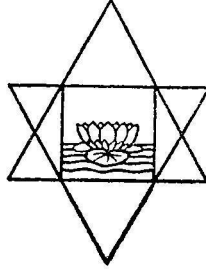


MOTHER INDIA

SEPTEMBER 1953

Price : Re. 1.



The Supramental is a truth and its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable...

I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution.

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

*A new Light shall break upon the earth,
a new world shall be born: the things that
were promised shall be fulfilled.*

Sri Aurobindo

TRANSLATED FROM THE MOTHER'S
"Prayers and Meditations."

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
HIGHER MODES OF COGNITION AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE ... S. R. Albless ...	1
THE ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY, BRUSSELS (<i>A Report</i>) ... „ ...	7
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO ... Nirodbaran ...	10
TRUTHS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE ... Sri Aurobindo ...	13
ASHRAM GLIMPSES—(<i>by An American Newcomer</i>) ... Jay ...	17
CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BRAIN: A SCRUTINY OF SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS ... K. D. Sethna ...	21
POEMS:	
TO EARTH ... Margaret Forbes ...	28
THE STAR AND THE FLAME ... Prithwi Singh ...	28
THE GOLDEN KISS ... Romen ...	29
THE OFFERING ... Robi Gupta ...	30
TO THE UNKNOWN ... Dhananjay Desai ...	30
SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE GITA ... C. C. Dutt ...	31
BOOK IN THE BALANCE ...	38
THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO <i>Chapter XIV—Karma Yoga and Its Indispensability Part III—The Perfection of Karmayoga</i> ... Rishabhchand ...	46
THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT: THE VEDANTIC RESURGENCE ... Sisir Kumar Mitra ...	54

CONTENTS (*Cont.*)

Students' Section

MEDITATION AND STUDY	... <i>The Mother</i>	... 60
MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO	... <i>Nagin Doshi</i>	... 61

POEMS:

THE BLUE KING	... <i>Aniruddha</i>	... 65
DREAM	... <i>Ranajit</i>	... 65
CLOUD-SPIRIT	... <i>Prithivindra</i>	... 66
IN THEE	... <i>Dulali</i>	... 67

HIGHER MODES OF COGNITION AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

A PAPER BASED ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF SRI AUROBINDO

(This exposition was given by Mr. S. R. Albles of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at the Eleventh International Congress of Philosophy at Brussels on 20th August, 1953. The exposition was followed by a discussion of 45 minutes. A brief account of the discussion is given here after the exposition.)

It is not really possible to do justice to a subject of this nature within the span of a short Paper, a subject which occupies a very large and important place in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy; consequently, a lengthy argument on the possibility of attaining knowledge through ways other than the rational-scientific based on sense-perception cannot be entered into here, for that alone would require a Paper to itself. All that can be attempted is a brief general discussion of such a possibility as envisaged by one who having developed in himself modes of cognition higher than the purely mental has written treatises to show what this knowledge consists of, and the ways and means by which it could be acquired. It can be stated at the outset that Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical position regarding the apprehension of the Ultimate Reality in its essence as well as dynamism is this, that all possible knowledge is within the power of man to acquire—for all cosmic and supra-cosmic aspects of Reality there exist corresponding powers and faculties in man by which he can know them. God, Universe, and the nature of his own self, therefore, need not remain for him always a closed book; at a certain stage of his evolutionary growth, when he is sufficiently evolved psychologically, he can develop a higher level of consciousness to which powers and faculties of acquiring knowledge of supra-physical realities is intrinsic; a growth into what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supramental Truth-consciousness can enable him to have direct and immediate knowledge of truths beyond the grasp of the purely rational intellect. Sri Aurobindo writes in his *Life Divine*: "The Unknown is not the Unknowable; it need not remain the unknown for us, unless we choose ignorance or persist in our first limitations. For to all things that are not unknowable, all things in the universe, there correspond in that universe faculties which can take cognisance of them, and in man, the microcosm, these faculties are always existent and at a certain stage capable of development...Fundamentally,

all possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of humanity." In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy the problem of higher knowledge is not centrally concerned with receiving stray "intuitions" in the mind—what is usually understood by supra-rational knowledge,—but with psychological evolution, with changing the mode of consciousness and acquiring higher cognitive faculties through a transformation of the rational mind into what is designated by him as "the mind of light", and then developing it further into the Supramental state.

The facile use of the term intuition, which is made to mean anything from the sudden birth of an idea in the mind to emotional responses or vague inner intimations, has done more harm than good to the correct understanding of this question. Further, an insistence on the infallibility of these "intuitions" has created an adverse reaction in many philosophically trained minds that cannot accept them without a certain measure of scepticism. This has in its turn led to a mis-statement of the problem itself, and intuition has begun to be looked upon by some schools of thought as something always irrational. But it cannot be arbitrarily presumed that the non-rational is necessarily the irrational; it can also be the supra-rational, all depending upon the capacity of the person who has the intuition. What we are normally conscious of as our self is only our surface being, the most external and out-gazing part of our total personality; there is not only a submerged part of our being commonly known as the sub-conscious, but also a subliminal part—a level of consciousness alongside the normal, and a superconscious part with the spiritual and gnostic ranges, at the summit of which, Sri Aurobindo says, is the Supermind, the Supramental Truth-consciousness; he calls it the gnostic light and creative dynamis of the Ultimate Reality. He states that it is an integral consciousness by attaining which one can know Reality in all its aspects, in its essence as well as in its modes and manifestations. Owing to an insufficient understanding of these levels, many thinkers do not admit the existence of higher modes of cognition or a higher order of knowledge; they are of the opinion that all such knowledge must be extremely unreliable, because if it is not acquired through the reason, it must be built on emotional responses and vague inner intimations—the outcome of some irrational process; in any case, the "intuition", they aver, must be a purely subjective factor and cannot possibly give verifiable knowledge of the universal process or the Ultimate Reality; in short, they contend that non-conceptual knowledge cannot be truly objective. But so far as the writer is concerned, the real issue at stake is different—it is more fundamental to the problem of knowledge. It is not a question of the abdication of the reason and rational thought-processes in favour of vague irrational intimations which are used as supports for the organization of knowledge, but a question of the possibility of enlarging the

total awareness, of developing a wider a higher consciousness—a gnostic-spiritual consciousness with a more global vision,—of giving the mind powers and faculties it did not possess before and turning it into a “mind of light” possessing truth-sight and truth-discernment. It needs to be pointed out that before “the mind of light” is fully developed, gnostic-spiritual intuitions start coming into the mind from the higher levels; they are intermittent at first, but slowly get canalised and become a continuous stream, and by a certain type of concentration can be directed towards a particular subject. After a time, owing to the constant influx of the higher light, the consciousness begins to change its character and poise, and a modification occurs in the psycho-epistemic basis of cognition—the manner in which it changes is explained at the end; the seizing of significances, the perception of causal sequences and of the interrelatedness of divers elements as well as of the structure of organic wholes changes and becomes more direct, integral, and acute, and the insight into meaning and values becomes deeper.

This means that the development of a mode of cognition greater than the rational does not imply the abandonment of mind as a principle, which is in its essence a subordinate power of the Supermind and is connected with it through a gnostic gradation, but its opening to the light of its source-principle, and evolving under its influence into a greater instrument of knowledge. Sri Aurobindo states that ignorance is the mind separated in knowledge from its source of knowledge, the Supermind. Naturally, to bring it back to knowledge a bridging between the two would be necessary. But before the mind can recognise this necessity, it must realise its own limitations—that its characteristic mode of acquiring knowledge by division and analysis and by an artificially constructed synthesis having behind it an imperfectly understood causality and ignorance of ontological relationships, is inadequate for comprehending the universal process, the working of which can find its justification and meaning only in a more cosmic and global vision, in a more illumined consciousness that can see in larger spaces the totality of existence. In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo points out that “our reasoning is based upon our experience of the finite operations of physical nature, on an incomplete observation and uncertain understanding of something that acts within limits; it has organized on that basis certain conceptions which it seeks to make general and universal, and whatever contradicts or departs from these conceptions it regards as irrational, false or inexplorable.” But there is a greater reason than the mental—“a spiritual and supramental reason....It is a greater reason...because it is more vast, subtle, complex in its operations; it comprehends all the data which our observation fails to seize, it deduces from them results which neither our

deduction nor induction can anticipate....If we observe a happening, we judge and explain it from the result and from a glimpse of its most external constituents, circumstances or causes; but each happening is the outcome of a complex nexus of forces which we do not and cannot observe, because all forces are to us invisible,—but they are not invisible to the spiritual vision.. . Some of them are actualities working to produce or occasion a new actuality, some are possibles that are near to the pre-existent actuals and in a way included in their aggregate; but there can intervene always new possibilities that suddenly become dynamic potentials and add themselves to the nexus, and behind all are imperatives or an imperative which these possibilities are labouring to actualise....All this our reason cannot grasp because....it has no means of direct awareness.” Now that the ground has been cleared, a brief exposition of the higher modes of cognition can be taken up.

In his search for truth, in his pursuit of knowledge, man makes use of his whole mind with all its powers; reason, observation, memory, imagination, all come to his aid. Now, if it was urged that whilst making a synthesis of knowledge he should give up or give a secondary place to the one power by which he has acquired most of his knowledge, the reason, and depend on inner dictates and intimations which may either be quite genuine intuitions with a truth-content, or, as is more likely, inferior movements of an infra-rational order, it would not be a proposition easy to accept; but if it was contended that instead of the reason man could acquire a more illumined power of knowledge capable of doing all that the reason could do and much more, but without its faltering and doubting, constant accepting and rejecting, and ultimately ending in the blind alley of agnosticism, it would be an altogether different matter. No philosopher would straightaway reject such a contention without examining it, unless he took up an *a priori* position that man cannot evolve further psychologically and spiritually and possess a more enlightened consciousness. And supposing it was also stated that not only the reason, but all the other powers of the mind like memory, observation, judgment, imagination, the capacity to analyse and synthetise, receive a corresponding gnostic action on the supramental levels of consciousness, it would be still more acceptable. It is necessary to stress this point here in order to allay the fears of those who believe that any knowledge not acquired through sensory and rational means must necessarily be of a highly dubious character, and that if the reason is not used the knowledge acquired would inevitably be based upon vague intuitions, the validity of which could not possibly be verified. It will be clear from what follows that as one abandons the rational way of knowing and judging things and develops the gnostic-spiritual consciousness, one gradually gives up the

use of the normal mental faculties and learns to depend on their corresponding gnostic powers, with the result that instead of the uncertain knowledge acquired through separative contacts between the knower and the object of knowledge, one begins to possess immediate and certain knowledge through direct contacts, these later developing into identification. The mind sees through a glass, darkly, but the Supermind sees clearly and luminously the essential as well as the manifested aspects of Reality, and knows with certitude.

Now, only one important thing remains to be done—to describe the working of a few of the gnostic powers, and make a general statement about the nature of the supramental cognition. Some extracts from Sri Aurobindo's writings are here strung together to form a brief exposition of the subject.—“The supramental knowledge is not primarily or essentially a thought knowledge. The intellect does not consider that it knows a thing unless it has reduced its awareness of it to the terms of thought,...until it has put it into a system of representative mental concepts....The supermind knows most completely and securely not by thought but by identity, by a pure awareness of the self-truth of things in the self and by the self.” It must be realized that the supramental consciousness is not ego-centric but cosmic, that is, it is not a consciousness one-pointedly focussed in the surface being, knowing itself to be a single separate self and looking upon the world as “not-self”, but is an extended and all-pervading consciousness in which the basic identity between itself and other existents is directly experienced—the knower now sees the object of knowledge in his universal being as a thing within the extension of his self brought forward before his consciousness. Sri Aurobindo proceeds: “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.” Regarding the general cognition of the supramental being he writes: “He sees truth in its proper order first in the essence, secondly in the potentialities that derive from it and only last in the actualities. The essential truths are to his sight self-existent, self-seen. .” We next come to the gnostic equivalent of observation.—“...the knower projects himself in consciousness on the object, feels his cognition in contact or enveloping or penetrating it and there, as it were in the object itself, becomes aware of what he has to know. Or he may by the contact become aware of that which is in 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.” The supramental reason has already been described.

MOTHER INDIA

These are a few of the gnostic instruments of knowledge according to Sri Aurobindo's vision and experience. How they can be developed is a problem in itself which does not fall within the scope of this Paper. The one thing worth considering is, that they have been made active in the being of at least one person, and consequently cannot be looked upon as lying beyond man's capacities. In this connection Sri Aurobindo once wrote to a disciple: "My sadhana is not a freak or a monstrosity or a miracle done outside the laws of Nature and the conditions of life and consciousness on earth. If I could do these things or if they could happen in my Yoga, it means that they can be done and that therefore these developments and transformations are possible in the terrestrial consciousness."* Emerson's aphorism: "Men walk as prophecies of the next age", may be quite true. Perhaps Sri Aurobindo walks in light as the prophecy of the age that is coming upon us. The age of belief gave way to the age of reason, the age of the mind; and this may in its turn make way for the age of spiritual enlightenment, the age of the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
PONDICHERRY, India

SOLI R. ALBLESS

(Reproduced from Vol. II of the Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of Philosophy, p. 72).

* These lines were added in the exposition. They were not included in the original Paper.

THE ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY, BRUSSELS

AUGUST 20-26, 1953

THE Eleventh International Congress of Philosophy commenced its sessions on 20th August at 10.30 a.m., at the Palais du Beaux-Arts. Mons. Barzin, the President of the Congress, Mr. Max Schneider of the UNESCO, and others gave speeches. The Sectional Sessions were kept for the afternoon. At 3 p.m. fifteen speakers lectured in fifteen different halls. Mr. S. R. Albless was scheduled to speak second in the Epistemological Section, but as the first speaker did not come, he was asked to give his exposition, and the Sessions on Epistemology commenced with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

After Mr. Albless had finished speaking, the subject was thrown open for discussion. The first gentleman to get up was Mr. Francisco Struck, a writer on spiritual and mystical subjects from Mexico.

MR. STRUCK: "I have heard your lecture with interest. May I ask you a question? Have you read a book called *Cosmic Consciousness*? In this book the author describes experiences of various mystics. The things that you say seem to be similar."

MR. ALBLESS: "I think you mean Bucke's book."

MR. STRUCK: "Yes, that's right."

MR. ALBLESS: "Well, there is a certain similarity, but the problem before us here is to develop a higher consciousness to which a superior mode of cognition is intrinsic. My basic position is this: The knowledge a man has of his own self, the world, and the Ultimate Reality, depends upon the nature of his consciousness, its level and range; if a modification can be brought about by some means in his consciousness, enlarging it and raising it to a higher level, there will be a corresponding change in his grasp of things around him, in his insight into his own nature, and in his apprehension of Reality, with a subsequent change in his knowledge; in short, a modification in the consciousness leads to a change in the mode of cognition, and as a result in the knowledge acquired.

"Now, I am maintaining that this *can* be done; that such a modification is an empirical fact, and not just speculation. I have seen it to be possible. I have been in contact with Sri Aurobindo for the last seven years; I have lived in his Ashram, and I know the effectiveness of his power. That is why I say that such a thing is possible. I would like to read out before you something he once wrote to a disciple about himself: 'It is singular that you cannot understand such a simple thing...I was incapable of understanding metaphysics, I developed into a philosopher. I had no eye for painting—I developed it...I transformed my nature from what it was to what it was not. I did it by a special manner, not by a miracle and I did it to show what could be done.' "

A philosopher from Norway was the next one to ask a question:

"Can you tell me a way by which one can reach this 'higher consciousness' you are speaking of—how one should begin?"

MR. ALBLESS: "I am afraid it is not within the scope of this exposition to discuss the methods by which the higher consciousness can be developed; but I can indicate the first step. It is to make the mind absolutely silent. It may seem paradoxical to you, but it is true that when thinking stops, meditation begins. As soon as you will attempt to make the mind quiet, you will find that a certain mechanical activity is going on in it; you have to control this chain of random recurring thoughts, by inwardly moving away from them. If you are able to make your mind silent you will become aware that it is much wider than what you had taken it to be; you will find that it extends in an inner mental space. Even before this happens, you can feel a certain doubleness in the mind, by which you see one part—the outer surface part—thinking, and the deeper part witnessing the train of thoughts and judging. When you can do this, you are able to control your mental activity better; you can marshal ideas as a general would marshal his toy soldiers upon a map before starting a campaign. This is only the beginning, the first step; the higher consciousness develops later."

Now a third gentleman got up and spoke, someone who seemed to be a man of science:

"I am not trying to say anything against what you have just now said. I have heard from you so much about this 'higher consciousness', but what are the facts? You haven't given any facts."

THE ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY, BRUSSELS

MR. ALBLESS: "What kind of 'facts' do you want? Every branch of knowledge has its own method of verification; the method of one cannot be applied to another. Now, I am speaking about states of consciousness, about spiritual experiences. I cannot bring before you a consciousness as I can bring stones, or tables, or chairs, which I would do if I were dealing with physical objects and examining physical phenomena. However, I can say one thing—supposing I tell you that if you follow certain conditions you will obtain certain results; you follow these conditions and find that what I have said is true. Then twenty-five persons do the same and obtain similar results. After observing this, what would you say? Would you call it evidence—would you admit it as 'fact'? These are facts of experience, and can only be verified by a similar experience."

The gentleman who had asked the question was satisfied.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the previous issue)

SRI AUROBINDO AND HIS YOGA*

19-12-1934

MYSELF: Is it possible to attain the highest realisation in your Yoga through work alone, or is work only a means up to a certain stage and then to be left aside, as Ramkrishna said in his well-known analogy of a pregnant woman and the gradual falling off of her work with the nearing of her full time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Am I Ramkrishna or is there no difference between my Yoga and his?

MYSELF: If I remember right, you wrote to me that work is only a means for the preparation of the spiritual life; otherwise, it does not have much value

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord God! When did I make this stupendous statement which destroys at one fell sweep the two volumes of the Essays on the Gita and all the seven volumes of the Arya? Work by itself is only a preparation, so is meditation by itself, but work done in the increasing yogic consciousness is a means of realisation as much as meditation is.

MYSELF: You wrote, I think, in Dilip's letter also that work only prepares one for the direct contact with the inmost.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have not said, I hope, that work *only* prepares. Meditation also prepares for the direct contact. If we are to do work only as a preparation and then become motionless meditative ascetics, then all my spiritual teaching is false and there is no use for supramental realisation or anything else that has not been done in the past.

MYSELF: My own impression is that work is an ⁵³excellent means as a preparation, but the major experiences and realisations are not likely to come in doing works.

* These are not questions and answers, but as usual Sri Aurobindo's marginal comments on my letters. These comments are printed here in the exact order in which they were made, with the relevant parts of my letters put before them—Nirodbaran.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: I see. When the time for preparation is over, one will sit immobile for ever after and never do any work—for, as you say, work and realisation cannot go together. Hurrah, for the Himalayas! Well, but why not then the old Yoga? If work is so contrary to realisation! That is Shankara's teaching. In that case I am entirely wrong in preaching a dynamic Yoga. Let us go back to the cave and the forest.

MYSELF: You have said that 9/10 of your time is spent in doing correspondence, works, etc., whereas only 1/10 is devoted to concentration.

SRI AUROBINDO: For me, correspondence alone. I have no time left for other "works etc." Concentration and meditation are not the same thing. One can be concentrated in work or bhakti as well as in meditation. For God's sake be very careful about your vocabulary, or else you will tumble into many errors and loosenesses of thinking.

If I devoted 9/10 of my time to concentration and none to work the result would be equally unsatisfactory. My concentration is for a particular work—it is not for meditation divorced from life. When I concentrate, I work upon others upon the world, upon the play of forces, what I say is that to spend all the time reading and writing letters is not sufficient for the purpose. I am not asking to become a meditative sannyasi.

MYSELF: Did you not retire for five or six years for an exclusive and intensive meditation?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not aware that I did so. But my biographers probably know more about it than I do.

MYSELF: If the Supramental Divine himself complains in that way and differentiates between work and concentration and finds it difficult to radiate his force contemporaneously with his work of correspondence, etc., what about undivines and infra-mentals like us?

SRI AUROBINDO: Between concentration on correspondence alone and the full many-sided work—not between work and correspondence. It does not mean that I lose the higher consciousness while doing the work of correspondence. If I did that, I would not only not be supramental, but would be very far even from the full Yogic consciousness.

(Sri Aurobindo underlined the words in my letter "contemporaneously with his work of correspondence", and wrote.)

Say "by correspondence alone". If I have to help somebody to repel an attack, I can't do it by only writing a note. I have to send him some force or else concentrate and do the work for him. Also I can't bring down the Supramental by merely writing neatly to people about it. I am not asking for leisure to meditate at ease in a blissful indolence. I said distinctly I wanted it for concentration on other more important work than correspondence.

The ignorance underlying this attitude is in the assumption that one must necessarily do only work or only meditation. Either work is the means or meditation is the means, but both cannot be! I have never said, so far as I know, that meditation should not be done. To set up an open competition or a closed one between work and meditation is a trick of the dividing mind and belongs to the old Yoga. Please remember that I have all along been declaring an integral Yoga in which Knowledge, Bhakti, works, light of Consciousness, Ananda and love, will and power in works—meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place. Have I written seven volumes of the Arya all in vain? Meditation is not greater than Yoga of works nor works greater than Yoga by knowledge—both are equal.

Another thing—it is a mistake to argue from one's own very limited experience, ignoring that of others and build on it large generalisations about Yoga. This is what many do, but the method has obvious demerits. You have no experience of major realisations through works, and you conclude that such realisations are impossible. But what of the many who have had them—elsewhere and here too in the Asram? That has no value? You hint to me that I have failed to get anything by works? How do you know? I have not written the history of my sadhana—if I had you would have seen that if I had not made action and work one of my chief means of realisation—well, there would have been no sadhana and no realisation except that, perhaps, of Nirvana.

I shall perhaps add something hereafter as to what works can do, but no time to-night.

Don't conclude however that I am exalting works as the sole means of realisation. I am only giving it its due place

You will excuse the vein of irony or satire in all this—but really when I am told that my whole case disproves my whole spiritual philosophy and accumulated knowledge and experience, a little liveliness in answer is permissible.

19-12-34

TRUTHS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

(Compiled from Sri Aurobindo's Unpublished Letters.)

THE ASHRAM AND HUMAN NATURE

OUTSIDE there are just the same things. The Ashram is an epitome of the human nature that has to be changed—but outside people put as much as possible a mask of social manners and other pretences over the rottenness. What Christ called in the case of the Pharisees—the “whited sepulchre.” Moreover there one can pick and choose the people one will associate with while in the narrow limits of the Ashram it is not so possible—contacts are inevitable. Wherever humans are obliged to associate closely, what I saw described the other day as “the astonishing meannesses and caddishnesses inherent in human nature” come quickly out. I have seen that in Ashrams, in political work, in social attempts, at everywhere in fact where it gets a chance. But when one tries to do Yoga, one cannot fail to see that in oneself and not only, as most people do, see it in others, and once seen, then? Is it to be got rid of or is it to be kept? Most people here seem to want to keep it; or they say it is too strong for them, they can’t help it!

Also in this atmosphere pretences and social ties are difficult to maintain. But if things become prominent, it is that people may see and reject them. If instead they cling to them as their most cherished possessions, what is the use? How is the purging to be done with such an attitude?

4-4-1938

LITERARY ACTIVITY AND SADHANA

It is obvious that poetry cannot be a substitute for sadhana; it can be an accompaniment only. If there is a feeling (of devotion, surrender etc.), it can express and confirm it; if there is an experience, it can express and strengthen the force of experience. As reading of books like the Upanishads or Gita or singing of devotional songs can help, especially at one stage or another, so this can help also. Also it opens a passage between the external consciousness and the inner mind or vital. But if one stops at that, then nothing much is

MOTHER INDIA

gained. Sadhana must be the main thing and sadhana means the purification of the nature, the consecration of the being, the opening of the psychic and the inner mind and vital, the contact and presence of the Divine, the realisation of the Divine in all things, surrender, devotion, the widening of the consciousness into the cosmic Consciousness, the Self one in all, the psychic and the spiritual transformation of the nature. If these things are neglected and only poetry and mental development and social contact occupy all the time, then that is not sadhana. Also the poetry must be written in the true spirit, not for fame or self-satisfaction, but as a means of contact with the Divine through inspiration or of the expression of one's own inner being as it was written formerly by those who left behind them so much devotional and spiritual poetry in India; it does not help if it is written only in the spirit of the western artist or littérateur. Even works or meditation cannot succeed unless they are done in the right spirit of consecration and spiritual aspiration gathering up the whole being and dominating all else. It is the lack of this gathering up of the whole life and nature and turning it towards the one aim, which is the defect in so many here that lowers the atmosphere and stands in the way of what is being done by myself and the Mother.

19-5-1938

TIME AND SPACE

(One day I asked Sri Aurobindo for a definition of Time and Space,—also, whether they were finite or infinite, and what he exactly meant by the Timeless and Spaceless Eternal. He gave the following reply.—P.S.)

Time and Space are not limited, they are infinite—they are the terms of an extension of consciousness in which things take place or are arranged in a certain relation, succession, order. There are again different orders of Time and Space; that too depends on the consciousness. The Eternal is extended in Time and Space, but he is also beyond all Time and Space. Timelessness and Time are two terms of the eternal existence. The Spaceless Eternal is not one indivisible infinity of Space, there is in it no near or far, no here or there—the Timeless Eternal is not measurable by years or hours or aeons, the experience of it has been described as the eternal moment. But for the mind this state cannot be described except by negatives,—one has to go beyond and to realise it.

22-1-1937

TRUTHS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

CONSCIOUSNESS IN PHYSICAL THINGS

What you feel about physical things is true—there is a consciousness in them, a life which is not the life and consciousness of man and animal which we know, but still secret and real. That is why we must have a respect for physical things and use them rightly, not misuse and waste, ill-treat or handle with a careless roughness. This feeling of all being consciousness or alive comes when our own physical consciousness—and not the mind only—awakes out of its obscurity and becomes aware of the One in all things, the Divine everywhere.

26-11-1935

THE PHYSICAL MIND'S IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

Q: I do not really know why I suddenly got the idea of chasing the sparrows. I never did it before and rebuked anybody who tried to do so. This evening I suddenly got the idea that they should be driven away as they were making the garden very dirty. That shows how I am still open to wrong ideas and suggestions.

A: It was, I suppose, an idea that came through the physical mind, suggesting the following of a physical utility only and ignoring all other perceptions and motives. You must be on your guard against the ideas and suggestions of the physical mind and accept none without examination and subjection to a higher light.

2-3-1937

CONVERSION OF THE VITAL AND THE PHYSICAL

Q: Please give me some advice about conversion of the vital and the physical.

A: For the vital it can come only by the rejection of personal egoism and desire—to be replaced by the will of the Divine Mother. For the physical—plasticity, not insisting on its own habitual ideas, feelings, needs, greeds, offering itself as an instrument to the Divine Mother.

10-3-1934

THE EGO

As for the ego, that recurs because all man's movements have long been penetrated with the ego. To get rid of it altogether is only possible when the

MOTHER INDIA

whole consciousness becomes the true consciousness—for even when the true mind, heart, vital become full of the Mother, the physical keeps the old habit and it returns mechanically by force of habit. But finally this habit wears out by the constant self-giving and devotion and disappears altogether.

26-11-1935

NON-ATTACHED LIVING

You must be prepared to live in either condition, attached neither to luxury nor to asceticism. It is good to be able to live with very few things but you must also be able to live with nice and decent things and make right use of them. Never mind your true need, live with whatever the Mother has given you.

6-4-1932

A VISION

Q: I saw a long big key in front of me; above it, the word "Mother" was written in big letters in white colour. Upon this, from above and around, a light was falling. What does this indicate?

A: Is it a key you saw? If so the meaning is clear; it is the key to the divine realisation; the Mother is the key because it is her light (white is her colour) that enables us to open the gate of realisation.

THE MOTHER'S TOUCH

Q: You wrote to me—"Keep yourself open to the Mother and in perfect union with her. Make yourself entirely plastic to her touch and let her mould you swiftly towards perfection." What does "her" "touch" exactly mean?

A: Touch means the contact of Mother's force and its influence. If you allow no other influence, you will easily become plastic.

ASHRAM GLIMPSES

(By an American Newcomer)

A DEEPER BROTHERHOOD

“ ‘GURUBHAI’ is a precious name,” said an Ashram brother soon after our arrival. Its meaning is enhanced with the passing months. One can believe that in time our growing together ever deeper into the Divine Parent will produce, among its many fruits, a more potent brotherhood than is found elsewhere.

This is a fact of great importance to the task of world-changing. Sri Aurobindo has written, “Only when man has developed, not merely a fellow-feeling with all men, but a dominant sense of unity and commonalty, only when he is aware of them not merely as brothers—that is a fragile bond—but as parts of himself, only when he has learned to live, not in his separate personal and communal ego-sense, but in a larger universal consciousness can the phenomenon of war, with whatever weapons, pass out of his life for ever.”

Out of much disillusioning experience in work for world peace, through the “World Brotherhood Mobilization” and other organizations, the writer can bear witness that in comparison with the divinely based fraternity of the Ashram the much-vaunted “brotherhood of man” is indeed “a fragile bond.” *Gurubhai ki jai! Victoire à la Mère Divine!*

BEAUTIFUL MEN

Poets and novelists of all times have been inspired to write of the beauty of woman, but a newcomer to the Ashram cannot help noticing, that here there are also not a few men who immediately strike one as beautiful. And a look beneath the surface reveals that, even in those who happen to have inherited a homely exterior, a certain pervasive grace is at work. It is scarcely surprising that those who for many years have looked with aspiring devotion into the face of the Divine should come to reflect something of that immortal Beauty.

MOTHER INDIA

THIS PRIVILEGE SUPREME

This is an age of the apocalyptic grown commonplace. Issues of vast import clamour for the attention and allegiance of mankind until crisis-weary mortals are prone to abandon the effort to keep big things big and small things small. We who live in the Ashram are not immune to this temptation. Are we not likely after a time to begin taking for granted, *in some degree*, the greatest boon of Heaven, just because it is a *constant*, our spiritual North Star?

But with persevering gratitude we can remind ourselves that ours is a privilege supreme. To live under the direct divine touch of not one Guru but two, not one Yugavator but two, is without precedent in the long history of mankind. If Jesus said to those "of little faith" around Him, "Truly I tell you, kings and prophets have desired to see the things that you see but could not", what shall we say of this mighty dual divine Advent and this blessed centre where we live under the immediate inspiration of "a constant Grace"?

It is a comfort to one who has been disillusioned with missionary and promotional pretensions of whatever sort to be aware that these sublime Facts exist in an atmosphere where we abhor assertions of the superiority of one Incarnation of the Divine over another, abstain from thinking or speaking in terms of "religion", much less rival religions, renounce all pride of the human instrument and refrain from resort to propaganda and appeals for support, overt or covert.

"PLAY-GROUND"

Each evening without exception can be heard the impressive united tread of Her spiritual soldiers in training before the Mother. Marching and vigorous calisthenics have evidently done wonders for the ashramites of all ages,—men, women and children,—since they were inaugurated by Her four years ago. Men as old as sixty-eight are able to take the half hour or more of brisk exercises, including as much as seven minutes of running at a stretch. Of course Mother, in ageless triumph over what the world calls "the upper seventies", has already set the pace with her hour of tennis before coming to the play-ground.

Ashram veterans say that we cannot imagine the extent of the further emancipation of the women here which Mother has effected by leading them to join in the marching and calisthenics, in their own units, in athletic costume. Perhaps they were helped to overcome their initial hesitance by discovering

ASHRAM GLIMPSES

that "play-ground" could not only build health but also be the Ashram's daily social event, providing ample time before and after the exercises for chatting or for avoiding the necessity of errands! We soon find that, despite our first summer's heat, "play-ground" induces in us a thrilling fitness and gives daily practice in "Offering", the dedication of "every least movement" to the Divine.

CONCENTRATION

The rhythmic tread of the marching ranks has ceased. We are drawn up in a hollow square facing Mother who stands before the large green relief map of greater India. From her relaxed figure a great Peace descends upon us all. With nobody holding them in check, even the younger children who in ordinary society, especially in the West, are specimens of perpetual motion, are perfectly quiet throughout the seven or eight minutes of silent "Concentration" that ensues.

A newcomer to this Way does not presume to fathom all that transpires in this supremely creative Event. What tides of Love and Power flow through Her before whom we stand, and through Him, still Her Great Collaborator, to us their children who would grow into their perfect Union with the Divine, must depend on the receptivity we bring to this high moment of the Ashram-day.

AN INTEGRAL OFFERING

Many and diverse are the strands of our nature by which the Divine takes hold of us, and many the aspects of His Being through which we approach Him. One aspirant comes to the Ashram aflame with Bhakti, another is aglow with a newborn Light of Truth, a third has the glint of a great new resolution in his eye, determined to pour out his life in service to the Mother.

Whatever his background or his bent, each soon finds himself at the Master's *Samadhi* and there, spread out before him, is a vivid reminder that the Call and the divine opportunity are in terms of an *integral* Way, for the floral offerings are of every color and form and symbolize the full spectrum of the Life Divine in all its elements and qualities. In the ensemble they typify the entire surrender which alone can bring that glorious Response of the Supreme Grace, "the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of *Ananda*."

This floral rainbow reminds us daily that the nature of the Divine is a standing invitation to an integral self-offering, and nothing less. The galaxy of

MOTHER INDIA

physical, vital, mental and spiritual qualities symbolized here remind us also that Gurudev's *Samadhi* was not a stratospheric retreat into a "high uplifted Absolute" but one that continually returns to the Divine Task of world-transformation here and now.

HIMALAYAN EGO-ANTICS

As stubbornly as his shadow, man's ego dogs his footsteps even to the top of Everest. A second "Himalayan blunder" duplicates in essence the one to which the Mahatma once confessed—the under-estimation of the collective ego-mania, the passions and pride of human-kind. An otherwise heroic achievement, the conquest of Everest, has been marred by the controversy touched off by an unwise statement of the expedition's leader and fanned by many conflicting newspaper reports, as to which individual (of what race and nationality) first set foot on "the roof of the world." Which of the two climbers reached the summit a step or two ahead of the other, which of two countries can claim one of them as its citizen, which flag was hoisted first, have become hot issues that compete for the headlines with the news of great world events such as the efforts to end the war in Korea.

These unseemly ego-antics are the more incongruous against the majestic backdrop of the Himalayan panorama and in the light of the fact that each man of the victorious pair depended on the other for his very life in the final hazardous assault, that both depended upon and were overwhelmingly representative of the whole expedition as a team, and that this expedition "stood on the shoulders" of eleven former Everest expeditions, as the leader of this one acknowledged. Not the least of the absurdities is the fact that the vast majority of the heated contenders over precise firstness and citizenship and flag are doubtless plainsfolk who have never seen a mountain, much less climbed one.

Every sadhak knows that the conquest of ego is a spiritual Everest more demanding of discipline and endurance than the physical summit, and infinitely more rewarding. I turn to a rereading of our Master-Guide's account of this greater conquest, "Equality and the Annihilation of Ego" (in *Synthesis of Yoga*), grateful that He has charted the way from His own triumphant experience. I then turn to Her who incarnates before our eyes the selfless Love and Power of the Divine and who inspires and guides my toiling ascent.

JAY

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BRAIN

A SCRUTINY OF SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS

I

IN an article entitled *Consciousness and the Brain* in *Science News* 25 Mrs. Margaret Knight, well-known writer on scientific psychology, believes she has made a couple of most momentous points in the still continuing controversy over the mind-body relationship. In stating the problem she remarks that there are many possible views such as psycho-physical parallelism, neutral monism, absolute idealism and Watsonian behaviourism but that the main issue lies between the hypothesis of interaction and of one-sided dependence—namely, of the mind on the brain. According to her, the weight of experimental scientific evidence is in favour of the latter and she declares herself an adherent, “though without dogmatic fervour”, to what she dubs the “brain-dependence school”. The only serious obstacle in the way is conceived to be one interactionist argument which has been repeatedly brought forward and seems never to have been effectively answered.

“The argument in question”, she writes, “has had some formidable advocates. It was used by the Hegelian philosopher McTaggart; it is accepted today by, among others, Sir Cyril Burt, who used it in a broadcast on the study of the mind; by Dr. C.E.M. Joad, and by Mr. C.S. Lewis. It is a type of argument that was beloved by metaphysicians of an older generation. It is directed against a hypothesis that is based mainly on experimental evidence; and it attacks this hypothesis, not by bringing forward facts which are inconsistent with it, but by an *a priori* argument designed to show that the hypothesis is self-contradictory.”

Such an argument, for all its supposedly old-fashioned look, would of course cut the very ground from under the feet of the brain-dependence school. Mrs. Knight is fully aware of this, but in her opinion the argument is invalid—and here comes what is meant by her to be a couple of most momentous points against it. In the view of the present writer she is really off the track, since the controversy between interactionists and the brain-dependence school is not at all about the points she has sought to make.

The argument is introduced by her in a brief quotation from McTaggart's *Philosophical Studies*: "If materialism is true, all our thoughts are produced by purely material antecedents. These are quite blind, and are just as likely to produce falsehood as truth. We have thus no reason for believing any of our conclusions—including the truth of materialism, which is therefore a self-contradictory hypothesis."

One wonders how many readers not thoroughly acquainted with the problem would be able to get the sense of it through this over-compact passage. They would be at a disadvantage to judge Mrs. Knight's "refutation". However, let that pass for the moment: a fuller statement will develop as we go on. Evidently the problem raised is of truth and falsehood. But what is to be understood by these terms here? Mrs. Knight gives the commonsense definition, saying that truth can be taken for present purposes as a proposition which "corresponds with a fact". Then she proceeds to test McTaggart in the field of immediate sense-perception. She writes: "Someone asks us, let us say, how many cats there are on the hearth-rug, and we look and see that there are two. What happens, in physiological terms, is that images are formed on the retinae of our eyes, electro-chemical impulses are transmitted along the optic nerve to the visual areas of the brain, and so on; and as a result we see two cats, and form the related belief that two cats are in fact there. Few people would dispute that in cases of this kind our belief is wholly determined by these 'purely material antecedents', to use McTaggart's phrase: given those specific sensory and brain processes, the belief *must* follow. Yet, so far as I know, no interactionist has argued that there is therefore no ground for supposing such beliefs to be true."

The only objection to her reasoning she anticipates in what she calls "absolute scepticism". She grants that, logically, there is no escape from the possibility that all the information received through electro-chemical messages transmitted to the brain from the sense-organs may be false because of distortion by the material intermediaries. Against this possibility she argues: "Even if all our beliefs were determined by mental, not physical processes, they would still be open to the same sceptical doubts; for the absolute sceptic sees no more reason for trusting the mind than for trusting the brain and sense-organs. Absolute scepticism, in short, is a logically tenable theory on any view of the mind-body relationship and the interactionist can no more refute it than the believer in brain-dependence."

Mrs. Knight's next step is to imagine what the interactionists say when

pressed to explain why, if they distrust beliefs that are determined by "purely material antecedents", they trust the deliverances of their senses. The answer she puts into their mouths is that beliefs based on sense perception are not really the sort of beliefs they are talking about. And then she goes on to deal with the sort of beliefs she pictures them to be offering as the real issue at stake.

We shall soon inquire what these beliefs are and whether her way with them carries conviction. But first we must show up the wrong-headedness of her procedure in the wake of the definition that truth stands for "correspondence with a fact". We do not need to call the definition itself in question; nor can we deny that once we adopt it we do involve the field of sense-perception. But, when interactionists try to prove materialism to be self-contradictory, do they accept beforehand that a perception is determined solely by physical processes in the sense-organs, the nerves and the brain?

With regard to McTaggart it is doubtful whether the quotation from him involves the field of perception at all. He speaks of "any of our conclusions" and gives the impression of meaning by truth a "conclusion" logically deduced. What he appears to refuse is to trust any conclusion reached by the specific procedure of logic from premises and data if that procedure is determined by purely material processes. It is in connection with the seeing of necessary implications when we act the logician that the word "blind" applied by him to "purely material antecedents" seems to have meaning. By all tokens, "correspondence with a fact" is not directly germane to the particular argument he offers.

However, we cannot deny that it is germane to an aspect of the interactionist argument, which, unlike the one presented by McTaggart, is connected with the perceptual field. But Mrs. Knight does not strike me as understanding what is involved. Else she would not blandly describe the perceptual process as she does. For, what is involved is indeed a challenge to her very description. To elucidate it we must ask whether any bodily event can be spoken of as true or false according to our definition. Can we call the state of my blood-pressure or the temperature of my skin true or false? Truth and falsehood in our definition have meaning only when there is an inevitable implicative reference from one thing to another, for then alone can there be any correspondence. A bodily event is just itself, it does not claim anything relating to a fact outside it, its occurrence does not demand comparison with a phenomenon other than itself, it asserts nothing except its own condition unless we start making

comparisons as we do in the case of a mirror which reflects something. A perception is on a completely different footing: it involves inherently a reference to a so-called external fact which it purports to assert or report or describe: it calls intrinsically for a judgment of its truth or falsehood.

And if a perception cannot be put on a par with a bodily event and can never be something physical, can it be the mere end-product of a chain of bodily events like the stimulation of a sense-organ, the running of an electro-chemical impulse from the sense-organ towards the brain, the reception of this impulse by certain areas in the cortex? Can the result of events of which it is meaningless to speak as true or false be of quite another order of reality about which words like "truth" and "falsehood" are significant? On the very face of it, this seems an impossibility, an absurdity. Mrs. Knight's description of the perceptual process assumes the seemingly impossible and absurd without the least qualm. The rational thing to do is to look for a different description which, without omitting the bodily events, goes beyond them and regards them more as normally indispensable occasions or provocations than as causes.¹

Mrs. Knight is unaware that to believe a perception to be true does not entail wholesale acceptance of her account of the perceptual process. The interactionist never resorts to absolute scepticism not because he is inconsistent when he refuses to doubt the deliverances of his senses but because when he trusts his perceptions he does not subscribe to the theory that they are totally determined by the events mentioned by her. The point, therefore, to which she ironically draws our attention—namely, that interactionists make no bones about believing perceptions—is utterly irrelevant. And not realising its irrelevance she does not see also how the interactionist argument, where it has to do with the perceptual field, shows a self-contradiction in the brain-dependence thesis: this thesis which, like a perception, is supposed to correspond with a fact stultifies itself automatically if it is determined by physical events which have no inevitable implicative reference beyond their own factuality, for then it too will be cut off from the question of truth and falsehood.

We come now to the other aspect of the interactionist argument—the one which, without understanding what the interactionists have to say apropos perception, she makes them imply to be the only real issue. In this aspect the argument is not about beliefs whose truth is defined by correspondence with

¹This important topic will be touched upon again in a subsequent article.

a fact but about, as Mrs. Knight puts it, "‘reasoned beliefs—that is, beliefs that we reach by deductive reasoning, or by the weighing of evidence’". But the problem whether we could trust such beliefs unless we knew that they were determined by mental and not by brain processes is tackled by her with the same unsubtlety as distinguishes her treatment of the other aspect of the argument. She tackles it by putting in effect a counter-query which, in her opinion, cuts to the heart of the controversy. Do we and should we reject the results of calculating machines as untrue just because they are produced by material processes? The answer of every sensible man—be he interactionist or no—is, of course, that we do not and should not. This answer is interpreted by Mrs. Knight to signify that the interactionist has thrown up the sponge. Really, however, the point Mrs. Knight considers the central one here has little force. No interactionist has built upon it and no interactionist grants that his "Yes" to her query entitles her to conclude that we lack ground to rule out brain-processes as all-sufficient producers of correct conclusions and true results arrived at by reasoning

According to Mrs. Knight, the sole difference between the electronic machines whose materially worked out results we accept as true and human brains with their electro-chemical events is the conscious experience of many kinds accompanying the latter and giving legitimacy to the term "mind". But, in her eyes, mind depends on brain and the argument summarised by McTaggart and claiming to refute this view is fallacious. On the brain-dependence hypothesis, she says, the result we reach is entirely determined by material processes, but that is no reason for distrusting the result, any more than it would be a reason for distrusting the results of calculations worked out by electronic machines. The fact mentioned by McTaggart that all material processes, whether accompanied by conscious experience or not, are in themselves "blind" makes no odds for her.

I am afraid Mrs. Knight has overlooked the precise reason why electronic machines can calculate correctly and give us truth. Her explanation is: "mathematical laws and relationships have their counterparts in the functioning of the calculator." But that is a truism, amounting to saying that a calculator is a calculator. And on the strength of a mere truism one has no right to a Q.E.D. just by equating the human brain with the calculating machine as does Mrs. Knight when she says: "Similarly they (mathematical laws and relationships) have their counterparts in the functioning of the human brain." The pertinent point is: How did these laws and relationships get there? In the case of the machines, they were put there by man. The machines can calculate correctly

and give us truth simply because they work according to a man-made plan ensuring correctness and truth—a plan based on conscious practice of logical mathematics. Strictly, the working of these machines can be compared to brain processes only if the latter have already been set from outside by a conscious agency, which is logician and mathematician, to produce correct and true results. In general, the comparison can hold if a conscious determinant is admitted to be either within or without the brain or else in some way both within and without, a mental determinant in whose absence there can be no guarantee of correctness, no meaning in the term “truth” as employed here. It is insufficient for Mrs. Knight to say that brain is not all there is to man and that mind cannot be denied. Here it is necessary to speak actually of the brain’s dependence on mind just as it is necessary to speak of the calculating machine’s dependence on man’s logic and mathematics.

Let me repeat that correctness and truth in our context involve acting according to the logical implications of a situation or problem. they involve a choice by deductive reasoning between alternatives of thought, a rationally argued judgment. A machine calculates trustworthily if such a choice has already been made for it and if such a judgment is rendered operative through it. A physical process entirely determined by physical antecedents and not by something else which thus chooses and judges cannot be spoken of as working out a correct or true result. “Truth” or “correctness” in the logical sense is absolutely inapplicable to either a machine’s working or a brain process or any other physical activity by itself. The one is a matter of conscious “ought”, the other a matter of blind “must”. Without a conscious “ought” operating somewhere somehow, no physical activity can be said to bring about results true or correct from the logical standpoint. That is why, when we talk of truth here, mind is not only indispensable but has got to be independent of brain and has to be considered as acting upon and affecting cerebral processes. The study of calculating machines—“cybernetics”, as it is currently called—may at the most indicate—though this is problematic—that when reasoning occurs a process goes on in the brain according to the same physical laws that hold within an electronic calculator. But this process, like the calculator’s, implies a conscious “oughting” agency which is other than itself and determines it.

Mrs. Knight seems to forget all this and concentrates on a question which has no crucial bearing and which in fact no interactionist answers in the negative. Is it any wonder she misses completely the force of the contention that if, as materialism asserts, material states are totally determinant of our

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE BRAIN: A SCRUTINY OF SCIENTIFIC OPINIONS

mental states there can be no conscious "oughting" agency which can possibly draw correctly a materialistic conclusion from the evidence and data available and there will be merely "blind" factors at work which can appreciate no logical implications and may tend towards falsehood as readily as towards truth, factors which make it self-contradictory to argue whether materialism is true or false?

The famous interactionist argument remains intact in both its aspects. Mrs. Knight has not disproved its validity. And, as she herself admits, if it is valid, it is fatal to the brain-dependence hypothesis.

To be continued.

K. D. SETHNA

POEMS

TO EARTH

EARTH with your gems, flame of amethyst, chrysolite, diamond-spark,
Your veins of vibrant silver, living gold—
What are you waiting for, O my love in the dark?
Beauty hid from the beginning, age on age untold,
Potently, patiently burning—at Whose behest?
That the blood-drops of ruby and sapphirine tears may adorn
Your final Crown? And all your fires, made white in the Light
Of that Morning, cry 'Consummatum Est'?

MARGARET FORBES

THE STAR AND THE FLAME

A SPIRIT-STAR had risen in the East,
And drawn by the light-borne call of that wonder-Star
A Golden Flame leaped out from the heart of the West
That the world be wed in One, the near and the far.

The tables are laid, O Lord, for Thy golden feast,
But where art Thou, O where in silence veiled?
Conquering all Thou brok'st Thy body's nest,
O Thou who hadst the vast infinitudes sailed.

A velamen hides Thy action's golden Day
Which a single cry alone of Love can break.
The soul must grow in man's aspiring heart
And human life be tuned for the Vast's Truth-play,
Then only shall be served the ambrosial cake
And the Flame unveil the Star by Her Magic Art.

PRITHWI SINGH

THE GOLDEN KISS

FAR from the unborn skies of changeless height
Comes down a rose
Like a sudden magical revealing light
From the timeless snows

Of God's endless meditation's upwardness,
A golden name
From the unnamable, an ache, a stress,
A bodied flame.

It wings down from its distances of still
Wingless release
With cadence-rapture too vast, ineffable,
A heaven-bliss

Too sublime for earth and time and lonely soul,
A burning face
From the shores of uncaught ecstasies, a scroll
No nights efface.

It touches then the brow of the ancient mire
With lips divine
Changing its dusthood to wide unmeasured fire
Intense, hyaline.

Wakening a hidden poignant eternity
Within its deeps
Till all darknesses become a luminous sea
Of Apocalypse.

Earth now discovers the golden rose of noon
Live in her clay,
A burden of splendid epiphanies, a boon
Of the diamond Day!

ROMEN

MOTHER INDIA

THE OFFERING

I AM Thy dream shaped by thy hands
Break me to a thousand bits, O break
As Thou willest, build anew and deck
My nights with flares that day commands!

Let earth sing sweet Thy form and name—
All that grovel shall rise yet high,
Free in the bosom of boundless sky;
God-white Fire! kindle thy purest flame!

Grey shall at a magic touch turn green,
The far depth of delight to embrace
Whose path the dawning hours retrace;
The sun shall scatter the cloudy screen!

Moulded from Thy Will alone, rebuild
This clod, O Master of golden dream!
I offer my all to the Grace supreme:
All that I am, to Her I yield!

ROBI GUPTA

TO THE UNKNOWN

Oh Mystery unfathomable! Thee alone I seek.

In vastness of silent sky and depth of thunderous ocean, in glamour of dawn and witchery of dusk I have yearned to find Thee, Oh ever Unknown!

In tremulous shyness of sweet union and tear-stained sorrow of solitude, in peaks of joy and wombs of pain, in smiles of kin and friends' farewell Thou art concealed.

Thou art veiled behind firmness of rock and tender beauty of untainted flowers, in long lingering hours of languid night and boundless blaze of noon.

In swiftly sliding streams and maddening moonlight, in purple of the mountain and emerald of the forest, in rapture of creation and ruins of destruction Thou art disguised. And where art Thou not? Still, Oh Omnipresent, the world is weary with agelong quest of Thee. And still in vain have my eyes thirsted for Thee, Oh Unknown!

DHANANJAY DESAI

(Free rendering from the original Gujarati by D. H. Desai)

SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE GITA

(Continued from the July Issue)

THE opening chapter of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* is "Our Demand and Need from the Gita". Right at the outset he proceeds to examine what exactly is the sacrifice of which the Gita speaks, what we expect to get from it and how we should approach it. The Gita is undoubtedly a Gospel of Works, but only of such works, Sri Aurobindo says, as culminate in knowledge or are motivated by devotion—"not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals".

This exposition of the Gita's message is very important in view of the fact that so many persons of note in modern India constantly cite the authority of this scripture in their exhortations to their countrymen to shake off their quietistic tendencies and engage ardently in political, social and philanthropic work. "To all this", says Sri Aurobindo, "I can only reply that this is a modern misreading, a reading of the present-day European and Europeanised intellect into a thoroughly antique and...Indian teaching." What this great book teaches is divine action, the abandonment of all other standards of duty for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature. No other interpretation is consistent with the famous mandate of the divine Teacher to his disciple towards the end of the book:

"Abandon all other *dharma*s (standards of conduct) and seek shelter with Me alone. I shall give you protection from all vice and evil".

Likewise, there are those who urge that this book teaches, not works at all, but a renunciation of life and action and formulates the course of preparation for the abandonment of all works. They argue that the unattached performance of action enjoined by the holy books and the doing of indispensable bodily functions form part of the discipline leading to ultimate renunciation of life and works. This view is supported by convenient citations from the texts but these arguments are obviously untenable in the face of persistent assertions to the very end of the book that action is superior to inaction. In this connection

Krishna makes a very important remark to Arjuna, "Even for the keeping together of this world you have to engage in action." That is to say, not only for the keeping up of your own bodily life but also for the maintenance of corporate existence—your family, your Society, your State—you have to work assiduously. What the superior type of man does in this direction is an example to his inferiors. The Teacher, therefore, exhorts his disciple to pick up his bow and arrows and perform his knightly duties. "With your consciousness fixed in the spirit, give up all your work to me and without desire, without attachment, fight on fearlessly": such is the command of the divine Charioter. Arjuna, influenced by a false pity, overcome by a softness of heart unworthy of a soldier, had cast aside his weapons. His friend and guide urges him to pull himself together and fight for the cause of righteousness, in a spirit of detachment and surrender. What the Gita teaches, then, is clearly not an outer renunciation of the act, but the inner renunciation of desire by an equality of the soul and the offering of all Karma to the supreme Lord of the universe.

Again, there are some people who argue that the Gita is a gospel of *Bhakti* (devotion) more than anything else. They put in the background, says Sri Aurobindo, "its monistic elements and the high place it gives to quietistic immergence in the one Self of all." There is undoubtedly in this scripture a strong emphasis on devotion and an insistence on the conception of the Supreme who is ever seated in the heart of every individual. But this immanent Lord, says Sri Aurobindo, "is the Self in whom all knowledge culminates and the Master of Sacrifice to whom all works lead as well as the Lord of Love into whose being the heart of devotion enters." The Purushottama of the Gita is the Supreme being in whom Knowledge, Action and Devotion meet and become one. A perfectly equal balance is preserved. We shall revert to this anon.

Like the Veda or the Upanishads or any other ancient scripture, the Gita is principally engaged in seeking the one ultimate and eternal Truth. It is obvious that a Truth of truths, such as this, cannot be tied down to a set dogma, cannot be contained in all its bearings in any single philosophy or in the teachings of any one Teacher. But one and eternal though it be, it is made up of two distinct elements or aspects—one, temporary and mutable, applicable to the ideas of a definite period and country, and the other of eternal and universal application. Also, as time progresses, this latter Truth takes on new forms and new modes of expression, what is really valuable is whether it has been lived and experienced and seen with a higher vision. How the Gita was understood by contemporary men, or by the men of the periods that followed, is but of little importance. So many are the commentaries on this great book, and so widely

do they differ from one another, that they cannot point out to us any definite metaphysical connotation. But, says Sri Aurobindo, "what we can do with profit is to seek in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from their metaphysical form, to extract therefrom what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression we can find, that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity." There is in this scripture very little that is local or temporal. What little there is can be very easily universalised and the way is suggested in the text itself. We have already dealt with the subtle symbolic sense imported to the Yajna or Sacrifice of the Veda. Vedism and Vedantism have both been put forward and reconciled. Equally, shows Sri Aurobindo, "the idea of action according to the Shastra, the four-fold order of society, the illusion to the...spiritual disabilities of Shudras and women seem at first sight local and temporal, and, if too much pressed in their literal sense,...deprive it (the teaching) of its universality and spiritual depth and limit its validity for mankind at large." But looking behind the apparent and superficial, we cannot fail to discover that the sense is profound and spiritual and universal. By Shastra we perceive that the Gita means the law imposed on humanity by itself as a substitute for the pure egoism of the unregenerate man who seeks only the satisfaction of his desire. The division into four castes is the outward form of a spiritual truth, which is independent of that form. Its basis is "the conception of right works as a rightly ordered expression of the nature of the individual being through whom the work is done."

With the element of current philosophical terms and religious symbols that have entered into the book we shall deal in the same spirit. It has, we find, given its own meaning to these terms and symbols, regardless of the dogma or creed with which they were connected in the contemporary mind. Sankhya in the Gita, for instance, is very different from the agnostic school of philosophy founded by Kapila, with its scheme of one Prakriti and many Purushas. Yoga, likewise, in this scripture, is not the philosophy of that name profounded by Patanjali—a rigidly defined and graded system of discipline—but is a rich and flexible yogic attitude leading steadily to action without attachment and desire. The first, Sankhya, is concerned with renunciation of Karma while the second, Yoga, is based on the doing of Karma, though in a particular manner. Are they really different in their precepts? The Gita recognises no difference and says, "It is only children who call them different; wise men see no distinction." The common mind of the time looked upon these two systems as contradictory. So Arjuna is perplexed and asks, "Thou declarest to me the renunciation of works, O Krishna, and again Thou declarest to me Yoga; which

one of these is the better way, that tell me with a clear decisiveness." The Teacher replies that the salvation of the soul is brought about by both, but, of the two, Yoga of works is distinguished above renunciation. He explains that a man who applies himself integrally to one gets the fruit of both, but adds that renunciation is difficult to attain without Yoga. Sri Aurobindo sums up the Gita's point of view this way:—"In the Gita the Sankhya and Yoga are evidently only two convergent paths of the same Vedantic truth or rather two concurrent ways of approaching its realisation, the one philosophical, intellectual, analytic, the other intuitional, devotional, practical, ethical, synthetic, reaching knowledge through experience."

The Sankhya school had conceived an all-powerful Prakriti, the doer of all acts, and many Purushas, for whose enjoyment Prakriti does her acts. The Gita, though it formulates one Prakriti and one Purusha, agrees that Prakriti performs all actions and for the enjoyment of the Purusha. But there is a very great difference between the two views. It is that Purusha in the Gita does not occupy a position subordinate or secondary to that of Prakriti. On the contrary, Nature is "my nature" as Krishna describes it in passages like, "Controlling my Nature I create again and again". But he also tells Arjuna that both Purusha and Prakriti are without a beginning; side by side, the two principles have existed eternally. According to this scripture, therefore, there has always been a Nature acting by her three *Gunas* (modes), but every one of her acts has throughout been sanctioned and upheld by the Lord. We shall revert to the Gita's presentation of Purusha and Prakriti at greater length, later on. It is enough to indicate here that the book adopts older terms and symbols for its own purposes and uses them in its special way. The conception of the two aspects, *Parā* and *Aparā*, of Nature and the three aspects of the Purusha (or the Divine) are the Gita's own, though they were not quite unknown to older scriptures.

The Gita has, no doubt, a philosophic system of its own, but more important than the system itself is the varied material, of which it is made up. For, a great part of this material is not so much ideas and speculations of the intellect as abiding truths of spiritual experience, verifiable facts of the highest psychological possibilities. One thing, however, is clear; this system is not intended to support any narrow and exclusive line of thought, as sectarian commentators have sought to make out. The following remark of Sri Aurobindo is explicit:—"The language of the Gita, the structure of thought, the combination and balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of a sectarian teacher nor to the spirit of a rigorous analytical dialectics cutting off one angle

of the truth to exclude all the others; but rather there is a wide, undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind and a rich synthetic experience." Indian spirituality has been particularly rich in these great syntheses. The method of the Gita, as we have indicated before, "does not cleave asunder, but reconciles and unifies." Its thought is not pure Monism though it sees in the one eternal unchanging Self the basis of all creation. It is not Mayavada (Illusionism) though it speaks of the Maya of the three modes of Nature, though Krishna tells Arjuna, "Enveloped by my Yogamaya, I am not manifest to all beings". It is not Sankhyavada though it explains creation by the dual principle of Prakriti-Purusha. It is not Qualified Monism though it lays more stress on dwelling in the Divine than in dissolution as the great goal. It is not Vaishnava theism though it places Krishna in the forefront as the supreme Ishwara—Krishna says in the text, "There is no principle higher than myself." The Gita is all these lines of thought and yet none of them.

Like the earlier spiritual synthesis of the Upanishads, the synthesis of the Gita, at once spiritual and intellectual, avoids all rigid determination such as would detract from its universal character. Its various sectarian commentators delight in dialectical warfare, but in the midst of their impassioned clamour the immortal text shines in its calm and sublime impartiality. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision." The Gita is a gate opening into the whole world of spiritual truth and experience.

In the long history of Indian spiritual thought there have been many attempts at synthesis. In the opening chapter of his Essays, Sri Aurobindo goes briefly over these and shows where the Gita stands in relation to the others "The crown of this synthesis", says he, "was in the experience of the Vedic Rishis something divine, transcendent and blissful, in whose unity the increasing soul of man and the eternal divine fullness of the cosmic godheads meet perfectly and fulfil themselves." When the Truth-consciousness of these early seers got lost in the maze of elaborate rituals, the Rishis of the Upanishadic period took it on themselves to rediscover the lost Key of Vedic Sadhana. By earnest meditation they sought to realise the highest spiritual Truths and embodied the result in the sublime scriptures known as the Upanishads. In these books we find constant reference to the sages and seers of old and occasionally come across whole verses taken from the Veda. The achievements of these later Rishis is thus summed up by Sri Aurobindo:—"They drew together into a great harmony all that had been seen and expe-

rienced by the inspired and liberated knowers of the Eternal throughout a great and fruitful period of spiritual seeking." The Gita starts with the experience of these sublime God-knowers and builds up on it its remarkable harmony of the three great paths of Love, Knowledge and Works, by which the human soul can come into direct contact with the Supreme.

Of the more recent attempts at synthesis, Sri Aurobindo picks out the Tantric and pays a very high tribute to it indeed:—"It is even more bold and forceful than the synthesis of the Gita,—for it seizes even upon the obstacles to the spiritual life and compels them to become the means for a rich spiritual conquest and enables us to embrace the whole of Life in our divine scope as the Lila of the Divine." The Tantra also grasped at the old Vedic idea of the perfectibility of man which had been lost during the intervening ages and brought out to the forefront the idea of using the body and the mind for the opening up of divine life on all planes, which has been so highly developed in Hathayoga and Rajayoga.

All this makes it clear that we are called upon, to-day, to proceed to a newer and larger synthesis than any that has gone before. In this progress, we must not get caught within the four walls of the teaching of even a great scripture like the Gita. For, as says Sri Aurobindo, "we do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future". Fresh material is flowing freely into us from many sources. We have to assimilate not only the influence of the past, in India and elsewhere, including a recovered sense of Buddha's message, but also to take full account of modern knowledge. All this, says Sri Aurobindo, "points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis". The Gita occupies a prominent place in the store of spiritual knowledge that the past has bequeathed to us. But we should approach it for help and light in our great quest and not with any idea of academical scrutiny or analysis.

The seeker must not, however, expect to find in it what is clearly beyond its scope. What this scope is has been set forth very briefly by Sri Aurobindo in his *Synthesis of Yoga*. We shall quote a very few lines. "It is true that the path alone, as the ancients saw it, is worked out fully; the perfect fulfilment, the highest secret is hinted rather than developed; it is kept back as an unexpressed part of a supreme mystery".

The reason for this is also indicated:—"Fulfilment is...a matter of experience and no teaching can express it. It cannot be described in a way that can really be understood by a mind that has not the effulgent transmuting experience."

SRI AUROBINDO'S INTERPRETATION OF THE GITA

The Vedic sages made it amply clear that the words of the supreme wisdom convey a meaning only to those who have already had the light. Sri Aurobindo calls the ending of the Gita cryptic and says that it has not crossed the border into the glory of supramental illumination. This requires a little elucidation for the ordinary reader. The Gita's exhortation to dynamic identity with the Divine and its insistence on absolute surrender to the inner Lord constitute the core of its teaching, its central truth. After preparing his beloved disciple in various ways, the Teacher imparts to him the supreme secret in two or three verses, the secret of the completest surrender without which no supramental change can come. And again, says Sri Aurobindo, it is only through supramental transformation that a dynamic identity with God is possible. Now, what is the effect of the supreme disclosure on Arjuna? He says at once, firmly and clearly:—"By your grace, O Achyuta, my delusion has been shattered, my memory has come back; I have gained my poise, my doubts have vanished, I will do your bidding." A state of the fullest submission, the pith of the teaching of the Gita. This is the cryptic close of the great scripture. The sun-lit summit of the Supermind stands clear and bright before the disciple, but it has yet to be climbed.

(To be continued)

C. C. DUTT

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Poems for Children by *Norman Dowsett*. Publishers. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Price. Rs. 2.

The selection of poems for children has always been a problem beset with very intricate difficulties and except in rare cases the poems are either nursery rhymes or 'delightful teachings.' The difficulty arises from the fundamental nature of poetry itself. No poem can be written or even appreciated truly if the poet or the reader has been prompted by some ulterior motive. The poet cannot write to order for the simple reason that he cannot stipulate his own conditions to the influx of the inspiration that comes from above. He cannot temper the wind to the shorn lamb and write a poem, all the while keeping in view the requirements of the children of a certain age. No genuine poet can allow his inspiration to be attenuated, curbed and cramped by such considerations. He has to give shape to the vision of beauty by which he has been thrilled, without caring whether it is understandable, clear and definable or not. A poem is 'a drainless shower of light' and the poet as the recipient has only to serve as a channel for that flash of eternal beauty which descends 'plunging through gold eternities' 'into the gulfs our nature.' Any interference on his part will act as an obstruction in the artistic creation of the Muse and spoil so much of the work and mingle with it something of 'the grey and little'.

The text books compiled for children always suffer from this fatal defect: the poems selected for them are not the spontaneous expressions of the poet's soul but some manufactured stuff lacking in any intrinsic power or beauty. Their merit consists only in being understandable by the young minds. The poem must be such as can be explained and paraphrased by the teacher and grasped by the pupil. And yet a true poem is so elusive a thing that it can neither be explained nor grasped but only felt.

*We do it wrong, being so majestic,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable...*

Such poems create a distaste for poetry in the minds of the students with the result that they read them not because their imagination is held captive

by the vision bodied forth in the poem but because it is necessary for success in the examination.

The Sri Aurobindo International University Centre must hew out a new path in this direction; for, the greatest seer-poet in human history presides over its destiny with "all the power of his creative genius."

The publication of *Poems for Children* will be perhaps a landmark in the history of education. Norman Dowsett, a poet of a fine order, is a torch-bearer for the new age and his book is not a compilation but the spontaneous utterance of his own psyche—that child in man which is an eternal portion of the Divine and whose light and purity remain unsullied and uncorrupted even when darkness tries to smother it. Whereas others while writing poems for children come down with great effort to the level of the child, Dowsett has uncovered the child in himself. The child is not only the man in preparation, but he has, as Wordsworth clearly recognised, a close kinship with his soul:

*Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;...
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.*

Dowsett, as I have said, by his spiritual sadhana has discovered or rather uncovered the eternal child in him, that which is immortal in mortals, and rises flame-pure from the depths of our hearts to kiss the Beauty that shines in the heavens of eternal Light and Bliss.

Hence it is that every poem has in it such a charm and thrill that children will find in it a lifelong companion fulfilling, as Keats said,

*...the great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend
To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.*

The poems are inspired by the ideal of divine humanity, free from the narrow walls of ego-centric life and liberated from the 'senses' narrow mesh'.

MOTHER INDIA

A human race, embodying the Divine in every act and thought and thus standing so far above man as man is above the animal, is the vision of the future.

In the poem 'Lotus Groves' he sees Lakshmi the goddess of Beauty and Celestial Harmony:

*Then Lakshmi smiles, and leans towards her daughters.
Earth-bound their feet, their heads like pale hands praying—
The sun-fire's liquid gold around them playing;
Brave heads held proud to kiss infinity
That know within them dwells divinity.
Pink tips that first received the rose-drawn light
To mark the sacred strain, vermillion bright—
So might a warrior's blood be purified
In thee, and come to be—so deified:
A symbol of high fate, man's liberty,
An emblem of divine humanity...*

Every poem radiates with the light of a spiritual vision and yet is full of colour and is iridescent with richness of imagery so that everything that he poet sees and makes the child see turns out to be a divine manifestation. In the poem 'Rose' he says:

*One quiet hour
I gazed on a flower,
And in a while
I saw Thy Smile
Fill all the earth
And in my heart
I saw the birth
Of Love there start :
It came from above—
Then could I call it mine,
This Rose,—this Love,
Breath-takingly divine.*

Usually, spiritual poems are bare and lack all colour and variety of theme and easily degenerate into didactic stuff. "The worst of religious poetry, as Johnson more than once pointed out, is its poverty of subject, and its enforced chastity of treatment. You cannot make a picture out of light alone; there

must be something to break it on", observes Sir Walter Raleigh. The reason for this failure is that the religious poets have no entry into the life spiritual, otherwise they would find in it inexhaustible material for poetry.

In another poem occur these lines full of simplicity and yet carrying an abiding significance:

*A great sun rose in my heart,
I loved all things—
Then all things became a part
Of thy voice that sings.*

The varying distribution of stresses invests the lines with subtle rhythmic effects. The first poem, 'The Mother' is a vision of the supreme divine creatrix who is omnipresent and in whose unity all of us become one.

*She knows no creed or caste,
Colour or race.
All can share Her vast
Unfailing Grace.*

Some prayers embody the child's aspiration for a higher and truer life. The poem 'Permit Sweet Mother' is addressed to the Divine Mother and ends with these lines:

*May our hearts beat with Thy Joy,
Our thoughts gleam with Thy Light—
May we become, each girl and boy,
More perfect in Thy sight.*

Some poems are full of fun and humour, the light stuff which the children will greet with laughter and from which also unconsciously imbibe some golden rule of a higher life.

The poem on 'Fairies' is an exquisite piece charged with imaginative fire and lyrical glow and warmth. The word 'Fairy' is always a vaulting-board for the child's flights in the planes of Beauty and Delight. They are real even when most fantastic because, as Keats said, what the imagination sees as Beauty must have Reality somewhere. "Are they real?" asks the child with wonder shining in his eyes. And the answer is:

MOTHER INDIA

*If you tell what you have seen—
Fairy rainbow's golden sheen,
To those who can't believe it's true
The fairy sight will fly from you.*

*There are worlds beyond our ken
And we only see them when
Our heart has opened like a flower:
This we call "the magic hour."*

And then these lines welling out of a psychic perception:

*Or when at twilight sleeps the rose,
And shows you, ere its petals close,
The form its perfumed beauty takes,
A fay or pixy, sprite or faery wakes.*

Echoes of Wordsworth's nature-poems may also be heard—e.g.:

*A bird note now has joined the throng
From depths to heights above—
The universe is full with song,
Her anthem voice of Love.*

Such are the poems included in this book consisting of sixty-four pieces in all. We ardently hope that the book will be widely accepted or at least others also will be stimulated to cut the new ground and give a new orientation to the education of children at an age when their minds are supple and impressionable. May it prove a harbinger of many others.

R. N. KHANNA

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo Part I by *Rishabhchand*. (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Rs. 3:-)

Readers of *Mother India* need no introduction to the stimulating pen of Rishabhchand, whose timely survey of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is (and has been for some time) appearing month by month in these pages. Now we have the first nine chapters of his exegesis published in neat book-form, constituting Part I, or the first half of the complete work.

The outstanding value of Rishabhchand's treatment is that in a simple, clear and straightforward way, he gives the main essentials of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga; and this is indeed valuable for the many of us who first approach Sri Aurobindo's synthesis with very mixed ideas on the subject. Our difficulties are not lessened by the fact that Sri Aurobindo left a very large mass of writings on Yoga, much of which, while not easily accessible, often proves too extensive for the average reader's first attempt to grasp the gist of it. A major work of Sri Aurobindo's was *The Synthesis of Yoga* which appeared in the old monthly magazine *Arya*, and extended through 72 chapters in the original; and added to this are the innumerable letters which he later wrote on the subject, and which are scattered through several collections, and other compilations on the practical problems of Yoga. Also, at the other extreme, we have the highly intensive synoptical work *The Mother* which without doubt is the very key to the whole Yoga, but which is so compressed (as compact as the Gita and as weighty with meaning) that again the ordinary reader is apt to boggle in attempting to take it all in at one gulp (which of course he is not expected to do). Rishabhchand's treatment is nicely planted midway between these two poles, and acts as a gateway to either the extensive or the intensive sphere of Sri Aurobindo's work.

At the outset we are shown that the goal of Yoga, which is the really important thing to have in mind all the time, is union with the Divine; and that the diversity of methods is always subordinate to this central aim. (How often in the history of Yoga the end has been completely swallowed up by a lavish overgrowth of the means!) The aim must, above all, satisfy that innate and persistent aspiration of man to link himself with the Highest, the Divine Reality, in whatever image he conceives Him in. The very root of the word Yoga lays its primary stress on union, which is in fact the only satisfying end to man's quest for wholeness and the integration of his incomplete being. Far from being an unnatural pursuit, Sri Aurobindo has shown us how Yoga is in direct line with the whole evolutionary ascent of man and the earth nature. Rishabhchand succinctly defines Yoga as "the direct movement of the consciousness and being of man through a series of self-purifications and self-enlargements towards the Truth of existence and its unconditioned peace and bliss".

In order to fully effectuate this link with man's natural development, Sri Aurobindo had delved through the whole of India's past achievements in Yoga. And we might note that the Integral Yoga is not a rehash but a renewed expression of yogic experience in terms of man's present development. It is nurtured by all that is greatest in the past, with direct roots in the Vedantic, Puranic, and Tantric traditions. We thus see it as a natural consummate

flowering of the great yogic tree of India. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is in fact, as Rishabhchand rightly calls it, "an epochal synthesis" for this present age, where yoga has become "at once the way and the ultimate goal of evolutionary Nature". This synthesis has rendered it a far-reaching and powerful instrument for the whole elevation of man (as Sri Aurobindo has himself proved it to be). It is, in effect, a gathering up of all our normally scattered and aimless efforts into a concentrated and one-pointed endeavour, linked with the Divine Will and Purpose. Precisely what this endeavour is, is shown step by step in Rishabhchand's book.

One admires the dexterity with which Rishabhchand handles all this mass of diverse material that Sri Aurobindo has put forth on the aims, methods and disciplines of Yoga. First, he has gathered all the historical material together, and shows Sri Aurobindo's unique contribution in respect of the present world needs; and, second, he has centralised all the diverse aspects of the Integral Yoga and shows how they converge on the central factor of the Divine Will and Grace embodied in the Divine Mother. The first aspect shows us how Sri Aurobindo's aim goes far beyond mere individual liberation; that nothing less than world transformation can be the fitting footstool for the Divine manifestation on earth. Such is the mighty goal set by Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. This leads naturally to the second aspect where the individual realises himself to be an instrument—but a growing conscious one—in a vast field that is being moulded and turned by a greater Will than his. Here the decisive turn is the surrender of one's egoistic will to the Divine, in order to become the true instrument in that greater Purpose and Design. This means a complete surrender of one's being, placing oneself wholly and unreservedly in the hands of the Mother, to become the true servitor of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo has indeed shown how the individual effort can be linked to the greater cosmic movement only by this complete surrender to the Divine; for in this relation we see the relevance of the individual effort linked with the evolutionary ascent of man and the divine Grace as the descent to meet man's stumbling efforts on the way. It is for this that "Sri Aurobindo announces another synthesis, a vast supramental synthesis for the ascent of man to the Truth and Unity of the One, and the descent of the One into the whole being and life of man". Henceforth the whole yogic endeavour centres itself on a progressive surrender to the Divine Power and Will in the Mother.

The important place of the Mother in the Integral Yoga is at once evident and compelling, since it is She who is the Divine-sent One for this present age of crumbling beliefs. It is She who has come in response to man's innermost

call and aspiration; the reply in fact to the intense yearning of the as yet immature psychic being caught in the mesh of an increasing ignorance in the world and a rising tide of darkness and obscurity. She has come at the blackest hour of man's spiritual eclipse, in order to show the way—"the sunlit path"—to the Divine Life on earth. The whole *raison d'être* of Sri Aurobindo's mighty exposition, *The Mother*, comes to life in the living presence of the Mother herself, whose *Prayers and Meditations*, as Rishabhchand points out, are indications enough of Her Divine-given mission. Thus the integral surrender, in a living relation with the Mother, is a natural consequence, which becomes the very centre and motive force of the whole Yoga. This alone establishes the true connection between the psychic being in man struggling to emerge, and the Divine Power whose direct action in the world will fully come only through the soul's growing maturity. All this, however, does not imply our neglecting the mental development. Sri Aurobindo fully recognised the true role of mind; first, as the natural channel and stairway for man's ascent to the Divine Consciousness and, second, as the effective Light-transformed instrument of the Divine Will operating in the world. It is here that the significance of Supermind can be seen. For Supermind is the very stuff of the Divine Consciousness—above man's present stage of a limited mental consciousness—that is pressing down to manifest in the world. And this means, above all, a concentrated and concerted effort on man's part, of which the Integral Yoga is the golden key.

Rishabhchand also devotes a very important place in his exposition to showing the distinction between the ego and the psychic being, since this is fundamental to our deeper understanding and development of the inner being. In this respect we find that the author has not made a clear enough distinction between the ego and the desire-soul. Particularly in chapter VIII (Part II) under the heading of 'Renunciation of Desire', one gets the impression that the desire-soul is in fact the ego; whereas the desire-soul is the surface part of the soul which has been usurped by the ego. Although functionally the desire-soul has become part of the ego, it is essentially separate. This, however, is but a minor blemish in a well-planned work. Certainly this first Part now appearing firmly establishes what the work as a whole sets out to do,—namely, stating the bases and preliminaries of the Integral Yoga. One is left with eager expectation of the ensuing Part.

N. PEARSON

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XIV

KARMAYOGA AND ITS INDISPENSABILITY

(Continued from the July issue)

PART II

THE PERFECTION OF KARMAYOGA

WE have seen that man being essentially a composite organism and not a mere sum-total of heterogeneous parts and powers,—which is only a superficial aspect of him—neither Karmayoga, nor Bhaktiyoga, nor Jnanayoga can become perfect in itself without the others also becoming perfect and complete at the same time. A certain insular perfection can be attained, as we have already conceded, by Bhaktiyoga, without much direct help from Jnanayoga and Karmayoga, or by Jnanayoga without bringing in much of the elements of karma and bhakti; but the perfection, thus attained, would always betray its imperfection to the discerning eye of knowledge and need for its fulness the incorporation and fusion of all the three. It is said that by knowledge alone one can realise the Absolute and merge in It; but if one analyses the inmost nature of the knowledge that carries one to the Absolute, one will see that the very force which wings its upward flight is the force of love for the Absolute, a sort of irresistible urge which stimulates and impels one's aspiring thought. And, besides, the knowledge that is gained by this exclusive movement of thought, is only of the transcendence of the Absolute, but not of its dynamic immanence here in the universe. It is not the complete, integral knowledge which the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita point to as the crowning fulfilment of our spiritual aspiration. Similarly, the contention that by bhakti alone one can unite with the Divine and commune with him, is only a half-truth; the fiery intensity of Godward love veils the light that secretly illumines the path of love. Love leads to knowledge and knowledge illumines and electrifies love. The more we love the Divine the more we come to know of His existence and nature; and the more we know of Him, the more passionately we love and adore Him. Therefore any division of the three indivisible powers of our being—thought

and feeling and will—can only cripple our capacity for realisation and render the divine union incomplete and imperfect.¹ But Karmayoga has a special advantage in that it naturally unifies love and knowledge with itself and becomes an expression of the triune power of our being. It is the most potent means of an active integration of all the parts of the being and the sole external vehicle of divine manifestation in the material world. Therefore, the perfection of Karmayoga would seem to imply a perfection of the triune power of our being. That is, indeed, the general conception of a synthesis of jnana, bhakti and karma. But in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo it means something more. A mental perfection resulting from a mental synthesis of the three powers can be good enough for a sattwic work in the world—almost selfless and impersonal; but it cannot be the authentic work of the Divine in man. A gulf still yawns between the spiritual experiences in the depths of the being and its natural action on the surface: the former are irradiated with the native Light of the Spirit and the latter only with the limpidities of the mind, intermittently shot with flashes of intuition. That is perhaps about the utmost we have had, barring a very few exceptions, in the spiritual lives of those who accepted the reality of the world and the teleological utility of consecrated action. But the Integral Yoga raises this synthesis from the mind to the Supermind and endeavours to achieve, not a mental or even a spiritual-mental, but a supramental or divine perfection. If the mind, even the enlightened mind, remains the dominant and directing agent of life's activities, the perfection we aim at cannot be realised. The perfection of Karmayoga, as Sri Aurobindo understands it, must be a total perfection in the fulfilment of the divine Will in the life of the human individual. And the divine Will can fulfil itself only in a divinised individual.

The perfection of Karmayoga is attained when the sadhaka of the Integral Yoga has been liberated and transformed in all the parts of his being including his body, and when his separative ego has disappeared for ever, leaving his consciousness in full and constant possession of the unity of universal existence. Perfect Karmayoga is a radiant blossom of a dynamic union with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo gives an outline of it in his poem, *Jivanmukta*. It is to be remarked that the ideal of the Jivanmukta, as envisaged by the Vedanta, is not the same as that portrayed here in Sri Aurobindo's poem. Sri Aurobindo

¹ It is interesting to note in this connection the words of Pfeleiderer who shared many of the views of Krause.

“Man's whole vocation is likeness to God in this life, or the unfolding of his godlike essence in his own distinctive way as an independent active being, according to his three faculties, true knowing, blessed feeling, and holy willing and doing.

MOTHER INDIA

has given it a more dynamic and comprehensive content. It represents his ideal of the perfect karmayogi who is also at once a perfect jñanayogi and bhaktiyogi.

*There is a silence greater than any known
To earth's dumb spirit, motionless in the soul
That has become Eternity's foothold,
Touched by the infinitudes for ever.*

*A Splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,
That floods some deep flame-covered all-seeing eye;
Revealed it awakens when God's stillness
Heavens the ocean of moveless Nature.*

*A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,
Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters,
A single might of luminous quiet
Tirelessly bearing the worlds and ages.*

*A Bliss surrounds with ecstasy everlasting,
An absolute high-seated immortal rapture
Possesses, sealing love to oneness
In the grasp of the All-beautiful, All-beloved.*

*He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence.*

*Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the æons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.*

*Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the unconscious darkness,*

*He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession
Infinity and the sempiternal
All is his guide and beloved and refuge.*

The base and fount of an authentic yogic action is, as the poem states, “a silence greater than any known to earth’s dumb spirit.” It is out of an abysmal silence that the divine Will blazes forth to fulfil itself in the world. The soul of the liberated karmayogi becomes a foothold of Eternity, that is to say, Eternity takes its stand upon this soul for an undisguised self-manifestation, and all that the karmayogi does is done by Eternity itself in Its all-achieving omniscience.

The perfected karmayogi commands a light of knowledge which is “refused to the earthward sight” of mortal men. His all-seeing eyes are flooded with that light, which reveals itself in his actions, but under conditions of absolute stillness—God’s stillness above and Nature’s stillness below like a calm ocean receiving in its mirror the overhead heaven itself.

The supreme Power which, “calmer than mountains,” bears the worlds and ages, descends into the Jivanmukta for conquering the evil and falsehood and suffering of the world. The Jivanmukta is not only a dove of peace, but also a “red icon of might”. He unifies in himself both the gentle and the violent aspects of the Creator, and is as ruthless in destruction as generous and compassionate in protection and deliverance. He has transcended for ever the egoistic leapings and shrinkings of his human emotions.

“An absolute high-seated immortal rapture” claims the Jivanmukta for its own. He lives immersed in the infinite divine Ananda, and every movement of his nature is a thrill of bliss. And this everlasting ecstasy seals his love to oneness, making him feel the embrace of the All-beautiful, the All-beloved in every being and thing in the world. He loves all, for he loves the One who has become all. In all that he contacts he contacts nothing but the Divine, the All-beloved. He can heal the suffering of the world and free himself from the same suffering, by a transcendence of all suffering and a pouring down from above of his infinite and inviolable Ananda upon it.

The perfect karmayogi has left below him the interminable flux of Time where we mortals float or flounder, and found his permanent abode in “the Eternal’s breast”, and, poised in that omniscient silence, he unfolds and reveals the mysteries of the Eternal. He has become a prism and channel of the Light, the Force, the Bliss and the Beauty of the Divine—a radiating centre of His unthinkable splendours.

Though living in a mortal, material body, he is a child of immortality, *amritasya putrah* His unvalled consciousness knows no limit, no death, and

no bondage to anything in the world. Deathless and free, he is a playmate of God in His universal Lila. Life after life, unwearied and unworn he plays his part, not for any personal profit or for the accomplishment of any merely mental ideal, but only "to bring God's forces to waiting Nature", to help "her tormented labour" with his "wide-winged peace", and to "heal with joy her ancient sorrow" by flooding the dark inconscient bases of life with the Superconscient's Light. He works only to further God's manifestation in the material world, by dispelling the darkness of inconscience and ignorance and healing all division and discord resulting from them.

*Vast, God-possessing, embraced by the Wonderful,
Lifted by the All-Beautiful into his infinite beauty,*

he works in the world "with his being beyond it". He does not care whether he is praised or blamed; whether he is on the righteous path or the unrighteous, as men judge it by their petty mental standards; whether he succeeds or fails in his work. He concerns himself only with the fulfilment of the Will of the "sempiternal All" who "is his guide and beloved and refuge".

The action of the karmayogi is not decided by his mind and its ideas; nor does it follow the demands of the society or community to which he belongs. Nothing pertaining to Time and Space can determine his movements. His actions well straight out of his swabhava, his essential self-nature, which is in perfect union with the Will of the Divine. His life is a spontaneous flowering of his self-nature, revealing a distinctive individual aspect of the Divine. His swabhava and swadharma furnish the force, the form and the right rhythm to his outgoing energies.

"The work (of the perfected karmayogi) cannot be fixed by any mind-made rule or human standard; for his consciousness has moved away from human law and limits and passed into the divine liberty; away from government by the external and the transient into the self-rule of the inner and the eternal; away from the binding forms of the finite into the free self-determination of the Infinite. 'Howsoever he lives and acts,' says the Gita, 'he lives and acts in Me' ...It is immaterial whether he wears the garb of the ascetic or lives the life of the householder; whether he spends his days in what men call holy works or in the many-sided activities of the world; whether he devotes himself to the direct leading of men to the Light, like Buddha, Christ or Shankara, or governs kingdoms like Janaka or stands before men like Sri Krishna as a politician or a leader of armies; what he eats or drinks; what are his habits or pursuits; whether

he fails or succeeds; whether his work be one of construction or of destruction; whether he supports or restores an old order or labours to replace it by a new; whether his associates are those whom men delight to honour or those whom their sense of superior righteousness outcasts and reprobates; whether his life and deeds are approved by his contemporaries or he is condemned as a misleader of men or a fomenter of religious, moral or social heresies. He is not governed by the judgements of men or the laws laid down by the ignorant; he obeys an inner voice and is moved by an unseen power. His real life is within and this is its description that he lives, moves and acts in God, in the Divine, in the Infinite.”¹

The perfection of Karmayoga implies a perfection in our union with the Divine. All the three kinds of union, sayujya, salokya and sadharmya, have to be perfected in the individual. Sayujya or an absorbed union or identity will obliterate all separation between the Divine and the individual soul; salokya will keep up, even in the midst of this identity, a mysterious, ineffable difference without division which will permit of a relation of love and devotion and a free transmission of the divine Will; and sadharmya will ensure a likeness or sameness between the nature of the Divine and that of the individual being, enabling an unhindered and unflawed expression of the Divine Will and a perfect manifestation of the Divine glories upon earth.

Then, perfection in Karmayoga demands as an indispensable pre-requisite our union with the Divine simultaneously in His three poises of transcendence, universality and individuality. The Will of the Transcendent will marshal the integrated forces of our being, the Universal will supply the necessary field and condition, and the Individual Divine in our heart will give the immediate drive and direction, the proper setting and frame and the distinctive colour and rhythm to our activities. Without this simultaneity of the triple union, our work can be great and powerful, even universal in its scope and effectivity, but it will not be the authentic work of the Supreme in us, the very work for which we are created, the destined work of God’s evolutionary manifestation.

A complete transformation of our whole being must precede any perfection in Karmayoga. If there is any part in us, or any single element or energy, which resists or refuses this supramental transformation and this utter submission to the transcendent Will, our work will remain tainted with imperfection. The whole organism of our nature must undergo a total transmutation,

¹ “The Synthesis of Yoga” by Sri Aurobindo

a supramental conversion, before it can become a perfect instrument of divine manifestation. And it is not enough that the conscious nature is transformed, even the subconscious and the inconscient ranges too must become conscious and luminous. There must be nothing left anywhere in the nature which can respond even in the slightest degree to the forces of ignorance and falsehood and suffering, which sway the life of humanity and impede its spiritual evolution. From the cells of the physical body to the summits of our mental being, all, without exception, must be divinely converted and rendered perfectly plastic to the supramental Force of the divine Mother.

“So long as one element of the being, one movement of the thought is still subjected to outside influences, not solely under Thine, it cannot be said that the true Union is realised; there is still the horrible mixture without order and light, for that element, that movement is a world, a world of disorder and darkness, as is the entire earth in the material world, as is the material world in the entire universe.”¹

When the whole being is thus weaned from all outside influences, transformed in all its fibres and united with the Divine Consciousness and Will, the karmayogi, freed from all personal duties and responsibilities, lives in the absolute equality and oneness of the divine Being and works in the world out of His inexhaustible power and plenitude. This equality is the supreme equality of the Infinite and Eternal, which nothing in the universe can shake or ruffle. The karmayogi has now become a divine child, liberated in his being and nature, immersed in an ineffable peace and bliss, and moved by the Divine Mother for the furtherance of her evolutionary ends in the world. Because he embraces the Divine in all beings and things, and clearly sees His Hand in every event, he knows that all in the universe are knit together by an invisible spiritual bond, and that there is a developing harmony everywhere in spite of the apparent chaos and confusion on the surface of existence. Catastrophes, cataclysms, revolutions, disasters leave him “not only unshaken but untouched, free in the emotions, free in the nervous reactions, free in the mental view, not responding with the least disturbance or vibration in any spot of the nature”. Not that he is hard-hearted or callous or indifferent with the impersonal indifference of the immutable Brahman. He overflows with love for all creatures, for he overflows with love for the Divine whom he meets in all creatures. He understands the sufferings of the world, for he sees beyond them their triumphant culmination in God’s everlasting ecstasy, and below and behind them to their evolutionary

¹ “Prayers and Meditations of the Mother”—Dec. 2, 1912.

source and utility and significance. An illimitable love, a high-seated delivering compassion, a fathomless empathy, born of the essential identity, characterise his dealings with the world. And all that blissful movement of love and compassion proceed on the untrembling foundation of an absolute peace and equality.

The perfection of the Karmayoga, as a correlate of the total perfection envisaged in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, is an extremely long and difficult work, but it is the only work for which the divine soul has descended into human birth, and without which no perfection it attains can really be perfect. It has come down to fulfil a "a Will that stirs in a divine peace, a Knowledge that moves from the transcendent Light, a glad Impulse that is a force from the supreme Ananda."¹

RISHABHCHAND

¹ "The Synthesis of Yoga" by Sri Aurobindo Vol 1

THE AGE OF THE SPIRIT

THE VEDANTIC RESURGENCE

(Continued from the July issue)

ALL the four Vedas have Upanishads appended to them. Some of them are included in the Brahmana or Aranyaka sections of the respective Vedas. Isha, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Aitareya, Kausitaki, Taittiriya, Kena, Katha, Svetasvatara, Mundaka, Mandukya and Prashna, are the twelve principal Upanishads, of which the Isha belongs to the Samhita of the Yajurveda, and the next five to the Brahmanas. Except the last three which are of a later period, all are dated around the second millennium B.C., one of the bases of this view being, according to some scholars, the date of the Bharata War about 1500 B.C. and the association of Krishna with it, who also is a figure in the Chhandogya Upanishad. Some of the Upanishads are in prose, some in verse, and some in mixed prose and verse. A later Upanishad mentions the names of as many as one hundred and eight Upanishads. About two hundred of them actually exist today. This is because the ancient Upanishads acquired such importance that later thinkers followed their method of expressing spiritual experiences and called these texts Upanishads.

The theme of the Upanishads is called *Brahma Vidya* or *Atma Vidya*, the Science of the Self. They are a gospel of inner illumination. The word Upanishad means inner knowledge, that which enters into the final truth and settles in it. They preserve the visions the ancient Seers had of the Reality, of 'the Bright Immortal'. They also say how what they saw they realised in their own life and consciousness. The Upanishads are also called *sarva-vidya-pratistha*, the foundation of all arts and sciences, but *Vedanta*, the final development and expansion of Vedic wisdom, is the most accepted of its appellations. The Upanishads therefore are a book of knowledge, but knowledge in the profounder Indian sense of the word, *jnana*, 'Not a mere thinking and considering by intelligence, the pursuit and grasping of a mental form of truth by the intellectual mind, but a seeing of it (Truth) with the soul and a total living in it with the power of the inner being, a spiritual seizing by a kind of identification with the object of knowledge is *jnana*' And this kind of direct knowledge can be made complete by an integral knowing of the self. It was

therefore the Self that the Vedantic sages sought to know, to live in and to be one with by identity. And through this endeavour they came easily to see that the self in us is one with the universal self of all things and this self again is the same as God and Brahman, the transcendent Being or Existence, and they beheld, felt, lived in the inmost truth of all things in the universe and the inmost truth of man's inner and outer existence by the light of this one and unifying vision. Thus the Upanishads are 'epic hymns of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and God-knowledge', the repository of all wisdom.

The Upanishads regard man as a spirit veiled in the works of energy, but moving towards self-discovery. The essential divinity of man is emphasised in them with a cogency and a conviction that is as inspiring as rare in the spiritual record of the world. This intensity of conviction bespeaks the directness with which the Seers saw the One Reality and felt its presence within them, in all, in everything. The verse has been quoted before in which the Rishi declares that he has seen the Supreme Person whose light shines from beyond the darkness. To know Him seems indeed to have been the one dominating passion of Indian life in that creative epoch, spiritually the most widely fruitful, in the whole course of her history, when in her soul she was fired with an ardent aspiration to be led

*'from non-being to true being,
from the darkness to the light,
from death to immortality.'*

That the Supreme heard this cry of India's soul is testified by her spiritual achievements recorded in the Upanishads, of which a few prominent ones will be touched upon here along with the lines of their later developments.

Man lives his ordinary life in ignorance of what he really is, of what his life really signifies for him. Knowledge is the only means by which he can liberate himself from his bondage to this ignorance. And this knowledge comes to him when he is able to exceed his outward, apparent, natural self and realise the inmost reality of his being, the divine self, and then rise into the light of its Glory in heaven. It is the dawn on his consciousness of this supernal illumination that inspired the Rishi in the Isha Upanishad to declare.

'O Illumining Sun, the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I'

When Svetaketu, a seeking soul, was told by his Rishi father 'Thou art That', he was vouchsafed the knowledge of his self. And to this knowledge he was led by a method of subtle reasoning which also conveyed to him the truth that the ultimate essence of everything is that self. This Self is also the Transcendent Brahman, the luminous Sun of Truth as well as 'the Purusha, the inner Self', who is the heart of all creatures, of everything. He is 'the one Godhead secret in all beings, all-pervading, the inner Self of all', says the Svetasvatara. And this One by self-energising and self-projecting becomes the Many. Says the Mundaka:

'By energism of Consciousness (Tapas) Brahman is massed; from that Matter is born and from Matter Life and Mind and the worlds and the law of immortality in work.'

The Isha repeats this in its psychological way:

'It is He that has gone abroad—That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal.'

In yet clearer terms the truth is stated in the Taittiriya:

'He desired, 'May I be many', He concentrated in Tapas, by Tapas he created the world; creating, he entered into it; entering he became the existent and the beyond-existence, he became the expressed and the unexpressed, he became knowledge and ignorance, he became the truth and the falsehood: he became the truth, even all this whatsoever that is. 'That Truth' they call him.'

'All this is Brahman' is the burden of the Upanishads. The One is also the Many. But in what relation does the One stand to the Many? The One is pre-eminently real, but 'The Others', the Many are not unreal. Unity is the eternal truth of things and diversity is a play of that Unity, because creation is a self-projection of Brahman into conditions of Space and Time. Creation is not a making but a becoming in terms and forms of conscious existence. Brahman is the One Self of all and the Many are the becomings of the One Being. And both the Self and the becomings are Brahman. The inmost reality of man is the divine Self. To become conscious of it and to grow into it, into its perfection and transcendence is the greatness of which man alone of all terrestrial beings is capable. The Upanishads say that to know Brahman is to become Brahman. *'Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati'*

To know Brahman, also say the Upanishads, is to become immortal. Immortality is not mere survival of death. It is the finding of our true self of eternal being and bliss beyond the dual symbols of birth and death. It is the absolute life of the soul as opposed to the transient and mutable life in the body. To rise out of the mortal world of limitation and bondage into the world of largeness and freedom, out of the finite into the infinite world is what Vedanta calls immortality. It is to ascend out of earthly joy and sorrow into a transcendent Beatitude that is for ever.

What then is the true nature of Brahman? How is It to be seen, felt and experienced? The Upanishads are one in calling It *Ananda*, Delight. Says the Kena:

'The name of that is the Delight; as the Delight we must worship and seek after It.'

'That Delight', *Tadvanam*, is how Brahman is called. *Vana* is the Vedic word for delight or delightful, and *Tadvanam* means therefore the transcendent Delight, the all-blissful Ananda of which the Taittiriya speaks as the highest Brahman,

'From which all existences are born, by which all existences live and increase and into which all existences arrive in their passing out of death and birth.'

This idea of the Infinite as Ananda which pervades the universe through Its immanence in it is an echo of the Vedic idea of everything as the full of delight, of *madhu*. Here is an exquisite Rigvedic Hymn on it, which is repeated in the early Upanishads including the Brihadaranyaka:

*'Sweet blow the winds, sweet flow the waters,
Sweet be to us the growths of the soil.
Sweet is night, and dawn, full of sweetness earth's bound:
Sweet be to us Heaven our Father.
May the lordly woods be full of sweetness to us
And full of sweetness the Sun!
Sweet be to us the Herds of Light.'*¹

Madhu Vidya, the esoteric science of the Mystic Honey, of the Brihadaranyaka, teaches that everything in and every part of creation is Honey to the

¹ Translated by Nolini Kanta Gupta.

whole and the whole is Honey to every part of it. Because this Honey, the secret delight, abides in the whole creation, in every part and particle of it, the earth becomes enjoyable. Delight is the root-principle of all existence. It is, as the Upanishad says, the basis of the Waters, the Fire, the Wind, the Sound, the Quarters, the Moon, the Lightning, the Thunder, the Space, the Law, the Truth, the Mankind, and at last, the Self, the crown of these all. Delight is indeed the essential nature of Self, and it is by this delight hidden in the Self that the world-existence is sustained and led to its goal. Even pain, and grief are perverse terms of Ananda which they veil here and for which they prepare the lower existence: all suffering in the evolution is a preparation of strength and bliss. Ananda is also the secret basis of all worldly attachments. And this he means when the great sage Yajnavalkya says:

'Verily, the husband is dear not for the sake of the husband but for the sake of the Self.'

'Verily, the wife is dear not for the sake of the wife but for the sake of the Self.'

'Verily, sons are dear not for the sake of the sons but for the sake of the Self.'

This Vedic and Vedantic teaching that delight is the essence of creation is unique in the philosophy of the world. It is diametrically opposed to the theory that postulates sorrow and suffering as the root and constituent of existence. Some distant echoes of it may be traced in a few of the ancient mystery cults, but they are there rather as significant suggestions than any definite basis of a spiritual life and practice. This teaching of the universal delight of existence cuts right across all illusionistic and pessimistic creeds and, if rightly applied in life, can be the foundation of a sovereignly beatific existence for man on earth.

There is then the other, more comprehensive Vedantic term for Self—Sachchidananda. It constitutes the superconscious existence of man, the higher hemisphere of this being, having its lower formation on the earth. *Sat* is the pure, infinite undivided essence of our being, the divine counterpart of what we know as Matter; the essentiality of *sat* is *chit*, consciousness, the divine counterpart of what we know as Life; the essentiality of *chit* is *ananda*, the eternal bliss of pure existence, the divine counterpart of the lower emotional and sensational being. The higher divine Sachchidananda is linked to the lower mortal existence by the supra-mental Knowledge-Will—the Vijnana of the Upanishads—which supports and secretly guides the confused activities of Mind, Life and Body, compelling and ensuring the right arrangement of the

universe. This is called in the Veda the True, the Right, the Vast. It is ever at work in the earth-consciousness preparing it for the manifestation in it of its own Light so that the lower principles of earth—the dark figures and perverse vibrations of the Infinite Existence, Consciousness and Bliss—may be transformed into their original divine counterparts and man may attain his perfection in a godlike life as the crown and glory of his terrestrial evolution. This, in short, is the meaning of the play of the Supreme in creation. This is also what the Vedic Rishis mean when they invoke the higher divine powers to descend on earth and illumine and enrich earthly existence.

'Guard for us the finite and lavish the Infinite.'

The Upanishads do not reject life but accept it as a field for man to grow into an immortal existence. It is here, *thaiva*, in this mortal life and body that immortality must be won, here in this lower Brahman and by this embodied soul that the Higher must be known and possessed. The Upanishad declares: *Atra Brahma samasnute*, 'Even here one tastes God, in this human body.' And this mastery implies also a divine capacity for enjoyment, which, to be true, must be free from any attachment and desire that subject man to ego and its offshoots, discord and suffering. The ego therefore has to be transcended in order to realise the one Self in us and in all and thus possess the whole universe in one cosmic consciousness. There is no need then to possess physically. Neither have we to desire in order to enjoy, for we shall have then the infinite free delight inherent in all things. Says the Taittiriya:

'He who knows the Truth, the Knowledge, the Infinity that is Brahman shall enjoy with all-wise Brahman all objects of desire.'

(To be continued)

SISIRKUMAR MITRA

Students' Section

MEDITATION AND STUDY

SOME REPLIES BY THE MOTHER

Q: This morning I was meditating and I felt a pressure I aspire that what happened may not become an obstacle to my studies. I wonder whether in that case it would be better not to meditate.

A: I see no reason why meditation, if it is properly done, should be an obstacle to study; quite the contrary. It is only if what you call "meditation" is not at all meditation but a state of inert passivity and of semi-somnolence, that it can harm your studies; and, as this state is from all points of view altogether undesirable, it naturally follows that it would be better not to indulge in it.

12-2-1934

Q: What, then, is real meditation?

A: It is a concentration, active and willing, on the Divine Presence and a contemplation, sustained and wakeful, of this Sublime Reality.

12-2-1934

Q: Why and how did that pressure during the morning meditation come?

A: If you are speaking of the pressure of inert passivity, it comes from the resistance of the lower vital and the obscurity of the material nature. It is by an untiring will and aspiration that this can be surmounted.

12-2-1934

THE MOTHER

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

MYSELF: How was mankind involved on the earth from the inconscient Matter—with the divinity behind him?

SRI AUROBINDO: The question is itself rather involved. Man has evolved from Matter—or rather Nature has worked first the plant, then the animal, then Man in a regular succession out of Matter. What is involved is not Man, but mind and life and spirit. “Involved” means that they are there even though there seems to be no mental activity (as in the tree) and no mental or vital activity (as in the stone); as the evolution goes on the involved life appears and begins to organise itself and the plants appear and then the animals; next mind, first in the animal, and then man appears.

25-7-1933

It is the nature of this world because it is an evolutionary world moving out of the Inconscient into the full consciousness of the Divine.

24-8-1933

MYSELF: May I know the meaning of the flower signifying “Aspiration”?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the call of the being for higher things—for the Divine, for all that belongs to the higher or Divine Consciousness.

4-6-1933

Aspire to receive what the Mother gives and then remain quiet in a concentrated way to receive.

19-6-1933

The order or time is of no importance. It is the force and sincerity of the aspiration itself that matters.

25-6-1933

MOTHER INDIA

MYSELF: Is it not a fact that to maintain a constant aspiration there must be only one thing to do at a time—either use my will or open myself to the Mother's higher forces?

SRI AUROBINDO: The two include each other. If you feel the forces it means that you are open. If you open, you will soon become conscious of the Mother's Force.

20-6-1933

MYSELF: I have asked you for the easiest method. For I do not want to decide anything in the mental way at present. I wish to work under the Mother just like Her machine. Let Her do in me anything and my duty would be to obey Her will and put it in details. Is it not the better way?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

20-6-1933

MYSELF: Sometimes, if not often, the Mother's Force comes down, finishes its work and disappears. When once it has descended why has it to return at all?

SRI AUROBINDO: So long as you cannot contain its constant action, there is no other way.

6-8-1933

MYSELF: In that case, generally speaking, is not every sadhaka ready to receive and contain the Mother's force at any time and in any circumstances? Who on earth would not like to hold its constant action—I do not understand.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a question of mental wish but of capacity and whether all the parts of the being are ready and can retain it. If everybody were containing the constant action of the Mother's force, the sadhana would be finished by now and the siddhi complete.

7-8-33

MYSELF: If one gives full and constant assent to the Mother's working, how does the attempt of other forces to enter into him succeed?

STUDENTS' SECTION

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not always an attempt. One receives the thoughts and feelings of the others without any attempt or intention of theirs, because they are in the atmosphere.

31-7-33

MYSELF: Could I be told what is this "Mother's Force" you often speak of?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine nature.

18-6-33

MYSELF: You wrote: Ask for the consciousness of Her (Mother's) force. Does it mean that I should aspire to Her to know about Her force; how and where does it work in me?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes—not know with the mind only, but to feel them and see them with the inner experience.

MYSELF: What is the function of the physical thoughts?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are concerned with physical things, ordinary external experiences, habitual thought and action; the physical mind looks at these things from a superficial point of view taking things as they seem and dealing with them in what appears to it to be a practical ordinary way.

28-7-33

MYSELF: What is the lower vital and its movements? How does it differ from the vital?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the small vital that brings¹ small desires, greeds, jealousies, angers etc.

The other is a larger movement of ambition, power, play of forces, effectuation of work etc.

18-7-33

¹ Doubtful reading—Editor.

MOTHER INDIA

MYSELF: What are doubts and hesitations? From where do they pay us an uninvited visit and how to get the upper hand over them? Such things arise in me frequently. I do not want them to rule over me.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have some faith as well as doubts, I suppose—Refuse to let your mind dwell on the doubts and think always of the faith.

They come from the ignorance of physical Nature. You have to reject them and replace them by faith.

8-5-33

MYSELF: When one reads pages and pages of a novel one does not get tired. But studying lessons even for an hour exhausts one. Why so?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because one is amusement and the other is work—the lazy physical does not like work unless it is supported and driven by the vital. But the lower vital is more attracted by amusement than by work.

17-9-33

NAGIN DOSHI

POEMS

THE BLUE KING

In darkness close to Him I feel,
In the blue-dark charm of night,
In my heart's deep caves where nought can steal,
Nought but His sapphire light.

Beneath His robe of eternal spring
With stars of bliss inlaid,
In the blue-lit shade of my Azure King
My dwelling I have made.

And when, without, the lightnings flash
And the raging ocean roars
And Tempest-Riders' thunders crash
On mortals' trembling doors—

Within, a lamp of Peace doth flame
Steadfast as those lovely eyes,
Revealing for ever my Krishna's name
In tints of a gold sun-rise.

ANIRUDDHA

DREAM

SITTING silent on the sun-red rocks of dream
I saw the curved blue line of the sea,
A flickering golden glow, and a rainbow gleam,
And the veiled visage of Mystery.

A sweet silence was round my heart and mind,
I was lost in rapture's magic embrace,
Hushed were the wave-calls and the singing wind,
And night was robbed of its last dark trace.

MOTHER INDIA

A light was born, a Lotus of ecstasy
On the mighty breast of the waters blue,
Its petals touched the fringe of infinity
And painted the sky with a mystic hue.

High lightning-billows rushed towards my sleep,
I plunged in the ocean of delight
And drunk from Spirit's white abysmal deep
The beauty and glory of the Infinite.

RANAJIT

CLOUD-SPIRIT

BEHOLD the moon-struck daughter of ocean,
Covering space with dark streams of hair,
Rises hastily from the verge of vespers
And weeps and sways the notes of despair

She holds in her breast the roar of thunder,
And hope and grandeur of sorrowful earth,
Her gaze is the lightning, the storm is her smile,
Her thoughts ignore all death and all birth!

Sweeping the planets and rocking the stars
She leaps up and threatens the breath of creation—
Her tears she has spread over the universe
And paved our paths with upward motion.

The heavens overflow with the charm of her strain
And drop upon earth—the rapturous rain!

PRITHWINDRA

STUDENTS' SECTION

IN THEE

Not reached as yet my journey's end,
All movements stop now suddenly,
And stormy winds moan like a fiend
Through the dreadful dark surrounding me.

Thus the days and nights will flee away
In ignorant play of rhythmless mirth,
Marring the tune of my life's sweet lay,
Amidst the travellers of unknown birth.

What was my need in the dawn of life?
What treasures were lost on the dusty way?
What gifts—with which my heart is rife?
Whose Blessings have made my world so gay?

What I have lost and what I have gained
Today my mind cares not to see.
The one desire that has kept me chained,
Is to lose myself, O Lord, in Thee.

DULALI

(Translated by Sâilen from the original Bengali)