THE WAR BEHIND THE WAR

May 7 marked the fourth anniversary of the end of World War II. Now that Hitler is past history and there is the threat of a new war we are liable to forget the true significance of those six years of sweat and tears and blood which were required to beat Nazism to its knees and how the newly threatened calamity may be really of a piece with the nature of that terrible period.

The truth about the last war will not be grasped simply by looking at the material surface of things nor even by examining the ideological forces at work. The New Order of Hitler, in the aid of which his Panzers and Luftwaffe went out to battle and the Gestapo and the Fifth Column of Quislings spread everywhere their tentacles, was not a mere man's conception. Its origin was occult, lying in the mystery that the world has always felt vaguely as the background against which the mundane drama is enacted. The jahut, therefore, about the last war will best be grasped if we consider the support given to the Allied cause from the very outset and in its darkest hours by one who stands today as the greatest exploler of the occult background—Sri Aurobindo.

Nazism and Sri Aurobindo

The support was given with an extreme decisiveness that cut down to roots deeper than any difference between one human way of life and another, between even a human civilisation and a human barbarism. That extreme decisiveness coming from a master of spirituality like Sri Aurobindo pointed to a vision of Hitlerism as the arch-enemy not just of Britain's or France's or America's outer dominion and of their type of culture but also of all that Sri Aurobindo himself has made it his mission to accomplish. He saw much more at stake than a political, social or cultural issue. He saw an issue beyond the human, the growth of God in man opposed from regressive occult to our normal consciousness. And he saw that secret opposition as the most colossal in history and not confined to a brief outbreak.

Many people believed that Nazism would be a temporary phase and its enormities would pass and the true Germany automatically rise to the fore and there would again be lovely music and great literature and towering philosophy. Sri Aurobindo never subscribed to this sunny view. On the contrary, he held that Nazism, in the form in which we then saw it, was, in spite of its terrible ugliness, no more than a small and slight beginning of a darkness of which we had no idea! It was to him the spearhead of an all-out offensive from the Pit. Its success would not be a passing phenomenon which would exhaust itself and let human life return to its old way of understanding though serious frailties relieved by admirable strengths. Its success would herald the beginning of an age in which the diabolic would reign over the human, make the advent of divine forces impossible for untold centuries and render the fight for the Spirit, whenever the fight did manage to come, a far more difficult and doubtful Armaggedon than anything we could know during those days. Nazism, in Sri Aurobindo's opinion, had to be struck down: there could be no complicity about it, no sitting on the fence, no comparing it to the savageries of past times and hoping for a swing-back to normal humanity.

From the occult standpoint, Nazism is the exact opposite pole to the Aurobindonian dynamis. It is no brief outbreak touching the surfaces of material life or a few domains of it but an attempt at total supremacy because the Aurobindonian dynamis is also bent on an all-comprehensive integrality of effect on earth. Sri Aurobindo's spirituality is not a grand escape from life's riddle: it is a radical solution of it. If his work were meant to be nothing more than a going inward and upward from the material plane to a hidden soul-status unborn and unmanifest, he would not have bothered about the Hitlerite cookey striding over mankind. Sri Aurobindo is for creating Iebrnasaum for the Spirit here and now. And what is finally determinative of his being the upper pole to Hitler's neither is that he is for divinising the material consciousness and substance and form no less than the subtle parts of our nature—a transformation never clearly envisaged by the saints, sages and prophets of the past despite their intuition that the material world has come originally from the Divine.

The Yoga of those saints, sages and prophets, even when not thoroughly escapist, would not be completely banalised if its function of manifesting the Divine on earth were checked or nolUlised, for its ultimate goal was still a fulfillment in some Beyond at the end of earth-life. But a unique Yoga, insisting on fulfillment by an integral divine manifestation in matter itself and not proceeding to an uneasy hereafter, a Yoga aiming to lay hands on every atom for the creation of a new race, would have its bottom blown away by the triumph of Nazism. Conversely, if the Aurobindonian New Order were allowed to make headway, the powers embodying themselves in movements like Nazism would suffer definite defeat and their hold on earth be fundamentally loosened. So, against this divine march upon the terrestrial plane with the purpose of basing there for good the Truth-Consciousness, there is the counter-march from the occult home of Falsehood to gain a permanent grip. Because Sri Aurobindo knew what the spiritual was liminously labouring at he perceived in one flash the whole character and menace of Nazism.

The Nature's Evolution and Its Occult Background

To gauge that character and menace we must look through Sri Aurobindo's eyes at Nature and her evolution towards the Spirit. Nature on earth starts with an invocation of the Divine, an impulsion. "It is not a case of this, life and mind and soul involved in matter and by a strong guiding pressure of these things from the planes above the material, where they have their organised activities. Spirit and Supermind are the highest terms involved, holding in themselves the key to an entire fulfillment of all the others in a perfected physical frame. The difficulties of evolution lie, in the first place, in the pervading unconsciousness which is our base in Nature and the separative half-consciousness which crystallises out of it. These are undivine factors, posed at the beginning of a special form of manifestation of the Divine, the working out of a particular possibility, the possibility of the Divine's emergence from what seems at the outset the very negation of Him. But there is another factor at work which derives from beyond material Nature. This is not merely undivine: it is also anti-divine. The undivine resists by sheer inertia, the anti-divine by a various strategy of attack. And the attack comes from occult dimensions of being."

Behind the evolutionary earth-scene there are typal worlds fixed in a certain order and harmony of their own. These worlds of darkness as well as light. There is no progress on their own levels, they are content with their own types, possessing their peculiar nature fully expressed and deploying it in diverse fashions. But that contentment with full self-play does not preclude these worlds from extending their desire to extend the play of their satisfaction from the occult to the material. They make the earth-scene their battlefield. And as the earth-scene starts with an invocation of the Divine, a clearment of Spirit, the occult worlds of darkness find an easier rôle than those of light. "On the black rock of the Inconscient" they build their edifices with greater immediate success. That is why evolution is not only aeonic...
but chockful of stipendious setbacks, demolitions of half-achieved good, per-verse advancement, blunders, and tragedies that undo the best in man. And Godward urge makes so little advancement and centuries see him but grandiosely shifting from tweedledee to tweedledee, remaining pitifully in his same heart under all camouflage of outer form. That is why every truth gets twisted in the long run and becomes actually a species of untruth, religion grows an obscurantist blight and art a decadent natur-nalis, philosophy a riot of sophisms and politics a huge machinery for expoliating the many in the interests of the few. O so slow is the journey of the Gods! Always the path is cluttered and cluttering in by jugged damnable forces—abundance of influence from mysterious worlds where brutality and blindness are the principles on which existence is founded in a non-evolving immutable mould.

The Titan, the Giant, the Demon

Three kinds of beings dwell in the hideous harmony of those worlds. The Indian terms are: Asura, Rakshasa, Pisacha. In English they may be translated: Titan, Giant, Demon. Each has a special function. The Asura is a being who comes with great powers of thought, not a beautiful and systematic movement but a force of over-whelming violence of his being. He has also great “moral” powers, he can be self-controlled, ascetic and chaste in his own life, a sort of inverted Yogi, but all his gifts of tapasya he uses for selfish and violent ends. His aim is to pluck civilization from the roots, destroy all humane and progressive impulses, regiment the spontaneous diversity of life into a ruthless movement of robots, drink the exaltation of triumph by breaking with an iron heel the dreaming heart of man. The Rakshasa is a devourer without brains, the raider who builds nothing and for whom the history of the world is a pyramidal heap of skulls. He plays with the world into a myriad graves and leaves it a chaos of corpses. He is naked greed run amok. The Pisacha fouls and pollutes all things, he is the walloper in dirt and the nemesis, the inventor of obscene tortures, the mutilating maniac. The Asura is the General, the Pulver of the army of darkness; the Rakshasa is the lieutenant, the henchman; the Pisacha is the private, the storm-trooper.

They are no symbols or imaginary figures by which man visualises his own imperfections and evil instincts. Rather the evil instincts are the signs in him of the subtle presence of powers and personalities that have their habitat in non-human and preternatural spheres. It is because these spheres are of a pervasive blight in which the cruel, the wily and the filthy are hideously harmonised for ever to yield enjoyment, that man feels a pleasure in his own baseness, an attachment to his crookedness and suffering, a reluctance to give up his blindness and lust in spite of all the misery his higher self sees and feels is them—a reluctance as if blindness and lust were things to be cherished, precious components of the life-drama, indispensable art-elements of the cosmic scheme. But man’s love of the base and the torturesome becomes not just one part of his nature but almost his whole being, which is the base and the torturesome, with his body Rakshasa and Pisacha, so clutches human nature that: it becomes one with that occult and rigid reality. Then we have an incarnation of adverse forces, the dark deities, and they shape out a collectively a nation, a race, with this mass of good and evil stepping on the world and smashing the entire fabric of civilization. Such a catastrophic invasion has taken place in our own times and with a thorough-roughness proportionate to its thoroughness with which the spiritual Light has sought embodiment and outwardizing.

The War’s Profound Meaning

Hence the last war was not like any other war and Nazism was not a recrudescence of man’s ignorance but the beginning of a new era of changeless horror and terror, the most monstrous onslaught made from Preternature to found here the empire of Satanism. The human consciousnesses well-sighed sighs in those who embody the preternatural hierarchy—for the simple reason that the human becomes as good as possessed. And because the possession is so extreme, the task of defeating the Asura and his band was both so imperative and arduous. It is no wonder a large number of conflicts as well as straits kept asking: Can Hitler be defeated? Yet the very enormity of the invasion called forth the hidden powers of Light from behind the veil. And though it is harder for the human instrument to be a channel of the Divine than to be a medium of the Diabolic, we must remember that the Divine is the infinite while the Diabolic is nothing more than the immense. If the Diabolic finds an easier ruse, the Divine brings a greater capacity—and slowly, step by step, the forces of Light were mobilised and trained and hurled against the foe. There could be no parleying, no compromise, no appeasement. The Asura cannot be converted: he has got to be broken.

However dimly, this truth was seized by the Allied nations. Churchill gave it the most dynamic push possible, short of the directly occult and spiritual. When Frances lay prostrate and Hitler announced that on the five-teenth of August that year he would address the world from Buckingham Palace and the empress Luftwaffe over Britain seemed a goddess of winged victory for him, Churchill knew that there could not be turning back nor knocking under. Whatever his defects in colonial policy, he was the most magnificent of uncles of high-explosive, and his instinct of the superhuman truth at stake marked him out as an insuperable par excellence of the Divine in the war. In far-away India was raised a voice guided not by instinct but by a shining insight. Strange enough, the voice was of one whose over-riding task was the fifteen-thirty hours of August, the exact day on which Hitler hoped to celebrate the death of all that mankind valued. It was the sole clear and clarion-like voice amidst a chaos of political quarrels that was confusing India’s mind vis-a-vis the occult conflict which had made our world a world of war, who had not been the God to no other country in the past, was weak, rumbling and hastiant, obsessed by her political animosity against Britain and oblivious of the wider and deeper call to which Churchillian Britain had responded. Sri Aurobindo stood alone in his sun-bright seeing of the war’s inner significance. He declared his un-restricted sympathy, his unconditional support—"whatever may happen", as his own words had it in his message to the Governor of Madras in connection with the Vicerecy’s fund. At the back of those words was the whole mystical puissance of an angel that worked secretly like a dynamo sending out world-currents, driving a vast invis-ible inspired strength into the armies and navies and air-forces ranged against Hitler.

When history-books are written, these armies and navies and air-forces together with the men at the head of the Allied governments figure large in them. The praise they get is amply deserved by their idealism, courage, perseverance and skill. But whoever understands the profound meaning of the war and senses the incipient clash of which it was the outer rever-beration will surely recognise, as the active antithesis to the occult evil that threatened utterly to engulf mankind through Hitler, the occult good that promises to lift mankind utterly to the heights through Sri Aurobindo.

Signs for the Future

And whoever understands the war’s profound meaning will also realise that Nazism, though defunct in its Hitlerite shape, may yet prepare a new attack and that it would be an error to regard all enemies of Hitler as having been children of Light. In the war of the Titan, the Giant and the Demon there are many principalities and the wrestle among them is part of the hideous harmony in which evil exists independently behind the earth-sphere. Hence, against one principality must be precipitated itself upon earth, another doing the same but be pitted side by side with the resist ance-movement by evolving man. As soon as that principality has been crushed, those who were comrades because of a common enemy may break up and once again evolving man may confront man not under the spell of the Titan, the Giant and the Demon. Some element of the anti Nazism of the past may itself be dyed with essentially the same darkness. The future must learn to see behind the masks and identify in spite of deception evil faces evil by a combination of four signs—the denial of God and of the divine spark in the human, the totalitarian free-dom-stifling grip on the individual’s mind and body, the acceptance of violence as basic to self-expression, the conspiracy to spread by all available means discontent and disorder in every country whose government pursues the ideal of political democracy.

The Called and the Chosen

(AFTER SEEING SRI AUROBINDO ON 24TH APRIL, 1949)

All chains that bind and terrors that loom To quell the heart, all tears that move The soul to sin, the flowers that swell On aspiration’s heights we love, We now be a thing of memory, attending The living lesson that one who is called Will win to thy eternity Which only coward fears forestalled. We are thy mountaineers who must Forbear our plains of phantom ease And pointless living and cremation dust To hail thy peak which dream-clouds kiss. Who beholds thy face of imperial light Is filled with a gleaming certitude: That those whom thou hast chosen at night Shall ever reign or glories duello.——

DILIP KUMAR ROY
INDIA TO STAY IN COMMONWEALTH

We welcome the decision reached at the Commonwealth Conference that India should remain a full and equal member of what henceforward may be called the Commonwealth of Nations after she becomes a Republic. It must, however, be pointed out that within the Commonwealth in any form is inconsistent with India's sovereignty which is essential for her free growth as a great nation and that India should have come out of the Commonwealth altogether and then formed association with it through the medium of an equal means of treaties. What, it may be asked, is the gain if India retains a link which is so long bound her to Britain? But however evil and undesirable as it might have been, British rule in India has created certain close relationships, cultural and economic, which it is to the advantage of India to retain even when she becomes politically independent, and this purpose will be best served if the link remains, at least for some time more.

And we must remember that this link is not at all a dependence. In the agreement reached by the Commonwealth statesmen, India is to regard the King who is the present head of the Commonwealth as the symbol of free association among the peoples of the Commonwealth, and countries of all other countries are expected to reaffirm their allegiance to the Crown, and at the same time accept Republican India—to whom this allegiance will not apply— as an equal partner in the Commonwealth. By this agreement India will recognise the symbolic status of the King in the legal context of Commonwealth association, thus linking herself with the other Member-Nations, and the King will have no function so far as India is concerned. In the role of Indian Republican state he will not be the King of India as he sow to. India's relations with other members of the Commonwealth will remain unchanged after she becomes a Republic. The future elected President will be the representative of the King. He will exercise the sovereign power and exercise the power to appoint Amritsar and sign international treaties.

Thus India is not going to be a full member of the Commonwealth in the sense of being subordinate or accepting any dictation in either her internal or her foreign policy. She will retain all the privileges of the people of India and exercise the power to appoint Amritsar and sign international treaties.

Tokyo and Hong Kong, and the community, as a whole to be called British Commonwealth by her will have no control over her. The association with the Commonwealth is meant only to preserve her standing in the world that if she is attacked there will be a powerful force in the world not going down until helped before the attack. It is evident that when Powers which would likely support India upon India see that she has backing, they will refrain from any such adventure; while when her allies are isolated, they might hesitate. It is very clear that there is no longer a world in which one can stand isolated and be safe.

It does credit to the Prime Minister of India that he did not yield at all on the issue of India being an independent Republic, and at the same time induced the Dominions Prime Ministers to accept her as a full and equal member of the Commonwealth. It also proved the integrity of that great institution, the British Commonwealth. It is a tough stuff enough to hold together the ultimate harmony of the world will be achieved and the dream of human unity realized.

NEHRU MEETS SHAW

Immediately after achieving what he likes like "acquiring the franchise", the reconciliation of the concept of India that is widely independent with the concept of the British Commonwealth of nations—Pandit Nehru could not have acted more appropriately than by meeting a master of surprise and paradox, Bernard Shaw. Nor has Nehru have done anything more appropriately than by meeting, than giving him not the usual present, but an unexpected one: a model of the Taj Mahal or a statute of Nataraja or a pack of sleeping pills, but the most unexpected symbol of his country—the mango!

The mango is indeed a symbol of India. In the world of flowers, as is as aesthetically as olives are Greece, grapes, Franch, Spanish, oranges, Maltese and dates Arabian. Even more so—it is a staunch nationalist as any of them. If it has a taste, if it has a flavor it has the best plant growing in these groves. It is also as old as Indian history: the specimens Nehru put to Shaw's hands are known by botanists to have four thousand years of ancestry behind them. He gave, in the land of Krishna and Buddha, in Harsh and Asoka, Rama Pratap and Shwetambara nod, the channeled gift of Roy and Lilac, the present that struck him. He called for honey. Dipping both his hands in honey, he offered him a banyan leaf with the sweet stuff and, holding it towards the astonished Shaw, said: "If Your Majesty deigns to taste the honey on this most humble leaf, the taste of the nation will be revealed." The Shaw, we are told, was so impressed by the proposal that he made the traveller his visitor. What the traveller did to convey the mango's delight to Shaw has indeed a strong taste of the national spirit. It is a simple, pleasant and impudent yet patriarchal Shah.

The most profoundly Shawian association, however, of the mango is by way of a pun. Often has Shaw featured the pun in a country's institution or other forms of social structure is no of avail if man does not change himself, set aright his imagination and dynamise his will. What of the mango's delight to Shaw's mind lying within that secret Something which is at the back of all beings? The pun itself, often called the Holy Ghost in the past and named the Life Force by Shaw. No doubt, the Shawian gospel lacks the true mystical sense and its mahatmas, the honorifics, the hedgehogs have taken away from the new version of the Holy Ghost the dynamism of dynamism, but an intense dissatisfaction and disgust with materialism and mechanisation, intimate Shaw and some touch he does bring of the "prophet Spirit of the whole world, dreaming on and on." The cry which Nietzsche raised of "surprizing man" and going beyond to a new of a new holy of holy, the word of the Life Force in Shaw's view, will be genuinely fruitful if we keep always in mind his passionate and puckered over. Of genuine fruitfulness we can very well conceive Shaw himself as the modern interpreter of the mango expressive. Perhaps the exception is that the popularly accepted Nehru's offering was due to the fact that the mango is a word which the "mango" sound like a part of the world-message which, in brief, is: "Man, go, Superman! come!"

Light-Sentinel

(UPON READING THE MOTHER ON 24TH APRIL, 1919)

Long sentinel gazing on the sleep
Of earth's heaven-born memorial heart
Too buried to feel the darkness-pang,
And caverns of twilight-distances
And urns of mysterious gloom—
While and eternal the Mother-flame
Watching forever the naked universe,
Her sun-child crouched in somnolence.

With unfettered and limitless will
To nurse the golden germin seed
Entombed in death's forgetful sheath,
And all the deep ones of hope
Turned from far heavens of trance
To fill the narrow dungeon of pain,
She lingers on the gateway of the dawn,
Waiting to release the titan source
Of light's unbarred magnificence
And turn the dust into a crystal flame—
An offering-rose on the altars of the Supreme.

ROMEN

The LIVING MOMENT

Glimpses of Men and Events

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LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

One of our chief aims will be to provide authentic guidance in regard to the many perplexing questions with which the common man is faced in his daily life. This cannot be better done than by examining these questions, both the light of Sri Aurobindo’s writings, because he is not merely a Master of Yoga in possession of the Eternal Spiritual Truths, but also a Guide and Helper of mankind in the many trying situations that arise in the course of its day-to-day existence. To bring home the light of this guidance applicable to the end and means of all life, by the series of questions of common interest along with precise answers based on Sri Aurobindo’s writings will regularly appear in these columns.

Q. 1: The extremist type of modern mind has disclaimed religion altogether by branding it as a mass of superstitions nonsense, but a more moderate type of mind has taken a less irrational attitude to it by dismembering it entirely but by creating what it calls a rational religion. Is this rational religion of any value?

A. This more moderate attitude of the rational mind to religion is as shallow, presumptuous and erroneous as the thoroughgoing extremist attitude. Its attempts to explain religion have resulted in the complication of an immense mass of amazingly ingenious perverions, such as certain pseudo-scientific attempts to form a comparative Science of Religion, which have built up in the approved style immense façades of theory with straw bricla of misunderstandings for their material. Its mild contortions of religion have led to superficial phases of thought which have passed quickly away. Its efforts at the creation of a rational religion, perfectly well intentioned, but helpless and unconvincing, have had no appreciable effect and have failed. A purely rational religion could only be a cold and bare Deism, and such attempts have always failed to achieve vitality and permanence; for they set contrary to the divine, the natural law and spirit of religion.

Q. 2: Has religion then nothing to do with reason?

A. The essence of religion, apart from its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol, is the search for and the finding of God, the infinite, absolute, one divine who is all these things and yet no ascension but a Being, and the living out of the relations between man and God, relations of unity, relation of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a. tasting of every part of our existence out of the normal man towards the Divine which brings a descent of the Divine into man. All this has nothing to do with the realm of reason or its normal activities; its aim, its sphere, its process is supra-rational. The knowledge of God is not to be gained by reason or against reason, but only by one who has resisted the powers of the Diana and has lived in the presence of the Divine which brings a descent of the Divine into man. All this has nothing to do with the realm of reason or its normal activities; its aim, its sphere, its process is supra-rational.

Q. 3: Is there no similarity between the mode of religious experience and the method of rational scientific experiment or rational philosophical thinking?

A. No. Even in those parts of religious discipline which seem most to resemble scientific experiment, the method is a verification of things which exist outside our mind and its activities, and even in those parts of religious knowledge which seem to resemble intellectual operations, the illuminating faculties are not imagination, logic and rational judgment, but revelations, inspirations, intuitions, intuitive discernments which come from a plane above the regular light. The love of God is an infinite and absolute feeling which does not admit of any rational limitation and does not use a language of rational worship and adoration; the delight in God is that peace and bliss which panes all understanding. The surrender to God is the surrender of the whole of man to a spiritual light, will, power and love and his service takes no account of the compromises with life which the practical reason of man uses as the best part of his method in the ordinary conduct of mundane existence. Wherever religion really finds itself its way is absolute and its fruits are ineffable.

Q. 4: Has reason then no part to play in the sphere of religion?

A. Reason has indeed a part to play in relation to this highest field of a man’s religious being and experience, but that part is quite secondary. It cannot lay down the law for the religious life, it cannot determine in its own right the system of divine knowledge; it cannot school and lesson the divine love and delight; it cannot set bounds to spiritual experience or play its yoke upon the action of the spiritual man.

Q. 5: What then is the true function of reason in relation to religion?

A. Its sole part is to explain as best it can in its own language to the intellectual part of man the truths, the experience, the laws that direct the supra-rational and spiritual existence; that has been the work of religious philosophy in the East and of theology in the West, a work of great importance in perpetuating the truths which present when the intellect of mankind after a long wandering is again turning towards the search for the Divine. Here there must inevitably enter a part of those operations which convert the facts, deduct, logical reasoning, inferences from the data given by rational experience and knowledge of the apparent facts of existence, appeals even to the physical truths of science and all the apparatus of the intelligent mind in its ordinary workings. But this is the weakest part of religious philosophy. It does not convince the rational mind unless it is predisposed to belief, or even if it convinces, it certainly cannot give it the knowledge. Reason is safest when it is either laying down the theorems and experiences of the spiritual being and the spiritual life, just as they are present to it, and throwing them into such form, order and language as will make them the most intelligible to the reasoning mind. Even then it is not quite safe, for it is apt to harden them into an artificial system, to present the forms as if it were the essence and, at best, it has to use language which is not the tongue of the supra-rational truth itself, but its translation and, not being either the ordinary tongue of the rational intelligence, is open to non-understanding or misunderstanding by the ordinary reason of mankind. It is well-known to the experience of the spiritual seeker that religious philosophy cannot give the knowledge, all it can do is, to address the intellect and, when it has done, to say, "It has been tried, but it is in the truth in a form and system which will make it intelligible and possible to you; if you are intellectually convinced or attracted, you must now seek the real knowledge by other means which are beyond your province."

Q. 6: But the earlier forms of religion are not always of this pure and sublime type and contain much which is impure, ignorant and crude. Has not reason a better claim for interference in this type of religious life than in the high supra-rational type of religious aspiration?

A. As there is the supra-rational life in which religious aspiration finds entirely what it seeks, so there is also the infra-rational life of the instinct, impulses, sensations, crude emotions, vital activities from which all human aspiration to its betterment originates. There is the feeling of the touch of the religious sense in man, share its needs and experience desire its satisfactions. Religion includes this satisfaction also in its scope, and in what is usually called religion, it seems even to be the greater part, so as to lead even a man to what is above the whole; for the supreme purity of spiritual experience does not appear or is glimpsed only through this mixed and turbid current. Much immaturity, ignorance, superstition, many doubtful elements must form as the result of this contact and union of our higher tendencies with our lower ignorant being. Here it would seem that reason has its legitimate part, that of enlightening, purifying, rationalizing the play of the instincts and impulses. It would seem that a religious reformation substituting a "pure" and rational religion for one which is largely infra-rational and impure, would be a distinct advance in the religious development of humanity. To a certain extent this is so, but, owing to the peculiar nature of the religious being, its entire urge towards the supra-rational, not without serious qualifications.

There are religious forms and systems which become effete and corrupt and have to be destroyed, others which lose much of their inner sense and become clouded in knowledge and ignorant in practice; in destroying them or in neglecting their intellectual reformation, reason has played an important part in religious history. But in getting rid of the superstition and ignorance which have attached themselves to religious forms and symbols reason tends to deny and, so far as it can, to destroy the truth and the experience which was contained in them. Reformations which give too much to reason and are too negative and protestant, usually create religions which lack in wealth of spirituality and fullness of religious emotion; they are not opulent in their contents; their form and too often their spirit are bitter and cold. If reason is to play any part, it must be an intuitive rather than an intellectual reason, touched always by spiritual intensity and insight.

Q. 7: Is there then a fundamental discord between the religious spirit and the reason?

A. The relations of the spirit and the reason need not be, as they too often are in orthodox thought, any point of contact. Religion itself need not adopt for its principle the formula "I believe because it is impossible" or Pascal’s "I believe because it is absurd." What is impossible or absurd to the unaided reason, becomes real and right to the reason lifted beyond itself by the power of the spirit and irradiated by its light. For then it is dominated by the intuitive mind which is our means of passage to a yet higher principle of knowledge. The widest spirituality does not exclude or discourage any essential human activity or faculty, but lifts them all up out of their imperfection and groping ignorance and makes them the instruments of the light, power and joy of the divine being.
We saw in the last essay that consciousness is the determining factor in the attainment of knowledge. Now we can state that as man’s culture is expanding on the basis of his knowledge, it also is determined by the nature of his consciousness. To be more exact, the culture of a people can be said to be the expression of its life-awareness and world-awareness. This expression formulates itself triply, each formulation expressing one element in the human consciousness. The first formulation is that of Religion and Philosophy as in the West, or, as in India, where philosophy and religion go hand in hand, the expression takes the form of a Spiritual Metaphysics, that is, a system of philosophy based on an alliance of spiritual realism. Philosophy is the expression of the mind’s seeking for the absolutes of Truth and Good, and for some universally valid all-embracing generalisation capable of explaining the nature of the universe, man’s place in it, and the nature and course of reality. Religion is the expression of the soul’s seeking for its transcendent Source, the Divine Being, and its aspiration to be constantly united with Him, and to lead a diviner existence upon earth. In India, philosophy and religion have not been given entirely separate formulations as in the West; for, to date, the Indian, truth is not ideistic, an abstract reality belonging to the pure reason, or existing in the realm of ideas; to him truth is of the Spirit, of Being and Consciousness which he can experience directly. So it is only after he has experienced the truths of the Spirit that he creates a system of metaphysics, which consequently is not, as in the West, a cogent logicizing from premises arbitrarily chosen according to the intellectual predisposition of the speculating philosopher. In ancient India, the philosophers—psycho-religious teachers—and rishis—Plato’s ideal—were not separated, both being philosophers, as distinguished from the Western purely mental ontologico-epistemological systems.

The second strain in the human consciousness is the aesthetic one—a seeking for the absolute of Beauty, the urge to capture its innmost spirit and recreate it here in terrestrial things. This strain expresses itself in Art and Literature.

The third important strain is the pragmatic one; it expresses itself in man’s attempts to create, on a basis of his philosophy and religion, a perfect system of individual conduct and of collective relationships—a system of ethics, politics and sociology— in which the collectivity can grow through the fullest development of the individual and in which the individual finds his right place and works for the good of the whole; a system in which one morality is harmoniously integrated with other such collectivities, forming eventually a world unity.

These are the three formulated expressions of the life-awareness of a people. Now, if the culture of a people—that is, its Philosophy and Religion, Art and Literature, Ethics, Politics and Sociology—reflects the nature of the consciousness that creates it, it follows that the type and level and range of consciousness will be the factors that will mainly determine its character for the more obscure and narrow the consciousness the more ignorant and rigidly formulated will be the culture, and the more luminous and universalised the consciousness the more enlightened and richly developed it will be. But a higher level of consciousness can only be attained through spiritual growth; so if man evolves further into a spiritualised being who no longer possesses a narrow ego-centric consciousness but who is poised in a wide and luminous spiritual consciousness and who frequently has the light of Truth in him, he will create a greater culture, a culture that will be truly worthy of beings who are the "eternal portions of the Divine", for it will have its very roots in Truth.

The Answer to the Sphinx Riddle

The basic factors in the creation of a culture are firstly Religion and Philosophy; Poetry and Art also play as important a part in determining its character, if they succeed in revealing truths which are normally unapprehended by men, that is, if the poet or artist becomes, in Shelley’s words, “the hierophant of an unapprehended inspiration.” The poet whom Shakespeare called “the bard that lights the corruptions from whose mind is open to inspiration and intuition.” But compared to Poetry, Religion and Philosophy have been instrumental to a greater extent in moulding the life of nations, for it is only according to a systematised way of thought based upon the ideas of the gods and their relation to them, and the purpose of existence, that man will create the whole superstructure of his civilisation. His philosophy and religion are his answers to the Sphinx Riddle; and the answers he will give will be accepted as the growth of his evolving consciousness, that is, according to the level of his consciousness. The eternal questions he has to answer are, “Who am I? Am I an evanescent perishing form which will finally mix with the dust, or am I an immortal soul who is greater than his outer sheet?” From whence do I come, what or who is the ultimate source of my being and of the universe around me, and what is the nature of this universe? Is it a creation of God or has it been created for a purpose with a design and plan in it—has it come into existence suddenly through a Divine Act, or is it the result of a gradual process of evolution which has a definite end in view and towards which it is proceeding? If there is such an evolution, does it end with man who can be called its crowning achievement, or is man only a transitional being who will one day evolve into a higher type? Is there a Divine Being, Eternal and Infinite, who is the source of all that is, a Reality by whom all exist but who exists by none? Then, am I free to lead my life as I wish to, or is my will determined by my past or by some other factor?"

Upon the answers that he gives to these questions will depend his answers to the other questions with which outwardly and pragmatically he is more directly concerned—"What is good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust?"

The primitive man gave one answer, and the early thinkers gave another; today man is called upon to answer the same eternal questions once again and it is imperative that he gives the right answers to them, for he is passing through a serious evolutionary crisis, a right solution of which can alone lead him to his fulfillment. Even on the present human level there are various types of consciousness, some spiritually inclined, some emotionally, many vitally-physiologically and in different men there are different combinations of the spiritual, mental and vital-physical elements with different predominant psychological stresses. It is these combinations which stamp individuals into various types, like God-seekers, idealists and humanists, or into utilitarians, hedonists and atheists. Each type reacts in his own unique way to the world around him and answers the riddle of the universe according to the particular psychological cast and mould of his being and the level of his consciousness. This means that the particular philosophy of life he himself creates or selects from his cultural environment is determined by his own inner and outer nature. His philosophy is an intellectual schema he creates for himself by co-ordinating and harmonising the sum total of his experience—his intuitive, intellectual, emotional and instinctual life; and it is in accordance with his philosophic life of that is, his beliefs and convictions about the nature of the Ultimate Reality and that of the Universe, and his relation to them, that he forms his ideas of good and evil, right and wrong, justice and injustice. This implies that his ethic will arise out of his metaphysic, for when he acts in the world he will translate his metaphysical values into life values and will regulate his conduct according to them. As Johanne Fichte has so admirably stated in the "Vocation of Man"—"it is our philosophy that is the history of our heart and life and only as we ourselves are do we conceive of man and his vocation". It is only according to what man himself is, that is, according to the nature of his consciousness, that he creates his philosophy of life, and it is his philosophical beliefs that will ultimately govern his actions.
The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and the physical, the body and the mind. If our work is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. "Shuriram khasht dahmasanmukham," says the old Sanskrit adage,—the body is the means and instrument of dharma and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life where all things are to be created, where the life of the spirit is accomplished in the conditions of the material universe. "That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a higher capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.

**Divine Life in a Material World**

I have already indicated in a previous message a relative perfection of the physical consciousness in the body and of the mind, the life, the character which it houses as, no less than an awakening and development of the body's own native capacities, a desirable outcome of the exorcis and processes of the physical culture to which we have commenced to give in this Ashram a special attention and scope. A development of the physical consciousness must always be a considerable part of our aim, and the highest right development of the body itself is an essential element; health, strength, fitness are the first needs, but the physical frame itself must be the best possible. A divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base. The soul with the basis of its life established in Matter ascends to the heights of the Spirit but does not cast away its base, it joins the heights and the depths together. The Spirit descends into Matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more and more divine. The transformation is not a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the Spirit; it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit, though now a form in which conceals, and turns it into a revealing instrument, it does not cast away the energies of Matter, its capacities, its methods; it brings out their hidden possibilities, uplifts, sublimates, discloses their innate divinity.

The divine life in the physical forces is given a spiritual or psychic turn and raised to a higher motion than belongs properly to the ordinary life and Matter, as for instance in the Hathayogic and Raja-yogic use of the breathing or the use of Anana. Ordinarily a previous preparation of the mind and life and body is necessary to make them fit for the reception of the spiritual energy and the organisation of psychic forces and methods, but this too is given a special turn proper to the Yogs. On the other hand, if we start in any field at the lower end we have to employ the means and processes which Life and Matter offer to us and respect the conditions and what we may call the technique imposed by the vital and the material energy. We may extend the activity, the achievement, the perfection attainment beyond the initial, even beyond the normal possibilities but still we have to stand on the same base with which we started and within the boundaries it gives to us. It is not that the action from the two ends cannot meet and the higher take into itself and uplift the lower perfection; but this can usually be done only by a transition from the lower to a higher

**Perfection**

But first the evolution of the nature must have reached a point at which it can meet the Spirit direct, feel the aspiration towards the spiritual change and open itself to the work of the Power which shall transform it. A supreme perfection, a total perfection is possible only by a transformation of our lower or human nature, a transformation of the mind into a thing of light, our life into a thing of power, an instrument of realization, right use for all its forces, of a happy elevation of its being lifting it beyond its present comparatively narrow potentiality for a self-fulfilling force of action and joy of life. There must be equally a transforming change of the body by a conversion of its action, its functioning, its one can hardly do more. It may be said that all to which we can reach, light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine.

**Pursuit of Perfection**

The total change of the mind we have to achieve, human means and forces too have to be taken up, not dropped but used and magnified to their utmost possibility as part of the new life. Such a sublimation of our present human powers of mind and life into elements of a divine life on earth can be conceived without much difficulty; but in what figure shall we conceive the perfection of the body?

In the past the body has been regarded by spiritual seekers rather as an obstacle, as something to be overcome and dispelled than as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field of the spiritual change. It has been condemned as a grossness of Matter, as an insuperable impediment and the limitations of the body as something unchangeable making transformation impossible. This is because the human body even at its best seems only to be driven by an energy of life which has its own limits and is debased in its smaller physical activities by much that is petty or coarse or evil, the body in itself is base and material, it lacks spirituality and inner beauty, desires and appetites and ignorance and laziness and idleness and death and corruption and destruction and impurity and darkness and falsehood and wrong and evil.

In the pursuit of perfection we can start at either end of our range of being and we have to use, initially at least, the means and processes proper to our choice. In Yogs the process is spiritual and psychic, even its vital and physical processes are given a spiritual or psychic turn and raised to a higher motion than belongs properly to the ordinary life and Matter, as for instance in the Hathayogic and Raja-yogic use of the breathing or the use of Anana. Ordinarily a previous preparation of the mind and life and body is necessary to make them fit for the reception of the spiritual energy and the organisation of psychic forces and methods, but this too is given a special turn proper to the Yogs. On the other hand, if we start in any field at the lower end we have to employ the means and processes which Life and Matter offer to us and respect the conditions and what we may call the technique imposed by the vital and the material energy. We may extend the activity, the achievement, the perfection attainment beyond the initial, even beyond the normal possibilities but still we have to stand on the same base with which we started and within the boundaries it gives to us. It is not that the action from the two ends cannot meet and the higher take into itself and uplift the lower perfection; but this can usually be done only by a transition from the lower to a higher
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outlook, aspiration and motive; this we shall have to do if our aim is to transform the human into the divine life. But here there comes in the necessity of taking up the activities of human life and sublimating them by the power of the spirit. Here the lower perfection will not disappear; it will remain but will be enlarged and transformed by the higher perfection which only the power of the spirit can give. This will be evident if we consider poetry and art, philosophic thought, the perfection of the written word or the perfect organisation of earthly life; these have to be taken up and the possibilities already achieved or whatever perfection has already been attained included in a new and greater perfection but with the larger vision and inspiration of a spiritual consciousness and with new forms and powers. It must be the same with the perfection of the body.

Spirituality and the Ordinary Life

The taking up of life and Matter into what is essentially a spiritual seeking, instead of the rejection and ultimate exclusion of them which was the attitude of a spirituality that shunned or turned away from life in the world, involves certain developments which a spiritual institution of the older kind could regard as foreign to its purpose. A divine life in the world or an institution having that for its aim and purpose cannot be or cannot remain something outside or entirely shut away from the life of ordinary men in the world or unconcerned with the mundane existence; it has to do the work of the Divine in the world and not a work outside or separate from it. The life of the ancient Rishis in their Ashrams had such a connection; they were creators, educators, guides of men and the life of the Indian people in ancient time was largely developed and directed by their shaping influence. The life and activities involved in the new endeavour are not identical but they too must be an action upon the world and a new creation in it. It must have contacts and connections with it and activities which take their place in the general life and whose initial or primary objects may not seem to differ from those of the same activities in the outside world.

In our Ashram here we have found it necessary to establish a school for education of the children of the resident anarchists, teaching upon familiar lines though with certain modifications and taking as part and an important part of their development an intensive physical training which has given form to the sports and athletics practiced by the Jeunesse Sportive of the Ashram and of which this Bulletin is the expression. It has been questioned by some what place sports can have in an Ashram created for spiritual seekers and what connection there can be between spirituality and sports. The first answer lies in what I have already written about the connections of an institution of this kind with the activities of the general life of men and what I have indicated in the previous number as to the utility such a training can have for the life of a nation and its benefit for the international life. Another answer can occur to us if we look beyond first objects and turn to the aspiration for a total perfection including the perfection of the body.

In the admission of an activity such as sports and physical exercises into the life of the Ashram it is evident that the methods and the first objects to be attained must belong to what we have called the lower end of the being. Originally they have been introduced for the physical education and bodily development of the children of the Ashram School and these are too young for a strictly spiritual aim or practice to enter into their activities and it is not certain that any great number of them will enter the spiritual life when they are of an age to choose to be the direction of their future. The object must be the training of the body and the development of certain parts of mind and character so far as this can be done by or in connection with this training and I have already indicated in a previous number what can be done in this direction this can be done. It is a relative and human perfection that can be attained within these limits; anything greater can be reached only by the intervention of higher powers, psychic powers, the power of the spirit. Yet what can be attained within the human boundaries can be something very considerable and sometimes immense; what we call genius is part of the development of the human range of being and its achievements, especially in things of the mind and will, can carry us halfway to the divine. Even what the mind will and will do can with the body in the field proper to the body..

In the way of physical achievement, bodily endurance, feats of prowess of all kind, a lasting activity refusing fatigue or collapse and continuing beyond what seems at first to be possible, courage and refusal to succumb under an endless and murderous physical suffering, these and other victories of many kinds sometimes approaching or reaching the miraculous are seen in the human field and must be reckoned as a part of our concept of a total perfection. The unflinching and persistent reply that can be made by the body as well as the mind of man and by his life energy to whatever call can be imposed on it in the most difficult and discouraging circumstances by the necessities of war and travel and adventure is of the same kind and its endurance can reach astounding proportions and even the inconsequent in the body seems to be able to return a surprising response.

The body, we have said, is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of its self and much of its hidden action; but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient and the perfection of the operations of inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.

Awakening of the Body's Powers

In the use of such activities as sports and physical exercises for the education of the individual in childhood and first youth, which should mean the bringing out of his innate and latent possibilities to their fullest development, the means and methods we must use are limited by the nature of the body and its aim must be such relative human perfection of the body's powers and capacities and those of the powers of mind, will, character, action of which is at once the residence and the expression of these aims as far as these methods can help to develop them. I have written sufficiently about the mental and moral parts of perfection to which these powers can contribute and this I need not repeat here. For the body itself the perfections that can be developed by these means are its natural qualities and capacities and, secondly, the training of its general fitness, as an instrument for all the activities which may be demanded from it and need and, by the life-energy or by the dynamic perceptions, impulses and instincts of our subtle physical being which is unrecognised but very important element and agent in our nature. Health and strength are the first conditions for the natural perfection of the body.
Sri Aurobindo’s Message on Perfection of the Body

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not only muscular strength and the solid strength of the limbs and physical stamina, but the finer, alert and plastic and adaptable force which our nervous, subtle physical parts can put into the activities of the frame. There is a second, the mental and the spiritual force which a call upon the energies can bring into the body and stir it to greater activities, even fears of the most extraordinary character of which its normal state it would not think possible. There is also the strength which the mind and will by their demands and stirrings can cause to come to the body which we use without knowing clearly the source of their action can impact to the body or impose upon it as masters and inspirers.

Among the natural qualities and powers of the body which can be thus awakened, stimulated and put to a normal activity we must reckons ductility and stability in all kinds of physical action such as readiness in the race, dexterity in combat, skill and endurance of the mountaineer, the conscious, living and orderly response to all that can be demanded from the body of the soldiery, sailor, traveller or pilot which has been made reference or in adventure of all kinds and all the wide range of physical attainment to which man has accustomed himself or to which he is essentially enabled by his own will and made liable in a conception of the natural powers of the body and its capacity of receiving and its fitness in the interaction of the human mind and will and therefore in our conception of the total perfection of the body.

We have two conditions for this perfection, an awakening in as great an entirety as possible of the body consciousness and an education, so evolu-

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its own transformation and the integral transformation of the whole being; this too would be a part and a sign and evidence of the total perfection of the body.

If the emergence and growth of consciousness is the central motive of the evolution and the key to its secret purpose, then by the very nature of that evolution this growth must involve not only a wider and wider extent of its capacities but also an ascent to a higher and higher level till it reaches the highest possible. For it starts from a nethermost level of involution in the Inconscience which we see at work in Matter creating the material universe; it proceeds by an Ignorance which is yet ever developing knowledge and reaching out to an ever greater light and ever greater organisation and efficacy of the will and harmonisation of all its own inherent and emerging powers; it must at last reach a point at which it develops or acquires the complete fullness of its capacity and that must be a state or action in which there is no longer an ignorance seeking for knowledge but Knowledge self-posessed, inherent in the being, master of its own truths and working them out with a natural vision and force that is not afflicted by limitation or error. Or if there is a limitation, it must be a self-imposed veil behind which it would keep truth back for a manifestation in Time but draw it out at will and without any need of search or acquisition in the order of a right perception of things or in the just succession of that which has to be manifested in obedience to the call of Time.

The Truth-Consciousness and the Body's Perfection

This would mean an entry or approach into what might be called a Truth-consciousness self-existent in which the being would be aware of its own realities and would have the inherent power to manifest them in a Time-creation in which all would be Truth following out its own unerring steps and combining its own harmonies; every thought and will and feeling and act would be spontaneously right, inspired or intuitive, moving by the light of Truth and therefore perfect. All would express inherent realities of the spirit; some fullness of the power of the spirit would be there. One would have overthrown the present limitations of mind: mind would become a seeing of the light of Truth, will a force and power of the Truth. Life in a progressive fulfilment of the Truth, the body itself a conscious vessel of the Truth and part of the means of its self-actualisation and a form of its self-aware existence. It would be at least some indication of this Truth-consciousness, some first figure and action of it that must be reached and entered into first a operation if there is to be a divine life or any full manifestation of a spiritualised consciousness in the world of Matter. Or, at the very least such a Truth-consciousness must be in communication with our own mind and life and body, descend into touch with it, control its seeing and action, impel its motives, take hold of its forces and shape their direction and purpose. All touched by it might not be able to embody it fully, but each would give some form to it according to his spiritual temperament, inner capacity, the line of his evolution in Nature: he would reach securely the perfection of which he was immediately capable and he would be on the road to the full possession of the truth of the Spirit and of the truth of Nature.

In the workings of such a Truth-consciousness there would be a certain conscious seeing and willing automatism of the steps of its truth which would replace the inefflable automatism of the inconscient or seeming inconscient Force that has brought out of an apparent Void the miracle of an ordered universe and this could create a new order of the manifestation of the Being in which a perfect perfection would become possible, even a supreme and total perfection would appear in the vistas of an ultimate possibility. If we could draw down this power into the material world, our age-long dreams of human perfectibility, individual perfection, the perfectibility of the race, of society, inner mastery over self and a complete mastery, governance and utilisation, of the forces of Nature could see at last a prospect of total achievement. This complete human self-fulfilment might well pass beyond limitations and be transformed into the character of a divine life. Matter after taking into itself and manifesting the power of life and the light of mind would draw down into it the superior or supreme power and light of the spirit and in an earthly body shed its parts of inconscience and become a perfectly conscious flame of the spirit. A secure completeness and stability of the health and strength of its physical tene
cment could be maintained by the will and force of this inhabitant; all the natural capacities of the physical frame, all powers of the physical consciousness would reach their utmost extension and be there at command and sure of their flawless action. As an instrument the body would acquire a fullness of capacity, a totality of fitness for all uses which the inhabitant would demand of it far beyond anything now possible. Even it could become a revealing vessel of a supreme beauty and bliss,—casting the beauty of the light of the spirit, suffusing and radiating from it as a lamp reflects and diffuses the luminosity of its kindling flame, carrying in itself the beatitude of the spirit, its joy of the seeing mind, its joy of life and spiritual happiness, the joy of Matter released into a spiritual consciousness and thrilled with a constant ecstasy. This would be the total perfection of the spiritualised body.

All this might not come all at once, though such a sudden illumination might be possible if a divine Power and Light and Airanda could take their stand on the summit of our being and send down their force into the mind and life and body illuminating and remoulding the cells, awakening consciousness in all the frame. But the way would open and the consummation of all that is possible in the individual could progressively take place. The physical also would have its share in that consummation of the whole.

There would always remain visions beyond as the infinite Spirit took up towards higher heights and larger breadths the evolution of Nature, in the movement of the liberated being towards the possession of the supreme Reality, the supreme existence, consciousness, beatitude. But of this it would be premature to speak: what has been written is perhaps as much as the human mind as it is now possible to the enlightened thought understand in some measure. These consequences of the Truth-consciousness descending and laying its hold upon Matter would be a sufficient justification of the evolutionary labour. In this upward all-uplifting sweep of the Spirit there could be a simultaneous or consecutive downward sweep of the triumph of a spiritualised Nature all-including, all-transmuting and in it there could occur a glorifying change of the material and the physical consciousness and physical form and functioning of which we could speak as not only the literal but the supreme perfection of the body.
NEW TRENDS IN WESTERN THOUGHT IN PHILOSOPHY AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE

By ANTONIN RAYMOND

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The true principles of Modern architecture can be comprehended only in so far as we realize that the architect is not, and never has been, free to disregard the technical and engineering sciences and the material resources. The modern architect must face and solve the problem of living itself. And thus the principles which we outline are rooted in the very essence of our craft; for the past may, in the distant past so often illuminates the present. To appraise what an architect should follow, it is useful, therefore, to turn to a Hindu philosopher who has devoted his life to those arts and who proposed a list of all the things that an architect should know.

The order in which these things is listed is not devoid of meaning: it is a hierarchical order, the architect should be acquainted with the laws that govern the universe and with the laws that govern nature; he should be a master of dancing; he should have a profound knowledge of the Vedas, of painting, sculpture, ethics, of engineering, botany, astrology, and he should be able to organize rites and ceremonies and to play all the musical instruments.

Another Hindu sage begins a treatise as follows: "I shall now describe the qualifications of architects and the system of measurements in order. From the Vedas, I embrace the Creator Brahma and also India. That he knows all things. The Architect is proclaimed by God himself. It is He who, as the Architect of the Universe, creates the living beings, and from his four faces, four families of architects are born with him. He bears the name of Viswaraksha, the great tree. From Shudhapati, the Master-Build. He is the physician of the powerful, the doctor of the other three families—two of which are designers and the rest carpenters."

The High Function of Architects

However humbly architects may think of themselves, the philosopher puts them up very high. In their hands are immediate responsibilities to God, for it is they who are responsible for many things. In fact, they are the doctors of mankind. As such, they are like doctors of themselves. They may prefer to serve, humbly tubing; along between shores, where they are not thrones, but wings are thrust upon them and they are shot up among the clouds.

And it is good that they should be. Whether men today look at the stars through gigantic telescopes, study life through microscopes, or sometimes lose sight of God, the men who are given to this function are the doctors of mankind. Our ignorance of them and of their importance in our lives is the cause of the world's misery. It may seem as if we were encouraging the architect to invade the domain of the philosopher, but I tell you, we are all near catastrophes to continue working with our noses on our drawing boards in obliviousness of the drama which concerns us immediately.

By choice, architects have taken a profession that touches absolutely every relationship between God and men. Their work is to translate divine truth, beauty, order, proportion, symmetry, and construc-

tion of mankind. Such high-flown phrases may be ridiculous when we architects remember the kitchens and the bathrooms for which we must sacrifice. But it is this very sacrifice which shows us exactly where we can build, create, beautify, and function and in the market places equally offer up to the public the opportunity. Therefore the task we must set ourselves is to draw our erring humanity back into a harmonious relationship with the universe. For this, the only way to true progress. Otherwise we face retrogression.

This task may seem stupendous, but the architect, who may here and there fall short of the ideal set up by the philosopher. The physician, however, before receiving his degree is asked to assert his belief in a simplified, concrete, and rationalized life. He should be, then, for the one whose profession is bound up with a love for beauty and order, to go forth into the world conscious of large responsibilities, receiving from God for the work he is committing, the truths of lasting value in forms which can be comprehended.

Decadence and Decline

There is in each cycle of civilization a period at which a peak is condensed and materialized and at which a period of decadence is stood. Such were the highest periods of Egypt, of Greece, of Rome, and, in our own cycle (beginning with the decadence of Rome, and ending, I propose, now), such was the Middle Age. The fact that to this day visitors swarm from all parts of the world to view the cathedrals of Europe, is a testimony to the mysterious power that these cathedral cast on men. Why this spell? Because in the 12th, 13th, 14th centuries, our nation, the Church of Rome, the people had grown to cherish during the preceding centuries were finally fully embodied in stone as a result of their being at last fully grasped by the whole of the people.

Following this there were decadence and decline; mannerism, the Manchester style, the naissance nor, later on, the architecture of the Renaissance. Each period is magnificent in itself, but in the whole, in the Gothic power or purity. The common spiritual quest is replaced by an individual one, and the goal becomes confused. Finally, in the 19th century, all common powers are completely lost and is replaced by personal, directly expressed the monstrances of the period. Notice that whereas, as I have already mentioned, great periods always have the awareness of a cosmic idea, the Renaissance had Truth and Beauty, Buddhism had Laoberaton—civilization at its lowest ebb is possessed by the importance of the personal.

There have been times when the only thing that mattered was something that it be true, not what anyone might think about it. Plato argued that opinion is the opposite of wisdom. Personal freedom may be regarded as the source of error, as the reason for our modern chaos.

And what has become of the architect through these six centuries? He who in Gothic times was versed in the profound and costly symbols, who was versed in engineering, painting, music, rites, and ethics as distinct by the 16th century, become a decorator. Unable to design new forms, since forms are the expression of ideas and of ideas he has no idea of any more. He has lost not only his past, but the way he can form the past. His engineering, since he can no longer calculate, he has passed on to the engineer appointed by himself. Having lost direct contact with material, since he employs a contractor, he has forgotten how to build with wood and stone and steel, he has no power to build up the life of the building, he is only a harmonizer of exteriors as distantly related to the master builder as the crooner is to Beethoven. Meanwhile, the engineers and mechanics and contractors have run away with the job of building, and one can still see going on that novel phenomenon, which to our Hindu philosopher would have appeared so strange—engineering and architecture divided.

That is to say, functionalism oblivious of esthetics, esthetics oblivious of function.

Why Modern Architecture Was Born

It was to remedy this state of things that Modern architecture was born. There was nothing great in its beginnings. It represented a process of cleaning up, an attempt to free architectural indigence from the 19th century. It resembled a dose of castor oil. Its initiators had to formulate which of the old ideas, i.e. to determine and fix new forms. They wished to rediscover lost beauty.

The new architects were unconcerned with form. Their desire was to discard the old stuff and begin anew. The first impulse was the scrapping off of ornament, revealing structure, allowing the building to stand in its crude nakedness.

Then it became evident how much the conceived construction had been concealed under decoration. The next step was to bring into the light the functional and structural qualities of the building real order, as it is to be found in modern machinery and in living bodies: for, it was realized, the beauty of the machine in the body and the body when they functioned. In fact, in the addition, the function is to be clearly expressed and not concealed. The new buildings were to use the life and movement taking place within. They had to be akin to the world and to its activities. They had so long been static and monumental (visualize any typical college or state building, or station or bank building) because the static and the monumental method of affirming the grandeur of power for which that country strove. Modern architecture accomplished this expression of movement by unbalanced equilibriums and by the varying heights and spaces, a method well known in Japanese architecture, where houses wander gracefully through the garden.

For a time, balance as a principle was enjoyed itself. For it is natural for excesses in one direction to be followed by excesses in the other. Thus we find Gothic lines transformed into Romanesque lines (see Gothic sculpture) followed by an avidity of delight in intellectual pursuits (see the pagan scenes of the chiasmus painting). Further it is believed that air and light should be had for the asking because of modern engineering which permitted the spanning of wide spaces, the adoption of light construction, the use of glass and concrete, the inclusion of large panes of glass.

Then the architect again took to town planning—an art he had set aside—for he recognized at last that his responsibilities extended beyond the scope afforded by the consideration of the needs of the individual, and that he had a duty toward society. As the Gothic architect not figuratively, but actually (study the history of the Chartes Cathedral and the manner in which it was built) by means of the cathedral brought the people into contact with the living Christ, so the architect today feels a desire to bring the people into contact with living beauty, air, space, growing things (study some of the plans of cities drawn up by modern architects).

Those who did understand what the new movement stood for are still working from the developing original scheme towards purging architecture of non-essentials, making room for the free expression of the life of the day, seeking by every possible means to live better and to find better ways of living; in fact, trying to determine what makes life worth living, dwelling for classes into the experiences of other peoples or other times; reaching out behind and around a materialistic universe for truths which science ignores; getting closer to nature which we had extinguished, and using the natural resources of forests, our pollution of rivers and wasting of fertile lands and using with tact and understanding all that nature offers. All that, and much else, would be expressive of architecture is truly Modern, that is to say, creative.

To be Concluded.

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Mr. Sorokin is well-known in the West, especially in America, for his wide learning and acute sense of reality, his knowledge of history and firm grasp over facts, his sincere approach to things that have value in life, and his rather lucid style... In fact, the "Twilight of the Western World" is a vivid picture. Man has lost his dignity, his high and noble consciousness. He can no more say: "We are the sons of the immortal"—the "I" perduring. Verily, then, he will have become the Dravidian of the new Puranism.

"Altruisation of Humanity"

Thus lost in ignorance, nurtured by a "sensitive culture", disregardful of all established high moral values, selfish and commercial man lives in continual clash with his surroundings. And today, as misfortune would have it, this field of conflict assuming dangerous proportions envelops the entire world. In the face of such a hateful peril we must, the author says, either perish wholesale in the sale of self-annihilation or else learn the lesson of arduous toil and find a way out and be saved.

"And there is a way out, assures Mr. Sorokin, if only his plan of combat be accepted in entirety. Well, then, what is his plan and what are the solutions he would like to us to work out? First, we must stop "comparing" people. A Roman or Russian is equal to a Chinese or a Hindu, an American is equal to a Negro, a proletarian is equal to a capitalist. In other words, we must abandon the meaningless principle of achievement and(strictly speaking) all measures of achievement, work, success, and the like. Instead, we must be concerned with a substantive idea—"being" and not "having". In other words, we must be concerned with the free, the free will, the free expression of the individual, instead of with what has been achieved by that individual."

The Sorokinian Strategy of Salvation

The next question would naturally be: how to achieve this goal? Here then is the Sorokinian strategy (as he puts it): It is a three-stage strategy or a three-pronged drive, as the most energetic millennialist would say: (1) to remove the modern senile culture, (2) to elimate from the socio-cultural field those elements which are opposed and contradict one another, and (3) to revaluate man as the individual. In the new geography of Sorokin’s "excessively relativised cultures we must be replaced by a set of fundamental values and forms universally valid and unconditionally basic. Every man, every group, every creed of man.

Mr. Sorokin believes in the importance of the humanities as a force for good. He says, "The humanities are the way to salvation."

Sorokin plans for the future

Mr. Sorokin plans a new kind of world in which the human being will have the opportunity to express his individuality. He believes that a new kind of culture will emerge, one that is not dependent on technological progress.

BANNED  FROM  THE  USSR

Mr. Sorokin is banned from the USSR, where his work is not permitted to be published. This has caused a great deal of concern among Sorokin scholars and admirers around the world.

Ranges of Human Nature

Mr. Sorokin addresses the concept of human nature in his book. He explains that human nature can be divided into several ranges: biological, psychological, social, and cultural. He believes that each range has its own characteristics and that understanding these ranges is crucial for understanding human nature.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Sorokin’s book is a powerful critique of modern society and a call for a new kind of culture that is based on the humanities. It is a must-read for anyone interested in the future of humanity.
MOTHER INDIA, MAY 14, 1949

TAGORE, POET AND SEER
BY NOEL KANT GIFT

May 8 was the day of Rabindranath Tagore's birth. To the many-sided and profound genius of this great son of India's, we offer as tribute an appraiserment which brings an extraordinarily fine insight into essentials.

A great literature seems to have almost invariably a great name attached to it, and that name by which it is known is as great. It is the name of the man who releases the immost potency of that literature, and for the time being the whole that has attained or perhaps can ever attain. Homer and Virgil, Dante and Shakespeare, Goethe and Camoens, Firdausi in Persian and Kaldas in classical Malayalam, are names that have been the Godhead, the godhead born full-armed out of the poetic consciousness of the race to which he belongs.

Even in the case of France whose language and literature are more democratic and collective and less an individual hit or miss, there is one single name that can be pointed out as the soul and life, the very cream of the characteristic poetic genius of the nation. I am, of course, referring to Racine—Racine who, with Moliere and Voltaire and Hugo, stands as the most representative French poet, the embodiment of French esthetic par excellence.

Such a great name is Rabindranath Tagore in Bengal's literature. We need not forget Bankim Chandra, nor even Madhusudan: still one can safely declare that if Bengal's language and literature are marked over any period for a very long time with the mark of St. Paul, as the New Testament is Rabindranath Tagore who took up that language and literature, and made the slender provincial and parochial status into the dominant and universal. If there was in any moment of Bengal's local valueness metamorphosed definitively into a thing of world value.

Ulceration of the Soul

The miracle that Tagore has done is that he has brought out the very soul of the race—its soul of lyrical fervour and grace, of intuitive luminosity and poignancy, of beauty and harmony and delicacy. It is this that he has made living and vibrant and giving life to pitch and amplitude in various modes and forms of expression. What he always expresses, in all his creations, is one aspect or another, a rhythm or a note of the soul movement. It is always a cry of the soul, a passionate lament of the soul, a yearning, a desire in the heart that wells out in the multiform cadences of his poems. It is the soul. It is that there is no need to search for the poetry in the song of the Bansley Note. An essay by Rabindranath within the sphere of the song mentions another note. An essay by Rabindranath within the sphere of the song mentions another note. An essay by Rabindranath within the sphere of the song mentions another note.

This is not to say that the essays are devoid of a solid intellectual content, a close-knit logical argument an acute and penetrating thought movement, nor is it that his novels or dramas are mere lyric dross; his novels are masses in the essential elements of a plot and a story line and a character which is that of an artist and above these factors which Tagore's art possesses to a considerable extent, the artist possesses an incomparable element, a Flavour, a burning sincerity, a passion to enter the entire creation, something that can be characterized only as the soul element. It is this that makes whatever the poet touches not only living and graceful but instinct

Tagore is modern in respect of all the other aptitudes that are an aptitude or a tradition. He has the brilliance and criticality of an alert soul brought down to the criterion of intelligence, the refined sensibility of a pagan and scientific intellect, he has the infinite resource of a boundless humour and, above all, he has that in him—a genital playfulness and sympathy and a warm sense of "wide commonality"—which makes him easily a citizen of the world, feeling absolutely at home all over the earth.

The breadth of modernism that Tagore has brought into the letters and the Bengali race is, I repeat, suffused with a soul-feeling—a sense of refinement and dignity and widthness and culture and urbiety in the inner make-up of life, attitude and consciousness, a feeling that one no longer lives in his village confined to it; that one lives a life at large and at its best; one is an inhabitant of the whole world; the noblest sense of the word and one has to move and act and speak in manner becoming such a citizen. A high sense of all the aristocratic virtues, plus a certain sunshininess of wit and playfulness, enough to prevent the serious and the solemn from becoming such a citizen. The Tagore gifts are part of the gifts that Tagore has brought and made a living element out of our literary and even social character.

Modern and Ye Ancient

Tagore is modern, because his modernism is based upon a truth not local and temporal, but eternal and universal, something that is the very bedrock of human culture and civilization. Indeed, Tagore is also ancient, as ancient as the Upanishads. The great truths, the basic truth of human experience and faith, as pointed out by the ancients clear and distinctly, are the same as from our own epoch. The creation, Tagore's intellectual make-up may be as rationalistic and scien-
tific as that of any reciprocal man. Nor does he discard the good sense of judgement that comes to the average man to offer to his man for his banquet; and he does not say like the bare ascetic 'anyas vrsam vrinacchu, "abandon everything else". But even like one of the Upanishadic Brahs, the great Yajnavalkya, he would possess and enjoy his share of terrestrial as well as of spiritual wealth—abhyasoyam. In a world of modernism, although he acknowledges and appreciates mental and vital and physical values, he does not give them the place demanded for them. He has never forsworn the religious; he has not lost the Pearls of the soul. He has continued to tend close to the eternal, to the religious, and creation and give a high value and position to man's life and creative activity.

In these iconoclastic times, we are liable, both in art and in life, to despise any certain basic factors which were held to be almost indispensable in the old world. The great tricks—the True, the Beautiful and the God, or Soul and Immortality—are of no consequence to a modernist perhaps these mighty words evoke no heart in the echo of a contemporary human being. Art and Life meant in the old world something decent, if not great. They were, perhaps, as I have already said, framed within narrow limits, certain rigid principles that cribbed and confined the human spirit in many ways; but they were not anathema, they obeyed a law, a discipline, which they considered as an ideal, a standard to look up to and even live up to. The modernist is an anathema to everyone in all ways. He does not care for the old world; they exist as a totally different conception. He is one of those that is normally accepted.

The modernist does not ask: Is it good? Is it BeautifulSoup? He asks: Is it effective? Is it expressible? And by effectiveness and expressiveness he means something—"nuanced powerless and expressiveness. Expressiveness to him would mean the capacity to tear off the veil over what once was considered as the secret of the universe and the world, and make it known. A strange recklessness and a sort of non-conformism pervade the works of the writer, and mark the movement of the modernist.

In such a world Tagore is a voice and a beacon from over the heights of the old world declaring and revealing the verities that are eternal and never die. They who seek to kill them do so at their peril. Tagore is a great poet: as such he is close to the eternal. Tagore is a great Seer: as such humanity will claim him as its own.