem is the psychology which he seems to have inherited through Richard of St. Victor from St. Augustine, is a primitive one, its intuitions surmise and transform it. "Pursuers his discourse is succeeded by his "rejoicing in the Lord." Nothing of this may be caught in his actions. "The nearer men touch the true, the more wary must men be of error." If the reader cannot grasp what he reads, "lay it beside thee," he says, "till God come and teach thee." Keep healthy, he instructs his young friend, "I tell thee truly, this work asketh a great full restfulness, and a full whole and a clean disposition, as well in body as in soul." Too great straining of body and spirit may lead to derangement, and the contemplative "fall into weariness, and his ghostly body, as it were, a full body of the" "boisterousness of body." "Learn to love listlessly with a soft and a demure behaviour as well in body as in soul," then the body "by the virtue of the soul shall set itself upright." Again, "God forbid," he says, "that I should separate what God hath mingled and willed together to be served with body and soul, both together, as seemly is, and reeward man his meed both in body and in soul." This wholeness of outlook is reflected in his refusal to denounce reason, which is greatly helpful to instruction and "a beacon of light to the blind and the unwise." Neither will be separate action and contemplation. "A man may not be . . . fully contemplative (as it may be here) except he be in part active." Likewise he gives the sovereignty to love and puts allness in a subsidiary place. He encourages his disciple to be cheerful in the right spirit and not to let his failures depress him, and that though he must love all creatures in God, "familiar affection" to friends is permissible, for even Christ had a special love towards the disciple John. Be temperate in all outward activities, he advises, "as in eating and drinking, and in sleeping, and in keeping of thy body from outrageous cold or heat, and in long praying or reading, or in communiting in speech." The contemplative life, rightly practiced, will carry "infinite functions and restrictions." "They have God, in whom is all plenty; and whose hath him—yea as this benediction—he needeth nought else in this life." The Cloud of Unknowing needs reading in its entirety, not once but many times. Nevertheless, as Charles Williams said, "The charge and challenge of that most blissfully unknown cartographer of heaven cannot be easily overcome." He prayed that all those who had towards his book only a curious wit should not read it. Those who choose its way will find in it that extraordinary power to transmit light which is the mark of the "transparenced." Wound up in its author, it is a voice of true and trustful voices in English mysticism: "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." It ends with his blessing: "For all the faithful, in God's blessing and mine! And I beseech Almighty God that true peace, whole counsel, and ghostly comfort in God with abundance of grace, evermore be with thee and all God's lovers on earth. Amen."
RELI GIOUS ED U CATION AND THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

BY ANILB A RAN ROY

Sri Aurobindo started National Education in Bengal but unfortunately for the country he could not organize it according to his vision and ideal. That education has been grossly neglected and we see corruption rampant everywhere. It was expected that with the advent of swaraj, things would be mended and education in India would be placed on a spiritual basis following the eternal ideal of India. But that has not yet been realized; on the contrary, the Constituent Assembly has adopted an article which has raised serious misgivings in the minds of people, that the present Government has put a ban on spiritual training.

It is true, the article refers expressly only to institutions wholly maintained out of Government funds, but people naturally think that the Government expect all other educational institutions to follow the same rule.

But a closer examination of that article, aided by a study of the speeches made by the sponsors in the Constituent Assembly, shows that the Government only intended that sectional and creed religious schools should not be taught in Government schools. There is no ban on teaching spirituality which constitutes the essence of all religions. Most people favour the imparting of religious education in schools, but they are not sure about the method. But the provision of the article solved the problem for us; they have left for us the Gita which contains the essential truth of all religions. Indeed the Gita is not a book of creed religion, it is a spiritual scripture, yoga abstrait. At the end of every chapter of the Gita we find the following sentence:—Srimadbhagavatam.yamabhishadat brahmanirudhyyogasarve.

A creed religion consists of certain special rites and ceremonies of worship and prayer according to some dogmatic belief. In this sense, the Hindu, Muslim, Christian religions are different. But these are the externals of religion, which may serve as a preparation for the true spiritual life which consists in finding direct union with God through self-surrender and so that all our life and action may be controlled by the divine Will and our consciousness be filled with divine peace and light and love and bliss. This is the true aim of all real religions, and yogic practice is the means of attaining it and the Gita is an eminent scripture of Yoga. We find in it a synthesis of all paths in such a manner as is to be found nowhere else. If only the Gita be taught well in our schools and colleges, a firm foundation will be laid for a truly moral and spiritual life. Still educational institutions are hesitating to introduce the Gita as they fear that the Government do not favour it. In order to remove these doubts I wrote a personal letter to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Constituent Assembly, and to be quite sure I sent him a copy of a Hindi booklet, Kastrine dharma, prepared by myself, giving an interpretation of the first 38 slokas of the second chapter of the Gita. As his reply removes a serious doubt and also may be helpful to the University Commission who will have to give their report soon, I take the liberty to publish that letter here in full:

My dear Anil Babu,

I am so glad to receive your letter dated the 2nd July after such a long time. I do not know to what particular part of the Constitution relating to religious education you refer in your letter. So far as I am aware there is no ban on spiritual training. In fact only institutions maintained out of State funds shall not provide any religious instruction. Institutions, run out of endowments which require religious instructions to be imparted, are free to give it even if the State manages such an institution. But no one can be compelled to take such an instruction unless, in the case of a minor, the guardian consents to it. I think, the wording of article 22 of the draft Constitution which perhaps you had in mind is clear, but I would like to know how this idea has arisen.

I have been glancing over the book in Hindi which you have been good enough to send to me. A book like this should prove very useful as a text book but, as you know, these text books are prescribed for the lower classes by text book committees and for the higher classes either by the University or by particular boards. I am not in touch with any of these institutions and I do not know how I could help you in getting it accepted. But I would suggest to you to put yourself in touch with the authorities concerned. I am well,

With regards,
yours sincerely,
S/d Rajendra Prasad.
Sri A. B. Roy
Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Pondicherry.

ADORATION

Thou sleepest on the eye-lids of the Superconscient, O Monarch of man's dream-land, and covarest Thyself up with the Inconscient's sheet; ever incrustable are Thy ways.

Becoming a child Thou plungest down along the precipitous incline of Involution, into the dead waters of the bottomless Inconscience. A deep Silence envelops Thee there.

At the end of a long, long, aeonic journeying on land mankind has now firmly pitched its camp on the Cape of Mind on the shore of the Superconscient's sea.

And there, O Divine, it awaits the arrival of the Boat of Thy Grace to voyage to the distant Supermundana. Shore.

Assuming once again the form of Fish, O Divine, manifest Thyself before Manu, the Man, and in Thy Ark carry him to the Superconscient's Northern Mount.

While the ever-circling water-wheel of breath empties the waters of Life, how can the mind remain composed with the futile consolations offered by the world?

But now both Life and Mind have become submerged in Thy Conscioussness; the former has forgotten its transience and the latter its restlessness in the rhythm of the Infinite.

When Thou, O Divine, camest near my heart and stoutly knocking at my door, the obstructing wall of sin, hit by Thy Feet, tumbled down.

The sentries of the unsailable Fortress of sin had been in the Subconscient's sleep; and ignorant of danger, all the Ministers too had been asleep in their mansions.

But in the inner apartment the Monarch Ego with his Consort were awake and watching the path of Thy Advent; and joyously he approached Thee, with his crown in his hand.

Returning to Thee the throne of Nature entrusted by Thee to him, the Ego was now happy; dedicating and surrendering to Thee he celebrated his own as well as Thy Victory.

In the hive of my heart I gather the ever-new honey of Divine Delight and there erect a home for the swarms of Mind's spirits.

Since Thy Consciousness has become the Queen and is ruling the other bees a state of harmony and content has settled there and all the griefs have vanished.

On the Trikuta Mountain, of Mind-Life-Body's triple peak, O Sun, stop Thy chariot awhile and shower Thy lustrous Force of Truth on those pinnacles.

Using Honey for ink write on my forehead Thy Fato-script of Love with the Superconscient's pen; I too will fill Thy Divine Lotus-Feet with my love's lacymograph.

When I stood before Thy Feet and held up the begging-bowl of my heart, that too Thou snatched away from me, O Incrustable Divine.

In a moment Thou madest me a pauper without any belongings, by snatching my heart-bowl away; but the very next moment pouring down Thy Love, Thou showedst me the Supreme Fullness.

RAJNIKANT MODY.

Stanza translated by the author from his Gujarati poem AIRCHANA.
BOOKS in the BALANCE
YOGA AND LIFE
A MASTER'S DIRECT GUIDANCE TO HIS DISCIPLES
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO
Edited by K. H. G. Published by the Sri Aurobindo Circle, 32, Rampart Row, Bombay. Rs. 8/-

AN EASTERN CRITIC’S ESTIMATE

The Sun from which we kindle all our suns
(Sri Aurobindo: Savitri)

Letters of Sri Aurobindo, the second in the series that is being brought out by the Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay, runs into six hundred pages of solid matter, a product well worth the painstaking labour and discriminating industry that K. H. G., the Editor, has brought to bear on this publication. Classified and arranged in 16 sections under descriptive titles, this collection of letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his disciples and esquires covers a wide field and a variety of topics from Jivamoto to Earthquakes, Quantum Theory to Avatars.

The letters deal mainly with the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo—its aim, goal, conditions and sadhana. True, but as the Editor observes in the Foreword—"Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga aims not only at a liberation but also at a decisive spiritual conquest and transmutation of... Ignorance, resulting in the complete divination of our entire existence, the manifold problems of life also clear up in many places for illuminating elucidation from the central spiritual vision."

Common occurences come in for unfamiliar treat- ment and much that is silent and unexplained in every-day life stands lit and revealed in all its significance after a careful study of this collection.

To be just overstated, the Editor gives a complaint about the ingratitude of human nature, Sri Aurobindo writes:

"Your surprise at X’s behaviour shows that you do not yet know what kind of thing is the average human nature. Did you never hear of the answer of Vidyasagar when he was told that a certain man was abusing him,—’Why does he abuse me? I never did him a good turn.’ The ungenerative vital is not grateful for a benefit, it resents being under an obligation. So long as the benefit continues, it is effective and says sweet things, as soon as it expects nothing more it turns round and bites the hand that fed it. Sometimes it does that even before, when it thinks it can do it without the benefactor know- ing the origin of the slanders.... Of course people with a developed psychic element are by nature grateful...." (P. 410)

Wisdom that Leads by the Hand

The epistolary medium has certain obvious advantages over other media for communication of knowledge and wisdom. Treatises are gener- rally more occupied with forceful presentation of the thought and the development of the argument and the clinching of issues than with con- vincing the reader and as such appeal only to a certain type of intellectual. Discourses can, of course, be popular and have a place in the dissemination of knowledge, but they cannot take the place of Letters which rarely fail to be fit vehicles to reach a wider circle of readers whose temperaments and levels of culture are and may be at variance with one another. Being in the nature of heart-to-heart talks, they do away with formalities and put the mind of the reader en rapport with the writer. Here there is a free flow of thought from one to another following the mind of the recipient. This is of special importance in matters like spiritual practice. An olym- pian exegesis of fundamental truths of the Atman or the Sri may dazzle, but it fails to carry effectively the soul of the novice. It is the reverse in Letters. Here the Master leaves his heights, comes down and meets the aspirant, jiswaas, on his own level, leads him by his hand as it were. And particularly in cases like the present one when the Master is a Seer his words carry a double conviction. Apart from the informality, the Ven of the Rishe carries with it an intrinsic power, a vibration that flows from the word and penetrates into the soul in an unmistakable manner. Thus, the atmosphere one breathes while reading the epic of Valmiki is one of sweet resonance and melting emotion; a recitation of the Hymns of Par- sara charges the whole air with powerful spiritual vibrations and leaves one on rare heights. These words carry a concrete effect. Sri Aurobindo’s letters, written mostly as they are in answer to queries relating to the spiritual life, have—we can safely aver from personal experience corroborated by the experience of hundreds—the power to effect the very thing they inculcate verbally.

This is a notable book. If you are one of the few who are determined to receive the Light as soon as possible—buy it. If you are not of this select band but know someone who is—buy it for him or her. You will be very popular.

A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK.
The Entire Field of Yogic Life

In themselves these precious Letters cover the entire field of the sadhana special to Sri Aurobindo’s Divinely Guided, Now manifested as Human Destiny. It is indubitably the Manual of Sadhana. All sadhana verily is a regulated effort to rise towards a Higher Reality, towards God. The sadhana begins with the awakening of man to his state of imperfection, his dissatisfaction with the present state of his existence. It proceeds to win him the saving Light through a disciplined endeavour to transcend his limitations and grow into a higher Knowledge leading to the living Truth that is behind and above all that we see and do not see. This Supreme Reality though one in essence is diversified and are the means of approach to That. There is really no conflict among them.

“They are thousand ways of approaching and realizing the Divine…each path has its own aim and direction and method and the truth of each does not invalidate the truth of the other….the important thing is to follow one’s own way well and thoroughly.” (P 49,43)

Particular paths appeal to particular temperaments and that is because the possibilities of one soul are different from those of another. The aim of the Integral Yoga is its own:

“This Yoga aims at a new and transformed life….its aim is to refound life in the truth of the spirit and for that purpose to transform the roots of all we are and do from the mind, life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind….In the new life all connections must be founded on a spiritual intimacy and a truth quite other than any which supports our present connections.” (P. 249)

The Higher Consciousness, the Higher principle to found the new life on is what has been termed the Supermind by Sri Aurobindo. It stands high above at the summit of this world-manifestation of which it is the original Creative Truth.

How to effect the desired change in ourselves and what is the nature of the self-discipline one has to take to? Prayer, meditation, concentration, work (for the Divine), bhakti, surrender and an inner psychic opening—any of these or all of these combined in a way most suited to the nature and need of the seeker on the one hand and the Divine Grace operating directly or the other, are the twin powers that work out the sadhana. The contribution of personal effort and the place of the Grace and the Intervention (Section IX), the true form of prayer and the conditions under which it is effective (p.1,137), meditation, its nature (p. 398) and its distinction from concentration, are some of the topics treated with illuminating felicity in these pages.

No doubt, this path like all great paths is beset with difficulties thrown up by one’s own nature and the environmental Nature which resists all change. By far the largest part of the book is devoted to their analysis and the ways of surmounting them with the least scrimmaging. While dealing with this aspect Sri Aurobindo gets into what is with him a rare reminiscent mood and observes:

“As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear….far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through insuperable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer….For the leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down or represent and embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience, not in a mere play or Lila but in grim earnest, all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled, bashed and only slowly victorious labour which are possible on the path….It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straightforward and easier road to others—if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others ‘take the psychic attitude; follow the straight unlit path, with the Divine openly and secretly upholding you—if secretly, he will yet show himself in good time,—do not insist on loud, bandied, roundabout and difficult.” (Pp. 37-88)

A Large Variety of Subjects

Besides these important aspects of sadhana there is a variety of subjects touched upon in the letters. Chiefl y, astrology, the attempt to which the stars ‘record a destiny that has been already formed’ (P. 558) come in for a brief treatment. Discussing the question of Destiny and Free Will, Sri Aurobindo draws pointedly to the fact that there are layers of destiny and that the destiny on the physical plane can be altered by changing the less rigid destiny on the higher altitudes by means of the spiritual Force. Sciences, modern, state of soul after death, its process of journey, root of mind and rebirth, how best one can help the departments, the possibility of other human beings regressing in evolution are some of the other interesting topics dealt with.

Sri Aurobindo is no iconoclast though he is uncompromising in his own way. He says:

“IT is a spiritual principle not to take away any faith or support of faith unless the persons who have it are able to replace it by something larger and more complete.”

For him whatever promotes the spiritual growth of the individual is good, no matter how it is viewed. Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual experience carries in (some) more and more humility; there are others like Vivekananda in whom it creates a great sense of strength and superiority; there are others in whom it fixes a sense of superiority to man and humanity in the spirit and act of worship.” (P. 290)

He cares little, however, for conventional virtues and taboos. Dealing with the question of humility in some and sense of superiority and strength in others, he writes:

“As for the sense of superiority, that is a little difficult to avoid when greater horizons open up before the consciousness…A spiritual experience creates (in some) more and more humility; there are others like Vivekananda’s famous answer to the Madras Pandit who objected to one of his assertions saying, ‘But Shankara does not say so,’ to which Vivekananda replied, ‘No, but I, Vivekananda, say so,’ and the Pandit was speechless. That ‘I, Vivekananda’ stands up to the ordinary eye like a Himalaya of self-confident egotism. But there was nothing false or unsound in Vivekananda’s spiritual experience. For this was not mere egotism, but the sense of what he stood for, the attitude of the fighter who, as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled. This is not to deny the necessity of non-egotism and of spiritual humility, but to show that the question is not so easy as it appears at first sight. It is for me to express my spiritual experiences I must do that with truth—I must record them, their phases, their thoughts, feelings, extensions of consciousness which accompany them. What am I to do with the experience is what one feels the whole world in oneself or the force of the Divine flowing in one’s being….And I have to use the word I…” (P. 310-31)

Sri Aurobindo’s disposal of the prohibitive injunction against the use of powers by the yogi is again characteristic of him (P. 576-77). It is possible to look at his teachings as quite unconventional. But let none forget that the very basis of his Yoga and spiritual culture is essentially Vedic. A special feature of these Numbers is its poetry-section which contains selections from the spiritual and mystical poetry of the new school of poets writing under Sri Aurobindo’s inspiration.

The Fifth Number, published on 24th April this year, contains a number of articles and poems of great value. Sri Aurobindo’s own contributions include “Chitrangada”—a long unpublished poem of over 250 lines, 22 letters to a disciple and two articles on “Ideal of Human Unity” and “Limitations of Religion as the Law of Life”. An important feature, in this number, of profound spiritual value is the six talks of the Mother which are published here for the first time.

The prices of these Numbers are:
First Number Rs. 5/-; Second Number Rs. 5/-; Third Number Rs. 5/-; Fourth Number Rs. 6/-; Fifth Number Rs. 7/-.

AN OPINION

“In the height, breadth and clarity of its vision, this occasional Journal, which is a collection of poems and essays by the pupils of Sri Aurobindo, would appear to be considerably above other journals of a similar nature published in Europe in America.”


AN APPROACH

SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE, 32, Rampatt Row, Fort, Bombay.
Still barred thy door—thou far east glows.
The morning wind blows fresh and free.
Should not the hour that wakes the rose
Awaken also thee?...?

Apart we miss our nature's goal,
Why strive after cups of pure desire?
Was not my love made for thy soul?
Thy beauty for my eyes?

In his Legende des Siecles (Legend of the Ages), his most ambitious work in poetry, Victor Hugo sought to present, as it were cinematographically, the story of human civilization from Egypt to the mother of nations, the Revolution the mother of the people. As he declared in the Epilogue:

This book is the dread wreck of Babylon,
The gloomy tower of things, the home concin
Of right, wrong, morning, tears, and sacrifice.
Once proud, and ruling o'er mortals, cow.
Now having sought but blocks that hiss and roar,
Scattered in the dark valley, lost and said;
It is man's epic—harsh, immense—decayed.

Contraries fascinated and attracted Victor Hugo, and he loved to bring together evil and good, body and soul, barbarism and civilization, Quasimodo and Esmeralda; and seeing them together, he saw the filiations between them, and it appeared to him that, like the iron and the magnet, they could not help being together, that indeed one could not be imagined apart from the other. Life is broad, human nature is inexhaustibly broad; and extremes meet and clash and coalesce into a new harmony. In Victor Hugo it would be absurd to look for the psychological penetration or profundity of a Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, but in his limited way he too was an explorer into the continent of truth and nature, and his integrity was beyond question. It is, however, not as a psychologist or thresher, but as a poet, that Victor Hugo becomes a true force in our day. The poet who speaks the things that are in the mind of man, who penetrates the depths of the soul, who makes music of the sound of the voice, who sings with the shimmering song of the human spirit, is the true poet. And so Victor Hugo is a poet, and in this sense the poetry of love and passion, the poetry of beauty and virtue, the poetry of longing and hope, the poetry of passion and desire—this is the poetry of love which Victor Hugo loves, which he professes, which he voices in his work. And so it is in his poetry that we find the highest expression of the human spirit, and in this sense he is a poet of the greatest importance in the history of literature.

There were doubtless other storm-troopers of the movement operating against other European battle-fronts, but during the second quarter of the nine-teenth century Paris was the crucial focus, and Victor Hugo was the acknowledged Generalissimo, with Sainte-Beuve for his Chief of Staff. Gautier thought that young Victor Hugo "might have worn the crown of laurel-garland of a Caesar or a god". There is also the testimony of another of his younger contemporaries, Theodore de Banville: "At times there appears a new work by Victor Hugo, and everything lights up, resounds, murmurs. The shining, sounding, fascinating verse, with its thousand shades of tone, of colour, of harmony, breaks forth like a rich concerto. Every moment he adds something new to that swing of syllables, that melodious play of rhyme, which is the grace and the glory of the poetry of France." The epilogue of Hernani, the brilliant Romanticism had arrived. From Victor Hugo poetry has issued forth in an inexhaustible flood; plays and novels spirited out in quick succession; and his fame leapt across frontiers, and communicated an aching thrill to countless devotees of song. The condition of constant excitation which became normal to Victor Hugo gave him an exceptional fecundity and facility in poetic expression, but such a condition was, after all, fatally apt to degenerate into the disease of insomnia and its attendant evils. Inebriated with a sense of one's own powers, one is likely to lose one's bearings, to see spectres, to hurk challenges, to fight windmills. Romanticism, then, can be a disease, but it is a disease that it is splendid to intoxication with which the human, the lover, and the poet, creatures who are of imagination, all compact, are peculiarly susceptible. Victor Hugo, said the late Lytton Strachey, "had the powers of a great genius and the soul of an ordinary man." It might be true; it might be true no less that Victor Hugo lacked poise, and lacked humour, that he is often sager, bloodless youth, rather than for sober, disillusioned age. And yet, at his quizzetistical best, Victor Hugo is as irresistible as the sun, as laden with promise as spring.
R o m a n t i c i s m , S y m b o l i s m , M y s t i c i s m . . . C o n t i n u e d f r o m p r e v i o u s p a g e

II

After a run of about two decades, the Romantic holocaust seemed to be almost spent. Hugo was alive and active, but he was rather a sobered Hugo. It was as Theophile Gautier, the Parisians, and the Symbolists that the immediate future lay. Gautier’s Envies et Coméies (Stambules and Comities) came out in 1852, and its orchestralness and restraint, its poetry and strength, made an instant appeal to a people who were just recovering from the intoxicating effects of the Romantic vintage. “In Envies et Coméies,” says Saintsbury, “it is almost impossible to find a flaw; language, motive, arrangement, are all complete and perfect, and this formal completeness is further informed by abundant poetic suggestion.” Here is a specimen of Gautier’s “clean chryselephantine” verse, in Swinburne’s exquisite adaptation:

We are in Love’s land today;
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or shall we rise?...
Where shall we land you, sweet?
Or fields of strange men’s feet,
Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the fumes of morn
Or flowers of foam?

We are in Love’s land today.

The Parisians, who came to prominence in the sixties and seventies, likewise executed a clear and polished beauty, restrained and impassioned to a marked degree. Then occurred Baudelaire whose Les Fleurs du Mal (Flowers of Evil) and Louise de la Violette’s principal themes, and that gives the murky world of Les Fleurs du Mal its peculiar glow is the radiance of his fiendish uncompromising sincerity. “In his verse,” says T. S. Eliot, “he is now less a model to be imitated or a source to be drained then a reminder of the duty, the consecrated task, of sincerity.” Baudelaire, it has been said, was the “Devil’s martyr”; but it is idle to turn away from the poetry to the man that he would appear to have made of his life; and we shall do well to bear in mind Herbert Read’s warning to biographers:

“A poet’s poems are facts far more essential in his life than his sexual adventures or his financial difficulties, and the biography of a poet should therefore be primarily an account of his creative activity, the life of his muse, and the other facts are only important in so far as they contribute to an understanding of this process”.

And the essential biography of Baudelaire is contained in these lines from Swinburne’s memorial poem:

Though sweet, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbelied of us:
Flowers of Evil and lovely leucides poisons,
Bere to thy skulter eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in-clime
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men are men reap.

While Baudelaire was somewhat of a dark Olympian, his “successors,” the Symbolists, aspired to a poetic utterance that was supra and musical, that freely trafficked with “symbol” and communicated a sense of the mutability of things. Starling or ethereal, sombre or glinting, language became for them the very flash and blood of poetry, no mere decorative vestment or protective armour. In modern times, and more especially in France, poetry and the visual arts have influenced one another, resulting in no small measure of intense, almost visionary, expression. “Just as Monet blanketed his cathedrals in a mist of irreléauté,” writes Bernard Weinberg, “as Debussy hid his melodies within a web of delicate harmony, so the poets of this late group give a tinsel to the masses of images and symbols”. Verlaine and Rimbaud, Larousse, Corbière and Mallarmé, contributed in their several ways to the heritage of Symbolism which has, according to T. S. Eliot, affected (since 1888) “all English poetry that matters”. Verlaine’s influence on the whole group, but his collision with Rimbaud, while it perhaps brought out the poet, completely undid the man. Hovering uncertainly between the excesses of sensuality and the surges of mystical fervour, Verlaine gave his songs something of the aroma of the spirit, elusive but unmistakable. Of “god-struggler” Rimbaud Mr. Desmond MacCarthy writes: “It takes a short time to read all Rimbaud has written, but a long time to understand him.” Of Rimbaud’s forbiddingly obscure poems, M. Bernard Fay says that they are “not born with things, and do not aim at reproducing them . . . they issue from a place where there are no things, but only words”. It was a vision of the World; that might very well have been Rimbaud’s defiant motto, prefixed to Les Illuminations. Mallarmé has been described as “the most erudite and laborious of all the Symbolists”, but his was a pointed purpose behind his anguished contortions. His aim invariably was to crystallize into plastic images all thoughts, all passions, all the movements of the mind, all the insurrections within the soul. The Mallarmean trick of linking chance audacities and performing inner spatio of sense has been exploited, among others, by Edwin Sidwell. Larousse’s “Symbolisme” is so extensive. Legends are, on the other hand, key to a high pitch of exasperated sensiveness, and was marked by what appeared to be deliberate dislocations of normal associations of ideas. Mr. James Huneker aptly describes Lefort as the “new buffoon of dainty eternities who sign the sorrows and complaints of a world peopled by fantastic souls, clowns, somnambulists, satyrs, poets, harlots, dainty girls, Cheret posters, kings of psychopathic tastes, blithe birds and and coloured cemeteries.”

The Symbolists were, after all, only Baudelaireans with a difference, even as Baudelaire himself was but a Romanticist with a difference. The curiosity European Romanticism has been to a large degree a regular and inexorable. As Mr. Richard Church points out, “Romanticism, since it is impulsive, must have an intermittent progress. One enthusiasm must fade and give place to another, sometimes the latter being tainted with the former’s vice, arising out of the spirit of the age.” What Mr. Earle Welby, adopting a phrase of Dr. Johnson’s, “calls the Romanticist’s ‘hunger of the imagination which prey on life’ cannot altogether be displaced in a whole life, fully-toiled, self-poised, self-satisfied age. The edge of the hunger remains, but the nature of the palate varies from time to time. Mr. Eliot has drawn a rather nice distinction between Baudelaire on the one hand and the Symbolists—Lefort, Verlaine, Corbière, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé—on the other:

“Baudelaire not only reveals the troubles of his own age and predicts those of the age to come, but also foreshadows some issue from those difficulties. When we go to Lefort, we find a poet who can express more clearly even than Baudelaire the difficulties of his own age: he speaks to us, or spoke to my generation, more intimately than Baudelaire seemed to do. Only later do we conclude that Lefort’s ‘prophecy’ is a nearer present than Baudelaire’s, and that Baudelaire’s present extends to more of the past and more of the future.”

This is perhaps but another way of saying that Baudelaire was more of a universalist than his Symbolist successors. But he is not less than they, equally if not to the same extent, typified one important aspect of the poetry written during the last one hundred years, viz., the determined exploration into consciousness, layer within layer, the aching desire for the discovery of fresh realms of experience, within the arc without, of the filiations between these diverse realms of experience, and, above all, the passionate unwavering pursuit of the elusive ultimate reality, the beckoning Holy Grail for these dedicated Galahads of the spirit.

In his thoughtful study, The Heritage of Symbolism, Professor Bowra went to the root of the matter and declared that the Symbolist movement was fundamentally mystical. In crude lands, the mystic seeks to understand a thing by becoming it, by living in it. What is the inns of truth of things? How shall we recognize it, how shall we seize it? Through internal evidence, through the stern ecstatic joy of recognition, through the ineffable sense of utter identity. The Symbolists and their last-century successors were one in this—they refused to accept the scientist’s view of the universe at its face value. In the mature work of Paul Valéry, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George, Alexander Blok and William Butler Yeats—where these works Professor Bowra has been held to a detailed synec-...
Neither Symbolism nor this religious "turn" could however, quite restore to the last infinities of the Spirit the modern poet. A beginning had been made, the right road had been taken, but the goal was as yet far off. The Symbolist experiment had certainly not been in vain; it had given poetry a fresh stimulus and a new buoyancy; but the future lay with other life-forces, other nectarine inspirations. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

"The rediscovery of the soul is the last stage of the round described by this age of the intellect and reason. It is at first mainly the perception of a desire soul, a soul of sense and sensation and emotion, and arriving through them at a sort of psychological mysticism, a mysticism which is not yet true mysticism, much less spirituality, but is still a movement of the lower self is that direction. The movement could not stop here: the emergence of the higher perceptions of a larger and purer psychical and intuitive entity in direct contact with the Spirit could not but come thus."

III

With the turn of the century—or not long after,—the great Symbolist adventure ceased at last to be a real adventure, and became more or less a stale formula of speech. Various modern diversions—Dadaism, Surrealism, Futurism, Imagism,—gained a brief or local vogue, and were presently hushed up. But the nameless discontent yet gnawed into the modernist's being, and goaded him to experiment again, and yet again, with poetic expression. Between strict traditionalism at one extreme end—a traditionalism which was somewhat akin to the dull rattle of a skeleton's bones—and the Surrealism of M. Andre Breton's, which reduced the poet to a slave of the subconscious or the unconscious and his words to creatures wholly independent of received categories of thought, at the other, between these two polar extremes poets angrily and uncomfortably wavered and staggered, unsure of their position and direction. Then came the War, and after the War, the Revolution in Russia and the Peace of Versailles. In the rat's alley of the Long Week-End, the dead men and women of the post-war world pathetically sought their lost bones, could not find them, and whimpered in consequence. The old world was dead, there was no new world worth mentioning—there was only the hideous wreckage from the past, the dilapidated Fisher-King with his paraphernalia of post-mortem, delirium tremens, temper, stupor, vulgarity, and dirt.

It is not thus surprising in the least that the last thirty or forty years should have been an age of experiment, more visibly and consciously so than even earlier epochs. The "modern" phase of the movement which, to push it no further, had its distant beginnings in Rousseau and the French Revolution and its latter-day impulsion is the War and the Russian Revolution, is the subject of another absorbing new study by Professor Bowra, a book which will serve as a potent Open Sesame discovering divers new horizons of poetry. Professor Bowra presents a group of seven "modern" poets—a Greek, Constantine Cavafy, a Frenchman, Guillaume Apollinaire, two Russians, Vladimir Majakovski and Boris Pasternak, an Anglo-American, T. S. Elliot, and two Andalusian-Spaniards, Federico Garcia Lorca and Rafael Alberti—and with these for his illustrative material sketches out the main principles and processes of the modern creative experiment in poetry. The opening chapter, which is tentative and permissive more than definitive or dogmatic, carefully distills out the essence of "modernism", both as a negative revel: and as a positive activity, as a vainglorious heresy no less than as a belligerent faith. How higgledy the moderns can be may be gauged from these two excerpts, the first from a Russian "futurist" challenge issued in 1912, and the second from the manifesto, Poetry is Vertical, published twenty years later, by an international group of "advanced" poets:

"The past is stifling. The Academy and Pushkin are more unintelligible than hieroglyphs. Throw Pushkin, Dostoievsky, Tlstoy, etc. overboard from the steamer of modernity. We demand respect for the poet's right:

1. to enlarge the vocabulary with arbitrary and derivative words—neologisms;
2. to uncompromising hatred for the language used hitherto;
3. to tear with horror from their proud heads the crowns of worthless fame made of bath-room brushes;
4. to set upon the rock of the word "We" in a sea of cat-calls and indignation."

The other extract, while in its own way it is equally downright, shows better manners:

"We are against the renewal of the classical ideal, because it inevitably leads to a decorative pecuniary conformity, to a fictitious sense of harmony, to the sterilization of the living imagination."

1. The Creative Experiment, by C. M. Bowra. (Methuen, 1949).
2. Ibid., pp. 95-96.

The transcendental "I' with its multiple stratifications reaching back millennia of years is related to the entire history of mankind, past and present, and is brought to the surface with the hallucinatory irradiation of images in the dream, the daydream, the mystic-gnostic trance, and even the psychotic condition.

The final disintegration of the 'I' in the creative act is made possible by the use of a language which is a mantic instrument, and which does not hesitate to adopt a revolutionary attitude toward word and syntax, going even so far as to invent a hermetic language, if necessary.

Poetry builds a nexus between the 'I' and the 'You' by leading the emotions of the sunken, telluric depths upward toward the illumination of a collective reality and a totalitarian universe."

It is, on the whole, more profitable therefore to turn from these packets of verbal dynamite to Professor Bowra's reasoned appraisal of modernist aims and methods. After a reference to the Nietzschean differentiation between the Apollonian and Dionysian ideals in poetry, Professor Bowra writes: "The moderns tend towards the Dionysian outlook. Their idea of the authentic thrill is of something powerful and overwhelming which gives not intellectual light but a sense of more abundant life. "The thrill is the thing, and the poetry is the thrill. To select is to falsify, and hence the modern poet aims at presenting the whole truth, as he sees it, as he participates in it. An age of complexity and confusion cannot be rendered in terms of simplicity and order—indeed an age of blind alley's and cross purposes can only be mirrored in a tantalizing crazy-patch-work-quilt of a poetical pattern. Hence such an exhibit of "trans-sence" as this bazaar-piece by the Russian poet, Anton Letov:

Khan khan da dash
Shu shur i des
Vilar' fagda
Sukhan kusuluk
Mak sa Mak sa
Yakim den zar
Vale bar dan yak
Zazu
Siu sech bard i
Gar yo zda be
Men khatt saysa
Vin da chok man

Hence too such a seeming aberration as this oft-quoted finale to The Waste Land:

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s' nacce nel foco gli abitanti della terra
Quando fiam uti choldon — O swallow swallow
Le prince d' Aquitaine a la tour abole
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then he hath done the hire and the money's mad again.
Datta. Dayadhvan. Damayanti.
Shantih shantih shanti.

Further, as the modern poet is a prey to a double disharmony—between the word and the idea, and also between the world and himself—he is apt to make his poetry an expression of this unresolved tension, the very image of his tragic predicament. It is not surprising in the circumstances that when he writes a poem he generally finds himself in the position of Jose Asuncion Silva who confesses:

I showed my poem to a marvellous critic, who scanned it all
And read it seven times, and said, "I do not understand it."

But he is determined to go his own way. Form and diction, metre and rhyme—these he will subordinate to the experienced thrill, be it Heaven's grace or Hell's damnation. He will forge his poetry in the fire of contemporary life and hammer it into shape on the anvil of utter integrity.

While the several estimates in Professor Bowra's book adhure ample proof of the eminence of the modern European literary scene, students of English poetry will be particularly stimulated by the essay on Eliot's The Waste Land. "There are revolutions", declared Mr. Earle Welby once, "which can be carried through only by an alien, who has, besides willingness to break the rules he knows, a lucky ignorance of the customs of the country." Without fully subscribing to this view, we may nevertheless note the fact that a stupendous renovation in English poetry is being carried out by two "aliens", T. S. Eliot and Sri Aurobindo. From the stilled negotiations of The Waste Land to the guarded affirmations of Four Quartets—from the cynical owl's-crey of the early Eliot to the haunting cadences of the mature poet—is indeed a significant march, a pre-ordained

5. Ibid., p. 18.
In the latest outrage, perpetrated by Communist forces in China on a neutral serviceable device, we have once more a "close up" of Communism as it is in the raw.

It is surprising that we still have an important number of intellects, scientists, writers, playwrights, politicians, etc., who take the Communist line, and in other walks of life who still regard Communism as a true symptom, signifying the entire army of one million which surrendered in Manchuria to Mao Tse-tung. Do the democracies still have faith in Mao Tse-tung will "play ball" with them after his recent agreement that the People's War must go hand in hand with the Soviet Union? These are facts beyond the realm of comment.

Because the western democracies have won minor skirmishes at Berlin does it mean they are to act the "gentleman" towards other Communist activities in Asia? It is rather like placating a bully because he has agreed to behave in your own club when you know all the time he is acting the bully in someone else's club. It flavours of the " appeasement policy" over again.

Why question ourselves any more upon these points, they are there for all to see who has the divine vision to see. Yet there are a vast number of people throughout the democracies who are proud to remain strictly neutral, who, by their surprising and probably correct assumption not reconcile their previous views with present-day facts) serve admirably well in the guise of "wait and see" in which any lethargic government is only too willing to acquiesce.

The Democratic governments and particularly within the Commonwealth of Nations should declare a united policy against all Communist disturbances which in any way disrupt the national life of the country.

The Two Pictures

There may be a subtle argument on the other side, that by becoming united we would be in fact forfeiting our own ideology on weaker nations; that this is only what Russia is doing by spreading Communist abroad. What truth is there in such an argument? None at all! In the first place could we say that we are without a cure? No! In the second place, is not everyone left the freedom to join us or not as he wills? But I am in any case we cannot say the same about the Soviet influence, its ideology is most exacting and its pressure (or does it call it support) brought to bear on western governments. The control is unique, to say the least of our only cause to be united. We take any value of our social civilisation as a standpoint and view from there the latest changes and it is the true merit of the Communist Union it will be seen how it is to be of great interest to the west for freedom of expression. Even the social services, science, travel, (interservice with other people on the earth) the religion, the press, freedom of speech, to say nothing of a spiritual freedom for which man in his quest for Truth constantly hangs, consciously or unconsciously. Does the Soviet ideology of today compare at all favourably from any of these points of vantage? When one looks at Communism from the vantage point of the last mentioned, namely spiritual freedom, one despairs for the millions imprisoned with the doctrine of the Kremlin. Especially the yet-to-be-educated millions of countries and schools, who, fired with this fiery fervour of adventure, are misguided by this chance to revolve against what appears to them a lethargic government.

Romanticism, Symbolism, Mysticism

It is on the other hand a basis of life for man to manifest itself in the world it can only come about by a united effort towards that which man knows to be the highest and best— the purest sense. Man has to choose what he believes to be the path leading to Truth and Freedom, and he must be united in his endeavour to attain it.

Action Now!

It is only by unity that this menace, which perverts the earth in a third world war, can be destroyed. The cause of medicine which has come to this: a paralytic disease of the world is to be tackled, and we cannot say we lack the specialists who have the medicine with which to combat a cure. "Wait and see" can only be a palliative.

Unity of purpose for the end to destroy this new sickness, which will effect a cure now.

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