AUTHENTIC AND PERMANENT PEACE

In the midst of the critical problems facing us today—problems of conflict between different classes, different religions, different systems of society, different nations and races—the advent of April 24 is like the vision of a wide gate, shining with daylight, culling us out of a discordant darkness in which the mind of man, haunted by golden dreams, is yet compelled to wander among dreary nightmares. But April 24 is once again the day in the year the dharma day on which a large public will take the blessing of Sri Aurobindo, under whose eyes and those of the Mother it will pass together with the 700 inmates of his Ashram in Pondicherry. We do not know how large the public will be, but it is sure to run into four figures: an ever-increasing number is turning, all over the world, towards Sri Aurobindo, for there is a growing sense everywhere that in this Ashram in Pondicherry the luminous solution of all the problems of humanity, especially the heart of India is the feeling, however vague on the whole, that in the figure of Sri Aurobindo there is no mere intellectual element of the essence of Indian culture but a living, dynamic and creative embodiment of it in a plenteous never seen before.

It is one of the signs of this feeling that, a little while ago, the Asiatic Society of Bengal should have awarded him its annual peace medal.

But, while a general feeling points towards him, a clear understanding is not common of what he works for and the power of peace he commands. In three respects the popular intelligence is liable to misguide his stature. To begin with, it may conceive him as nothing more than a powerful moral philosopher with a strong religious temperament. To be just a philosopher preaching ideas of a Spiritual Reality that is one and single in the whole world, a unitary substratum of all beings and things, would not touch his identity. It may evoke admiration of a certain impersonal type, but there will be little of warmth leading to a husking joining of palms at the thought of him. India instinctively looks for life-values, for practical realisation, for the quickening palpable achievement. Not only his personal presence and command a man must express his high comprehension of the uiatary Spirit, before he can draw a devoted response from the Indian mind. Sri Aurobindo is accepted by India as being more than a God-fancied philosopher of genius. But many may be entirely equating him with a practitioner of what are commonly called virtues—faith, simplicity, truthfulness, non-violence. He may be imagin ed as spending all his time is affirming his trust in God and setting an example of proper, cutting down his needs to the bare minimum and putting away from himself every thought of name and fame, divesting himself of sensual thoughts and being honest in every detail, harbouring no envy or resentment and dealing gently, in a most brotherly way, with all and sundry. Such a notion of him would not be a complete denial of the reality, but it would fit him into too small and rigid a formula: it would not be commensurate with the vast and many-sided and illuminated nobility that is his genuine moral stature, for it would fail to regard that there are as part of and rooted in a consciousness fulfilling the ethical and the religious by transcending them and entering into mystical experience. If Sri Aurobindo were a great moral philosopher with a devout disposition, both teaching and practising virtues such as Gandhi has made famous, they would certainly deserve a following and his mark on the present generation would not be negligible and the nation in its confusions and crises might well seek his guidance. But there have been mighty moralists of this kind in the past and, admirable as their example and work have been, they have not discovered the key to life's riddle and because of them mankind today is not essentially on a loftier level than it was centuries ago. At the most they have helped the race to a temporary tidying-over: the most superficial issue of man's ignorance and egotism and suffering has always remained.

That Sri Aurobindo is more than a moral and religious philosopher is understood by no small portion of the Indian public. He is looked upon by quite a number as a great Yogi, a living store-house of mystical experience. Brahman, Atman, Ishwara—the Absolute, the Supreme Self, the Lord of the universe—all are conceived to have been realised by him and the white radiance of Eternity to be gathered in him, making him a seer and saint. But the fact that three decades ago he withdrew from the field of politics, the scene of his heroic combat with British imperialism, and kept mostly aloof from the external vicissitudes of the world and even retired in 1926 from day-to-day outward contact with his disciples in the Ashram—this fact produces on several the impression that his eyes are fixed on some beatific Beyond and that he regards life as merely a preparation and passage with its fulfillment far away in a deathless but also birthless status of infinite being. The light of the Divine he is indeed here amongst us and as such he is to be valued, for with that light he can carry us through our anxieties and perplexities, soothe the hurts we receive in the gloom of a bedevilled world, permeate us with a happiness and a tranquillity that stand us in good stead when we are thrown into the dust and heat of life's arena. Yet, with a cry of "Not here but elsewhere!" he appears to leave the core of our trouble unpledged, while on all that intense craving and searching for perfection in our finite complex members—in the mind straining after knowledge and harmony, the life-force aching after bliss and power, the body gasping after beauty and stability—there seems to fall from him a remote chill, the touch of a grandiose buffeting. "No doubt, he has a timidity immense to give us", it is said, "but what about the dreaming heart of time that would see a fully developed, multi-vibrant, man-controlled and secure earth? The more we move towards the topless silence of his Yogi consciousness into the eternal mysteries that are above, the more defeated we feel in all to which our hands have been set—art, science, politics, industry. And the more defeated we feel, the less convinced we are that this sage and recluse of whom we sincerely hope to hear more and for whose benediction of transcendentual calm we are grateful can solve the problems with which we are confronted and which will accept no refusal from us."

This recurrent criticism is valid via-èvia all other-wordly mystics, for they have created wonderful epochs of spiritual experience and even conferred on active life itself a new fervour and fertility, but all the lines of consciousness they have set going have, either by a directly ascetic effort or by an abundant earthly artistry of calling the soul heavenwards, ended in an ultimate decadence of world-values, a final enshamblement of the very vital on an earth from which one is always dragged away yet which can never be forsaken. The question, however, is: Can the Aurobindonian mysticism be deemed other-worldly?

The answer given by those who have visited the Ashram in Pondicherry is a decisive "No!" They are aware that Sri Aurobindo did not retire from the political field in order to lose himself in an actionless samadhi: dynamism is in the very grain of his nature and withdrawal from one kind of activity can only mean the adoption of another because it is far from being significant and effective. Retrenchment and the repudiation of the basic problems of politics but only the quest for a more radical way of dealing with them and bringing about the fulfilment of human societies and collectivities: proof of this is the publication of two magnificent books which are keenly alive to the circumstances and the psychology of social development and of international growth: The Human Cycle and The Ideal of Human Unity. Students of Sri Aurobindo's world-view are also aware that his self-confinement to his own rooms since 1926 is not a poetic refusal of life, nor stamping the Ashram as a life of contemplative navel-gazers. One has only to look around to note how full of activity is
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the Ashram: there is hardly any fruitful human occupation that is not part and parcel of the life here. Lately a stress has been laid even on physical culture and a large sports ground is the scene daily of colourful exercises and athletics. What is still more meaningful, Sri Aurobindo withdraws to his room does not make for an Ashram habit of constant mixing of the Guru with the disciples; for, there is the Mother who is in varied contact with the inmates day after day and whose beautiful presence is almost everywhere, so intense is her interest and participation in all the activities. Men, women and children are full of healthy vitality under her care and guidance. The Integral Yoga is intended to take up the whole of our nature and pour into it the creative light of the Divine Consciousness. A new world assuming the responsibilities of earth-exist-

ence with a being which is dynamised by a greater power than the mere mind is springing up to constitute a nucleus of super-humanity. And Sri Aurobindo keeps aloof only because he wants to concentrate even more intensely on a swift solution of the acute problem of life's transformation: he seeks to expedite the emergence of the Divine in the mould of the em-bodied human. His is not a fundamental or permanent seclusion.

Yes, those who perceive the dynamic world-embracing character of the Aurobindonian mysticism are free from the errors of interpreting the Master in terms of the ethico-religious philosopher or of the God-realised supra-sensationalist. Still, a certain error can reside in even their interpretation. For, most people are under the impression that spirituality either world-abandoning or world-embracing is something that the giant mystics of the past have already practised and that modern practitioners can only play variations on an old theme. No doubt, the soar into the ineffable beyond the cosmic labor must always be a repetition of an ancient experi-

ence, with whatever minor changes of approach and discipline the modern mind may introduce. But the dynamic spiritual realisation need not cover essentially the same orbit as in the past. While one can add nothing by way of further passivity to the immeasurable experience of a Buddha, Nirvana or a Shankara's Parabrahman or a Plotinus's One and Alone, the activity compassed by the dynamic Yogis—whether Vaishnavite or Tantric, whether following the cult of Krishna or the cult of Kali—is evident-

ly incomplete. The spiritualised workings of the mind, the life-force and the body, which they insist on and bring about, stop short somewhere. A marvellous Light does enter into the mind's functionings, the life-force's movements, the body's processes—it is most obvious in the first, clear enough in the second and not imperceptible in the third—yet the very fact of a diminuendo is the direction of the second and the third is indi-

cative of a flaw and, since all three are interdependent and the lower reacts upon the higher, the first itself cannot be fully admitting a divine dynamismin or else is not in contact with the absolutely transformative plane of power. If the mind is not divinised in totum, if the vital and the physical being harbour incapacity and frailty, an active per-

fection is surely not present. And because it is not present, neither Vaishnavite nor Tantric can help looking towards some super Mundane sphere of harmonised existence whether the soul in him wills to depart when death has set its seal upon the body's innerper-
	
fection and both life-force and mentality that cannot be wholly made sub-

stance of Spirit have been relinquished. The mortal, to put an immortal-

ity, has to forsake earth: the long evolution out of brute matter into aspir-

ing self-awareness comes to an abrupt terminus: the sovereign Spirit that must be in everything cannot be brought forth in earth's evolutionary terms. There is an illogic here, as well as a lack of rationale for the assumption of those terms by the sovereign Spirit. Sri Aurobindo has refused to accept this illogic and irrationality. The root of it he has traced not in the nature of things but in a deficiency in the old realisations. If the Divine has fashioned the earth-formula for His progressive self-dis-

closure, there cannot be with the degree of mental, vital and physical spiritualisation attained by the dynamic Yogis a "Thus far and no further!" Within the depths of the Divine there must be the secret Truth-energy of evolutionary completion, and the soul in its upward grade here must be capable of uniting with that Truth-energy and effectuating its entire des-

cent below and a transformation of our threefold nature into this luminous and faultless Supernature. A revolution in vision of evolutionary pos-

sibilities is Sri Aurobindo's. A momentously new working of the Eternal in Time is the ideal and objective of his Yoga and those who do not grasp the breath-bereaving novelty of the descending light and might of what he calls Supermind or Gnosis are, for all their recognition of his "force one with unimaginable rest", open to the charge of failing to do him justice.

Only when we seize the Aurobindonian originality, the wonderful heart of the tremendous Yogic process that has kept the Master busy for the last forty years, do we understand the real sense in which he is the prophet par excellence of peace. The gold medal that he has been offered in appreciation of him as a peace-bringer can acquire its fullest signifi-

ance not before we perceive that, unless our threefold nature of mind, life-force and body become divinised down to the smallest velocity, the least nerve-querer, the last cell-stir, there can be merely a transcendental calm in the recesses of our being, a limited play of harmony is our instru-

mental and outer mould, and never in this mould the flawless illumination and ecstatic equilibrium by which the colour and cry of adventurous multi-

foliate earth-existence will not be annulled and yet a vast unity, sponta-

neous as well as inviolable, manifested—an authentic and permanent peace, proper to earth, born not from a cessation of activity but from its divi-

nisation.

THE SACRED FIRE

O keep the sacred fire
A prisoner poise
With walls that never wake

To earthy voice.

So delicate and small
This undulled
Epiphany of joy,

This golden child,

That like a freezing blast
The unfruitful power
Of stony mind will quench
The burning flower.

Breathe tenderly your love:
Feed the moving flame
By secret offerings
Of one far Name

Whose rhythm makes more rich
That smiling face
Of angel glow within

The heart's embrace—

Until the dreamy hue
Grows wide enough
To flash upon time's chill
A warrior laugh

Piercing through twilight walls
Of calm to blind
With a noon of ecstasy
The space of mind.

A sword divine which darts
From clay's dull sheath,
The luminous tongue shall rise
Devouring death

And every icy thought's
Oblivion
Of earth's unburnt soul,
Its core of sun.

K. D. SETHNA
INDIA AND COMMUNISM
By RISHABHCHAND

The world's eye is upon India as a bulwark against the rolling tide of Communism is a fact not material, it is a fact as significant as one is likely to find first sight. It is not so much the conscious as the subconscious thought of humanity instinctively turning to India as the savour of its culture and civilization. The black demon of Communism is out to devour or deface all that is rich and progressive in the life and society of the country. The world is watching under its grim menace, mankind finds itself bankrupt for all of its resources and confronted either with an utter extinction or a cramped and mutilated existence. Russian militarism, it feels, can be stayed and even checked, but not Russian Communism, which has the strength of strong and uncanny appeal to all that is crude and grossly material in the human composition.

But what is it that makes the thought of mankind turn to India? A superficial view may attribute it to India's long and glorious feudal systems. Is it a vague enough statement which carries more sound than sense to the mind. Where is stability in India to-day? Is not everything in flux, everything being felt for, and tried, adopted or rejected? In the field of practical politics there is any sure, guiding knowledge of the essential elements that went to constitute the long past of the country, any clear perception of the nation's organic growth and goal? A fumbling empiricism, a haphazard and half-hearted loyalty to the ancient ideals and a bold strenuous attempt at promiscuous imitation mark our dealing with the thousand and one problems that surround us to-day. To speak of stability in the midst of this maelstrom is to speak in a vein of sentimental idealism and national pride.

It may also be asserted that the world's eye is on India, because India has been through the ages an indomitable preacher and propagator of peace and there is nothing that the war-weary world needs more to-day and nothing that Communism threatens more with complete destruction than peace. But how can she give way to the self-harmfully possess? Has Gandhi's devoted labour in the cause of peace borne fruit? It is said that India has achieved liberation by means of peace and non-violence, but that is a half-truth. Every student of political thought knows that a country has will to win back its freedom and staked its all upon it, there is no power on earth that can withstand it for long, whatever the means adopted for the realisation of the objective, violent or non-violent. And we must not also forget the important fact that it is not the compelling force of the war political circumstances that forced the hands of British Imperialism and pushed India into the limelight of international recognition. Non-violence, by appealing to the religious idealism of the masses, has been a considerable rallying force and a stimulator of the people's national aspirations, but for the sake of truth one must admit that it has been also a parent of many a national calamity and political blunder. An impartial and exclusive insistence on non-violence has precipitated more violence, not once but several times, and, proved to hit the catastrophic futility of such drastic constraints and impositions upon human nature, such cavalier treatment of the subtle intrinsics of psychological forces. It may be benevolent optimism but it is not certainly beneficial wisdom to expect whole nation to become non-violent overnight. A rigid ethical extremism has led to the sort of exploding or simmering violence and rank corruption which impede, more than anything else, the advent of peace and open the door to the forces of darkness and disorder. History records a parallel instance in Asoka's ajoined introduction of non-violence into political statecraft with the result that the country almost immediately suffered a definite decline and degeneracy. Widespread poverty, social and political inequity, commercial disintegration and educational confusion have made the country to-day a little too hot for peace, and unless the nation is the right lead along the lines of its soul's evolution, it will forfeit for ever its role of a preacher of peace to the world.

And yet there is peace or stabilising force in India, but it is not on the troubled surface of her life; it is deep in the eddym of her soul, and is the substratum of her cultural heritage. This hidden force of peace which is not a moral force—morality is but a product of the mental consciousness—but a spiritual force, has to be evolved and made dynamic in the collective life of the people. It is this force of peace along with other equally important factors that will conquer communism and be the base of a social order, unitarian in essence and yet capable of multiplied expression.

The Theory and the Practice

In an impartial assessment of Communism it would be wrong to fix upon its theoretical side and overlook its practical bearings, implications and concrete developments. Even when,—unlike as in Communism,—there is no direct second error, its principles may often fly in the face of its theoreti cal foundations and give birth to many conflicting consequences. The theory and the basic principles of Communism have a precise, positive and dogmatic materialist and accepts economics as the sole determining factor in the evolution of social system. This means that it is the bread and the brick that mould the character, inspire the thought, motivate the actions and decide the destiny of man. All individual and collective initiative is thus trampled underfoot, and it is devously held that by a victorious manipulation of the economic forces, human society can be rendered efficiently productive, culturally progressive and

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organically prosperous. That naïve faith in birth of an invented reading of history. The illusion of human society is in bond to receive rude shocks from contrary facts, as knowledge advances. If economic well-being were the cause of intellectual and spiritual greatness, then India would have been the land of intellectual dwarfs and spiritual anemias. The equality of Shankars and Kalidasses, Ramkrishnas and Rabindranaths and Gandhis.

Its third error is that it aims at the establishment of equality without caring to remove from society the primal causes of inequality. It takes the symptoms of the cause and disorders in a system to receive rude therapeutic. It is unjust to lay the whole blame at the door of the capitalist who has no more than an ignorant instrument in the hands of the forgers that make for inequality. Any thoroughbred Communist politician in the position of the capitalist would have behaved likewise, if not worse. If equality has really to be brought into the society of men and made a dynamic principle of a free and progressive communal living, then the very causes of inequality have to be eliminated. It is not a certain arrangement of society or a particular method of economic dealing that is at fault but the primitive human propensities of greed, envy, jealousy, egoistic power-lust, intolerance and violence that have created the inequalities and would continue to create them so long as they are allowed, whatever the disposition of society and the laws governing its external growth and expansion. Left to themselves, inequalities will crop up even in the midst of a rigorously systematized economic equality, and the classless society, the communal ideal of the communist, if it ever came into being, will cleave asunder into many classes and seek the potentials of another revolution. The remedy lies, therefore, not in an adjustment, not even in an overthrowing, of the outer body of the human society and an utter mecha-nization of the natural and change in the consciousness of society and nature. Man is the greatest problem to himself and it is in himself and not in his outer activities, in the spring and not in its leaping waters, that he has to seek a solution. He can go on preaching peace and love among all sorts of nations, making pacts and hatching policies, but nothing will be of any eventual avail. It is he who has to change, first in the individual and then in the collectivity, by a sincere and arduous process of self-purification, before he can hope to build his society on a peace and unity and equitable basis.

Its fourth error is its preaching of the gospel of savage hatred against the capitalist classes and its naked advocacy of brute force and fraud as the most effective means of realizing its objective. It is this vengeful view of reality that has made a monomaniac out of it and constitutes the most vulnerable, probably the most fatal, plague-spot upon its bodily politic. Born of hatred rather than of pity, it has necessarily lived and thrived on hatred and is destined to perish by it. Hatred breeds suspicion and fear and poisons the springs of life, and after the first step of economic reconstruction to which it has undoubtedly given a strong impetus, is over, it is sure to recoil upon its source and disrupt the very bases upon which such an immense structure has been so laboriously reared. Even Socialism in a world at war, is pitting for international peace, and its forerunners are the worst enemies of mankind.

Its fifth error, probably the most pernicious of all, and outrageous to the uninitiated mind, is the individualization of a social pattern and the strangling of all individual originality and initiative other than those directly promoted or approved by the State. The individual, the predecessor and pioneer of every reform and the originator and protagonist of all progressive movement, has been made the passive element in a determinate plan. The individualism of the non-socialists is, in this sense, nothing but a conspiracy to undo all the good work that has been done, the ideal of the non-socialists is the state in which society is best suited to its dynamic, the state is the instrument in which society is best served, and the achievement of that state is the highest goal of society.

The sixth error consists in its predication of the collectivity as the driving force of all social change. According to it, it is not the individual who conceives a change and pioneers a movement in society, but the collectivity. This is an absurd proposition which is flately refuted by the entire history of human progress. The caste system is a social fact that is as old as history itself, but it is not the collectivity that creates the caste system, it creates the castes. The caste system is as old as the community, and it is the community that is the source of the caste system, not the collectivity.

It is true that this comprehensive vision of oneness and equality was naturalized and accentuated during the period of the caste system, a system which is a natural and universal institution of social hierarchy, lost its flexibility and became a box of water-tight compartments. The sacerdotial domination disturbed the balance and hamstrung the harmonious growth of the Indian society as a whole and thereby stowed the seeds of its own eventual destruction. But it is a significant fact, well worth remembering, that every resurgence of spirituality in India has given birth to a revolt against the inequalities in religious and social life and borne witness to the persistent vitality, however obscured and depressed, of the high ideal of unity and equality. The synthetic spirituality that is trying to emerge today out of the welter of the past, promises to find itself upon an integral vision of the omnipresent Reality and the brotherhood of all men. A perfect society is one in which the expression more magnified, and the equality of all men will be a reality. The equality will sustain this multi-fold play of variation and never for a moment betray any sign of disturbance or discord.

The caste system is one of the oldest forms of the exploitation of the proletariat marks an important but transitional phase of social evolution and will soon pass away, as did the ancient deification of the aristocrats, giving place to a harmonious hierarchy functioning equitably with the subalterns in the same spirit, that is the organic interaction of a progressive organism. The hierarchy will remain so long as diversity remains in the world—and without diversity there can be no world—but, spiritual equality will be a permanent safeguard against the hierarchy breaking up into an anarchy of ego-centric interests.

India has always preached the gospel of universal love, and not of
lusted. Though she may not evince any sudden eagerness to turn pacifist—
a premature pacifism, if successful, is likely to increase rather than diminish the
gentle tensions of the human nature in war, not reveal her soul that anoynce of love which can sooth all embittered
elsments in international relations and conduces to a real confraternity of the world's races and nations. This love, I must hasten to add, is not moral love—of which often doth run as a baleful self-sufficiency, set out from the rest by a natural demarcation of its field
and limits, but connected with the whole by well-understood relations, each
a co-partner with the others in the powers and duties of the communal existence, executing its own laws and rules, administering with its own
proper limits and its own devices the discussion and regulation of matters of a mutual or common interest and represented in some way to
the degree of its importance in the general assemblies of the kingdom or
state. The sovereign or supreme political authority was an instrument of
coordination and of a general control and efficiency, and exercised a
supreme but not an absolute authority; for in all its rights and powers it
was limited by the Law and by the will of the people, and in all its internal
functions only a co-partner with the other members of the socio-political
body."

"The one principle permanent at the base of construction throughout all
the building and extension and rebuilding of the Indian polity, was the
principle of an organically self-determining communal life,—self-determining
not only in the mass and by means of the machinery of the vote and a
representative body erected on the surface, representative only of the politi-
cal mind of a part of the nation, which is all that the modern system has
been able to manage, but in every pulse of its life and in each separate mem-
ber of its existence."

The most important and determining factor in the national reconstruc-
tion of to-day and tomorrow is spirituality, the essential power and principle
of Indian polity succeeds to take hold of the spirit and apply it to every limn and cell of the society, is ever likely to succeed. It was
an effluent, dynamic spirituality that inspired the lofty ideals and shaped
the course and pattern of life in ancient India, and whatever the aberrations in
later times, whatever the passing predilection for quietism and escapism,
the same ideals persist down to the present day, more or less unimpaired,
if not actually enriched in certain directions, and are bound to seek their
highest fulfillment in the near future. Deprive India of its spirituality and
you have deprived her of the very spirit of her life and condemned her to
sterility and stagnation. Foster her spirituality and you have helped her
grow and burst into a carnival of creation. India lives for God and His
work in the material world, and neither material prosperity nor vital and
mental achievements, but only a union with Him and a perfect expression of
His Will in her, can satisfy her soul for ever.

Communism is utterly foreign to the spirit and tradition of Indian culture,
because it is incurably materialistic, unidealistic, unethical, unspiritual
and vandalsitic in its dealings with the eternal values of human existence.
India has God as her pole-star and freedom and purity as the steps of her
progress towards Him, while Communism is riveted to matter and sold,
and is a symptom only of a national distribution of material wealth and amenable to her children, but also to dispense the light and
and bliss of the Spirit to all humanity. Her democracy is polarized to her
ideal of raising mankind from the quagmire of base materialism and enable it to live a divine life of freedom, equality and creative harmony.

Gold

Along in the flame-white elters of trace
Stands the pinnacle of the unreached Gold—
Summit of the intangible vastitude
With inscrutable secrecy of the Sun-caves .
A gold-blue dust of the high starry seas
Is mother of the myriad unbarred domains
Of rapture and repose, of the sole-golded brooks
And worlds of cadenced unwept dreams
And bright-plumed swans in a luminous sphere,
Symbol of the soul's unhorizoned ascent;
Its silver-deep silence encroaches the earth's
Sonnambulistic urge for the unseen heights
With inspiration's magical eagle-pinnioned fire
Opening wide unenraptured spirit-gaze .
A gold-red rose from the distant hilltops
Stands above the dust with effulent calm
And a puissance and a will indomitable
Urging the clay to open its granite doors
And change its vesper-rocks into the high
Sky-castellated sculpture of the unknowable
A Gold is asleep in the womb of the gloms
Of deep, remote, unenraptured splendour
Bearing the seed of unpilumaged august night,—
A Mirror of Gold of the altitudes.
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.

Such was our conversation this morning, O Lord:

Thou hast made the vital being awake with the magic wand of Thy impulse and Thou saist to it: "Awake, bend the bow of thy will, for the hour of action will soon come." Suddenly awakened, the vital being rose, stretched itself and shook off the dust of its long torpor; it perceived from the elasticity of its members that it was still vigorous and fit to act. And it was with an ardent faith that it replied to the sovereign call: "Here am I, what demandest Thou of me, O Lord?" But before another word could be uttered, the mind intervened in its turn, and after bowing down before the Master in token of obedience, thus spoke to him: "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I am surrendered to Thee, and that I try my best to be a faithful and pure intermediary of Thy supreme Will. But when I turn my look towards the earth, I see that man's field of action, however large it may be, is always terribly restricted. A man, who, in his mind and even in his vital being, is vast like the universe, or at least like the earth, as soon as he begins to act, is shut up within the narrow limits of a material action, very bounded in its field and results. Whether he is the founder of a religion or the author of a political transformation, the man of action becomes a petty, little stone in a general edifice; a grain of sand in the immense dunce of human activities. I cannot see any realisable action which is of so great a worth that the whole being should concentrate upon it and make of it its reason of existence. The vital being delights in the adventure: but must it be allowed to throw itself into some lamentable adventure, unworthy of an instrument conscious of Thy Presence? "Fear nothing," was the reply. "The vital being will not be allowed to set itself in motion, thou wilt not be asked to bring in all the effort of thy organisational faculties except when the proposed action will be vast and complex enough for all the qualities of the being to be fully and usefully employed. What this action will be exactly, thou wilt know when it will come to thee. But I warn thee from now, so thou mayest prepare thyself not to reject it. I warn thee also, as well as the vital being, that the time of a small, tranquil, uniform and peaceful life will be over. There will be effort, danger, the unforeseen, insecurity, but also intensity. Thou wilt make for this role. After having agreed for long years to forget it completely, because the time had not come and also because thou wast not ready, awake now to the consciousness that it is very truly thy role and that it was for this that thou wast created."

The vital being, first, awoke to the consciousness and with the enthusiasm which is natural to it exclaimed, "I am ready, O Lord, Thou canst count upon me." The mind, more feeble and timid, alighted as doles, added, "What Thou willest I too will. Thou knowest well, O Lord, that I belong entirely to Thee. But shall I be able to be at the height of the task, shall I have the power to organise what the vital being has the capacity to realise?" "It is to prepare thee for it that I am working at this moment; it is for this that thou art undergoing a discipline of plasticity and enrichment. Do not worry about anything: power comes with the need. It is not because, at the same time as the vital being, thou hast confined thyself to very small activities when it was useful that it should be so, in order that the things which had to be prepared might have the time to prepare themselves,—it is not that, I say, that can make thee incapable of living outside these smallnesses in a field of action in keeping with thy true stature. I have chosen thee from all eternity to be my exceptional representative upon the earth, not in an invisible and hidden way, but in a way apparent to the eyes of all men. And what thouwert created to be, thou shalt be."

As always, O Lord, when the voice of the depths was silent, the sublime and all-powerful benediction enveloped me fully.

And for a moment, the Master and the instrument were but one: the One without a second, the Eternal, the Infinite.

THE MOTHER

December 8, 1916

Prayers & Meditations.

* * *

In this ineffable communion's climb
He grew towards the integer of his soul.
A union of the Real with the unique,
A gaze of the Alone from every face,
The Presence of the Eternal in the hours
Made whole the fragment-beings we are here.
At last was won a firm spiritual poise,
A constant lodging in the Eternal's realm,
A safety in the Silence and the Ray,
A settlement in the Immutable.
His heights of being lived in the still Self;
His mind could rest on a supernal ground
And look down on the magic and the play
Where the God-child lies on the lap of Night and Dawn.
And the Everlasting puts on Time's disguise.
To the still heights and to the troubled depths
His equal spirit gave its vast ascent:
A tranquil purity, a servant of his truth.
Faced all experience with unaltered peace.
Different to the sorrow and delight,
Untempted by the marvel and the call,
Immobile it beheld the flux of things,
Calm and apart supported all that is:
His wide tranquillity helped the toiling world.
Inspired by silence and the closed eyes:
His force could work with a new luminous art
On the crude material from which all is made
And the refusal of Inertia's mass
And the grey front of the world's Ignorance
And ascendent Matter and the huge error of life.
As a sculptor chisels a deity out of stone
He slowly chipped off the dark envelope,
The illusion and mystery of Ignorance
In whose black pall the Eternal wraps his head
That he may set unknown in cosmic Time.
A spendour of self-creation from the peaks,
A transfiguration in the mystic depths,
A happier cosmic working could begin
And fashion the world-shape in him anew,
God found in Nature, Nature fulfilled in God.
Already in him that task of Power was seen:
A new being breathed under new stainless heavens;
His soul and mind and heart were bright and free,
Only life's lower reaches remained dim.
But there too, in the uncertain shadow of life,
The ambiguous coveted celestial puissance worked
Watched by the inner Witness's moveless peace.
Even the struggling Nature below the strong periods of illumination came:
Lightnings of glory after glory burned,
Experience was a tale of blazes and fire,
Air rippled round the argosies of the Gods,
Strange riches sailed to him from the Unseen;
Splendours of insight filled the blank of thought,
Rivers poured down of bliss and luminous force,
Visits of beauty, storm-swept gusts of delight,
Rained from the all-powerful Mystery above.
Thence stooped the eagles of Omniscience.
A dense veil was rent, a mighty whisper heard;
Revised in the privacy of his soul,
A wisdom-cry from rapt transcendences
Sang on the mountains of an unseen world;
The voices that an inner listening hears
Conveyed to him their prophet utterances,
And flame-wrapt outbursts of the immortal Word
And flashes of an occult revealing Light
Approached him from the unreachable secrecy.

SRI AUROBINDO

Savitri: Bk. 1, canto 3.
"The spiritual process of life is then in some sense a creation, but a self-creation, not a making of what never was, but a bringing out of what was implicit in the Being. The Sanskrit word for creation signifies a loosening forth, a letting out into the workings of Nature. The Upanishad in getting into the inner image of the physical nervous system its self the infinite out of itself and creates the structure in which it takes its station. That is applied in the ancient Scripture not to the evolution of things out of Matter, but to an original bringing of temporal becoming out of the eternal infinity; Matter itself and this material universe are only such a web or web no more a part of it brought out from the spiritual being of the infinite. But the same truth, the same law holds good of all that we see of the emergence of things from involution in the material energy. We might almost say of the top of the spiritual evolution by a soul in Nature, which infinite brings out of it eternally the structure of its action in a universe of which the last descending scale is based upon an involution of all the powers of the spirit into an unconscious absorption in her self-oblivious periods of the external world. There comes an ascent and progressive liberation of power after power till the spirit self-disclosed and set free by knowledge and mastery of its works reposes the eternal fulness of its being enveloped and its spirit in the manifold swelling solitude of its nature. At any rate the spiritual process of which our human birth is a step and our life is a portion, appears as the bringing out of a greatness aya kchamanam, which is secret, inherent and self-imprisoned, absorbed in the form and working of things. Our world-action figures an evolution, an outworking of a manifold power gathered and coiled up in the crude intricacy of Matter. The upward progress of the successive births of things is a rise into waking and larger and larger light of consciousness shut into the first hermetic cell of sleep of the eternal Energy.

There is a parallel in the Yogi experience of the Kudalini, eternal Force coiled up in the body in the root vessel or chamber, swaddling, pedaling, earth-swirl of the physical nervous system. There she slumbered coiled up there like a Python and filled full of all that she holds gathered in her being, but when she is struck by the freely coursing breath, by the current of Life which enters in to search for her, she awakes and rises flaming up the ladder of the spinal cord and forces open centre after centre of the involved dynamic secrets of consciousness till at the summit she finds, joins and becomes one with the spirit. Thus she passes from an involution in inconceivability through a series of opening glories of her powers into the greater eternal unconceivability of the spirit. In the mysterious evolving Nature in the world around us follows even such a course. Inconceivable being is not so much a matrix as a chamber of materials ready to be gathered up by the powers of spirit that are there, but work in the conditions of the material energy involved, we say, and therefore not apparent as themselves because they have passed into a form of working subnormal to their own right scale where they are not evident and think we recognize it as being self-suppressed into a minor and an undetected force of working. As Nature rises in the scale, she liberates them into their recognisable scales of energy, discloses the operations by which they can feel themselves and their greatness. At the highest summit she rises into the self-knowledge of the spirit which informed her action, but because of its involution or concealment in the forms of its workings could not be known in the greatness of its reality. Spirit and Nature discovering the secret of her energies become aware of the greatness of the power of Spirit and the inconceivableness of the spirit. At the apex of the spiritual evolution by a soul in Nature, which awakening to the significance of its own being in the liberation of the highest truth; it comes to know that its births were the births, the assumptions of form of an eternal Spirit, to know itself as that and not a creature of Nature and not a form of consciousness. In all the powers of spirit there are there, but work in the conditions of the material energy involved, we say, and therefore not apparent as themselves because they have passed into a form of working subnormal to their own right scale where they are not evident and think we recognize it as being self-suppressed into a minor and an undetected force of working. As Nature rises in the scale, she liberates them into their recognisable scales of energy, discloses the operations by which they can feel themselves and their greatness.

We must consider all the packed significance of this involution. The spirit spoke here of a dog's being there with all its powers; life, mind and a greater supramental power are involved in Matter. But what do we mean when we say that they are involved, and do we mean that all these things are quite different energies cut off from each other by an eneity of the material universe? Or do we mean that there is only one being with its one energy, varying shades of the light of its power differentiated in the spectrum of Nature? When we say that Life involved in Matter in material force, for that Force Matter is always all to be only a various self-empan formation, we do not mean that all this universal working, even in what seems to us its unconscious inanimate action, is a life-power of the spirit busy with formation, and we do not recognise it because it is there in a lower scale in which the characteristics by which we recognise life are not evident, or are only slightly evolved in the dullness of the material covering? Material energy would be then Life packed into the density of Matter and feeling out in it for its own intense recognisable power which it holds locked up in the inner being of the evolution and which brings forth itself and becomes a power of a secret mind, a mind imprisoned in its own forms and quivering out in the nervous seekings of life for its intense recognisable power of consciousness which it discovers within the vital and material supramental and liberates into sensibility. No doubt, practically, these powers work upon each other as different energies, but in essence they would be one energy and their interaction the power of the spirit working by its higher on its lower forces, depending on them at first, but then rising above and independent of them. Mind might only be an inferior scale and formulation derived from a much greater and supramental consciousness, and that consciousness too with its greater light and will a characteristic originating power of spiritual evolution in all things, in mind, in life, in matter, in the plant and the metal and the atom assures constantly by its inevitable action the idea and harmony of the universe. And what is the spirit itself but infinite existence, eternal, immortal being, always a conscious and of all things, in mind, in life, in matter, in the plant and the metal and the atom assures constantly by its inevitable action the idea and harmony of the universe,—which here expresses itself in a world finite to our conceptions whose every movement yet bears witness to the Infinite? And this world is because the spirit has the delight of its own infinite existence and the delight of its own infinitesimal self-variation; birth is because all consciousness carries with it power of its own being and all power of being is self-creative and must have the birth of its self-creation. For creation means nothing else than a self-expression; and the birth of the soul in the body is nothing but a mode of its own self-expression. Therefore all things here are expression, form, energy, action of the Spirit; matter itself is but form of spirit, life but power of being of spirit and working of consciousness, and that consciousness is a display and a play of God, power and action and self-creation of the one spiritual Being. Nature presents to spirit at once the force, the instrument, the medium, the obstacle, the result of his powers, and all these things are the necessary elements for a gradual and developing creation.

But if the Spirit has involved its eternal greatness in the material universe and is there evolving its powers by the virtue of a secret self-knowledge, is disclosing them in a grandiose succession under the self-creation of a form of being and not material being, is it to say that a first veiling absorbed inconceivability of Nature, there is no difficulty in thinking or seeing that this soul shaped into humanity is a being of that Being, that this also has arisen out of material involution by increasing self-expression in a series of births of which each grade is a new rise of the asent opening to higher powers of the spirit and that it is still arising and will not be forever limited by the present walls of its birth but may, if we will, be born into a divine humanity. Our humanity is the conscious meeting place of the finite and the infinite and to grow more and more towards that Infinite even in this physical birth is our privilege. This Infinite, this Spirit who is housed within us but not bound or shut n by mind or body, is our own self and to find and be our self was, as the ancient sages knew, always the object of our human striving, for it is the object of the whole immense working of Nature. But it is by degrees of the self-finding that Nature enlarges to her spiritual reality. Man himself is a self-evolved being; no part of himself is made but all is involved in a subliminal conscience or a subconsciousness; most of himself above mind is involved in a spiritual superconscience. When he becomes conscious in the superconscience, the heights and the depths of his being will be illuminated by another light of knowledge than that flickering lamp of the reason can now cast into a few corners; for then the master of the field will enlighten this whole wonderful field of his being, as the sun illuminates the whole system it has created out of its own glories. Then only he can know the reality even of his own mind and life and body. Mind will be changed into a greater consciousness, his life will be a direct power and action of the Divinity, his very body no longer this first gross lump of breathing clay, but a very image and body of spiritual being. That transfiguration is the consummation of a spiritual birth, and the first and last of all these births are a long series of laborious steps. An involution of spirit in matter is the beginning, but a spiritual assumption of divine birth is the fullness of the evolution."
"Lovely is Truth, lovely in its ori-
gins, bright, lovely in its consum-
mation." What can we in the modern world understand by such words? Is the major-
ity of people to-day heavily im-
paired after suffering in the past?
all seems obscure and inexplicable.
They tend to despair of the work of
her own existence. They want to
plunge into the most difficult moves-
ment of the spiritual world, with
previous knowledge of its opening sub-
scription or its resolution, without
rigorous training. How to be Con-
ductor? A grim state of affairs.

In this situation the psychologists
make confusion worse confounded,
forgetting that, as Sri Aurobindo says,
"We must know the Whole before we can know the part."

- The notion that Wholes, in-

terrelations and effort directed towards
conclusion ends really foreign to our
daily experience? The artist
sees his work in a single vision
which is not the sum of all its
stages, and he sustains this unity-in-


page from the Bible

From this springs the 'inessentiality'
of art. Or again, a mother lives
interminably with her child before it is born, and, in
the case of a well-informed woman, with
to the consummation of its birth.

Somebody deep in our being urges us to participate in the creat-
ive rhythms of the Mother, however
dark and troubled they may be, and, in
this participation, the motherly

phrase, to 'see through things'—yes,
even to seeing torture and death in

the sake of—or when the whole

For instance (only one of
millions), those who were paria-
hed into France, caug by


have proceeded from Matter to Spirit, from terrestrial to supra-terrestrial
levels, laying stress on the ascending evolutionary movement. In
the next essay we shall follow a different approach—the ontological one—and proceed from the summits of the Spirit downward.

The main thing before us is, to use Sri Aurobindo's own words, "Is

the whole sense of the evolution and the master of Nature? Is Nature only the force of self-
expression, self-presentation, self-creation of a secret Spirit, and man however
hedged in his present capacity, the

power begins to be conscious of self-creative in the front of the action, in
this outer chamber of physical being, there set to work and bring out by an
increasingly self-conscious evolution what he can of all his human signifi-
ce or its divine possibility?"

From what has preceded we can see that the real sense and significance of evolution is the emergence of higher and higher grades of Being, Consciousness, Force, Delight and Truth. But as we have seen, the idea of evolution carries within it the reciprocal idea of a previous involution; all that has evolved, all that is overtly mani-

fested, must have been involved and secretly present in essence. Life

evolves out of Matter because it is already involved and lies concealed in

Matter, and Mind evolves out of Life because it is there dormant in Life.

This seems to indicate that: Life is a form of veiled Consciousness, and pursuing the argument a little further we may state that Mind itself may hold involved in it a still higher reality, the Supraesthetic Truth-principle, which may be presaging

the new creation. And, as Sri Aurobindo says, "the understandable

impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by

which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond the present stage. Nature

satisfaction with the impulsion towards Light which she has planted in certain forms of Matter or the impulse towards Mind which she has

planted in certain forms of Life. As the impulse towards Mind ranges from the more sensate to the more intellectual and cognitive stage, so the impulse towards Light which is the will and the placement of the creative power of Man in the

creation of the world to come, so the impulse towards Bliss and Freedom is the urge of the individual to be more and more whole and real."

The spiritual metaphysic continues...
From its very beginning UNESCO has been concerned with the production of a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind—a project which originated at the meeting of experts of UNESCO in November, 1946. The technical committee, composed of the leading experts in the field of history, has the purpose of producing such a work. This task is not only a difficult one, but it is also a vast one, for the human past is a vast and complex one. The task is not only to produce a work that will be a useful tool for historians and social scientists, but it is also to produce a work that will be accessible to the general public. The work will be a comprehensive survey of the scientific and cultural aspects of the history of mankind, of the mutual interdependence of people and cultures and of their contributions to the common heritage.

The General Conference also recommended that "account should be taken of the work done by the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education", namely, a project which the Director General of UNESCO had proposed for the publication of a collection of studies dealing particularly with "the history of learning" now being successfully carried out under the direction of Sir Ernest Barker. In view of the work already done and the contributions meanwhile held by the Secretariat, the General Conference in 1948, in order to draw up a plan for the project and to give its opinion as to how the plan might be carried out.

The report of this Committee of Experts, with such comments as may be decided upon, will be presented to the General Conference in May, 1949, in order to draw up a plan for the publications proposed and to give its opinion as to how the plan might be carried out.

Three sorts of publications are contemplated: (1) a central work, in six volumes, of approximately 500 pages each, intended for scholars and the educated public, which will be written by specialists, to be followed by (2) an abridged version, best drafted by a single writer, for the use of teachers and the general public, and (3) a standard text-book for secondary and (b) primary schools, adapted to the needs of the conditions of the different countries.

The task in hand is the preparation of publications at different levels, of "books which will provide an understanding of the scientific and cultural aspects of the history of mankind, of the interdependence of people and cultures and of their contributions to the common heritage".

The Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind, as envisaged by UNESCO, is to be a comprehensive and authoritative survey of the scientific and cultural aspects of the history of mankind, of the mutual interdependence of people and cultures and of their contributions to the common heritage.

The project is to be carried out by a team of experts, under the direction of the Director General of UNESCO. The project is to be completed within five years, and the first volumes are to be published in 1952.

When darkness blinds, O give—I may not walk, But sing: "Thy Grace, beyond the zone of Night, Still waits her hour when she'll to me unveil The Day of days illumined by thy Light."

If barren deserts vast and trackless seem, O may I never lose my faith in flowers. If thunderous—th' lightning hopes will gleam: If the world is hot—the blue attend with showers.

The mountains are forbidding like sentinels And loom life-hostile—sterile, bleak and stern? But midst this vast cold sea of years, that had these considerations in mind, and pleased the division into five parts of similar significance, each varying greatly in length. Volume I, "The World of Man," is the largest and most essential, when we come to study and analyse the many aspects of the nature and growths of civilizations and to draw special conclusions from such study and analysis.

The experts who drew up the plan of the project have been assisted by the UNESCO Economic and Social Council and have been financed by the United Nations Special Fund.
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The biggest problem in India is psychological, says Nehru, and there he has no doubt hit upon the truth, not only for India but for the whole world. The Congress Committee in its recent session voiced the same view that the Congress should aim at the creation of a psychology whereby things would "move on". But what is this all important psychological change and how is it to be brought about?

Pandit Nehru has said: "The perennial problem of India and the amount of hardship, provided they really understand what the Government needs, and the amount of hardship which we have to show them the desirability of." In it is up to us to gain their confidence, to tell them exactly what we want and ask for their co-operation.

To serve this purpose of winning the confidence of the people, the Government has introduced a new Planning Commission. In the meantime, the Congress has appointed its own Planning Committee for drawing up a five-year program to improve the lot of the common man. But is this the proper way of solving the problem? Everyone knows that economic planning involves a corresponding loss of liberty. In a fully planned economy, the rate of purchase, movement, and occupation—and thereby many would add, of thought and speech—would disappear almost by definition. For there is a vicious circle of mistrust and fear leading to planning which in turn leading to social and economic planning which in turn lead inexorably to labour slavery and the secret police. The example of planning in Russia shows us the way.

The inherent cost of planning is that it cannot serve as warning to all enthusiasts of planning. And in a vast country like India, welfare too far, is bound to become a huge machine of suppressing individual liberty which is essential for the growth of life. Indeed that is the danger of all State planning. In a fully planned economy forms a part. To plan correctly one must understand all aspects of economic planning. It is only to be expected that all the necessary data in a vast country like India. Some amount of planning and therefore control is indispensable for rapid progress, but to strike the golden mean is essential, and that is the root of the conflict between the two ideologies that is threatening the peace of the world today. Here, the planning should begin from below and from below the village. Let the villages plan their own economic development and let the provincial government serve only as a coordinating agency. And let the centre where planning should be the minimum, leaving the provinces to have free scope to build up their life in their own way.

The Necessities of Life

Referring to the objective of the proposed Planning Commission, Nehru explained: "The objective is the betterment of the standard of living for every individual in India. Everybody should have food, clothing, shelter and medical care. This again is rather a distinct objective. We want something more than that. It seems there has been some mistake in reporting the words of Mr. Nehru: 'We have no intention of creating a planning commission. But, really speaking, they are not to be made objectively, anywhere or distant, of any commission; indeed, there is nothing to be planned about, it is a question of execution by the Government itself. If you want a psychological change in the mind of the people to give food to the hungry and not mere promises. The Government is spending less rupees in propaganda for growing more food; but how can people work to grow more food if they are not first supplied with the primary necessities of life? This is a vicious circle of mistrust: Government alone can break, for it is the Government alone who has the means to supply people with primary necessities immediately. That was what British India itself, and in all three of its economic conditions was far worse than that of India. The government of those times had to be a debtor to people. The Government owed to Britain about one thousand crores of rupees. Still she did not lend a single paisa to people. The America to feed and clothe her people; it is in this way that the Government is constantly giving people food and has already spent liberally. It is not an outdated notion of British in many things, he has highly praised Britain's social activities and for the cost of India. Why could he not follow Britain in this most vital matter. The Government in India has rationed food, but curiously this has not been done for the whole country; how can such a system work satisfactorily? If there is shortage of any vital article, food or clothing, it is naturally going to be rationed, but all and that is the object of rationing and control. Obviously this could have been done a long time ago, but this is a very vital piece of the Government. It is this idea of centralizing all power as a means of promoting the well-being of the people of the country, irrespective of any class distinction, which should be assured of not mere subsistence but full nutrition. Otherwise there will be weaknesses in human material and the carry on any scheme however well planned. To be more concrete, like rice, milk powder, butter, sugar should be rationed for all in quantities to be increased as the nutrition experts and a price must be fixed for them so that they may reach the common people, and also arrangement should be made so that all people without any distinction may have sufficient money to buy food and other necessities and to give aid to the Governmental planning for which no Commission is necessary. If people are thus freely employed, all primary necessities of life as is being done in Britain and other advanced countries, most people in the countries where the remaining unemployed can be given allowances by which they can maintain themselves in health during the period of unemployment.

Village Reconstruction

It should not be imagined that all of this is only chimerical or impossible; it is not even so difficult as people think: it is only an revival or restoration of the ancient system. In ancient India the panchayats were not formed by laws made by the government in as it is being done now. The people have no right to do so. It is a question of rules and rules and their authority was in no way derived from the government. There is a citizenship prevalent that unless the panchayats are formed by governmental laws they have no authority. But wherefrom does the government itself derive its authority? Is it not ultimately from the villagers? Then why cannot the villagers form their own government on their own authority? That is the only condition of freedom, the true basis of democracy. We have to learn. It is pitty that our leaders have not understood this lesson and put it into their lessons in democracy. The term "Democracy" was coined by the Greek; they had a real village democracy, as found prevailing in India. Let that system be revived in a manner suitable to our conditions, and let it bring the needed psychological change for making things move on.

Now the panchayats formed by the Congress and the village development machines, intended to help the Congress party to win the next elections, and the Congress formed by the government are parts of the government machinery. Both these have to be scrapped, and the villagers allowed to form genuine panchayats to work in the national interest. Instead of village councils, they cannot trust co-operative societies. Collective fines are paid only to people who are likely to support the Congress and if the Congress wins the elections, they cannot trust co-operative societies.

Two things are essentially needed to bring a healthy psychological change in the masses. Firstly, they must be immediately supplied with the primary necessities of life such as nutritious food, and clothing. Secondly, the villages must be given the true freedom to manage their own affairs. But this cannot be done until the villagers take courageous steps to stop this rot, the country cannot be saved from utter ruin and disorder.

It is reported that aproach the Prime Minister has pointed out that the Congress the younger sections have to show the world and its Congress organization from "stagnation and disruption." They can do this by gathering the Congressmen to give up the programme of fighting the next elections. Then they can be freed to do real constructive work in the organisation. The Congress can be reconstituted above and that alone can revitalise the Congress and turn it into a real like-village, a real village. A FULLY PLANNED ECONOMY BY "CHANAKYA"

Eleven
LIGHTS ON LIFE-PROBLEMS

(27)

One of our chief aims will be to provide authentic guidance in regard to the many important questions which arise in the minds of thoughtful persons all over the world. This cannot be better done than by considering these questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s writings, because Sri Aurobindo is not only a Master of Yoga in possession of the Eternal Spiritual Power, but also a Guide whose mind has its own capacity to be a Helper of mankind in various spheres of life and thought.

Q. 1: The modern trend in art, especially in poetry, has been towards laying a predominant stress on its thought-content. The modern mind asks of the poet not so much perfect beauty of song or of creative vision as a message to the seeking intelligence. The poet is expected to be not a supreme singer or an inspired seer but a philosopher-prophet, a teacher, even something of a moral preacher. Is this not a deviation from the true function of poetry?

A. This is only a sign of the intellectual malady of our age of which we are almost all of us the victims. "The native power of poetry is in its sight, not in its intellectual thought-matter, and its safety is in adhering to this native principle of vision and allowing its conception, its thought, its emotion, its presentation, its structure to rise out of that or compelling it to rise into that before it takes its finished form. The poetic vision of life is not a critical or intellectual or philosophic view of it, but a soul-view, a seeing by the inner sense: and the man is not in its substance or form poetic enunciation of a philosophic truth, but the rhythmic revelation or intuition arising out of the soul’s sight of God and Nature and the world and the inner truth — occult to the outward eye—of all that peoples it, the secrets of their life and being. . . . In claiming for the poet the role of the seer and in seeking the source of great poetry in a great and revealing vision of life or God or the gods or man or Nature, it is not meant that "it is necessary for him to have an intellectual philosophy of life or a message for humanity which he chooses to express in verse because he has the material gift and the gift of imagery, or a solution of the problems of the soul or a mission to improve mankind, or, as it is said, ‘to leave the world better than he found it’. As a man, he may have these things and the less he allows them to get the better of his poetical gift, the happier will be for his poetry. Material for his poetry they may give, an influence in it they may be, provided they are transmuted into vision and life by the poetical spirit, but they can be neither its soul nor its aim, nor give the law to its creative activity and its expression.”

Q. 2: Are the functions of the poet and the philosopher then totally distinct?

A. "The philosopher’s business is to discriminate Truth and put its parts and aspects into intellectual relation with each other; the poet’s is to seize and embody aspects of Truth in his living relations, or rather,—for that is too philosophic a language,—to see her features and excited by the vision create in the beauty of her image". "The philosopher may bring into the sid of colour and image to give some relief and base the dry light of reason and water his arid path of abstractions with some healing dew of poetry. But these are ornament and not the substance of his work; and if the philosopher makes his thought substance of poetry, he ceases to be a philosophic canvas thinker and becomes a poet-seer of Truth. Thus the more rigid metaphysicians are perhaps right in denying to Nietzsche the name of philosopher; for Nietzsche does not think, but always sees, turbidly or clearly, rightly or distortedly, but with the eye of the seer rather than with the brain of the thinker. On the other hand we may get great poetry which is largely or even wholly philosophic in its matter; but this philosophic poetry is poetry and lives as poetry only in so far as it departs from the method, the expressiveness, the way of seeing proper to the philosophic spirit. It must be vision pouring itself into thought-images and not thinking to observe truth and distinguish.

In earlier days this distinction was not at all clearly understood and therefore we find even poets of great power attempting to set philosophic systems to music or even much more prosaic matter than a philosophic system, Hesiod and Virgil setting about even a manual of agriculture in verses! In our case, always a little blunt of perception in the aesthetic mind, her two greatest poets fell a victim to this unhappy conception, with results which are a lesson and a warning to all posterity. Lucretius’ work lives only, in spite of the majestic energy behind it, by its splendid digressions into pure poetry, Virgil’s Georgics by fine passages and pictures of Nature and beauties of word and image, but its substance is lifeless matter which has floated to us on the stream of Time saved for the beauty of its setting."

Q. 3: But in India the attempt at expressing philosophical thought in poetry has been successfully carried out in the Gita and the Upanishads. How was this possible?

A. "India, and perhaps India alone, had managed once or twice to turn this kind of philosophic attempt into a poetic success, in the Gita, in the Upanishads and some minor works modelled upon them. But the difference is great. The Gita overleaps its poetical success in its starting from a great and critical situation in life, having that in view and always returning upon it, and to its method which is to seize on a spiritual experience or moment or stage of the inner life and throw it into the form of thought, and this, though a delicate operation, can keep well within the limits of the poetic manner of speech. Only where it overburdens itself with metaphysical matter and deviates into sheer philosophic definition and discrimination, which happens especially in two or three of its central chapters, does the poetic voice sink under the weight, even occasionally into flattest versified prose. The Upanishads too, and much more, are not at all philosophic thinking, but spiritual seeing, a rush of spiritual intuitions throwing themselves inevitably into the language of poetry, shaped out of fire and life, because that is their natural speech and more intellectual utterance would have falsified their vision."

Q. 4: Does this mean that there should be no philosophy in poetry or that the poet has no right to express philosophic thought or spiritual truth as some critics have tried to maintain?

A. That depends on what is meant by ‘philosophy’ in a poem. "Of course if one sets out to write a metaphysical argument in verse like the Greek Empedocles or the Roman Lucretius, it is a risky business and is likely to land you into prosaic poetry which is a less pardonable mixture than poetic prose. Even when philosophizing in a less perilous way, one has to be careful not to be flat or heavy. It is obvious easier to be poetic when singing about a skylark than when one tries to weave a robe of verse to clothe the attributes of the Brahman. But that does not mean that there is to be no thought or no spiritual thought or no expression of truth in poetry; there is no great poet who has not tried to philosophize. Shelley wrote about the skylark, but he also wrote about the Brahman.

Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity
Is as good poetry as
Hail to thee, blithe spirit!

There are flights of unsurpassable poetry in the Gita and the Upanishads. These rigid dicta are always excessive and there is no reason why a poet should allow the expression of his personality or the spirit within him to be clipped, calmed or stifled by any theories or ‘thou shalt not’s’ of this character. If the expression of philosophic truth in poetry is absolutely denied then half the world’s poetry would have to disappear. Truth and Thought and Light cast into forms of beauty cannot be banished in that cavalier way. Music and art and poetry have striven from the beginning to express the vision of the deepest and greatest things and not the things of the surface only, and it will be so as long as there are poetry and art and music. ‘Philosophy’ is its place in poetry and can even take a leading place along with psychological experience as it does in the Gita. All depends on how it is done, whether it is a dry or a living philosophy, an arid intellectual statement or the expression not only of the living truth of thought but of something of its beauty, its light or its power.”

K. G.