SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

LITERARY VALUES AND SOME MODERN TRENDS
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LITERARY VALUES AND SOME MODERN TRENDS

(You have not commented yet on the two poems I sent up—rather "modern" in their irregularity. I doubt if they possess real value. What's your opinion?)

"My opinion is that these two poems reproduce very successfully the fault of most 'modern' (contemporary) poetry, at least what I have seen of it. I admit I have not read much of this poetry, but the little I have is all of the same fundamental quality. It is all very carefully written and versified, recherché in thought and expression: it lacks only two things—the inspired phrase and inevitable word and the rhythm that keeps a poem for ever alive. These two poems also are well-written, well-thought, all the material of good poetry is there but not the poetry itself, except the four lines I have marked off, and even these are a little tame in rhythm, though perfect in poetic speech and verbal inspiration. Speech carefully studied and made as perfect as it can be without reaching to inspiration, verse as good as verse can be without rising to inspired rhythm—there are something like a hundred 'great' poets (if you can believe their admirers) writing like that in England just now. It will be easy for you to be the hundred and first, if you like, but I would not advise you to proceed farther on that kind of modern line. It is not the irregular verse or rhymes that matter, one can make perfection out of irregularity—it is that they write from the cultured mind, not from the elemental soul-power within. Not a principle to accept or a method to imitate!"

(2-3-31)

(If you have seen the poem, 'Lumber Horses, in the copy of 'The New Statesman and The Nation' recently sent you up? What sort of inspiration has it?)

"Evidently inspired from the vital world—from a certain part of it which seems to be breaking out in much of today's literature and art. All that comes from this source is full of a strange kind of force, but out of focus, mishapen in thought or vision or feeling, sometimes in the form too, ominous and perverse. For that matter, the adverse vital world is very much with us now—the War was the sign of its descent on the earth and After-war bears its impress. But from another point of view that is not a cause for alarm or discouragement—for it has always been predicted from occult sources that such a descent would be the precursor of the Divine Manifestation."

(What do you think of Georgian poetry in general?)

"The defect of what was called Georgian poetry—though I suppose it would more properly be called late-Victorian-Edwardian early Georgian—is that it has fullness of language which fails to go home—things that ought to be very fine, but miss being so; so much of the poetry of Rupert Brooke as I have seen, for instance, always gives me that impression. In our own language I might say that it is an inspiration which tries to come from the Higher Mind but only succeeds in inflating the voice of the poetic intelligence."

(1-11-31)

"(Donne is very much in the limelight these days. How far can we regard the present high estimate of him as justified? Does he not in his ingenuity combine most interestingly the life-force of the Elizabethans with a new intellectual temper?)"

"It seems to me that Donne falls between two stools. The Elizabethan ingenuity passes because of the great verve of the life force that makes them attractive; Donne's ingenuity remains intellectual and do not get alive except at times, the vital fire or force is not there to justify them and make them alive and lively. On the other hand he keeps to an Elizabethan semi-Elizabethan style, but the Elizabethan energy is no longer there—he does not launch himself as Milton did into a new style suitable for the pre-dominant play of the poetic intelligence. Energy and force of a kind he has, but it is twisted, laboured, something that has not found itself. That is why he is not so great a poet as he might have been. He is admired today because the modern mind has become like his—it too is straining for energy and force without having the life-impulse necessary for a true vividness and verve not that higher vision which would supply another kind of energy—it's intellect too is twisted, laboured, not in possession of itself.""

(28-2-33)

(I am sending you a sonnet by Edward Shank, considered to be one of our best young poets):"

O Dearest, if the touch of common things
Can taint your love or wrack, let it die.
The freest-hearted lark that soars and sings
Sooq after dawn amid a dew-brushed sky
Takes song from love and knows well where love lies,
Hid in the grass, the dear domestic nest,
The secret, splendid, common paradise.
The strangest joys are not the loneliest.
Passion fore-sought is fled when it is found
But love's that's born of intimate common things
Cries with a voice of splendours, with a sound
That over stronger feeling shames and rings.
The best of love, the highest ecstasy
Lies in the intimate touch of you and me.)"

"Shank—Phoebus, what a name! I am not in love with the sonnet, though it is smooth and musically rhythmical. The sentiment is rather namby-pamby, some of the lines weak, others too emphatic, e.g. the wealth. It just misses being a really good poem, or is so, like the curate's egg, in parts: e.g. the two opening lines of the third verse are excellent, but they are immediately spoilt by two lines that shout and rackle. So too the last couplet promises well in its first line, but the last disappoints, it is too obvious a turn and there is no fusion of the idea with the emotion that ought to be there and isn't. Still, the writer is evidently a poet and the sonnet very imperfect but by no means negligible."

(12-6-31)

(I should like to have a few words from you on the poetic style and technique of these two quotations. The first is an instance of Gerard Hopkins's polyphony "at its most magnificent and intricate": Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, 

"Evening strains to be time's nest, | swoon of all, home-of-all, hearses of all night.

'Her luscious yellow hourglass wound to the west, | her wild hollow hourglass hung to the height

Waste: her earliest stars, earl-stars, | stars principal, overorded us, Fire-featuring heaven. For earth her being has unbound, her dappled is at

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Robert Bridges has invented what is called the loose Alexandrine. Lascelles Abercrombie explains its principle thus: "The novelty is to make the number of syllables the flat base of the metre; but these are the effective syllables, those which pronounce the accent and v. 2 or 3 emphasizes or combinations with following syllables being treated as metrically ineffective. The line consists of 12 metrically effective syllables; and within this constant scheme the metre allows of a wide variation in the number and placing of the accents. Thus the rhythm attained is purely accentual, in accordance with the genius of the English language, but a new freedom is achieved within the confines of a new kind of discipline." What do you think of the principle?)

I do not understand how it can be called an accentual rhythm except in the sense that all English rhythms, prose or verse, is accentual. What one usually means by accentual verse is verse with a fixed number of accents for each line, but here accents 2 can be of any number and placed anywhere it would be in a prose cut up into lines. The only distinctive feature is thus of the number of effective syllables. The result is a kind of free verse movement with a certain irregular regularity in the lengths of the lines.

(7-7-36)

I am sending you two poems—one is Albert Samaan's famous Paisaye aux talons d'or and the other is Flecker's much-praised translation of it. I shall be very much interested in your comparison of the two. Here is Samaan:

Dans la salle en rieur un silence a passé,
Paisaye aux talons d'or s'avance pour danser.
Un voile aux mille lueurs se coince tout entier. 
D'un lent mouvement l'âme dure de le faire, la première,
L'invie; elle s'élance, entre-croisé, 
Et du lent mouvement imprimé sur ses bras,
Donne un rythme bizarre à l'étoffe nombreuse,
Qui s'apprête, ondule, et se gonfle et se creuse,
Et se déploie enfin en larges tourbillons...
Paisaye devient fleur, flamme, papillon!
Tous se saisissent; les yeux se suicident en extase.
Pens à peu la furie de la danse l'embrasse.
Elle tourne toujours; vit plus vite encore!
La flamme éperdument voile aux flambeaux d'or.
Puis, brusque, elle s'arrête au milieu de la salle;
Et le voile qui tourne autour d'elle s'arrête;
Suspendu dans sa course, passe ses long plis,
Et, se collant aux sein signe, aux flancs pales,
Comme au travers d'une eau sournoise et continue.
Dans un divin éclat, monte Paisaye nue.

Here is Flecker:

The revel pauses, and the room is still,
The silver flute invites her with a trill,
And buried in her great voice, fold on fold,
Rises to dance Paisaye, Heel of Gold.
Her light steps cross, her subtle arm impels
The clanging drogery, it shrinks and seizes,
Holiness and Hope, and bursts into a whir; 
She is a flower, a moth, a flashing girl.
All lips are silent; eyes are all in trance,
She slowly makes the madness of the dance;
Windy and wild the golden torches burn;
She turns, and swifter yet she tries to turn,
Then stops; a sudden marble still she stands,
The veil that round her coil her spirals bands,
Checked in its course, brings all its folds to rest,
And clinging to bright limb and pointed breast
Shines, as beneath soft webs weaving fine,
Paisaye naked in a flash divine!

"All here", says a critic, "is bright and sparkling as the jewels on the dancer's breast, but there is one ill-adjusted word—pointed breast—which is perhaps more physiological than poetic." Personally I don't somehow react very happily to the word "pointed" (line 3).

"Samaan's poem is a fine piece of work, inspired and perfect; Flecker's is good only in substance, an adequate picture, one may say, but the expression and verse are admirable within their limits. The difference is that the French has vision and the inspired movement that comes with vision—all on the vital plane, of course—but the English version has only physical sight, sometimes with a little glow in it, and the precision that comes with that sight. I don't know why your critical sense objects to 'girl'. This line,

'She is a flower, a moth, a flaming girl,' and one other,

Windy and wild the golden torches burn,
are the only two that rise above the plane of physical sight. But both these poems have the distinction of being perfectly satisfying in their own kind.

P.S. 'Flaming girl' and 'pointed breast' might be wrong in spirit as a translation of the French, but I do not think just what Flecker's poem is not, in spite of its apparent or outward falsity, it is in spirit quite different.

(23-5-32)
A detailed exposition of the powers and faculties of the gnostic consciousness was begun in the last essay. It was pointed out that the supramental, or gnostic, powers—"the inconceivable" based on separative and indirect contacts, but a direct knowledge based on identity and attained through "a pure awareness of the self-truth of things in the self and by the self"—thought could only be, on the supramental level, a particular degree, what is really self-existing in this higher knowledge.

It was also shown that this identity-knowledge carries within itself as a secondary power a supramental vision. This power has the characteristic of sight and sightlight discernment—one who possesses it does not require thought to aid him in the acquisition of knowledge, but uses it only as a means of representation.

In this essay the gnostic action which the mental powers of thought, reason, and observation receive on the supramental level is discussed. Of course, all these powers cannot really be put into separate categories and examined individually—thou shall carry the ignorance of the unilluminated rational mentality into the domain of supra-rational knowledge, it would mean using the rational-analytical method of inquiry to attain to the total and integral, and not piecemeal like intellectual knowledge. However, for the convenience of the mind these powers have to be described in terms of intellectual knowledge and classified in its categories.

Together with the knowledge by identity in essence and dynamism and the supramental vision, there is developed what may be called a supramental thought as one grows into the gnostic consciousness; but this thought is not at all of the same order of thought as that of the supramental consciousness. Sri Aurobindo writes from his personal experience that "the supramental thought is a form of the knowledge by identity and a development, in the idea, of the truth presented to the supramental vision. The identity and the vision give the truth in its essence, its body and its parts in a single view: the thought translates this direct consciousness and immediate power of the truth into idea-knowledge and will. It adds or need add otherwise nothing new, but reproduces, articulates, moves the body of the knowledge. Wherever, however, the identity and the vision are still incomplete, the supramental thought has a larger efficiency, it reveals, interprets or recalls as it were to the soul's memory what they are not yet ready to give. And where these greater states and powers are still owing, the thought comes in front and prepares and to a certain extent effects a partial rending or helps actively in the removal of the veil. Therefore in the development out of the mental ignorance into the supramental consciousness this illumined thought comes to us often though not always first, to open the way to the vision or else to give first supports to the growing consciousness of identity and its greater knowledge. This thought is also an effective means of communication and expression and helps to an impression or fixation of the truth whether on one's own lower mind and being or on that of others. The supramental thought differs from the intellectual not only because it is the direct truth idea and not a representation of truth to the ignorance—it is the truth consciousness of the spirit always presenting to itself its own right forms, the angles and visions of the Veda,—but because of its static reality, basic of light and substance.

"The intellectual thought refines and submutes to a ravelled abstractness; the supramental thought as it rises in its height increases to a greater spiritual concreteness. The thought of the intellect presents itself to us as an abstraction from something seized by the mind sense and is if supported in a void and sublue air of mind by an intangible force of the intellect, it has to resort to a use of the mind's power of image if it wishes to make itself more concretely felt and seen by the soul sense and soul vision. The supramental thought on the contrary presents always the idea as a luminous substance of being, luminous stuff of the idea's own existence and experience. It is this that enables it to present to itself its right forms, the angles and visions of the Veda,—but because of its static reality, basic of light and substance."

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"The supramental thought, as has already been indicated, has three elevations of its intensity, one of direct thought vision, another of interpretative vision pointing to and preparing the greater revelatory idea-sight, a third of representative vision recalling as it were to the spirit's knowledge the truth that is called out more directly by the higher powers. In the mind these things take the form of the three ordinary powers of the mental mentality—"the synesthetic and discriminating intuition, the inspiration and the thought" that is of the nature of revelation. Above that correspond to three elevations of the supramental being and consciousness as, as we ascend, the lower first calls down into itself and is then taken up into higher, so that on each level all the thought of that level is always presupposed, but always there predominates in the thought essence the character that belongs to that level's proper form of consciousness and spiritual substance. It is necessary to bear this in mind, for otherwise the mentality, looking up on the lower planes of the supramental as it has never done before, has got the vision of the highest heights when it is only the highest range of the lower ascent that is being presented to its experience.

Another gnostic power that develops in the consciousness is that which may be called the supramental reason, which stands in a more direct relation to the supramental consciousness. In this movement of ascending the first well-organised action of the Supramental is, says Sri Aurobindo, "the supramental reason, not a higher logical intellect, but a directly luminous organisation of intimately subjective and intimately objective knowledge. . . . This supramental reason does all the work of the becoming intelligence and does much more, but with a greater power and in a different fashion. It is then itself taken up into a higher range of the power of knowledge and in that too nothing is lost, but all farther heightened, enlarged in scope, transformed in power of action."

"The supramental reason observes all that the intelligence observes and much more; it makes, that is to say, the thing to be known the field of a perceptual action, in a certain way objective, that causes to emerge its nature, character, quality, action. But this is not that artificial objectivity by which the reason in its observation tries to extrude the element of personal or subjective error. The supramental sees everything in the self and its observation must therefore be subjectively objective and much nearer to, thought the same as the observation of our own internal movements regarded as an object of knowledge. It is not in the separative personal self or by its power that it sees and therefore it has not to be on guard against the element of personal error: that interferes only when a mental substratum or enervating atmosphere yet remains and can still throw in its influence or while the supramind is still acting by descent into the mind to change it. And the supramental with error to eliminate it, not by any other device, but by an increasing spontaneity of the supramental discrimination and a constant heightening of its own power of observation. The consciousness of supramind is a cosmic consciousness and it is in the self of universal consciousness, in which the individual knower lives and with which he is more or less closely united, that it holds before him the object of knowledge."

But it must not be imagined that as a knower in the position of a witness, he is psycho-epistemologically on the same level as the observer who attempts to acquire mental knowledge and who looking at the object is as a separate self and upon the object he is observing as "not-self." On the supramental level there is no such separateness; the essential underlying oneness is constantly felt and known. It must be borne in mind that this act of apprehension does not take place in an epistemic but in a universalised consciousness. In the universal self the object to be known is seen as a thing within oneself brought forward before the witness-consciousness. The witness on the supramental level is really one in being with the consciousness with the object of knowledge and is therefore capable of knowing it in essence and functional relationships by the force of this oneness. When the object is brought in view for observation it is only a movement which brings out the latent knowledge within the Self. The consciousness of consciousness is equally equably manifested in stasis, but greater or less in power and kinesis, and more or less immediately revelatory of its contents of knowledge according to the stage of the gnostic development of the individual. Sri Aurobindo says..."
Four

POWERS OF MIND AND SUPERMIND—Continued from page 3

that as a result of this inherent unity there is established between the knower and the object of knowledge a "stream or bridge of conscious connection". This experience of immediate awareness of the object is one to see, feel, sense supremally what is to be known in the object or about it... The necessity of this stream or bridge of connection ceses when the fundamental oneness becomes a complete active oneness. This idenfity that he may be known by the consciousness, and the separatation of the supernal ranges in the Divine Truth-consciousness, wherein Omniscience is one with Omnipotence, and Knowledge and Power are one with a self-effective Will.

If we have no moments of the supernal observation—their description given by Sri Aurobindo here is extremely interesting. Whist reading the reader is asked to bear two things in mind—first, that the movements taken in dynamics here is the idea of the universal consciousness, which has been liberated from its egocentric mould and widened to embrace all existence, and secondly, that there is a basic identity between the observer and the object of knowledge; if he does this, he will not find it very difficult to understand this description.

"There are three particular movements of this kind of supernal observation. First, the knower may project himself in consciousness on the object, feel his cognition in contact or enveloping or penetrating it and there, as it were in the object itself, become aware of what he has to become. By so doing, he may by the consciousness in his own supreme knowledge of himself, which belongs to it, as for example the thought or feeling of another, coming from it and entering into himself where he stands in his station of the witness. Or he may simply know himself in a sort of supernal cognition in his own witness station without any such penetration or entrance. The starting point and apparent basis of the observation may be the presence of the object to the physical or other senses, but to the supernmind this is not indispensable. It may be instead an inner image or simply the idea of the object. The simple will to know brings to the supernal consciousness the needed knowledge—or, it may be, the will to be known or communicate itself of the object of knowledge."

To be continued

The SPIRITUAL LIFE & WORLD-RENUNCIATION—Continued from page 5

come to grief, for when one strives to rise beyond the routine of human existence one gets into touch with strange beings and forces and unless one has a deep purity and sincerity they may make use of one in ways that are far from spiritual and they may even destroy their spiritual mind. That is a matter of prime moment in the development of some kind of peace. The Guru can give this peace as well as a protection by his own power. Unless one is a spiritual genius, one cannot do without the Guru. Not only to gain certain knowledge on the line of the Great Masters and the teachers they gathered round him which you regard as very desirable. Apart from the untutored tax it lays on one by its rigid rules and its grinding tasks, there is the very great possibility of its not spiritualizing one at all. Who is usually in charge of a monastery? Not a St. Teresa or a St. Catherine, the mystics, the genuine spiritual people but other people who have an ability to govern and organize, but no special spiritual radiance. How is she to help one's soul? Of course one may turn to the occult Christ and worship him and call down his help. But how much is one's own capacity for doing this? Most of us are very ordinary people even when we union enable with Godward, we are not spiritual geniuses. We cannot for long keep up worship or mystical communion or even the inner strength that laughs at the outer hardships one has often to go through. Disappiontment is bound to invade us and a bit of resentment in our own inner self and generally do, have many petty traits, for they too are not supernatural folk. A religious bent of mind or a kepetuous turn towards the cloister does not transmute people into superhuman beings. And unless a St. Teresa or a St. Catherine is there to guide a sun and help her and uplift her by their very presence and make all her trials and tribulations as work while as they can be made, the aspirant will not attain her genuine goal—God-union and God-expression. The point is that we must find the Guru who is God-realized; and in a merely mortal and pious life which is all that there is in organised religion at its best, whether Christian or Hindu or any other, we have not much hope of being truly illuminated. To sit at the feet of a living and real embodiment of the Divine and be with him as a constant spiritual presence in very flesh and blood is the only right and reliable and fruitful way of mysticism.

Lastly, in regard to a person who has passed beyond our own level of consciousness, and has not lacked in trials and heroism, we must remember the opening para of the mother's talks to which I have already referred, where she says that we must never sit in crude judgment on what we imagine to be shortcomings. The Divine, when it manifests for earth, seems often to act very ordinarily, but we do not know what is the magnificent meaning of its Action. To take an instance from another sphere, suppose an average matric student reads a poem and says, "It's beautiful." What would be the meaning of this statement? Will it put the stamp of merit on the poem? Now suppose a man like Coleridge or Matthew Arnold makes the same remark, "It's beautiful." The words will have come from an entirely different source: they will have sprung from a mind quick to the revelatory impact of poetic inspiration and the significance they will carry for whoever is able to recognise their source will be momentous. The two utterances were identical and yet worlds apart. In a like manner, a spiritual person may act in several respects like a non-spiritual one, but the whole fount of consciousness, the whole aim and objective are altogether different.

People used to question why Sri Aurobindo was staying in one room and not coming out and lecturing or guiding political conferences at the same time. They expressed judgment on him for not acting as they imagined a spiritual person should have. The conclusion they drew was that Sri Aurobindo was wasting his time and that his spirituality was dubious. But how could we dictate to a person who had been for years at the job of spirituality, how could we tell what spirituality consists in? Can you dictate to a poet what he should do in poetry? He may not be good at cooking or at mending clothes, but he knows something about poetry and he should not be compelled to act according to the wishes of those who are not so experienced in the art of writing poems. Similarly, how could we know what Sri Aurobindo, with the aim he had in view, should have done or not done? He knew his job best. We could, of course, have offered suggestions to him, but if he was wrong he would have to concede to him that he knew better than we the art and science of being spiritual and doing the Divine's work. The Mother too knows her work best and is better aware than we of the right way to embody and express the spiritual realisation and to lead others to it. Of course, doubts and questions are not unnatural, but in our search for the Spirit we must not erect our ordinary conceptions into absolute canons. Especially when a new path of spirituality is trod, which, for all its discipline and detachment, tries to take into its sweep the whole essential life-movement of the world and bring about its transformation by the power of what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have called the Supermind, a power that has never before been completely compassed or directly manifested, such criticisms from a standpoint based on old identifications of spirituality with a stress on poverty and barrenness and external abstentions are all the more invalid.

I quite understand that even if you grasp with your mind your conception of some sub-mental impact it may still prove inadequate to grasp a truth, the chances are that this impulse may weaken gradually. The final blow to it, however, can only come by actual living contact with the Mother and with the truth, the radiance, the beauty, the bliss, the love, the compassion that she embodies. In front of her, if the soul in you is open even a little bit, your whole being will be flooded with light and everything she does will strike you as the rightest possible and even the things one may most criticise from an outsider's conventional standpoint will become part and parcel of the divinity that is in her smile—for here is

The Light whose smile kindles the universe.

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(Lowes Dickinson obtained mystical experiences from music. He once told me that Beethoven's later quartettes and other chamber music seemed really to introduce one into some other world. Was he not on a composer? Did he claim to have been on such a level, to have had such an experience? The music was often from another world; so it is quite possible for it to give the key to an inwardly sensitive hearer or to one who is seeking or ready for the connection to be made. But I think it is very few who get beyond being aesthetically moved by a sense of greater things; to lay the hand on the key and use it is rare."

(What would you say on the contrast between Lowes Dickinson's Modern Symposium (1905)—especially the fine passage on page 75—and his post-war Dialogue, On the Discovery of God?)

"The pre-war and the post-war Dickinson are indeed a contrast. This appreciation of human life is not without the force of a half-truth, but this just the other half that he misses when he sweeps idealism out of the field. Man's utopias may be the projection of his hopes and desires, but he has to build up something in the real world. In the second, the dream is more distinctly seen as a dream. A dream of peace, of the suppression of fear, of the absence of passion, of the absence of pain, of the absence of suffering, of the absence of death. And here the force is there, but the dream is only a dream."

After a time weary of it and reject it, as if after a surfeit of cheap sweets. Man has to rush from his pursuit of pleasure, with all its accompanying making of shallowness, cynicism, hardness, frailty, weakness, by the very conditions of its pursuit. A little satisfaction and fatigue, to a new idealism or else sink towards a dull or catastrophic decadence. Even if the Absolute Good were a high spiritual or ideal chimera, the pursuit of it is rooted in the very making of human dignity that it is so would seem to indicate that it is not a chimera—something still beyond man, no doubt, but into which or towards which he is called by Nature to grow."
I read your letter with great interest and my mind went back to my own early and unhappy days. The only thing that I have always feared for the life of man is death. The first time I glimpsed it was when I was very young. It was not something that I could grasp or understand. It was just a thought that would come to me periodically, and I would wonder what it meant. I would think about what it would be like to be dead, and I would feel sad about it. It was not something that I could control, but it was something that I could not avoid. It was a constant reminder of the fragility of life, and it made me feel small and powerless.

The one who receives your letter is an old man, and he has been living in this world for many years. He has seen many things, and he has experienced many things. He has seen the beauty of the world, and he has seen the pain of the world. He has seen the joy of life, and he has seen the sorrow of life. He has seen the strength of the human spirit, and he has seen the weakness of the human spirit. He has seen the love of the world, and he has seen the hate of the world. He has seen the beauty of the world, and he has seen the ugliness of the world. He has seen the strength of the human spirit, and he has seen the weakness of the human spirit. He has seen the love of the world, and he has seen the hate of the world. He has seen the beauty of the world, and he has seen the ugliness of the world.
The Integral Yoga

CHAPTER VIII: THE EGO

By RISHAI

It is proceeding towards a greater, a more trenchant principle of individualisation is evidenced by the growing complexity of its organism, on the one hand, and the more efficient co-ordination of its functionings, on the other. The plants sleep and awake, feel pleasure and pain, and react to all external stimuli, as has been demonstrated by St. Agapit of Sebaste and display a certain sense of self-preservation and self-defence. No doubt the central being is shaking off its drowsy and coming forward to assert itself and possess its nature.

Then evolutes mind, at first, in its most elementary form of instinct in the animal-life and the lower animals, and next as a life-mind of hunger, and even a rudimentary, incipient reason. It shows a greater emergence of consciousness, a replacement of blind impulsions by more or less defined appetites and a much more pronounced and expressive individuality. The animals possess developed instincts, operating wide areas of experience; their sensations are more alert and definite than in the plants; they have emotions and feelings—love, affection, hatred, anger, jealousy, etc.—and, in some advanced types, even a flicker of the reasoning mind. Here, for the first time, we get a distinction centralising agency, a primary crystallisation of the individuality, a subconscious ego. This ego takes its stand upon the separateness of its existence, and, though the generic and gregarious habits and tendencies predominate in it, displays enough specific traits and characteristics and variable psychological contours to justify the hypothesis of a clear-cut ego with sharp edges and outlines, physical and psychological, as the eventual fulfilment of the principle of individualisation in the ignorance. The animal foreshadows the full-fledged human ego.

When man appears on the scene of terrestrial evolution with his developing mind of reason and imagination, the ego-building tends to become coherent and complete. In his sense of separateness reaches its most rigid fixity, and an egoistic self-affirmation of the individuality becomes a dominant and governing factor. The human ego is not a subconscious but a conscious ego, asserting itself at every step of its life, imposing itself and encroaching upon others and demanding the submergence of everything to its personal ends. But its consciousness is a mental consciousness, fleeting like an isolated iceberg among other icebergs upon the waters of the encompassing Subconscious and, more often than not, moved and tossed by them, though it always has the delusive sense of its free will and independent initiative. In man the work of individualisation seems to reach a climax, and that there is even a semblance of the fulfillment of the primordial Will of the Divine to conscious, multiple self-reproduction; but it is only a deceptive semblance, and not a fact. The normal human consciousness is an ignorant consciousness, seeking but not possessing knowledge,—it is not a representative of the divine Consciousness. The human being, therefore, though a developed individual, is not the perfect, divine individual, which is his destiny to become. His is a confused and clouded, a seeking and struggling and suffering individuality, dragging out a labouring and precarious existence.
OF SRI AUROBINDO

HCHAND

— THE DESIRE-SOUL

in the rushlight of its mental reason. The Divine cannot yet announce in
him, "Here am I, become many, and yet remaining myself, the eternal
and indivisible One." The separative ego in man has no experience of the
unity of the universal, nor of the absoluteness of the transcendent
Existence—it lives imprisoned in the dim shell of its limited personality.

It will have been clear from the above description that the ego-
principle has created distinct individualities in human beings, multiple
centres of mentally conscious existence, but not divine centres of luminous
self-awareness and self-expression. Even having become many, the Divine
has not yet become divinely many, which was His primal Will. For
that supreme consummation and the ultimate goal of terrestrial evolution, man
has to get beyond the ego and widen into infinity. The ego's work of
separative individualisation done, it has to fade away, giving place to the
true individual, the soul of man, that lives in the indivisible unity of
existence and yet reveals a facet and aspect of the infinite Person.

The Purpose And Utility Of The Ego

Our rapid survey of the birth and growth of the ego has shown us
that it is a temporary device, a phenomenal construction of Nature for
constituting conscious and separate individualities in the Ignorance. In
the midst of the amorphous flux of universal elements, the shifting
intermixture of forces and energies, something was needed to serve as a
centralising and co-ordinating agency, otherwise no individualities could
have been formed. The soul, the true individual, could not certainly come
forward at the very start and be the overt pilot of its evolution in Nature;
the start from the Ignorance precluded such an abrupt intervention.
Evolution, commencing from the Ignorance, has persiforce to pass through
the transitional stage of Ignorance, in which ego-centric division and discord
invariably predominates, before it culminates in the Knowledge and unity of
the Superconscient. It is true that the soul directs its evolution even from
the start, but from behind a thick veil of ignorance—it has to purify and
prepare its nature, its instrument of divine self-expression, through long
and chequered stages of slow and gradual progress. In the stone and the
mineral, it is hidden in distant depths and throws out no hints of its occult
presence, save in certain automatic reactions to external stimuli. In
the plant it has been able to release just enough of its consciousness to react
by sensation to the impacts of the outside world and register some of its
subjective affections in its objective form and organic functioning. In the
animal it has liberated a little more of its consciousness, always in the teeth
of an unceasing gravitational pull towards the inert Ignorance of its
territorial origin, changed the blind urge of Nature into subconscious
desire, accentuated and enlarged the action of the instinct and initiated
the play of emotions. Sentience, mobility, subconscious volition and
emotions are the outstanding innovation effected by the indirect influence
of the slowly emergent soul. Another innovation, the greatest from the
standpoint of the aim of evolution, is the incipient formation of the ego in
the animal, particularly in the higher types of it. The ego stands as a
nucleus, a point of concentration and cohesion, tending to clinch the
reflected individuality of the soul and impart to it a provisional definiteness
and permanence against the shapeless drift and diffusion of the universal
elements. In man the soul has succeeded in making the ego his conscious
representative, endowing it with reason, imagination, conscious volition,
developed and articulate emotions, even tentative flashes of intuition,
and—this is its signal achievement—an increasing urge towards self-
transcendence. This urge is the harbinger of the soul's perfect emergence
in Nature and spells an eventual extinction of the ego. But the human
ego is a chained and convulsed representative of the soul,—chained to the
dualities and convulsions of desire and passion and the perverted
realization of the Will of God, which the soul is unconfinedly free to fulfill.
Besides, it lives in limitations, and reasons and reflects and acts in the semi-darkness
of finite consciousness. It proceeds on the basis of division and confusion—
and in spite of its marvellous complexion in its habitual avenues, its fenced,
formal pastures and bounded horizons, it strains after the Unknown and thirsts for
the Infinite. It is a bridge between the blind mechanism of the material life
and the Spirit. But as it is but a fiction, as some hold, it is according to Sri Aurobindo,
"a practical and effective fiction." If it is a shadow cast by the soul upon the canvas
of evolving ignorance, it is progressively penetrated and suffused with the
soul-substance in the concentrated light of which it finally vanishes for ever.

The Triple Strand Of The Ego

The three qualitative modes of the lower nature, Sattwa, Rajas and
Tamas, interpenetrate the ego in varying combinations and give it its
distinctive stamp. The ego can be predominantly tamic, rajasic or
sattvic. The tamic ego is burdened with the inertia and incapacity of
the physical nature. It is obsessed with its weak will and insignificance, and
is averse to any sustained effort and high ambition. The rajasic ego
is drugged with its own importance and proud of its power and
possessions. It exults in violent self-assertion and the strenuous pursuit
of its multiplying desires. It counts nothing of difficulties. If it is crude and gross in its self-expression, it is never-
the-less more evolved than the tamic ego, which is dull and heavy
and supine. The sattvic ego achieves a poise and purity, so far as they are
possible in the comparative calm and clarity of the mind, but is attached
to and secretly proud of them. It is obsessed with its virtues as the rajasic
ego is obsessed with its desires and passions and the tamic ego with its
incapacity. The ego of the altruist or the humanitarian, of the callow
conivist or the shallow puritan is a subtly magnified ego, all difficulties
difficult to detect and renounce, because it is masked in apparent
selflessness and buttressed with its ethical or religious principles. When
the humanitarian says that he is ready to lay down even his life for the
freedom of mankind or the vindication of his lofty principles, what
the spiritual seeker sees God not for God's own sake, but for
the achievement of some spiritual end, unless it is their own soul speaking
or seeking in them, it is unmistakably their glorified ego. In many self-
justifying religious or spiritual lives one can trace the subtle
working of the sattvic ego. But sattvic or rajasic, the ego is the ego, as
a chain is a chain, whether it is of iron or gold; and so long as the ego persists,
spiritual liberation is a far cry, let alone the divine Life, which is
the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

The Tentacles Of The Ego

The tentacles of the ego are spread out in every part of human nature.
They pervade our body, our life parts, our sensations, our heart of emotions,
our understanding and intellect, and determine and direct every action
and reaction of our complex organism. It is not an easy thing to sweep them
away at a stroke or even at many strokes from the entire nature. And
unless the ego is completely obliterated, there is no possibility of the
dynamic divine Presence being installed in our being for manifesting its
glory upon earth. There is no greater enemy of spiritual liberation and
perfection than the ego, "the lynch-pin of the wheel of ignorance,"
Sri Aurobindo calls it. It has to be expunged from the whole being—from
each of its fibres and each of its energies with which it is securely
entwined. The immaculate soul of love and delight cannot live with the
insatiable desire-soul—the same self-manifesting Divine. The shadow must depart, so that the substance,
the psychic entity, may reign in its place. The end of the ego is the
beginning of the manifest Divine in man.

On the next article we shall try to understand the means and
methods Sri Aurobindo advocates for the complete elimination of the ego
from our entire being and consciousness.

To be concluded

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test the quality of our faith
Thy touchstone. Grant that
I purer from the ordeal.
"SAVITRI" AN EPIC

BY A. B. PURANI

Continued from the issue of December 5

We have said in the beginning that Sri Aurobindo's Savitri in its origins and in the realm of experience was a poetic expression of an inner vision of several expressions—is comparable to the highest spiritual poetry of the world, the Vedas and the Upanishads. Some passages have already been cited in the Introduction* showing the deep spiritual affinity between Savitri and the Vedas. We shall pursue the subject a little further to show that the epic height and manner of expression which is native to the Vedas and the Upanishads is in Savitri the most sustained element giving to the whole poem the most sublime thrust of an organic spiritual creation. This is so because Sri Aurobindo's spiritual work comes naturally in a line with that of the Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads. His work in fact adds to the rich spiritual treasures of the past by giving to mankind his great vision of the light of a divine goal, and by his insistence that life must be related to the Divine in order to solve its problems. Besides, his mode of poetical creation is akin to that of the ancient seers. This is not to say that he takes them as models for imitation, but in him the Goddess's speech seems to act—under conditions of full awareness of his aides— upon themes from the plane of the human mind and is constantly bringing in currents—and torrents even of Light from higher planes which have been "touched or tapped occasionally but are far beyond him", even the highest genius of poetical expression. When Sri Aurobindo speaks of "a torrent of rapid lightnings" which represent the irresistible current of illuminating inspiration or says, "A moment's voice drive to me from God's doorway" Words that shone, once upon Nature's summits, Ecstasy's chariot," he is not using merely figures of speech but is expressing his own personal experience. It is by such an outrush from the mental level that K.D. Sethna puts it, "knowledge of the Deathless Divine leaps on the human consciousness and by its thronged and glittering invasion the revelatory speech of the Overhead spiritual is born."

It is because Sri Aurobindo derives his poetical inspiration from the higher worlds known to the ancient Rishis that his poem bears a kinship to the creation of the ancient sages. In the Gita, the eleventh chapter giving the vision of the Vishwarupa, the Cosmic Divine, bears a resemblance to some portions of Savitri. The student may compare the utterances of Arjuna in his disheartenment and his yearning for salvation and the vision of the Vishwarupa, as the Destroyer of the World, with the colloquy of Aswapathy and the Divine Mother in the third Book.

Savitri has the intense directness, vastness and comprehensiveness of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Vedas and the Upanishads speak of the One, the Divine, the Supreme Ineffable. It is That which finds expression in a myriad forms in the cosmic dance. In the seer's vision, the shadows of the lower planes of being of the cosmic are washed through with the Light of this Eternal Reality and to him, therefore, the whole of Nature seems to be bathed in an ether of Delight. This experience seems so far from the ordinary human that one would have thought that its expression in poetry would lack the sense of a convincing Reality. But the most miraculous power of the Goddess of poetry is that the expression of this experience by the ancient sages carries with it a very intense sense of concreteness, what Mr. Sethna calls "a burning thirst of realization." This power of expression comes to them, not from any uplift from Overhead regions of intuition, inspiration, revelation and even beyond it from the Overmind. It is the spiritual alchemy of this Overhead poetical expression that renders this immeasurably remote domain of experiences intimately near to us and carries us at their reality to our most outward mind. While reading those inspired utterances one feels opening before him altogether a new world of experiences, a world of beings, "more real than living man," for in it breathe and move "nurseries of immortality." Like the Vedas and the Upanishads, Savitri also opens us to this realm of the Eternal. It is not merely a reproduction of the experience of the past, for, Sri Aurobindo has discovered new realms of the spirit. Savitri, therefore, is charged, with a similar inspirational afflatus but is also at the same time, "a springing forward." We are not here concerned with the difference of spiritual content—which could take us far—but with the similarities in their content and mode of expression.

In the Katha Upanishad, there is a situation which is apparently similar to the one we find in Savitri. There the boy Nachiketa like Savitri confronts Yama, the God of Death. But the similarity is only apparent because Death does not meet his challenge, neither is Nachiketa faced with the inevitability of death. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the "futility of death, the losses the backbone of death in his earthly life, is not in the picture. But apart from the dissimilarity of content one can see that there are passages where the expression of the Upanishad rises to a plane of impersonality of Illumined Mind which sees life in larger uperensions and is at the same time itself suffused with a wide and intense emotion of the tragedy of the ignorant human life. It is a very effective and direct poetical utterance. When he reaches the house of Death, Nachiketa thinks within himself,—

* The Sri Aurobindo Circle Annual.—8th Number.
SRI AURIBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. Dutt

Continued from previous issue

Socialism is the great challenge of the future. If it gets hold of the leading nations of the world, it would undoubtedly impose itself on the others. In that case, the function of the World-State would be to combine the different socialist groups into one great system and to harmonize their differences. By more and more every day, the law of the world, and uniformity is bound to lead to centralisation. In actual practice, socialism has undergone many different developments—National Socialism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and Mussolini in Russia. But all these are equally antagonistic to individualism. There is one obstacle in the path of a World-State which should be taken note of and that is race-sense. Though irrational, it is a very strong feeling. Nationalism is harmful, but is one of the most natural feelings, with which it is not possible to interfere—cultural, intellectual and physical. It is a legacy left to us by past history—history of a period when men were not guided by reason.

The extreme form of the World-State, as dreamed of by the modern thinkers, is then "a strict uniformity, a vast uniformity, a regulated socialisation of united mankind." It might seem a chimerical Utopia, to the unthinking mind, but the speculations of the political philosophers and Social scientists, the inevitable end of the secret urge towards human unity. It is, however, necessary for us to appraise the gain and loss of the State principle. Must we accept it? Sri Aurobindo describes how in America the state idea, though it was admired, was not advanced as a certain point. "The state machine existed only for a restricted and superficial action; the real life of the people was determined by other powers with which it could not meddle. Its principal function was to prevent war and protect national property, to maintain order, to control the political, social and administrative order—as far as possible an immutable order—"for the real life of the people to function undisturbed in its own way and according to its own innate tendencies." Some such unity for mankind might be brought about, instead of a centralised World-State, if the important nations could keep intact their nationalistic instinct and resist the domination of the international State idea. The result would be not a single State, but a single human race with a free association of its native-units.

Which of the two would be preferable? What is the World-State going to give us? How long is it going to endure? The results of such a state would, making due allowances, be much the same as those of the ancient Roman Empire—assured peace of the world, great development of race and economic, the solution of important problems of life by the united intelligence of man, a marked cultural and intellectual uplift, the rise of a common language. But all this is on the credit side. On the debit side, there would be, after a time, a dying down of force, a static condition of the human mind and human life, a stagnation, decay, disappearance of the spirit of man would begin to wither in the midst of his acquisitions. The reasons for the disintegration would be much the same as in the Roman analogy. It may be argued that the World-Government is going to be a free, democratic organism with liberty. Yet the progress would not be hampered in any way. But, really speaking, there is no such guarantee. To begin with, democracy in the future international State may be quite different from what we have known it to be. As a matter of fact, Aurobindo made it amply clear in his statement that untruthfulness of individual liberty, may be the key-stone of the future State? The rule—even perhaps the tyranny—of the majority is a concomitant of all democratic forms of Government. But, says Sri Aurobindo, "What the future promises us is something more formidable than the tyranny of the whole, of the self-hypnotised mass over its constituent groups and units."

Originally, individual freedom was the ideal of the democratic movement, but what has actually come about is that a huge mechanism, a gigantic group-being, a leviathan, has taken the place of the monarch and the aristocracy. The legislators and administrators represent this leviathan and the individual is helpless and unimportant, his only remedy is a retreat into the freedom of his soul or the freedom of his intellectual being. But is there any assurance of either kind of freedom in the new State? Freedom of thought and speech no longer exists in Russia. They had certainly vanished from Germany and Italy too, during the Axis regime. As to religious liberty, it is being slowly and steadily ground out in Soviet Russia, just as it had in Nazi Germany, by force. Sri Aurobindo, in "Nature," is still, however, optimistic: "the free individual is the conscious progressive; it is only when he is able to impart his own creative and mobile consciousness to the mass that a progressive society becomes possible."

In the next chapter, Sri Aurobindo explains how in the course of progress both oneness and diversity are equally necessary. Unity is undoubtedly the very basis of life. The race is moving steadily towards it and must one day realise it. But uniformity is not the law, life consists by diversity. Each individual, group, though one with the others in its universality, must retain its own unique character. This rules out centralisation and insistence on uniformity. "Therefore the unity of the human race to be entirely achieved and in consonance with the laws of the groupings and the groupings again must be the natural association of free individuals." This ideal may or may not be attainable in the near future, but we must keep it always before us. "The social grouping must build itself up in accordance with the natural law of life by Nature, and one great principle of this division is the diversity of language. At one time, not very long ago, there was a strong feeling in favour of a common language and the Esperantist movement made considerable headway. But it failed to catch all its intensity and rightly so. For to run after the chimera of one language means a failure to understand the principle of unity in diversity. Sri Aurobindo sums up the point thus: "It is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group—or, I should add, to preserve its language and to make it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language cannot live its whole life." We have said already that uniformity is not what man seeks. His goal is the unity of the race in spite of the diversity of language by Nature, and one great principle of this division is the diversity of language. At one time, not very long ago, there was a strong feeling in favour of a common language and the Esperantist movement made considerable headway. But it failed to catch all its intensity and rightly so. For to run after the chimera of one language means a failure to understand the principle of unity in diversity. Sri Aurobindo sums up the point thus: "It is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group—".

If, therefore, the natural diversity of the units is to be preserved and, at the same time, the unification of the race is to be accomplished, a free world-union, rather than a centralised World-State, is indicated as the means. Obviously, this would be a method, quite different from the one by which the Nation-State has been built up. Just before 1914, the ideal of this State seemed to be on the point of being crushed by the war, on the one hand, of the huge world empires, and on the other, of the progress of the international ideal. If we wish to see national idealism not shattered and, at the same time, to give full chance to the growing ideal of human unity to develop we have to find some way to unite the deepest laws by Nature works by balancing opposite forces. She tries centralisation and decentralisation by turns. She may destroy the Nation-State as she has destroyed the tribal and city States in the past; or she may preserve the nation as a Brake or a counterpoise against a too rapid progress towards unification. The most important development in the last half century has been the growth of huge monstrous empires which swallowed up small independent States, under one pretext or another—often without any pretext at all. Korea, Abyssinia, Morocco, the Boer republics and many others lost their individual existence. Then, fortunately for the lesser States, the robber fell out. Korea saw the end of Japan's rule, Abyssinia shook off the yoke of Italy. England had to disregard Ireland. The cataclysm of the two wars changed the face of the globe. Egypt, India, Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia came out of the tutelage of their erst-while masters. The Turkish empire disintegrated, giving birth to a number of free states—Iraq, Bedjaz, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arab., just as, a few decades before, Germany and the Balkan States came into existence. Turkey, however, lived on as a strong but well-knit nation State. It can be said definitely that the ideal of free nationalism has established itself all over, though some powers still lag behind in full recognition of it and some others hold it not so much in practice as in principle.

Anyhow, as things today are, the world is not going to be divided into a small handful of world-empires. First of all, we can safely bank on the probability of the falling out of the older ones, the White Man's Burden or the Nordic's right to dictate to others.

It is in this setting that we have to judge international bodies like the League of Nations. Today the League is not disposed to brook any preposterous claims like those of the White Man's Burden or the Nordic's right to dictate to others.

To be continued
BOOKS in the BALANCE
NEW HOPES FOR A CHANGING WORLD

BY BERTRAND RUSSELL

Allen & Unwin, 9s. 6d.)

Lucidity, it has been said, is a divine gift; and some benediction god or goddess must have richly deserved it when it fell on Bertrand Russell at the auspicious moment of his native country’s centennial in 1914. Today he is sixty!—Russell has tirelessly pursued the profession of letters, and the award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to him last year was a fitting recognition of his early unwonted and long maintained eminence in letters.

Poetry, drama, and creative fiction are traditionally chased along the literature of the world, while philosophy, history, and criticism are considered its ”literature of the mind,” “applied” literature. It is convenient, but not a wholly satisfying classification; in great literature our primary categories are thrown into confusion, poetry leaves philosophy and criticism as resplendent truth, drama makes the dead past live again, and what matters most is the creative word itself, carrying within it a dance of the only art that can ever really solve our problems.

Russell’s marvellous lucidity carries a necessary limitation: it is not a facile, facile treatment of the movements of the Spirit. If all life without a permanent or an extension of Euclidean mathematics, Russell’s methods would yield the right—the only right—solutions to our problems. But there are incommensurables in human life: hidden intensities, ardent aspirations, transgressions, and incommensurables in this non-Euclidean world, a mere mathematical approach to life’s many difficult problems cannot really, or finally, or perhaps ever, or historically, or actually, hit the mark. Reason is a splendid analytical instrument and, confined to its proper jurisdiction, a potent helper. Russell wields this instrument with extraordinary skill, but more and more of its skill and power are only directed towards a renewal of life.

Like many other thinkers of the day, Russell too is plagued by the polarization of forces in the world into the opposite camps of Stalinist Russia and all-powerful America. Total victory over Hitler has not been followed by the halting of fear, progressive disarmament, the return of normality, and the building of the United Nations into a reality as well as name. Guns before butter is the wild cry once again. Atomic piles are being planned, and two or three are taking shape. Humanity has taken fright, and the future is as dim as Erebus. It is not possible to think about it, and, besides, the Past has its memories and evils no less than the present. To fare forward is hard; but we are afraid. Semantically as it were, we make agitated moments: we have not been afraid of war, we have been afraid of war; we often behave like forward children: we are afraid—we know not what; and, as Russell puts it, can always and never “forgotten how to smile”.

Bother, it seems a hope for mankind? What can men and women of good will do to meet this crisis in civilisation? These are the questions which Russell tries to answer in his new book. Originally delivered as a set of radio lectures under the title “Living in an Atomic Age”, it is, unfortunately, a very disappointing book. Its usual conversational urgency and intimacy, and as one reads the twenty chapters comprising the present work, one feels that Russell’s capacity for analytical thinking and vivid expression has been seriously impaired in evidence. The crisis concerns, not only general problems, politicians, and scientists, but even the “common people”—perhaps it concerns these last more than any other. For so hard-headed a mathematician and political scientist, Russell is —perhaps in spite of himself—very human as well. This gives a certain softness to his writing, which makes it both delightful and forcible.

Fear, uncertainty, and apathy are set to paralyze all constructive effort today. There is now neither constructive thinking nor action upon the basis of such thinking: there is no outward movement of the mind—followed by half-headed, half-way thinking. Russell grimmly points at the situation: a young woman who finds scholastic education boring says to us, Russell: “Why bother if I shall be killed in battle before long?” A young woman who might have been a great drink to have and for whose sake she had better have a good time, while she can. She is going to be killed by Russian soldiers till she dies. Parents wonder whether the sacrifices called for by their children’s upbringing are worthwhile since they are likely to prove futile. Those who are lucky enough to possess capital are apt to put it into fictitious values, since they fear a catastrophic depreciation in which it would become worthless. Capitalists are in this way undermining the banks that the illusion to be worth the efforts until the capital is transformed into that which is going to be its cause. Through this hatred it brings daily nearer the catastrophe which it is trying to prevent. The nations seem caught in a tragic fate. Bewildered by mental fog, they march towards the cliff’s edge while they imagine that they are marching away from it.

What, then, can be done about it? Anything would be better than watching this tragic spectacle, much as we watch the parading Cepheus marching to his doom. Only, this is not a play, but a drama, but—we are ourselves, inexcusably involved in it. It is clear that when our peace will return, when the prevaricating discord is reconverted into harmony will prevail. But how are we to banish fear? How shall we unite the knots of fear, and then, shall not the knots of life may flow freely—and flow for ever? Russell enjoins us to three kinds of conflict—man and man; man and nature; man and machine—and, in addition, we are if yet further: an outward conflict between man and his environment, and an inner conflict between the ”genius and mortal instruments.” Nothing new in this story of man as knows, but as the malady of the present century is acute very, the dia- gram is for us very important indeed. In a way the problem is a simple one—at any rate, it can be extended to the apparently trivial, but it is not so. Can man save himself—and by that save the world? Man is still the measure of all things. If he fails,—the whole adventure of evolution will have proved a ghastly fiasco. But he must not fail. If this resolution kindles faith in man, spurs him on to a new burst of creative endeavor, there is no doubt he has saved civilization and given it a new power and glory, a new meaning and a new life.

Always, from very early times, a struggle has been going on, a root struggle for living at all and for living well. Always man has turned Nature to his purpose to regulate his relations with his environment. Here, and, above all, to preserve something of a fair balance between the urges, arduous and passionate, and the possible, and the possible without. Man’s state has thus always been a transitory made up of the scientific man, the social man, the political man, and the moral or spiritual man. Each stage in advancement has had to be an integral advance. It is only during the last few centuries that this essential concept of evolution has been ignored—while science and society have advanced tremendously. But the technological advance has taken phenomenal strides, and social and political organization has become so terrifyingly complicated, human happiness has haled as it were in mid-air and is frankly unable to size up, much less control, the march of events. Our generals are not cleverer men than Alexander, but they are able to use instruments of destruction a thousand and ten times more deadly than those Macedonian men. Our statesmen—even the best of them are no wiser than was a Periplus of the Erythraean Sea or a Periplus of the Black Sea, but the reserves of power to which they have the key are ominous in the ex- treme. Two or three roads may have vital positions can today destroy the entire world.

Russell devotes the first part of his book to the conflict between man and Nature. Western man would now appear to have largely mastered Nature: but scientific knowledge and technological processes, while they give him the means to combat effectively the extra-humans, do not “give the means of conquering man himself or the individual soul which leads towards death rather than towards life.” Man’s relation to Nature is somewhat of an unending problem and that is the more so because, the more precocious one’s mastery proves to be. Bullock cattle give no rice or ice; that is the way of Nature. But when man is able to manufacture the products, thus, even when the means of making what passes for civilisation are confined mainly to Europe, America and America, there are serious raw material shortages and industrial bottlenecks. Were these “benefits” expended to meet the present needs? These difficulties would be accentuated yet further. It is necessary therefore that the mastery of Nature is more apparent than real: in so far as it expedite, it has to retard the polarization of the peoples of the world into the haves and have-nots, the advanced and the primitive.

The Western races having multiplied abundantly in recent times, having not seldom exploited racial Asiatic labour for raising the white man’s standard of living, now chafingly feel horrified by the seeming ever-increasing populations of the Oriental races. Of course, it is not mean that the Orient should continue to propagate the species in the way it is now doing. Self-control where possible, artificial birth-control where necessary, would have to be accepted as one of the means employed to deal with the problems of poverty, starvation, and overcrowding in India, China and other Oriental countries. But a less important consideration is to modernize our farming and agricultural industry in the Western World, to develop the land in a healthy way, and to educate the people in what constitutes a full and adequate life.

This is easier said than done: the developed nations are unable, by themselves, to modernize their agriculture and organize large-scale industries. Help from outside, even when it is both free and adequate, is suspect. Countries like Persia and Egypt seem to be ready to undergo privation rather than perform the necessary sacrifices. The oil and the Suez canal are now vital interest, not only to Persia but to the whole of the Western civilized world. Yet misunder- standings baffle cooperation, and the work that has to be done will not happen quickly. Every local problem is a part of the whole; partly because the world is now essentially one, and partly because each local problem is a part of the whole.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA
By SISIRKUMAR MITRA
Continued from previous issue

Growth of Integrity

The vision of India’s oneness and territorial integrity came to her sages and seers almost at the very dawn of her history. Sanskrit literature preserves significant evidences of how this concept entered the thought of those early fathers of the race. We find in them dim but definite beginnings of India’s national consciousness, of the love and adoration of their children for the Mother that India has been and has ever been, the Infinite and Compassionate Mother of man, for that is how India has always been worshiped by her children as also by those of her devotees from outside who understood and shared the secret meaning of India’s existence in history. In those early days when communications and transport were scanty, Indians conjured up to themselves a glorious picture of their vast and mighty land. The very name of their country, Bharatavarsha (land of the Bharatas)—a single and common name for the whole of India, current all through the millennia of her history—suggests the vividness of this picture in the mind and imagination of the people. The origin of the name is traced to the glorious House of the Bharatas of the Rig Veda who played a most important part in the Aryanization of the Rig Veda. Refraining this immemorial tradition of the geographical unity of India, the Vishnu Purana, one of the oldest of the Puranas, says that the rishis were present in the land from the very first days. The Vedic sages who later went on to expand and give shape to the vast territory of India under a unified political system. In the Satapatha Brahmana the word is associated with fire symbolising Aryan culture which marched along the courses of rivers and valleys disseminating its light. Bharata is thus a most significant word implying the totality and also the profundity and depth of India’s existence in history. Ethnologically it means the children of Bharata signifying nourisher.

There are prayers in the Rig Veda addressed to the principal rivers of north India, which indicate how the fertile land between them is their bountiful gift to man. There are other prayers too in later Sanskrit literature in which the seven chief rivers of India are invoked together. These are reverently uttered by every Hindu at his daily ablations, and the same prayers are to be recited by him who wishes to be cleansed. And how can the Hindu think of the rivers without thinking of the country by them? The sacred cities of India—of the North and of the South—are equally immortalised in hymns which are also part of the daily adoration of the Hindu. Each one of these hymns is associated with the life and activity of God-men and God-lovers by the touch of whose feet those cities were blessed. Nor are the rocks and mountains of India forgotten in this adoration of the country of whose physical formation they are the pillars and backbones.

Not only these. Pilgrimage, another sacred institution of the Hindu, has ever served to accentuate and objectify this notion of India’s integrity, giving it, through personal touch and experience, a still more intimate form. Every principal faith or sect of the Hindus has its sacred place spread over the length and breadth of the country. Significantly enough, there is a holy city at each extreme point in the four directions of India. Prayer and pilgrimage link them, passing through others in between, realise more concretely the oneness of the country, the singleness of its existence in history. And when they meet and mix with fellow-pilgrims, they feel a sense of comradeship with them fostered by their allegiances to the same ideals that are cherished by all. Religious fairs also play their part to the same end.

The Buddhist holy places, no less popular among the Hindus, are yet another means through which the whole of India has stamped itself on the consciousness of her children. There is scarcely a region, either in the North or in the South, which does not have at least one Asokan pillar or any other monument eighty-four thousand of which were erected in different parts of the country by that most humane of emperors for the moral welfare of his subjects. The ghats of the Hindus have also spread over the length and breadth of the country. Significant enough, there is a holy city at each extreme point in the four directions of India. Prayer and pilgrimage link them, passing through others in between, realise more concretely the oneness of the country, the singleness of its existence in history.

According to the Tantrik conception, the fifty-two sacred centres of Shakti-worship in India, covering the entire length and breadth of the country, from the Himalaya to Kanyakumari on the southern sea, from Haridwar in the west to Kanpur in the east, and symbolise the fifty-two aspects of the divine Shakti and represent in the experience of the Tantrik the mystical integrity of India as the Mother-Force of the world.

Vision of the Mother

In Rupertus strain have the poets of India sung of their great Mother—Lakshmi—ever visible, of her entrancing beauty, her invincible power, her inexpressible wealth and her inner significance. The earliest song of this kind is the one in the Atharva Veda which, in language at once fervent and striking, speaks of the Mother-country as “the land of the brave and the pious, of heroes and enterprise, of trade and commerce, of art and science, of greatness and virtue, of countless herbs and plants; the land girl by the ocean, and fertilized by rivers like the Sindhu, and rich in grain and foodstuffs; the land where our forefathers lived and worked, where the titans succumbed to the gods; the land which boasts of the highest mountain and the most beautiful forests; the land of sacrificial rites and sacred pleasures, of valour and renown, patriotism and self-sacrifice, of virtue and kindness.” These words which are a depth and intensity of feeling and show how true, profound and comprehensive was the conception the ancients had of their country’s many-sided magnitude, how grand to them were its various aspects which constituted, in their totality, the Mother of their worship.

Of particular note is the reference in it to the victory of the gods over the demons, which is symbolic of the Vedic story that the forces of Light are ever at war with the forces of Darkness so that man may be liberated from his subjection to the latter and the Kingdom of God established on earth as the crown of that victory. This idea which has been an even deeper truth comes to be more expressly represented in the popular mention in the Puranas—the Veda of the Brahma—the Bhagavata Purana in particular—which declare Bharatavarsha as the country where gods are eager to be born for the greater blessing of their final liberation. Indeed, in their birth in man and in man attaining his divine perfection, the land envied by the Vedics sees her supreme liberation from their tyral state. The liberation of the gods, who are typal beings, is possible if they choose to accept human birth and pass through the cycle of evolution of which earth alone is the divinely-created field.

In her sublime age of the Spirit the seers of India visualised this truth round which has grown the tradition of the spiritual quest that has been the high privilege of India to foster through the ages, thus becoming the holy land not only for man but also for the gods whose descent therein so many times has made it all the happier for the eventual and full manifestation of God’s own light in man. This is the meaning of the god’s desire to be born in India. And this is why the Aryas have always regarded their country as deবস্থা (the land of gods) greater even than heaven.

The epics of India are not without their beautiful descriptions of the various regions of the country and moving references to the sanctity and holiness of its integrity. The very name of the Mahabharata comes from that of the early father after whom the country is called. The Ramayana contains brilliant and charming accounts of the many cities—forests and mountains—in which Rama passed his years of exile. Classical Sanskrit literature has in it eloquent references to the glory that is India. Kalidasa’s lines in his Meghaduta and in his other works on the wonder and beauty with which India is so gorgeously robed are ever memorable words of the king of poets depicting what to him his country is. In Kipinacanadas, a famous work on the history of the Hindus in the Satapatha Brahmana, a noted dramatist of the ninth century A.D., gives a vivid description of the geographical features of India and makes suggestive references to her seasons, and the winds, the birds, the flowers, the influences and the effects perfecting the way the country is. He also emphasizes the fact that natural facts and considerations under contribution passed into one of the virtual poetical conventions of their day. Speaking generally of the later and even of the more modern times, one might say that these factors, separately or collectively, cannot but have their natural impact on the general trend of thought and action of the land all the time.

In modern times the greatest singers of Bengal were also the mighty voices of the New Dawn that burst upon India in the beginning of this century through a resurgence of her soul into fresh cultural and political endeavours whose fruits are modern India’s multiform contribution to the sum-total of human culture. The songs of the new awakening that these poets composed stirred their countrymen into an impetuous striving to win back their country’s freedom, and re-instal the Mother in her own temple. Indeed every one of them had a vision of the Mother which he expressed itself in fiery words of faith and love, worship and dedication, and the devotion of his Mother stood revealed once more to the spiritual sight of her children.

In one of his finest national songs, Rabindranath Tagore invokes in his inimitable language the Dispenser and Guide of India’s Destiny. In an intense vision he visualises his mother as a country of incomparable beauty, an English rendering of which done in the same hymnody and rhyme-scheme by Dilip Kumar Roy is given below:

Heart-charmer of the universe!
O thou earth, borne up on the beams of the sun!
Our ancestors’ Mother and Nurse!
The first dawn broke out in thy sky of love,
The first hymn rang out in thy mystic grove,
The sycon arbours first proclaimed to man
The love of light and parables of stars.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA—Continued from page 11

MOTHER INDIA, January 5, 1952

Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Dark of hue, O candid-fair
In thy soul, with jessamelled hair
And thy glorious smile divine,
Loneliest of all earthly lands,
Shrouding wealth from well-stored hands!
Mother, mother mine!
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free!

The most striking feature in this song is that India with all her earthly and heavenly riches is shown here as the Mother, the divine Shakti, who sustains and nourishes her children both materially and spiritually. This hymn, sung and sanctified by scores of martyrs, is the true national anthem of India. In it the country is not merely the temple of the Mother but the Mother herself whose children worship with all the passion of their heart. And when they do so, they worship the Power that shapes the destiny of India and guides her development through the ages, and this ever-expanding process forms the chequered story of India's unique achievements in the inner as in the outer court of life. This is how India's history becomes indissolubly bound up with her geography—a fact of which a glimpse was caught by a British Prime Minister, J. Ramsay MacDonald, when he said: "The Hindu, from his traditions and his religion, regards India not only as a political unit naturally the subject of one sovereignty, but as the outward embodiment, as the temple,—may, even as the goddess mother,—of his spiritual culture. India and Hinduism are organically related as body and soul." (R. K. Mookerji's The Fundamental Unity of India).

This concept of the Indian mind in which the homeland is adored as the Mother is rooted in the truth perceived by the ancients that all creation is the manifestation of the supreme Energy and that India is, at least in the present cycle of evolution, a special manifestation inasmuch as she is not only a beautiful and bountiful Mother lavishing upon her children all that they need for their material well-being and aesthetic and intellectual growth, but bestowing upon all mankind, since the dawn of human culture, the inestimable treasures of the Spirit, which have nourished the soul of many a nation and are still the only hope and haven of this distracted world. In the midst of the gloom that envelops the world today, India shows the path of Light, the path of man's liberation from his present imperfect life in Ignorance into the truth, bliss and perfection of a divine Life. Not only this. The cult of Shakti—Divine Force—sees in the shapely form of India, so markedly singular, a conscious physical formation of Shakti, presiding over her destiny, and preparing her for participation in the coming age of the spirit when man will live a godlike life as the next stage of his evolution.

Even when Indians admire the matchless beauty of their country, the romance it outwardly is, they feel within them a kind of inner relationship not only with its material embodiment but also with her soul; and as the feeling deepens the externals fade off, and in their place emerges before their mind's eye, much more vividly, an idea, a dynamic concept, of which the land with all its charms becomes a symbol, an image, an object, as it were, of their love and veneration. Nothing indeed can more indubitably develop in us an abiding sense of our fellowship with others, with all, belonging to a common land of birth than when we are blessed with this exciting experience. And does not this sense invariably prove real enough as a wholesome and a strengthening factor in our collective life? In fact, this is its very bedrock. The physical merges itself in the ideal, and the ideal fulfils itself in the real, reconciling the apparent contradictions into a harmony, a multiple oneness built up of India's human and geographical factors. It is a force, an energy, inherent in its soil and pervading its spirit, that works this transforming miracle. India is that Force, that Spirit which makes its mystic appeal to the inmost being of her children. Sri Aurobindo once said that India had never been to him what was merely suggested by her outer vestures, attractive and gorgeous though they were. She was to him the Mother, the Eternal and Infinite Mother. The truth of India is revealed to those who respond to this appeal and so all the more easily know and grasp the secret, the supreme secret of her motherhood. To this vision of the Mother, India calls her children who realise in it their oneness that is for ever.

To be continued

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

From February 21, 1952 "Mother India" will commence its fourth year, not as a Fortnightly but as a Monthly. The new edition will be in a handy though substantial magazine form.

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