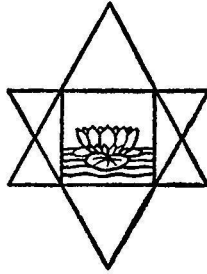


MOTHER INDIA

APRIL 24, 1955

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALL-INDIA CONVENTION ON
THE SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTRE

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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

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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A PREFACE ON NATIONAL EDUCATION*

SRI AUROBINDO

I

THE necessity and unmixed good of universal education has become a fixed dogma to the modern intelligence, a thing held to be beyond dispute by any liberal mind or awakened national conscience, and whether the tenet be or not altogether beyond cavil, it may at any rate be presumed that it answers to a present and imperative need of the intellectual and vital effort of the race. But there is not quite so universal an agreement or common attainment to a reasoned or luminous idea on what education is or practically or ideally should be. Add to this uncertainty the demand—naturally insistent and clamorous with the awakening of the spirit of independence in a country like our own which is peculiarly circumstanced not only by the clash of the Asiatic and the European or occidental consciousness and the very different civilisations they have created and the enforced meeting of the English and the Indian mind and culture, but by a political subjection which has left the decisive shaping and supreme control of education in the hands of foreigners,—add the demand for a national type of education, and in the absence of clear ideas on the subject we are likely to enter, as we have in fact entered, into an atmosphere of great and disconcerting confusion.

For if we do not know very clearly what education in general truly is or should be, we seem still less to know what we mean by national education. All that appears to be almost unanimously agreed on is that the teaching given in the existing schools and universities has been bad in kind and in addition denationalising, degrading and impoverishing to the national mind, soul and character because it is overshadowed by a foreign hand and foreign in aim, method, substance and spirit. But this purely negative agreement does not carry us very far: it does not tell us what in principle or practice we desire or ought to put in its place. There may be much virtue in an epithet but to tag on the word “national” to a school or college or even a Council or Board of Education, to put that into the hands of an indigenous agency mostly of men trained in the very system we are denouncing, to reproduce that condemned

* First published in *Arya* in 1920.

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system with certain differences, additions, subtractions, modifications of detail and curriculum, to tack on a technical side and think we have solved the problem does not really change anything. To be satisfied with a trick of this kind is to perform a somersault round our centre of intellectual gravity, land ourselves where we were before and think we have got into quite another country,—obviously a very unsatisfactory proceeding. The institutions that go by the new name may or may not be giving a better education than the others, but in what they are more national, is not altogether clear even to the most willingly sympathetic critical intelligence.

The problem indeed is one of surpassing difficulty and it is not easy to discover from what point of thought or of practice one has to begin, on what principle to create or on what lines to map out the new building. The conditions are intricate and the thing that is to be created in a way entirely new. We cannot be satisfied with a mere resuscitation of some past principle, method and system that may have happened to prevail at one time in India, however great it was or in consonance with our past civilisation and culture. That reversion would be a sterile and impossible effort hopelessly inadequate to the pressing demands of the present and the far greater demands of our future. On the other hand to take over the English, German or American school and university or some variation on them with a gloss of Indian colour is a course attractively facile and one that saves the need of thinking and of new experiment; but in that case there is no call for this loud pother about nationalising education, all that is needed is a change of control, of the medium of instruction, of the frame and fitting of the curriculum and to some extent of the balance of subjects. I presume that it is something more profound, great and searching that we have in mind and that, whatever the difficulty of giving it shape, it is an education proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of, not indeed something faithful merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit. It is this that we have to get clear in our minds and for that we must penetrate down to fundamentals and make those firm before we can greatly execute. Otherwise nothing is easier than to start off on a false but specious cry or from an unsound starting-point and travel far away from the right path on a tangent that will lead us to no goal but only to emptiness and failure.

But first let us clear out of the way or at least put in its proper place and light the preliminary disabling objection that there is and can be no meaning at all or none worth troubling about in the idea of a national education and that the very notion is the undesirable and unprofitable intrusion of a false and narrow patriotism into a field in which patriotism apart from the need of a

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training in good citizenship has no legitimate place. And for that one purpose no special kind or form of education is needed, since the training to good citizenship must be in all essentials the same whether in the east or the west, England or Germany or Japan or India. Mankind and its needs are the same everywhere and truth and knowledge are one and have no country; education too must be a thing universal and without nationality or borders. What, for an instance, could be meant by a national education in Science, and does it signify that we are to reject modern truth and modern method of science because they come to us from Europe and go back to the imperfect scientific knowledge of classical India, exile Galileo and Newton and all that came after and teach only what was known to Bhaskara, Aryabhata and Varahamihira? Or how should the teaching of Sanskrit or the living indigenous tongues differ in kind and method from the teaching of Latin or the living modern tongues in Europe? Are we then to fetch back to the methods of the "tols" of Nadiya or to the system, if we can find out what it was, practised in ancient Takshashila or Nalanda? At most what can be demanded is a larger place for the study of the past of our country, the replacement of English by the indigenous tongues as a medium and the relegation of the former to the position of a second language,—but it is possible to challenge the advisability even of these changes. After all we live in the twentieth century and cannot revive the India of Chandragupta or Akbar; we must keep abreast with the march of truth and knowledge, fit ourselves for existence under actual circumstances, and our education must be therefore up to date in form and substance and modern in life and spirit.

All these objections are only pertinent if directed against the travesty of the idea of national education which would make of it a means of an obscurantist retrogression to the past forms that were once a living frame of our culture but are now dead or dying things; but that is not the idea nor the endeavour. The living spirit of the demand for national education no more requires a return to the astronomy and mathematics of Bhaskara or the forms of the system of Nalanda than the living spirit of Swadeshi a return from railway and motor traction to the ancient chariot and the bullock-cart. There is no doubt plenty of retrogressive sentimentalism about and there have been some queer violences on common sense and reason and disconcerting freaks that prejudice the real issue, but these inconsequent streaks of fantasy give a false hue to the matter. It is the spirit, the living and vital issue that we have to do with, and there the question is not between modernism and antiquity, but between an imported civilisation and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future. It is not a return to the fifth century but an initiation of the centuries to come, not a reversion but a break forward away from a present artificial falsity to her

own greater innate potentialities that is demanded by the soul, by the Shakti of India.

The argument against national education proceeds in the first place upon the lifeless academic notion that the subject, the acquiring of this or that kind of information is the whole or the central matter. But the acquiring of various kinds of information is only one and not the chief of the means and necessities of education: its central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit, it is the formation or, as I would prefer to view it, the evoking of knowledge, character, culture,—that at least if no more. And this distinction makes an enormous difference. It is true enough that if all we ask for is the acquisition of the information put at our disposal by science, it may be enough to take over the science of the West whether in an undigested whole or in carefully packed morsels. But the major question is not merely what science we learn, but what we shall do with our science and how too, acquiring the scientific mind and recovering the habit of scientific discovery—I leave aside the possibility of the Indian mentality working freely in its own nature discovering new methods or even giving a new turn to physical science—we shall relate it to other powers of the human mind and scientific knowledge to other knowledge more intimate to other and not less light-giving and power-giving parts of our intelligence and nature. And there the peculiar cast of the Indian mind, its psychological tradition, its ancestral capacity, turn, knowledge bring in cultural elements of a supreme importance. A language, Sanskrit or another, should be acquired by whatever method is most natural, efficient and stimulating to the mind and we need not cling there to any past or present manner of teaching: but the vital question is how we are to learn and make use of Sanskrit and the indigenous languages so as to get to the heart and intimate sense of our own culture and establish a vivid continuity between the still living power of our past and the yet uncreated power of our future, and how we are to learn and use English or any other foreign tongue so as to know helpfully the life, ideas and culture of other countries and establish our right relations with the world around us. This is the aim and principle of a true national education, not, certainly, to ignore modern truth and knowledge, but to take our foundation on our own being, our own mind, our own spirit.

The second ground openly or tacitly taken by the hostile argument is that modern, that is to say, European civilisation is the thing that we have to acquire and fit ourselves for, so only can we live and prosper and it is this that our education must do for us. The idea of national education challenges the sufficiency of this assumption. Europe built up her ancient culture on a foundation largely taken from the East; from Egypt, Chaldea, Phoenicia, India, but turned in a direction and another life-idea by the native spirit and temperament, mind

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social genius of Greece and Rome, lost and then recovered it, in part from the Arabs with fresh borrowings from the near East and from India and more widely by the Renaissance, but then too gave it a new turn and direction proper to the native spirit and temperament, mind and social genius of the Teutonic, and the Latin, the Celtic and Slav races. It is the civilisation so created that has long offered itself as the last and imperative word of the mind of humanity, but the nations of Asia are not bound so to accept it, and will do better, taking over in their turn whatever new knowledge or just ideas Europe has to offer, to assimilate them to their own knowledge and culture, their own native temperament and spirit, and out of that create the civilisation of the future. The present, rationalistic, industrial, pseudo-democratic civilisation is in process of dissolution and it would be a lunatic absurdity for us at the present moment to build blindly on that sinking foundation. When the days of the occident are beginning to turn in this red evening of hope of a new and more spiritual civilisation to the genius of the East, it is strange if we could think of nothing better than to cast away our own potentialities and put our trust in the dissolving and moribund past of the West.

of man, the objection grounds itself on the implicit idea that the mind is everywhere and can everywhere be passed through the same machine and uniformly constructed to order. That is an old and effete superstition of the reason which it is time now to renounce. For within the universal mind and soul of humanity is the mind and soul of the individual with its infinite variation, its commonness and its uniqueness, and between them there stands an intermediate power the mind of a nation, the soul of a people. And of all these three education must take account if it is to be, not a machine-made fabric, but a true building or a living evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of the human being.

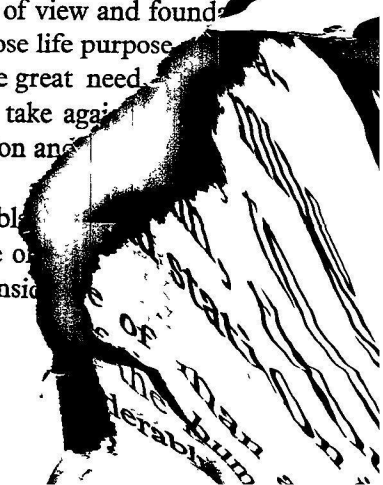
II

These preliminary objections made to the very idea of national education and, incidentally, the misconceptions they oppose once out of the way, we have still to formulate more positively what the idea means to us, the principle and the form that national education must take in India, the thing to be achieved and the end turn to be given to the endeavour. It is here that the real difficulty begins because we have for a long time, not only in education but in almost the whole cultural life, lost hold of the national spirit and idea and yet no effort of clear, sound and deep thinking or seeing which would lead us to recover it and therefore no clear agreement or even clear

difference of opinion on essentials and accessories. At the most we have been satisfied with a strong sentiment and a general but shapeless idea and enthusiasm corresponding to the sentiment and have given to it in the form whatever haphazard application chanced to be agreeable to our intellectual association, habits or caprices. The result has been no tangible or enduring success, but rather a maximum of confusion and failure. The first thing needed is to make clear to our own minds what the national spirit, temperament, idea, need demands of us through education and apply it in its right harmony to all the different elements of the problem. Only after that is done can we really hope with some confidence and chance of utility and success to replace the present false, empty and mechanical education by something better than a poor and futile chaos or a new mechanical falsity, by a real, living and creative upbringing of the Indian manhood of the future.

But first it is necessary to disengage from all ambiguities what we understand by a true education, its essential sense, its fundamental aim and end, its efficacy. For we can then be sure of our beginnings and proceed to fix the just place and whole bearing of the epithet we seek to attach to the word. I must be sure what education itself is or should be before I can be sure what a national education is or should be. Let us begin then with an initial statement, as to which I think there can be no great dispute that there are three things which have to be taken into account in a true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness and in his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity. It follows that that alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member. It is by considering the whole question in the light of this large and entire principle that we can best arrive at a clear idea of what we would have our education to be and what we shall strive to accomplish by a national education. Most is this largeness of view and foundation needed here and now in India, the whole energy of whose life purpose must be at this critical turning of her destinies directed to her one great need to rebuild her true self in individual and people and to take again possession of her inner greatness, her due and natural position and the life of the human race.

There are however very different conceptions possible of the life of the nation and its life and of humanity and the life of the individual and our idea and endeavour in education may well vary considerably



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to that difference. India has always had her own peculiar conception and vision of these things and we must see whether it is not really as it is likely to be, that which will be or ought to be at the very root of our education and the one thing that will give it its truly national character. Man has not been seen by the thought of India as a living body developed by physical Nature which has evolved certain vital propensities, an ego, a mind and a reason, an animal of the genus *homo* and in our case of the species *homo indicus*, whose whole life and education must be turned towards a satisfaction of these propensities under the government of a trained mind and reason and for the best advantage of the personal and the national ego. It has not been either the turn of her mind to regard man preeminently as a reasoning animal, or let us say, widening the familiar definition, a thinking, feeling and willing natural existence, a mental son of physical Nature, and his education as a culture of the mental capacities, or to define him as a political, social and economic being and his education as a training that will fit him to be an efficient, productive and well disciplined member of the society and the State. All these are no doubt aspects of the human being and she has given them a considerable prominence subject to her larger vision, but they are outward things, parts of the instrumentation of his mind, life and action, not the whole or the real man.

India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his *paramārtha* and highest *puruṣārtha*. And similarly India has not understood by nation or people an organised State or an armed and efficient community well prepared for the struggle of life and putting all at the service of the national ego,—that is only the disguise of iron armour which masks and encumbers the national Purusha,—but a great communal soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a *Swabhava* and *Swadharma*, and embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, dynamic, social and political forms and culture. And equally then our cultural conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal manifesting in the human race, evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim,—it must be the idea of the spirit, the soul of humanity advancing through struggle and concert towards

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oneness, increasing its experience and maintaining a needed diversity through the varied culture and life motives of its many peoples, searching for perfection through the development of the powers of the individual and his progress towards a diviner being and life, but feeling out too though more slowly after a similar perfectibility in the life of the race. It may be disputed whether this is a true account of the human or the national being, but if it is once admitted as a true description, then it should be clear that the only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation. That is the principle on which we must build, that the central motive and the guiding ideal. It must be an education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its *dharma* and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being.

MAN'S EVOLUTION AND THE SUPREME GOAL

SRI AUROBINDO

THE progressive self-manifestation of Nature in man, termed in modern language his evolution, must necessarily depend upon three successive elements, that which is already evolved, that which is persistently in the stage of conscious evolution and that which is to be evolved and may perhaps be already displayed, if not constantly, then occasionally or with some regularity of recurrence, in primary formations or in others more developed and, it may well be, even in some, however rare, that are near to the highest possible realisation of our present humanity. For the march of Nature is not drilled to a regular and mechanical forward stepping. She reaches constantly beyond herself even at the cost of subsequent deplorable retreats. She has rushes; she has splendid and mighty outbursts; she has immense realisations. She storms sometimes passionately forward hoping to take the kingdom of heaven by violence. And these self-exceedings are the revelation of that in her which is most divine or else most diabolical, but in either case the most puissant to bring her rapidly forward towards her goal.

That which Nature has evolved for us and has firmly founded is the bodily life. She has effected a certain combination and harmony of the two inferior but most fundamentally necessary elements of our action and progress upon earth,—Matter, which, however the too ethereally spiritual may despise it, is our foundation and the first condition of all our energies and realisations, and the Life-Energy which is our means of existence in a material body and the basis there even of our mental and spiritual activities. She has successfully achieved a certain stability of her constant material movement which is at once sufficiently steady and durable and sufficiently pliable and mutable to provide a fit dwelling-place and instrument for the progressively manifesting god in humanity. This is what is meant by the fable in the Aitareya Upanishad which tells us that the gods rejected the animal forms successively offered to them by the Divine Self and only when man was produced, cried out, "This indeed is perfectly made," and consented to enter in. She has effected also a working compromise between the inertia of matter and the active Life that lives in and feeds on it, by which not only is vital existence sustained, but the fullest developments of mentality are rendered possible. This equilibrium constitutes the

basic status of Nature in man and is termed in the language of Yoga his gross body composed of the material or *food sheath* and the nervous system or vital vehicle.¹

If, then, this inferior equilibrium is the basis and first means of the higher movements which the universal Power contemplates and if it constitutes the vehicle in which the Divine here seeks to reveal Itself, if the Indian saying is true that the body is the instrument provided for the fulfilment of the right law of our nature, then any final recoil from the physical life must be a turning away from the completeness of the divine Wisdom and a renunciation of its aim in earthly manifestation. Such a refusal may be, owing to some secret law of their development, the right attitude for certain individuals, but never the aim intended for mankind. It can be, therefore, no integral Yoga which ignores the body or makes its annulment or its rejection indispensable to a perfect spirituality. Rather, the perfecting of the body also should be the last triumph of the Spirit and to make the bodily life also divine must be God's final seal upon His work in the universe. The obstacle which the physical presents to the spiritual is no argument for the rejection of the physical; for in the unseen providence of things our greatest difficulties are our best opportunities. A supreme difficulty is Nature's indication to us of a supreme conquest to be won and an ultimate problem to be solved; it is not a warning of an inextricable snare to be shunned or of an enemy too strong for us from whom we must flee.

Equally, the vital and nervous energies in us are there for a great utility; they too demand the divine realisation of their possibilities in our ultimate fulfilment. The great part assigned to this element in the universal scheme is powerfully emphasised by the catholic wisdom of the Upanishads. "As the spokes of a wheel in its nave, so in the Life-energy is all established, the triple knowledge and the Sacrifice and the power of the strong and the purity of the wise. Under the control of the Life-Energy is all this that is established in the triple heaven."² It is therefore no integral Yoga that kills these nervous energies, forces them into a nerveless quiescence or roots them out as the source of noxious activities. Their purification, not their destruction,—their transformation, control and utilisation is the aim in view with which they have been created and developed in us.

If the bodily life is what Nature has firmly evolved for us as her base and first instrument, it is our mental life that she is evolving as her immediate next aim and superior instrument. This in her ordinary exaltations is the lofty preoccupying thought in her; this, except in her periods of exhaustion and

¹ Annakosa and Pranakosa

² Prasna Upanishad II. 6 and 13

recoil into a reposeful and recuperating obscurity, is her constant pursuit wherever she can get free from the trammels of her first vital and physical realisations. For here in man we have a distinction which is of the utmost importance. He has in him not a single mentality, but a double and a triple, the mind material and nervous, the pure intellectual mind which liberates itself from the illusions of the body and the senses and a divine mind above intellect which in its turn liberates itself from the imperfect modes of the logically discriminative and imaginative reason. Mind in man is first emmeshed in the life of the body, where in the plant it is entirely involved and in animals always imprisoned. It accepts this life as not only the first but the whole condition of its activities and serves its needs as if they were the entire aim of existence. But the bodily life in man is a base, not the aim, his first condition and not his last determinant. In the just idea of the ancients man is essentially the thinker, the Manu, the mental being who leads the life and the body,¹ not the animal who is led by them. The true human existence, therefore, only begins when the intellectual mentality emerges out of the material and we begin more and more to live in the mind independent of the nervous and physical obsession and in the measure of that liberty are able to accept rightly and rightly to use the life of the body. For freedom and not a skilful subjection is the true means of mastery. A free, not a compulsory acceptance of the conditions, the enlarged and sublimated conditions of our physical being, is the high human ideal.

The mental life thus evolving in man is not, indeed, a common possession. In actual appearance it would seem as if it were only developed to the fullest in individuals and as if there were great numbers and even the majority in whom it is either a small and ill-organised part of their normal nature or not evolved at all or latent and not easily made active. Certainly, the mental life is not a finished evolution of Nature, it is not yet firmly founded in the human animal. The sign is that the fine and full equilibrium of vitality and matter, the sane, robust, long-lived human body is ordinarily found only in races or classes of men who reject the effort of thought, its disturbances, its tensions, or think only with the material mind. Civilised man has yet to establish an equilibrium between the fully active mind and the body; he does not yet normally possess it. Indeed, the increasing effort towards a more intense mental life seems to create, frequently, an increasing disequilibrium of the human elements, so that it is possible for eminent scientists to describe genius as a form of insanity, a result of degeneration, a pathological morbidity of Nature. The phenomena which are used to justify this exaggeration, when taken not separately, but in connection with all other relevant data, point to a different truth. Genius is

¹ *manomayah prāṇaśarīranetā*. Mundaka Upanishad, II. 2. 7.

one attempt of the universal Energy to so quicken and intensify our intellectual powers that they shall be prepared for those more puissant, direct and rapid faculties which constitute the play of the supra-intellectual or divine mind. It is not, then, a freak, an inexplicable phenomenon, but a perfectly natural next step in the right line of her evolution. She has harmonised the bodily life with the material mind, she is harmonising it with the play of the intellectual mentality; for that, although it tends to a depression of the full animal and vital vigour, does not or need not produce active disturbances. And she is shooting yet beyond in the attempt to reach a still higher level. Nor are the disturbances created by her process as great as is often represented. Some of them are the crude beginnings of new manifestations; others are an easily corrected movement of disintegration, often fruitful of fresh activities and always a small price to pay for the far-reaching results that she has in view.

We may perhaps, if we consider all the circumstances, come to this conclusion that mental life, far from being a recent appearance in man, is the swift repetition in him of a previous achievement from which the Energy in the race had undergone one of her deplorable recoils. The savage is perhaps not so much the first forefather of civilised man as the degenerate descendant of a previous civilisation. For if the actuality of intellectual achievement is unevenly distributed, the capacity is spread everywhere. It has been seen that in individual cases even the racial type considered by us the lowest, the negro fresh from the perennial barbarism of Central Africa, is capable, without admixture of blood, without waiting for future generations, of the intellectual culture, if not yet of the intellectual accomplishment of the dominant European. Even in the mass men seem to need, in favourable circumstances, only a few generations to cover ground that ought apparently to be measured in the terms of millenniums. Either, then, man by his privilege as a mental being is exempt from the full burden of the tardy laws of evolution or else he already represents and with helpful conditions and in the right stimulating atmosphere can always display a high level of mental capacity for the activities of the intellectual life. It is not mental incapacity, but the long rejection or seclusion from opportunity and withdrawal of the awakening impulse that creates the savage. Barbarism is an intermediate sleep, not an original darkness.

Moreover the whole trend of modern thought and modern endeavour reveals itself to the observant eye as a large conscious effort of Nature in man to effect a general level of intellectual equipment, capacity and farther possibility by universalising the opportunities which modern civilisation affords for the mental life. Even the preoccupation of the European intellect, the protagonist of this tendency, with material Nature and the externalities of existence is a necessary part of the effort. It seeks to prepare a sufficient basis in man's phy-

sical being and vital energies and in his material environment for his full mental possibilities. By the spread of education, by the advance of the backward races, by the elevation of depressed classes, by the multiplication of labour-saving appliances, by the movement towards ideal, social and economic conditions, by the labour of Science towards an improved health, longevity and sound physique in civilised humanity, the sense and drift of this vast movement translates itself in easily intelligible signs. The right or at least the ultimate means may not always be employed, but their aim is the right preliminary aim,—a sound individual and social body and the satisfaction of the legitimate needs and demands of the material mind, sufficient ease, leisure, equal opportunity, so that the whole of mankind and no longer only the favoured race, class or individual may be free to develop the emotional and intellectual being to its full capacity. At present the material and economic aim may predominate, but always, behind, there works or there waits in reserve the higher and major impulse.

And when the preliminary conditions are satisfied, when the great endeavour has found its base, what will be the nature of that farther possibility which the activities of the intellectual life must serve? If Mind is indeed Nature's highest term, then the entire development of the rational and imaginative intellect and the harmonious satisfaction of the emotions and sensibilities must be to themselves sufficient. But if, on the contrary, man is more than a reasoning and emotional animal, if beyond that which is being evolved, there is something that has to be evolved, then it may well be that the fullness of the mental life, the suppleness, flexibility and wide capacity of the intellect, the ordered richness of emotion and sensibility may be only a passage towards the development of a higher life and of more powerful faculties which are yet to manifest and to take possession of the lower instrument, just as mind itself has so taken possession of the body that the physical being no longer lives only for its own satisfaction but provides the foundation and the materials for a superior activity.

The assertion of a higher than the mental life is the whole foundation of Indian philosophy and its acquisition and organisation is the veritable object served by the methods of Yoga. Mind is not the last term of evolution, not an ultimate aim, but, like body, an instrument. It is even so termed in the language of Yoga, the inner instrument.¹ And Indian tradition asserts that this which is to be manifested is not a new term in human experience, but has been developed before and has even governed humanity in certain periods of its development. In any case, in order to be known it must at one time have been partly developed. And if since then Nature has sunk back from her achievement, the

¹ Antahkarana

reason must always be found in some unrealised harmony, some insufficiency of the intellectual and material basis to which she has now returned, some over-specialisation of the higher to the detriment of the lower existence.

But what then constitutes this higher or highest existence to which our evolution is tending? In order to answer the question we have to deal with a class of supreme experiences, a class of unusual conceptions which it is difficult to represent accurately in any other language than the ancient Sanscrit tongue in which alone they have been to some extent systematised. The only approximate terms in the English language have other associations and their use may lead to many and even serious inaccuracies. The terminology of Yoga recognises besides the status of our physical and vital being, termed the gross body and doubly composed of the food-sheath and the vital vehicle, besides the status of our mental being, termed the subtle body and singly composed of the mind-sheath or mental vehicle,¹ a third, supreme and divine status of supra-mental being, termed the causal body and composed of a fourth and a fifth vehicle² which are described as those of knowledge and bliss. But this knowledge is not a systematised result of mental questionings and reasonings, not a temporary arrangement of conclusions and opinions in the terms of the highest probability, but rather a pure self-existent and self-luminous Truth. And this bliss is not a supreme pleasure of the heart and sensations with the experience of pain and sorrow as its background, but a delight also self-existent and independent of objects and particular experiences, a self-delight which is the very nature, the very stuff, as it were, of a transcendent and infinite existence.

Do such psychological conceptions correspond to anything real and possible? All Yoga asserts them as its ultimate experience and supreme aim. They form the governing principles of our highest possible state of consciousness, our widest possible range of existence. There is, we say, a harmony of supreme faculties, corresponding roughly to the psychological faculties of revelation, inspiration and intuition, yet acting not in the intuitive reason or the divine mind, but on a still higher plane, which see Truth directly face to face, or rather live in the truth of things both universal and transcendent and are its formulation and luminous activity. And these faculties are the light of a conscious existence superseding the egoistic and itself both cosmic and transcendent, the nature of which is Bliss. These are obviously divine and, as man is at present apparently constituted, superhuman states of consciousness and activity. A trinity of transcendent existence, self-awareness and self-delight³ is, indeed, the metaphysical description of the supreme Atman, the self-formulation,

¹ Manah-kosa

² Vijñanakosa and Anandakosa

³ Sachchidananda

to our awakened knowledge, of the Unknowable whether conceived as a pure Impersonality or as a cosmic Personality manifesting the universe. But in Yoga they are regarded also in their psychological aspects as states of subjective existence to which our waking consciousness is now alien, but which dwell in us in a superconscious plane and to which, therefore, we may always ascend.

For, as is indicated by the name, causal body (*kāraṇa*), as opposed to the two others which are instruments (*karaṇa*), this crowning manifestation is also the source and effective power of all that in the actual evolution has preceded it. Our mental activities are, indeed, a derivation, selection and, so long as they are divided from the truth that is secretly their source, a deformation of the divine knowledge. Our sensations and emotions have the same relation to the Bliss, our nervous forces and actions to the aspect of Will or Force assumed by the divine consciousness, our physical being to the pure essence of that Bliss and Consciousness. The evolution which we observe and of which we are the terrestrial summit may be considered, in a sense, as in inverse manifestation, by which these Powers in their unity and their diversity use, develop and perfect the imperfect substance and activities of Matter, of Life and of Mind so that they may express in mutable relativity an increasing harmony of the divine and eternal states from which they are born. If this be the truth of the universe, then the goal of evolution is also its cause, it is that which is immanent in its elements and out of them is liberated. But the liberation is surely imperfect if it is only an escape and there is no return upon the containing substance and activities to exalt and transform them. The immanence itself would have no credible reason for being if it did not end in such a transfiguration. But if human mind can become capable of the glories of the divine Light, human emotion and sensibility can be transformed into the mould and assume the measure and movement of the supreme Bliss, human action not only represent but feel itself to be the motion of a divine and non-egoistic Force and the physical substance of our being sufficiently partake of the purity of the supernal essence, sufficiently unify plasticity and durable constancy to support and prolong these highest experiences and agencies, then all the long labour of Nature will end in a crowning justification and her evolutions reveal their profound significance.

So dazzling is even a glimpse of this supreme existence and so absorbing its attraction that, once seen, we feel readily justified in neglecting all else for its pursuit. Even, by an opposite exaggeration to that which sees all things in Mind and the mental life as an exclusive ideal, Mind comes to be regarded as an unworthy deformation and a supreme obstacle, the source of an illusory universe, a negation of the Truth and itself to be denied and all its works and results annulled if we desire the final liberation. But this is a half-truth which errs by regarding only the actual limitations of Mind and ignores its divine

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intention. The ultimate knowledge is that which perceives and accepts God in the universe as well as beyond the universe and the integral Yoga is that which, having found the Transcendent, can return upon the universe and possess it, retaining the power freely to descend as well as ascend the great stair of existence. For if the eternal Wisdom exists at all, the faculty of Mind also must have some high use and destiny. That use must depend on its place in the ascent and in the return and that destiny must be a fulfilment and transfiguration, not a rooting out or an annulling.

We perceive, then, these three steps in Nature, a bodily life which is the basis of our existence here in the material world, a mental life into which we emerge and by which we raise the bodily to higher uses and enlarge it into a greater completeness, and a divine existence which is at once the goal of the other two and returns upon them to liberate them into their highest possibilities. Regarding none of them as either beyond our reach or below our nature and the destruction of none of them as essential to the ultimate attainment, we accept this liberation and fulfilment as part at least and a large and important part of the aim of Yoga.

(From Chapter II of the Introduction to "The Synthesis of Yoga" in "Arya")

THE YOUNG SAVITRI:
HER DEVELOPMENT, PREPARATION AND MILIEU

SRI AUROBINDO

...OVER her watched millennial influences
And the deep godheads of a grandiose past
Looked on her and saw the future's godheads come
As if this magnet drew their powers unseen.
Earth's brooding wisdom spoke to her still breast;
Mounting from mind's last peaks to mate with gods,
Making earth's brilliant thoughts a springing board
To dive into the cosmic vastnesses,
The knowledge of the thinker and the seer
Saw the unseen and thought the unthinkable,
Opened the enormous doors of the unknown,
Rent Man's horizons into infinity.
A shoreless sweep was lent to the mortal's acts,
And art and beauty sprang from the human depths;
Nature and soul vied in nobility.
Ethics the human keyed to imitate heaven;
The harmony of a rich culture's tones
Refined the sense and magnified its reach
To hear the unheard and glimpse the invisible
And taught the soul to soar beyond things known,
Inspiring life to greaten and break its bounds,
Aspiring to the Immortals' unseen world.
Leaving earth's safety daring wings of Mind
Bore her above the trodden fields of thought
Crossing the mystic seas of the Beyond
To live on eagle heights near to the Sun.
There wisdom sits on her eternal throne.
All her life's turns led her to symbol doors
Admitting to secret Powers that were her kin;
Adept of truth, initiate of bliss,
A mystic acolyte trained in Nature's school,

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Aware of the marvel of created things
She laid the secrecies of her heart's deep muse
Upon the altar of the Wonderful;
Her hours were ritual in a timeless fane;
Her acts became gestures of sacrifice.
Invested with a rhythm of higher spheres
The word was used as a hieratic means
For the release of the imprisoned spirit
Into communion with its comrade gods.
Or it helped to beat out new expressive forms
Of that which labours in the heart of life,
Some immemorial Soul in men and things,
Seeker of the Unknown and the Unborn
Carrying a light from the Ineffable
To rend the veil of the last mysteries.
Intense philosophies pointed earth to heaven
Or on foundations broad as cosmic Space
Upraised the earth-mind to superhuman heights.
Overpassing lines that please the outward eyes
But hide the sight of that which lives within
Sculpture and painting concentrated sense
Upon an inner vision's motionless verge,
Revealed a figure of the invisible,
Unveiled all Nature's meaning in a form,
Or caught into a body the Divine.
The architecture of the Infinite
Discovered here its inward-musing shapes
Captured into wide breadths of soaring stone:
Music brought down celestial yearnings, song
Held the merged heart absorbed in rapturous depths,
Linking the human with the cosmic cry;
The world-interpreting movements of the dance
Moulded idea and mood to a rhythmic sway
And posture; crafts minute in subtle lines
Eternised a swift moment's memory
Or showed in a carving's sweep, a cup's design
The underlying patterns of the unseen:
Poems in largeness cast like moving worlds
And metres surging with the ocean's voice
Translated by grandeurs locked in Nature's heart

THE YOUNG SAVITRI

But thrown now into a crowded glory of speech
The beauty and sublimity of her forms,
The passion of her moments and her moods
Lifting the human word near to the god's.
Man's eyes could look into the inner realms;
His scrutiny discovered number's law
And organised the motions of the stars,
Mapped out the visible fashioning of the world,
Questioned the process of his thoughts or made
A theorised diagram of mind and life.
These things she took in as her nature's food,
But these alone could fill not her wide Self:
A human seeking limited by its gains,
To her they seemed the great and early steps
Hazardous of a young discovering spirit
Which saw not yet by its own native light;
It tapped the universe with testing knocks
Or stretched to find Truth-mind's divining rod;
A growing out there was to numberless sides,
But not the widest seeing of the soul,
Not yet the vast direct immediate touch,
Nor yet the art and wisdom of the Gods.
A boundless knowledge greater than man's thought,
A happiness too high for heart and sense
Locked in the world and yearning for release
She felt in her; waiting as yet for form,
It asked for objects around which to grow
And natures strong to bear without recoil
The splendour of her native royalty,
Her greatness and her sweetness and her bliss,
Her might to possess and her vast power to love:
Earth made a stepping-stone to conquer heaven,
The soul saw beyond heaven's limiting boundaries,
Met a great light from the Unknowable
And dreamed of a transcendent action's sphere.
Aware of the universal Self in all
She turned to living hearts and human forms;
Her soul's reflections, complements, counterparts,
The close outlying portions of her being
Divided from her by walls of body and mind

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Yet to her spirit bound by ties divine.
Overcoming invisible hedge and masked defence
And the loneliness that separates soul from soul,
She wished to make all one immense embrace
That she might house in it all living things
Raised into a splendid point of seeing light
Out of division's dense inconscient cleft,
And make them one with God and world and her.
Only a few responded to her call:
Still fewer felt the screened divinity
And strove to mate its godhead with their own,
Approaching with some kinship to her heights.
Uplifted towards luminous secrecies
Or conscious of some splendour hidden above
They leaped to find her in a moment's flash,
Glimpsing a light in a celestial vast,
But could not keep the vision and the power
And fell back to life's dull ordinary tone.
A mind daring heavenly experiment,
Growing towards some largeness they felt near,
Testing the unknown's bound with eager touch
They still were prisoned by their human grain:
They could not keep up with her tireless step;
Too small and eager for her large-paced will,
Too narrow to look with the unborn Infinite's gaze
Their nature weary grew of things too great.
For even the close partners of her thoughts
Who could have walked the nearest to her ray,
Worshipped the power and light they felt in her
But could not match the measure of her soul.
A friend and yet too great wholly to know,
She walked in their front towards a greater light,
Their leader and queen over their hearts and souls,
One close to their bosoms, yet divine and far.
Admiring and amazed they saw her stride
Attempting with a godlike rush and leap
Heights for their human stature too remote
Or with a slow great many-sided toil
Pushing towards aims they hardly could conceive;
Yet forced to be the satellites of her sun

THE YOUNG SAVITRI

They moved unable to forego her light,
Desiring they clutched at her with outstretched hands
Or followed stumbling in the paths she made.
Or longing with their self of life and flesh
They clung to her for heart's nourishment and support:
The rest they could not see in visible light;
Vaguely they bore her inner mightiness.
Or bound by the senses and the longing heart,
Adoring with a turbid human love,
They could not grasp the mighty spirit she was
Or change by closeness to be even as she.
Some felt her with their souls and thrilled with her;
A greatness felt near yet beyond mind's grasp;
To see her was a summons to adore,
To be near her drew a high communion's force.
So men worship a god too great to know,
Too high, too vast to wear a limiting shape;
They feel a Presence and obey a might,
Adore a love whose rapture invades their breasts;
To a divine ardour quickening the heart-beats,
A law they follow greatening heart and life.
Opened to a breath is the new diviner air,
Opened to man is a freer, happier world:
He sees high steps climbing to Self and Light.
Her divine parts the soul's allegiance called:
It saw, it felt; it knew the deity.
Her will was puissant on their nature's acts,
Her heart's inexhaustible sweetness lured their hearts,
A being they loved whose bounds exceeded theirs;
Her measure they could not reach but bore her touch,
Answering with the flower's answer to the sun
They gave themselves to her and asked no more.
One greater than themselves, too wide for their ken,
Their minds could not understand nor wholly know,
Their lives replied to hers, moved at her words:
They felt a godhead and obeyed a call,
Answered to her lead and did her work in the world;
Their lives, their natures moved compelled by hers
As if the truth of their own larger selves
Put on an aspect of divinity

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To exalt them to a pitch beyond their earth's.
They felt a larger future meet their walk;
She held their hands, she chose for them their paths:
They were moved by her towards great unknown things,
Faith drew them and the joy to feel themselves hers;
They lived in her, they saw the world with her eyes.
Some turned to her against their nature's bent;
Divided between wonder and revolt,
Drawn by her charm and mastered by her will,
Possessed by her, her striving to possess,
Impatient subjects, their tied longing hearts
Hugging the bonds close of which they most complained,
Murmured at a yoke they would have wept to lose,
The splendid yoke of her beauty and her love:
Others pursued her with life's blind desires
And claiming all of her as their lonely own,
Hastened to engross her sweetness meant for all.
As earth claims light for its lone separate need,
Demanding her for their sole jealous clasp
They asked from her movements bounded like their own
And to their smallness craved a like response.
Or they repined that she surpassed their grip,
And hoped to bind her close with longing's cords.
Or finding her touch desired too strong to bear
They blamed her for a tyranny they loved,
Shrank into themselves as from too bright a sun,
Yet hankered for the splendour they refused.
Angrily enamoured of her sweet passionate ray
The weakness of their earth could hardly bear,
They longed but cried out at the touch desired
Inapt to meet divinity so close,
Intolerant of a Force they could not house.
Some drawn unwillingly by her divine sway
Endured it like a sweet but alien spell,
Unable to mount to levels too sublime
They yearned to draw her down to their own earth.
Or forced to centre round her their passionate lives
They hoped to bind to their heart's human needs
Her glory and grace that had enslaved their souls.

THE YOUNG SAVITRI

But mid this world, these hearts that answered her call,
None could stand up her equal and her mate.
In vain she stooped to equal them with her heights,
Too pure that air was for small souls to breathe.
These comrade selves to raise to her own wide breadths
Her heart desired and fill with her own power
That a diviner Force might enter life,
A breath of Godhead greaten human time.
Although she leaned down to their littleness
Covering their lives with her strong passionate hands
And knew by sympathy their needs and wants
And dived in the shallow wave-depths of their lives
And met and shared their heart-beats of grief and joy
And bent to heal their sorrow and their pride,
Lavishing the might that was hers on her lone peak
To lift to it their aspiration's cry
And though she drew their souls into her vast
And surrounded with the silence of her deeps
And held as the great Mother holds her own,
Only her earthly surface bore their charge
And mixed its fire with their mortality:
Her greater self lived sole, unclaimed, within.
Oftener in dumb Nature's stir and peace
A nearness she could feel serenely one;
The Force in her drew earth's subhuman broods;
And to her spirit's large and free delight
She joined the ardent-hued magnificent lives
Of animal and bird and flower and tree.
They answered to her with the simple heart.
In man a dim disturbing somewhat lives;
It knows but turns away from divine Light
Preferring the dark ignorance of the fall.
Among the many who came drawn to her
Nowhere she found her partner of high tasks,
The comrade of her soul, her other self
Who was made with her, like God and Nature, one.
Some near approached, were touched, caught fire, then failed.
Too great was her demand, too pure her force.
Thus lighting earth around her like a sun,
Yet in her inmost sky an orb aloof,

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A distance severed her from those most close.
Puissant, apart her soul as the gods live.

As yet unlinked with the broad human scene,
In a small circle of young eager hearts,
Her being's early school and closed domain,
Apprentice in the business of earth-life,
She schooled her heavenly strain to bear its touch,
Content in her little garden of the gods
As blossoms a flower in an unvisited place.
The wide world knew not yet the inhabitant flame,
Yet something deeply stirred and dimly knew;
There was a movement and a passionate call,
A rainbow dream, a hope of golden change;
Some secret wing of expectation beat,
A growing sense of something new and rare
And beautiful stole across the heart of Time.
Then a faint whisper of her touched the soil,
Breathed like a hidden need the soul divines;
The eye of the great world discovered her,
A wonder lifted up its bardic voice.
A key to a Light still kept in being's core,
The sun-word of an ancient mystery's sense,
Her name ran murmuring on the lips of men
Exalted and sweet like an inspired verse
Struck from the epic lyre of rumour's winds
Or sung like a chanted thought by the poet Fame.
But like a sacred symbol's was that cult.
Admired, unsought, intangible to the grasp
Her beauty and flaming strength were seen afar
Like lightning playing with the fallen day,
A glory unapproachably divine.
No equal heart came close to join her heart,
No transient earthly love assailed her calm,
No hero passion had the strength to seize;
No eyes demanded her replying eyes.
A Power within her awed the imperfect flesh;
The self-protecting genius in our clay
Divined the goddess in the woman's shape
And drew back from a touch beyond its kind,

THE YOUNG SAVITRI

The earth-nature bound in the sense-life's narrow make.
The hearts of men are amorous of clay-kin
And bear not spirits lone and high who bring
Fire-intimations from the deathless planes
Too vast for souls not born to mate with heaven.
Whoever is too great must lonely live,
Adored he walks in mighty solitude;
Vain is his labour to create his kins,
His only comrade is the Strength within.
Thus was it for a while with Savitri,
All worshipped marvellingly, none dared to claim.
Her mind sat high pouring its golden beams,
Her heart was a crowded temple of delight.
A single lamp lit in perfection's house,
A bright pure image in a priestless shrine,
Midst those encircling lives her spirit dwelt,
Apart in herself until her hour of fate.

SAVITRI—Book IV Canto 2

MIND-SUBSTANCE AND MIND-FORCE

A TALK BY THE MOTHER

THERE is a "stuff" of mind, of which the mental being is constituted. This stuff is not exactly material—at least not Matter as we generally understand it—but there is nothing unsubstantial about it. If there were no mental substance there would be no mental being. Without it, mind would be just a vibration—but does not even a vibration need a medium to manifest itself? People generally think that mind is a mere mode of activity and not a substance. They might as well as consider the body to be no more than a mode of activity! Further, as there is a mental substance, there is a corresponding world of mind which has an autonomous existence: in other words, there can be a mind without any physical support. Everything physical may disappear and yet the mind can continue.

How shall we make clear this substance-character of mind? Evidently as compared to Matter, it is immaterial. There is an expression in popular usage, "It is rarefied"—but I do not believe it quite hits off the kind of stuff that mind is. All the same it has something correct in its suggestion of lessened density. We may say that substance has different densities and that the more material it becomes the more dense it grows and that the more it moves away from materiality the less dense it is. But being less dense does not diminish its substantiality. There is even an etheric substance. I make no claim here of conforming to scientific theories; I do not guarantee that I am not telling you scientific heresies! But these are cosmic facts. And they are at the basis of all occult practice. The first thing in occultism is to know that there are different states of being, each with a different density and having an independent existence. These states are real, they are actual substances and not simply a manner of being.

There can be, as I have said, a distinct mental being acting in its own rights. There can be a thought altogether independent of the brain—quite contrary to the materialistic theory which says it is only the brain that carries on mental activity. The truth is that the brain is just the material translation of the mental activity. And this activity has its proper domain, its proper substance, so that one can think outside one's brain, make all sorts of mental formations outside the cerebrum. One can even live, move, go about from place to place in the mental being, have a direct knowledge of mental things in the

mental world—and all the time that this is done the body may be in a condition of complete inertia, not only sleep but even catalepsis. If anyone wants to have a total control over himself, he must recognise this fact—the fact that he is made up of different states of being which have their own independent life. If he does not set about his job in full awareness of this fact, he is likely to miss something—something will always slip through his fingers.

Sri Aurobindo has written in *The Brain of India* that the Bengalis can think with their hearts. I believe it is a poetic statement, implying that the Bengalis are essentially emotive and that their heart is conscious even in their thought, their thought is not purely intellectual and dry but expressive of the heart's warmth and impulse and aspiration. But one can find even a literal interpretation for such a statement. When I was in Japan I met a man who had formed a group, not exactly for sadhana but for a sort of psychological discipline. He had the theory that one can think in any part of one's being if one concentrates there. Thus, instead of thinking in your head, you can think in your chest. And the aim of this Japanese was to make people think in the stomach! It was his contention that the majority of human miseries come from our thinking in our heads. According to him, such thinking gives headaches, tires us, impairs the mind's clarity! If we learn to think in the belly, he used to say, we get power, strength, calmness. And the remarkable thing is that he had arrived at a certain kind of capacity to bring the mental force exactly into the stomach: the mental activity could be carried on from there and no longer from the head. And by teaching the transference of the thought-centre he had cured a considerable number of people who had been suffering from terrible headaches.

This Japanese used to say, "Haven't you noticed that all men who have great power have also a big belly? This is so because they concentrate their force in the belly and the concentration makes it big." He would often give the example of Napoleon and remark, "Such men of power always hold themselves straight up, with their head quite erect, but with all their force in the belly." Once he had a visit from Tagore when the poet came to Japan. After the visit the Japanese told me, "Have you observed how Tagore carries himself absolutely upright with the head quite erect?" I said, "Yes, but he has not got a big belly." The answer was prompt: "It will surely come."

There were hundreds of people at his meetings. They would sit on their heels in Japanese style. He would strike a table with his stick and immediately all would start bringing their mental force to the stomach and they would remain like that for a full half hour. Then he would strike the table a second time and all would release their mental force from the spot where it had been concentrated and begin to talk—of course in the restricted Japanese sense of talking, which does not amount at all to chatting.

I have tried out this man's teaching. It is perfectly practicable. I can vouch also that headaches can be cured by it. If ever you have a headache, I advise you to take hold of your thought-force and make it pass from the top of your head downwards. If you have a congestion in the head, due to over-exposure to sunlight, make the mental force descend in the same way, bring it to the centre of the chest or even lower into the stomach. You will be cured. Sit quite straight but at ease and without stiffness: then start the downward movement of the energy that is in your head—let it descend very slowly, very carefully towards the navel. It is an excellent remedy, there is no need to take pills or injections.

Let me repeat that what I have told you drives home two points: our mental faculties are not in the brain but in the mind itself and it is by sheer habit that they are exercised from the head. The mind's most prominent faculty—understanding or comprehension—even this is in the head only by habit. One can comprehend from anywhere. Wherever one seats one's consciousness, from there the comprehending can take place. You may feel that it is natural to think with the brain and that you were born doing it. But were you really thinking at the moment you were born? You began doing so later with the brain because of an established habit in the race. Your parents and their parents and so forth had all of them this habit. But it is not binding. It is like the habit of looking with the eyes. It has been proved that centres of vision can be created elsewhere than in the eyes, with a little bit of concentration. Don't, however, have the impression that I am declaring the brain to be not an organ made for thinking. It certainly has been formed for thought, but what I am insisting on is that thought does not depend on the brain. If one knows how to handle mental forces, one sees well that the brain is a very suitable medium for expressing oneself: evidently it has been made for receiving mental forces and putting them into action, into expression, into speech. Still, one need not be exclusive of other parts. It is the exclusiveness that is the established habit I have spoken of. A little bit of Yoga is enough to show that you can think from various parts of the head itself. You can think in the centre of the forehead, or on the right side or else on the left or at the top of the head—and even from much above it. The best way of thinking is from above where there are subtle centres in touch with greater and higher or spiritual mind-planes. To think from overhead seems impossible merely because most people have not tried it and have been accustomed to feel all the phenomena of the mind as being produced by the brain or in the brain. But there are quite a number of people who have attempted it—with indubitable success and distinct advantage.

(8-9-1954)

“OVERHEAD POETRY”

(Last April, at the instance of several readers, we published the detailed appraisals by Sri Aurobindo of some poems by an inmate of the Ashram, which the Master had characterised as “overhead” in their inspiration: that is to say, drawing their inspiration from the spiritual planes above the mental intelligence and even the inner mind—the planes of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. We are adding a supplement by way of remarks by him on a few more poems either directly overhead or approaching the planes above or else connected with them in one manner or another. As overhead poetry is a rare phenomenon and as it is difficult to discriminate properly between the various modes of it as well as to mark the dividing-line between it and the mental poetic creation, Sri Aurobindo’s analyses, though brief, are of extreme value in the education of both the writer and the critic of what he has termed in general “the future poetry”.)

PRELUDE

O Fire divine, make this great marvel pass,
That some pure image of thy shadowless will
May float within my song’s enchanted glass!
Sweep over my breath of dream thy mystic mood,
O Dragon-bird whose golden harmonies fill
With rays of rapture all infinitude!...

Or else by unexplorable magic rouse
The distance of a superhuman drowse,
A paradisal vast of love unknown,
That even through a nakedness of night
My heart may feel the puissance of thy light,
The blinding lustre of a measureless sun!

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS:

"Very fine—language and rhythm remarkably harmonious, *teres totusque rotundus*¹—the expression very felicitous and embodying exactly the thing seen. Source is poetic intelligence drawn back into inner mind and lifting towards the overhead planes from which it receives its vision and substance and a certain breath of subtlety and largeness."

INVOCATION TO THE FOURFOLD DIVINE

O Void where deathless power is merged in peace!
O myriad Passion lit to one self-fire!
O Breath like some vast rose that breaks through form!
O Hush of gold by whom all truth is heard!
Consume in me the blinded walls of mind:
Wing far above dull thought my speech with flame,
Make my desire an infinite sky's embrace,
A joy that feels through every colour's throb
One single heart kindling the universe—
And by strange sleep draw heaven closer still,
Blotting all distances of space and time!

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS:

"That is perfect—it is all of one piece, an exceedingly fine poem expressing with revelatory images the consciousness of the cosmic Self into which one enters by breaking the walls of individual limitation. Higher Mind, touched with Illumined Mind, except lines 3, 4, 8, 9 which are more of the Illumined Mind itself."

Asked what exactly was meant in line 3 by the phrase "that breaks through form", Sri Aurobindo replied:

"It means nothing exactly, but it gives the suggestion of a vast rose of illimitable life breaking out to manifest its splendour and colour through the limitations of form, as a rose breaks out of its bud."

¹ "Smooth, complete and rounded" (Editor).

"OVERHEAD POETRY"

THROUGH VESPER'S VEIL

A rose of fire like a secret smile
Won from the heart of lost eternity
Broke suddenly through vesper's virgin veil.
A smoulder of strange joy—then time grew dark,
And all my vigil's burning cry a swoon
As if the soul were drawn into its God
Across that dream-curve dimming out of space...
Then from the inmost deep a white trance-eye
Kindled a throbbing core of the Unknown,
Some mute mysterious memory lit beyond
The wideness with one star that is the dusk.

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS:

"Very fine poetry—quite original. Its originality consists as in other poems of yours of the same kind in the expression of a truth or plane of vision and experience not yet expressed and, secondly, in the power of expression which gives it an exact body—a revelatory not an intellectual exactitude. Lines 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 are overhead lines—Illumined Mind."

AGNI

Not from the day but from the night he's born,
Night with her pang of dream—star on pale star
Winging strange rumour through a secret dawn.
For all the black uncanopied spaces mirror
The brooding distance of our plumbless mind.
O depth of gloom, reveal thy unknown light—
Awake our body to the alchemic touch
Of the great God who comes with minstrel hands!...

Lo now my heart has grown his glimmering East:
Blown by his breath a cloud of colour runs:
The yearning curves of life are lit to a smile.
O mystic sun, arise upon our thought
And with thy gold omnipotence make each face
The centre of some blue infinitude!

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS:

"The modifications now made are quite satisfactory and render the poem perfect. The last six lines still remain the finest part of the poem, they have a breath of revelation in them; especially the image 'my heart has grown his glimmering East' and the extreme felicity of 'the yearning curves of life are lit to a smile' have a very intense force of revealing intuitivity—and on a less minute, larger scale there is an equal revealing power and felicity in the boldness and strength of the image in the last three lines. These six lines may be classed as 'inevitable', not only separately but as a whole. The earlier part of the poem is also fine, though not in the same superlative degree—the last two lines have something of the same intuitive felicity, though with slighter less intense touches, as the first two of the (rhymeless) sestet—especially in the 'alchemic touch' of the 'minstrel hands'. Lines 2 to 5 have also some power of large illumination."

THE SANNYASI

(An old story relates how a princess over-proud of her beauty would not accept any lover unless he could first live like a sannyasi in the Himalayas, practising austerities to purify himself in order to win her favour as of a divinity. One youth, famous for his handsomeness as well as heroic deeds, took up the difficult wager and at the end of the stipulated three years returned to the eagerly waiting princess, but he came now no longer in the mood of a suitor...)

If every look I turn tramples your flesh,	1
Forgive the pilgrim passion of a dream	2
That presses over the narrow path of limbs	3
To an azure height beaconing above the mind.	4
No love could dare to reach your mouth's red heaven	5
Without a spirit washed in whitenesses—	6
But who shall hear the call of flickering clay	7
When titan thunders of the avalanche leap,	8
A pinnacle-voice plunging to deeps below	9
As if the agelong barrier broke between	10
Our dubious day and some eternal light?	11
Nor can a small face fill the widening heart	12
Where in the ice-pure lonelihoods of hush	13
A vast virginity devours all time!	14
O masquerader of the Measureless,	15

"OVERHEAD POETRY"

O beauty claiming the Invisible's crown,	16
The empire of the undying Mystery	17
Has burned across you like an infinite sun	18
Withering for me your body's puny veil!	19
Yet all this fire is but the dwarf soul's death:	20
O strain no more those pale and quivering arms:	21
Rise from the crumbling cry of littleness	22
Beyond each blinded boundary to feel	23
The immortal Lover flaming through your heart,	24
The golden smile of the one Self everywhere!	25

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS:

"The blank verse is quite successful. It is all fine throughout, rising from time to time to overhead sublimity and profound force. Overhead inspiration: 9-11, 13-18, 22, 23. Poetry fine enough and strong, but not from overhead: 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 19, 21, 24, 25. 2, 5, 6, 12, 20—lines which have the overhead touch or might even reveal themselves as overhead if in proper immediate company—the last is the case with line 2. The overhead lines belong to the type that is now usual with you, Higher Mind lifted by Illumination to reach the Intuition level or else Illumined Mind rising to Intuition level; the latter in 9-11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 22, 23. Both are very fine combinations."

INNERMOST

Each form a dancer whose pure naked sheen
Mirrors serenity, a moving sleep
White-echoed out of some mysterious deep
Where fade life's clamouring red and blue and green—

The priestesses of virgin reverie
Sway through the cavern heart of consciousness.
A marble rapture fronting frozenly
The cry of mortal hunger and distress,

A love superb moulded to rocks of flame,
A ring of rhythmic statues worship-hewn
From the pale vistas of a perfect moon—
They guard with silences the unbreathable Name.

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS :

"Very fine throughout. It is a combined inspiration, Illumined Mind with an element of Higher Mind coming in to modify it and sometimes rising to touch Intuition—even what might be called Overmind Intuition. The last touch is strongest in lines 2, 3, there is something of it in lines 5, 6, 7, a little in the last three lines.

"It is, I suppose, some *anandamaya* rhythm of the divine inmost Silence lifted above the vital life, that is the significance of the image."

(Q: You once distinguished three Overmind levels: mental Overmind, Overmind Intuition and Overmind Gnosis. Is it possible to give some idea as to what quality of rhythm, language and substance could constitute the differences in expression from these three levels?)

"As for the Overmind Gnosis, I cannot yet say anything—I am familiar with its workings, but they are not easily definable or describable and, as for poetry, I have not yet observed sufficiently to say whether it enters in anywhere or not. I should expect its intervention to be extremely rare even as a touch; but I refer at present all higher Overmind intervention to the Overmind Intuition in order to avoid any risk of overstatement. In the process of overmental transformation what I have observed is that the Overmind first takes up the illumined and higher mind and intellect (thinking, perceiving and reasoning intelligence) into itself and modifies itself to suit the operation—the result is what may be called a mental Overmind—then it lifts these lower movements and the intuitive mind together into a higher reach of itself, forming there the Overmind Intuition, and then all that into the Overmind Gnosis awaiting the supramental transformation. The Overmind 'touch' on the Higher Mind and Illumined Mind can thus raise towards the O. I. or to the O. G. or leave in the M. O.; but estimating at a glance as I have to do, it is not easy to be quite precise. I may have to revise my estimates later on a little, though not perhaps very appreciably, when I am able to look at things in a more leisurely way and fix the misty lines which often tend to fade away, being an indefinable border." (3.5.1937)

THE OVERHEAD PLANES

SRI AUROBINDO

...A few have dared the last supreme ascent
And break through borders of blinding light above,
And feel a breath around of mightier air,
Receive a vaster being's messages
And bathe in its immense intuitive Ray.
On summit Mind are radiant altitudes
Exposed to the lustre of Infinity,
Outskirts and dependences of the house of Truth,
Upraised estates of Mind and measureless...
A cosmic Thought spreads out its vastitudes;
Its smallest parts are here philosophies
Challenging with their detailed immensity,
Each figuring an omniscient scheme of things.
But higher still can climb the ascending light;
There are vasts of vision and eternal suns,
Oceans of an immortal luminousness,
Flame-hills assaulting heaven with their peaks,
There dwelling all becomes a blaze of sight;
A burning head of vision leads the mind,
Thought trails behind it its long comet tail;
The heart glows, an illuminate and seer,
And sense is kindled into identity.
A highest flight climbs to a deepest view:
In a wide opening of its native sky
Intuition's lightnings range in a bright pack
Hunting all hidden truths out of their lairs,
Its fiery edge of seirg absolute
Cleaves into locked unknown retreats of self,
Rummages the sky-recesses of the brain,
Lights up the occult chambers of the heart;
Its spear-point ictus of discovery
Pressed on the cover of name, the screen of form,

MOTHER INDIA

Strips bare the secret soul of all that is.
Thought there has revelation's sun-bright eyes;
The Word, a mighty and inspiring Voice,
Enters Truth's inmost cabin of privacy
And tears away the veil from God and life.
Then stretches the boundless finite's last expanse,
The cosmic empire of the Overmind,
Time's buffer state bordering Eternity,
Too vast for the experience of man's soul:
All here gathers beneath one golden sky:
The Powers that build the cosmos station take
In its house of infinite possibility;
Each god from there builds his own nature's world;
Ideas are phalanxed like a group of sums;
Thought crowds in masses seized by one regard;
All Time is one body, Space a single book:
There is the Godhead's universal gaze
And there the boundaries of immortal Mind:
The line that parts and joins the hemispheres
Closes in on the labour of the Gods
Fencing eternity from the toil of Time.
In her glorious kingdom of eternal light
All-ruler, ruled by none, the Truth supreme,
Omnipotent, omniscient and alone,
In a golden country keeps her measureless house;
In its corridor she hears the tread that comes
Out of the Unmanifest never to return
Till the Unknown is known and seen by men.
Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight,
Above the silence of the wordless Thought,
Formless creator of immortal forms,
Nameless, investitured with the name divine,
Transcending Time's hours, transcending Timelessness,
The Mighty Mother sits in lucent calm
And holds the eternal Child upon her knees,
Attending the day when he shall speak to Fate.
There is the image of our future's hope;
There is the sun for which all darkness waits,
There is the imperishable harmony;
The world's contradictions climb to her and are one;

THE OVERHEAD PLANES

There is the Truth of which the world's truths are shreds,
The Light of which the world's ignorance is the shade
Till Truth draws back the shade that it has cast,
The Love our hearts call down to heal all strife,
The Bliss for which the world's derelict sorrows yearn:
Thence comes the glory sometimes seen on earth,
The visits of Godhead to the human soul,
The Beauty and the dream on Nature's face.
There the perfection born from Eternity
Calls to it the perfection born in Time,
The truth of God surprising human life,
The image of God overtaking finite shapes.
There is a world of everlasting Light,
In the realms of the immortal Supermind
Truth who hides here her head in mystery,
Her riddle deemed by reason impossible
In the stark structure of material form,
Unenigmaed lives, unmasked her face and there
Is Nature and the common law of things.
There in a body made of spirit stuff,
The hearth-stone of the everlasting Fire,
Action translates the movements of the soul,
Thought steps infallible and absolute
And life is a continual worship's rite,
A sacrifice of rapture to the One.
A cosmic vision, a spiritual sense
Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form
And seen through a quivering ecstasy of light
Discovers the bright face of the Bodiless,
In the truth of a moment, in the moment's soul
Can sip the honey-wine of Eternity.
A Spirit who is no one and innumerable,
The one mystic infinite Person of his world
Multiplies his myriad personality,
On all his bodies seals his divinity's stamp
And sits in each immortal and unique.
The Immobile stands behind each daily act,
A background of the movement and the scene,
Upholding creation on its might and calm
And change on the Immutable's deathless poise.

MOTHER INDIA

The Timeless looks out from the travelling hours;
The Ineffable puts on a robe of speech
Where all its words are woven like magic threads
Moving with beauty, inspiring with their gleam,
And every thought takes up its destined place
Recorded in the memory of the world.
The Truth supreme, vast and impersonal
Fits faultlessly the hour and circumstance,
Its substance a pure gold ever the same
But shaped into vessels for the spirit's use,
Its gold becomes the wine jar and the vase.
All there is a supreme epiphany:
The All-Wonderful makes a marvel of each event,
The All-Beautiful is a miracle in each shape;
The All-Blissful smites with rapture the heart's throbs,
A pure celestial joy is the use of sense.
Each being there is a member of the Self,
A portion of the million-thoughted All,
A claimant to the timeless Unity,
The many's sweetness, the joy of difference
Edged with the intimacy of the One.

SAVITRI — Book X Canto 4

FRENCH CULTURE AND INDIA

THE India Government's plan to let the French Settlements enjoy, even when they are a part of the larger Indian sub-continent, a degree of cultural and linguistic autonomy is a wise one. It reflects the enlightened international outlook that is our Prime Minister's. The same outlook that has led Jawaharlal Nehru to keep India within the Commonwealth without abrogating her independence has recognised the French cultural influence as an enriching value worthy to play its part in the free future that is modern India's in a world of increasing internationalism.

England and France—these are the two countries whose cultures we should do well to assimilate by means of our naturally synthesising and multiform genius. England gives us on the one hand a practical dynamic expansive life-instinct which can serve profitably to re-stimulate what was ours in the days of our past greatness—namely, a deep creative life-intuition flexibly functioning to give birth to a richness of varied and complex, adventurous and even fantastic-seeming forms of existence which yet carry a certain stability and self-balance by being rooted in a spontaneous organic energy. On the other hand England gives us a language of extremely subtle poetic possibilities in which our innate mysticism of soul can most fittingly express itself and from which we can convey quickening colour and tone to our comparatively undeveloped vernaculars.

France comes with other gifts. There is, to begin with, her gift of prose as distinguished from poetry. English prose can be very great, but at its most characteristic it flourishes rather as a beautiful suburb of the poetic metropolis: it is poetry in a less intense medium, it has not its own typical self and movement. Poetry sings and visions and enraptures; prose converses and expounds and pleases, its power is persuasion and its progression has a controlled order and an accurate sober effectiveness. Not that it lacks fire and speed, but its glow is steady and tastefully tempered, its run is a vigorous continuity. There have been English prose-writers who did not want in the clarity, the justice, the care, the firmness and the ease that constitute prose an art distinct from poetry which comes with a flashing flooding force; but only French culture provides us with this art in its most perfect as well as most cumulative form. It is a valuable art, since what is best said by way of pointed and animated conversation cannot be replaced, however sublime the substitute offered. So,

French prose cannot but be a cultural asset if the mind of modern India is to be adequate in expression of a certain quality of keen and serious thought or quick and refined feeling—a quality requiring a humane and natural manner.

Behind this prose there is the whole French civilisation. France brings, at her truest, a clear-seeing accurately organising idea-force and a considerably warm, liberty-loving, graciously and gracefully radiant sentiment. Here is a supple logic putting delicately discerned parts together to make a precise systematic whole, aided by a happy feeling for form which is an artistic eagerness at once to fashion total harmony and to keep unblurred the contours of individual entities. Ordered *ensemble* and sharp individuality in a brilliant combination—there we have the essence of the French genius. To resist standardisation or mass-reproduction and to make everything sparkle with a definite outline free of irrelevance and still to join all things to one another in a neat pattern which avoids waste and which discloses their interrelation in a lucid crystalline loveliness—this is the French genius's ruling passion. In other words we may say that what the French genius attempts is a reasoned and tasteful, vivid and diversified integration.

But integration, we may note further, does not consist for the French genius in only combining system and individuality in a brilliant way. It consists in also bringing together the physical and the intellectual. The body with its senses, the mind with its conceptions—these are not, for the French, contrasting modes of living, opposed means of the *joie de vivre*. They are a single two-toned design and delight, complementaries and not contradictories. Hence, in general, so little dryness or abstractness in the French intellect and such a wide-spread intellectual flavour in the commonest walks of French life.

The things of the mind are not limited to a small group: even the sailor and the barman and the *concierge* will surprise you with intelligent interest in literature or science or the fine arts. As a charming instance of the general appreciation of serious literature in France F.L. Lucas remembers the case of one Laurent, called "Coco", accused of burglary in April, 1905, who proved an alibi because: "Juste à cette heure-là je me trouvais chez un marchand de vin de la Rue de Tracy et je discutais avec un camarade au sujet de la mère de Britannicus dans la tragédie de Racine." This discussion at a wine-merchant's on a *personnage* out of a classic drama in verse was proved to have lasted three-quarters of an hour. "No doubt," remarks Lucas, "burglars in England *might* discuss the character of Hamlet in a public-house; but no magistrate would believe it."

And, just as the *apache*, the *restaurateur* or the chorus-girl may talk with some *esprit* about Claudel, Camus, Picasso or perhaps even de Broglie, and, we may add, just as the window-dressers of the Faubourg Saint Honoré

seem to bring to every-day objects the art of a Chardin composing with devoted care a still life, so also in their turn the *littérateurs*, the artists, the scientists live not like specialists but as men with broad sympathies and with an interest in day-to-day mundane occupations, men who are no bunglers in physical things but are aware of their niceties. It is difficult to come across, anywhere else in the world, the easy friendship between mind and body which is found where France is most French—that is, in Paris—and in those sections of Paris where, as Charles Morgan tells us, the foreigner's influence is least felt—the Rue Bonaparte, the square of St. Germain des Prés, the Ile St. Louis, the neighbourhood of Notre Dame.

No doubt, here is not the mystical harmonisation of all the terms of existence so as to lift each to its divine counterpart. But here is what can afford to the urge towards that harmonisation a fine co-operating zest, even as the French bent for a bright ordering of details without diminishing each detail's clear-cut uniqueness can be finely helpful to the balanced splendour of divine unity and divine diversity that, together with the ascent of earth to heaven and the descent of heaven to earth is the complete aim of the spiritual consciousness.

When we go back to the Vedas, the early Upanishads and in later times the Bhagawad Gita, we discover a large synthesising movement careful of all aspects and forces of existence. Owing to various circumstances this movement got broken up and the Indian genius began to satisfy its hunger for the absolute by seeking keen separate culminations and carrying each trend to its farthest solitary limit, instead of by questing for an all-round interrelated perfection keyed to the highest spiritual yet orchestrating all the instruments of being. It is integration in this exalted sense that the Indian genius must ever toil for; it is integration of this kind that is most native to it; and to achieve it we must draw inspiration from our own spiritual depths and surcharge with their quality our outer life. But to help create in our outer life a response to those depths we might interfuse with our own spiritual temper the turns of the French genius, for we have to a considerable extent allowed important powers of our own to withdraw into the background and, in the modern *milieu*, these turns can go far both to resuscitate and enrich them.

Of course, the French genius can degenerate into the sceptical, the superficial and the sensual, just as the English can become crudely commercial or deviously opportunist at one extreme and, at the other, lose itself in a labyrinth of fancy or a conceptual muddle. But this does not detract from their intrinsic worth. We must do our best to absorb their positive virtues. The English language promises to remain a living force in all India and therefore the virtues of the culture of England are not likely to vanish from amongst us. But the

centres of French culture are small—in fact, a few towns—and its peculiar essence is likely to be elusive unless we are studious to capture it.

Since the Merger, a local non-governmental association has been formed in Pondicherry: the Friends of French Language and Culture. Also, with the willing co-operation of the India Government which had already accepted the continuance of French Colleges, France has recently founded, with Dr. Filliozat, an eminent orientalist, as Director, a French Institute in the same town. These are hopeful signs. But surely the most effective means of capturing for our country the essence of French Culture is to give full support to the idea mooted some years ago that Pondicherry should be converted into a University town, a cultural meeting-place between India and France consciously organised around the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre which was initiated in 1951 and is fast flowering now. From such a meeting-place drawing inspiration from the creative genius of Sri Aurobindo a great impetus will be gained by the new India which is arising today, an India true to her own nature and fulfilling it but also embracing and absorbing all that is best in the world and developing an international entity out of herself.

By developing such an entity she will extend her own spiritual influence in the world. France will not fail to respond to her. The French consciousness is not lacking in the capacity to answer the mystical call. A certain side of it is mystically perceptive, the side which turns with instinctive enthusiasm to the figure of Jeanne d'Arc and does not feel alien to Pascal with his "reasons of the heart that Reason does not know" and his *Pensées* that all Europe has hailed as one of the most penetrating spiritual apologies produced by the West, the side which in the modern age has found expression in that exquisite search for the essence within the appearance, the single within the many, the infinite in each finite—the Symbolism of Mallarmé and his heirs. It would be difficult to surpass in any poetry of our day the sublime profundity of insight in that line of Mallarmé's on the dead Poe:

Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change,
(At last to Himself he is changed by eternity)

or the rapturous visionariness that uplifts us in Rimbaud's

Millions d'oiseaux d'or, ô futur vigueur!
(Millions of golden birds, o vigour unborn!)

What is, in several respects, the modern opposite of Symbolism *à la* Mallarmé by a stress not on the secret and unifying, universal and eternal

Government, profession or trade union, but partakes of sheer ultimate Being, a world "méta-problématique". Marcel, we may remark, has here an affinity with that earlier French philosopher who has profoundly influenced modern thought—Bergson—by his analysis of the time-experience and his clarification of what he termed "intuition", the supra-intellectual in-feeling of the very flow of life. Marcel and Bergson are perhaps the two most powerful factors tending the contemporary French mind in the direction of the basic Indian method of experiencing Reality. Together with Bergson's *Introduction à la Métaphysique* which kindled a new vision for a whole generation by its few pages of concentrated yet self-revelatory subtlety, Marcel's short treatise *Positions et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique* has been a luminously seminal document for twentieth-century thinkers.

So much for what directly or indirectly has prepared conditions for a response from France to India's spiritual genius. But, the most sensitive temperament in Europe, the French race in even its older brand of atheism than the Sartrean, the scepticism which, unlike Sartre's chafing against science and intellectuality, is based on the "natural" and the "rational", is not quite closed to the haunting ambience of the ideal around the actual, no matter how firmly the intellect may refuse to admit any religious tinge in the strange sense of loss that is often felt in the midst of the most tangible fullness of physical preoccupation or achievement. Has not the agnostic Anatole France, ironical about the aspirations of the all-too-human, pitiful of blind pieties, shown also the irony of the negativist attitude, the piercing pitiableness of the denying posture, when he penned that sentence of delicate inexplicable nostalgia: "Ce que la vie a de meilleur, c'est l'idée qu'elle nous donne de je ne sais quoi qui n'est point en elle"? A sentence, we may observe, that is typical also of the beautiful directness of French prose in even the glimmers it gives of the far and the faint, a combination of the subtle with the simple and straightforward, a fearless use of the almost colloquial without sacrificing euphony. Paul Bloomfield remarks that this sentence is as mellifluous in French as it would be awkward in English if translated word for word; and we may add that the soul of its liquid elegance as well as of its pellucid poignancy would be a little missing in even the finest free English rendering: "The best in life is the idea it gives us of a something that is not in it."

To return to our point: a certain side of the French consciousness is not wanting in mystical perception. But the emphatic and open mystical turn cannot come readily to the French consciousness, and when it does come it frequently gets grooved in conventional religiousness and deviates from its true goal. Only a movement like Indian spirituality's, at once illumined and elemental, free from narrowness and obscurantism without losing intensity, can

essence but on the concrete and separate, individual and time-fissured existence—Existentialism *à la* Sartre may itself be traced to a perversely orientated pressure of the mystically inclined side of the French temperament. For this is not an atheism that is happy in its denials; it is an atheism avowedly torn by *angoisse* at the unending nothingness, *néant*, which it feels to be the fundamental fact against which the feverish little dramas of conscious life are futilely played out, an atheism unable to get over the calamity of its conviction that there is no God. It even luxuriates in that calamity, keeping it ever keen: the existentialists, as Jolivet has discerned, are intoxicated with the void and worship it because the void is as if not a non-existence but a paradoxical negative existence, a *nihil tremendum et fascinans*, inducing at once a strange death-wish and by reaction an intense leap inward into self-subjectivity, into utterly individual isolation. Born of such a leap is the disbelief of Sartrean Existentialism in any blind and iron fate ruling us by some inherent human or cosmic nature whose expressions we may be: each man is a unique activity, possessed of an ineradicable freedom from the tyranny of type, faced with an unescapable responsibility of choice, called to a valorous creativeness fighting the *nausée* which is felt on realising the meaninglessness, the absurdity of brute fact, the given world into which one is thrown without knowing why and incapable of saying no. And each man's free and constant self-creation should move towards "personal engagement" in a collective pursuit of values whose justification cannot be found in any scientific or philosophical formula. Sartrean Existentialism, inspiring the youths in chequered shirts and the girls with straight uncurled hair who flock to the Café de Flore, seems to seek, in misguided theory and often aberrant practice, to transcend the limitations of both the merely "natural" and the purely "rational".

The rival Existentialist school to Sartre's—that of Marcel—is not atheistic at all and is rather the complement of Symbolism than its opposite. Although Sartre is more in vogue because the French post-war psychology is shot through with a feeling of world-tragedy, Marcel has perhaps deeper roots in the soil of French history, connecting up as he does with the Christian tradition without being really committed to it. It was after his philosophy had been developed in most of its characteristics that he entered the Roman Catholic Church and its true ties are with all mystical aspiration in general that is founded on what he calls "the Mystery of Being". To this Mystery he brings a concrete approach—by music, art, drama, literature, poetry and by a philosophy of action which accepts exterior life with its myriad contacts yet springs, as he says, from a recollected interior life in communion with the supreme Ground and Source of all things, an all-enveloping secret Presence in which man is not a bundle of "functions" to be described by psychologists, sociologists and scientists nor by his

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bring about such a turn in its purity sooner or later in at least a marked nucleus of progressive minds. And all the more can it do so in its Aurobindonian version as a Yoga which embraces life in all its dynamism, endeavours to transform rather than reject any part of it and makes for the evolution of a supramental divine man in an ideal society on earth.

Yes, France can answer India's call. However, there must be the proper conditions. If the erstwhile French India becomes a cultural meeting-place and if India takes as much as possible into herself the best that France can show, the answer will be all the more intimate and strong. And once there is the answer from France, all Europe will echo it in the course of time. For, France is still the vital core of European civilisation. Hence, both from the standpoint of helping out in the cause of the Divine some of our own receded powers and from the standpoint of accomplishing as widely as we can the mission of mysticism that is India's, it is desirable to promote a Franco-Indian culture.

K. D. SETHNA

A PRAYER

Awake, O drum of the indomitable flame
And pierce the iron door
Of moveless sleep with Thy puissances untame;
Thy music's seas outpour

In the dim ear of dying obscurities,
In the dark sub-human root;
Bring to the earth thy burning sleepless release—
The release absolute.

Not in subtle chant of ethereal tenderness
Be Thy sudden bliss-advent,
But sweep and smite with Thy victorious stress
Of laughing firmament

The deaf and blind humanity of time;
Arouse thy tempest-light
To drown the blackness and death's pantomime
With Thy rapture infinite

Till all sheaths of ignorance crumple one by one
And spirit is left God-nude
Immersed in Thy gold-white apocalypse-sun
Alone in peak-solitude.

ROMEN

Students' Section

POETIC INSPIRATION

(A Model Answer for First-Year Poetry Students)

Q: What light is shed on the nature of poetic inspiration in general by Sri Aurobindo's line: "Sight's sound-waves breaking from the Soul's great deeps"?

This line from *Savitri* is meant primarily to sum up the Mantra, the poetry of the highest spiritual truth flowing out "in metres that reflect the moving worlds"—and it is itself an exemplification of mantric utterance. But it also sheds light on the nature of poetic inspiration in general. For, if the Mantra is the ideal poetry, all poetry that is genuine must represent or shadow forth in its own way the mantric essence.

We gather from the line, first of all, that the ultimate source from which poetry comes is what we may term the Soul, the true being of us, which is not our body or our life-force or even our mind. Our self of sensations, our self of emotions, our self of ideas are not the fountain of poetic speech. All of them have a part to play, all of them can be instruments, indeed must be instruments if the poetic speech is to be full. But that speech is basically from the true being of us which is not only deep within but also itself a great depth, holding as it were a vast secret ocean of experience-movements in which the Divine Consciousness is hidden and in which there is a concealed oneness of our individuality with the whole world. Sensation, emotion, idea are here involved or contained in a thrilled intuitive awareness focussed for poetic purposes into a subtle vision which is at the same time a subtle vibration taking the form of rhythmic words.

Sight is the characteristic function of the poet: he catches the shine, the colour, the shape, the gesture of things, his is a concrete seizure of significances—vivid pictures, imaginative figurations, symbolic suggestions, these are the poet's fundamental powers and means by which he enjoys the world within and the world without and by which he traces the beauty and truth of things and attains to a comprehension of details, interrelations, totalities.

MOTHER INDIA

But mere seeing, however intense, is not all that there is to poetry. Whatever the poet intensely sees carries with it an expressive harmony as if every picture, every image, every symbol spoke out its own heart: the poet's act of seeing is simultaneously an act of hearing. They are not two processes really—the sight-substance comes fused with the sound-form, the vision is its own word, the right manifesting word which is not just “transmissive” but “incarnative”, embodying with a living intimacy and concrete directness the gleaming stuff and stir of the Soul's revelatory contact with reality.

Further, this sound is like a march of waves, it has its pattern of rise and fall, its rhythm variously modulating on a basic recurrent tone and breaking upon the receptive heart and mind and sensation with the powerful spontaneities, the profound felicities of Soul-experience.

We may sum up in the words of Sri Aurobindo: “Sight is the essential poetic gift. The archetypal poet in a world of original ideas is, we may say, a Soul that sees in itself intimately this world and all the others and God and Nature and the life of beings and sets flowing from its centre a surge of creative rhythm and word-images which become the expressive body of the vision, and the great poets are those who repeat in some measure this ideal creation, *kavayah satyaśrutāḥ*, seers and hearers of the poetic truth and poetic word.”

K. D. SETHNA

THE GIFT

LONG long ago, in the dawn of the creation, the Gods and the Titans who rule over the Universe met together once, each one bringing a precious gift for the Supreme Mother out of whose sacred womb they all had come forth.

The palace they met in was all made of diamond and it was situated over a snow-white cloud that floated gaily in the blue and serene sky. An opalescent hue clothed the universe and a divine fragrance thrilled the Immortal Ones with a sublime ecstasy.

Inside the palace was a huge hall, the walls of which were made of a transparent and multicoloured light. At one end of the hall, in a shower of golden light sat the Supreme Mother; on Her left stood the Gods and on Her right the Titans. From the side of the Gods there shone out a sapphire-blue light, and from the side of the Titans a ruby-red light; both these lights mingled joyously and bathed the lotus feet of the Mother.

Then one by one the Gods and the Titans came and placed their precious gifts at the feet of the Mother; each considered his to be superior to all the rest and began to boast and criticise. Last of all came mother Earth, dressed in a simple white garment. The Titans began to jeer at her and the Gods smiled pitifully and said, "Alas! what gift can she have worth giving to the Mother!"

Earth, with tears in her eyes, approached timidly the Mother-of-all and kneeling down before Her placed humbly at Her feet an innocent and helpless child.

The Divine Mother leaned forward and, taking the child in Her arms, kissed him on the forehead and said, "This child is mine, and he alone, amongst all things created, shall manifest my entire Divinity." A magic silence, for a moment, held the Titans and the Gods spell-bound.....

Ever since, the Titans and the Gods have been fighting together in order to win over to their side this apparently weak and helpless child. And this child of mother Earth is Man, it is

"He in the mirroring depth of whose far eyes
The Gods behold, o'erawed, the Unnamable One
Beyond all Gods, the Luminous, the Unknown."

MANOJ

POEMS

AIR FROM THE SUN

Standing on the last horizon
I saw a golden gate opening.
It had no bolts, no hinges—
Only a huge lid that looked like a sun.

Amazed I watched on, forgetting my very self.
The opening lid made no sound,
Only a movement of light.
Then gushed out air the world had never breathed before.

NAGIN

THE SYMPHONY

A nameless flower grown in a lonely field,
Pure and simple yet breathing notes of eternity,
Said to the air of morning sweetly thrilled:
“To whom shall I offer my riches of harmony?”

My eyes were drawn to the far lambent sky
Of a clear night when all lay still and dumb;
Torches in hand, said the sleepless stars on high—
“We are looking for the Guest who is to come.”

The day neared its end as the sun dipped below,
I read in the last streak of light golden and clear:
“I toil from dawn to dusk but am too slow, too slow,
For the unseen Face beloved is ever afar.”

All on a sudden I glanced deep into me
And saw the flower, the stars, the twilight, all blend
In one long lone and mellow symphony:
O, would that this broken vessel His touch could mend!

ROBI GUPTA

POEMS

THE GOAL

Beside the luminous shrine of my Lord I sit
And see the sky above me all purple in flame,
The flowers with an upward glow are lit,
And the humble-blades of grasses sing His name!

The stars are peeping from behind the veil
Of the emerald branches over the sacred shrine:
A forlorn cricket, a nestward nightingale—
In harmony they chant His name divine!

A rustling message of voices unknown is heard
In the evening breeze that blows from a deathless height:
O none save he who seeks the celestial Bard
Shall know his path out of the darkest night.

A hush, a mighty Silence rings all soul,
A finger of light to earth has shown the Goal.

PRITHWINDRA

SRI AUROBINDO

Thy vast of bliss enfolds our mortal sheaths,
Thy smile from eternity unlinks our eyes.
O Thou! the Flame that hymns of creation new,
Thy Blaze transmutes our poison-paradise.

Who dares to love thy diamond Heart of love?
Lover of the self-same stupendous Soul—
Within, without a world of nectar's flood
Sporting with thy ever-unhorizoned whole.

Out of the marvel process of supernal toil
Thy gnostic Sun flowers in the soil of earth.
The clay is not a dream, a chimera's mist—
In Thee she shall awake to golden birth.

CHINMOY

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

(Some Reviews by Students)

The Eternal Smile and Other Stories by *Pär Lagerkvist*. Published by Random House, Inc. New York.

This book contains a miscellaneous collection of partly realistic, partly fantastic and mostly symbolic tales of various lengths ranging from half a page to eighty pages. Lagerkvist writes in an extremely simple style. His language is usually bare, but rhythmic and flowing, verging at times, especially in his parables of the *Evil Tales*, on the language of the Bible. He tells his stories in a casual and quiet tone which is very appealing and gives us an impression of aloofness, as if he were a detached "Spectator" of life unemotionally recounting his observations. He has a most original style of narration, so original in fact that even current and well-known ideas take a new form and colouring in his tales and appear to us as something novel.

This originality of Lagerkvist comes, I think, from the marvellous synthesis that he has achieved by mingling realism and fantasy with fine touches of symbolism. *The Hangman* is an excellent example of this synthesis. Here the writer combines stark and gruesome realism, vulgar superstition, weird fantasy and a submerged symbolism, and achieves an effect which is not only most unusual but also vigorous and wonderful. The hangman is portrayed as a giant figure, and the writer shows us that in spite of his cruel and inhuman profession and in spite of his symbolising the eternal violence ingrained in the heart of man he is human and has a heart. And in contrast Lagerkvist brings into relief the bloodthirsty nature of normal men and women in more peaceful ways of life.

Lagerkvist deplotes the degraded condition of the world and the low level to which mankind has sunk, and thinks that anguish is man's heritage. These philosophic thoughts find their expression in his parables like *Love and Death*, *Father and I*, *Paradise*, and in his grim and poignant satires like *The Children's Campaign*, *The Hero's Death* and *Venerated Bones*. But for all his pessimism, it is evident from many of his stories that Lagerkvist has a deep faith in God and Perfection and ultimate Good. His idea of God is very well depicted in the character of the symbolic landlord in *The Basement* and in the "old man sawing wood...who did the best he could do" in *The Eternal Smile*.

Pär Lagerkvist is Swedish by birth. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1951. This collection of short stories proves how well he deserved it.

ANIRUDDHA

Poems by *Edna St. Vincent Millay*. Published by Harper and Brothers, New York and London. Pp. 113+9. 1951.

This book is of special interest to all those who like to read poetry not only for the love of it, but also to know and see things from new points of view. For this poet has the faculty to search for the soul behind everything, and she expresses that soul beautifully through the poems—sixty in number—contained in this volume. Her expression is so straightforward yet original that it is sometimes thrilling for the reader to plumb the depths amid such transparent simplicity! Moreover, she has a skilful grip over diction, rhythm, music, image—and, crowning all, her ideas are lofty. The reader, even at the first perusal, can feel the impact of a profound poetic mind. In a petty thing such as mud, she is struck to find a dazzle:—

April this year, not otherwise
Than April of a year ago,
Is full of whispers, full of sighs,
Of dazzling mud or dingy snow.¹

In the following lines she gives expression to her universal love:—

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!
Thy mists that roll and rise!
Thy woods, this autumn day...

Her keen torch of observation is even flashed upon her own heart and she finds:—

My heart is what it was before,
A house where people come and go.

All those who have a contact with spirituality know that when an intense aspiration rises from the soul, there is nothing that would then seem unattainable. Thus only can man venture to realize the Divine. In the following lines the poet speaks of such an intense moment:—

The soul can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through.

¹ Professor's Note The poetic point of the last line is the surprise of "dingy snow" as much as that of "dazzling mud". There is an exchange of epithets, by which "mud" and "snow" lose their apparent opposition and fuse together into one multi-faceted reality.

MOTHER INDIA

The poems are divided into six sections, of which the last one consists of thirteen sonnets (four Petrarchan and six Shakespearean). The third part of the book contains only a long poem which describes the effects of the Renaissance, when "the dragon of 'thou shalt not'" was killed. It was only then that man had the freedom to criticise things for himself, and not follow blindly what the ancient scriptures prescribed to be the best. As Tagore says, "Thou art the truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind". The man of the Renaissance passionately wanted this light of reason. Science then usurped the place of religion. But no sooner did man discover the limits of science and feel its incapacity to reach the highest Truth, than man cried out:—

I saw and heard and knew at last
The How and Why of all things, past
And present and forever more.

O God, I cried, give me new birth,
And put me back upon the earth!

The similes, such as "And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold" or "sorrow like a ceaseless rain beats my heart", are original and make us see vividly the reality sought to be pictured. And the alliterations, such as "Crumbling stones and sliding sand is the road to Heaven now", or "I light the lamp and lay the cloth, I blow the coals to blaze again," are very charming and are present in nearly all the poems.

In most of the poems the writer has mingled a note of sadness which has, however, increased the tenderness in them. But is it the poet's intention to make us so conscious of the sorrows and sufferings of the present world, that we may seek shelter only in the embrace of the Supreme Spirit? Does she want to remind us of the saying of Sri Krishna, "*Anityam asukham lokam imam prāpya bhajaswa mām*"¹?

We congratulate the poet for presenting us with such a beautiful volume, and we wait for her further works which we hope will even surpass the present one. We recommend this book to the youth of every country.

The get-up is praiseworthy and the illustrations by Mr. J. Paget-Fredericks are indeed expressive.

PRITHWINDRA

¹ "Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and turn to Me."

An Innocent on Everest by *Ralph Izzard* (E. P. Dutton and Company, New York, Pp-318, Price \$ 3.75.)

Ralph Izzard, roving correspondent of the London *Daily Mail*, was asked by his paper to proceed to Nepal to report on the 1953 British Everest Expedition. The London *Times*, which had co-sponsored the expedition had already obtained sole rights of all "news" from the expedition.

Reporting on a mountain-climbing expedition is difficult. Once the expedition reaches the mountain, news is very scanty, and it is more so in the case when the mountain is very high and the place remote. The odds become tremendous when it is found that whatever news is dispatched by the expedition is meant only for the representatives of one particular newspaper—the *Times*.

Not having been able to get much news from members of the expedition, some of whom were, at times, even brusque with him, Izzard decided to follow the expedition up to Namche Bazar, in the hope of gaining some first-hand experiences on which he would then be able to write. He eventually went right up to the foot of Everest past Thyangboche monastery. He went from Khatmandu to Namche Bazar in record time for any European. On his return to Khatmandu he proceeded to get his material back to his newspaper.

This book is Izzard's story. It is not the story of the Everest expedition, but it is an absorbing account of his own exciting adventures.

In the first chapter, Izzard gives quite a comprehensive account of all previous expeditions to Mount Everest. The previous history of Everest-climbing is all there, in a nutshell, and also included are some of the more interesting and more important details.

The book tells one a lot about conditions in Nepal. Izzard who previously visited Nepal in 1947 describes the changes—most of them improvements—that have taken place since the fall of the Rana dictatorship. He also tells the reader about buildings and architecture in Nepal. On this subject he makes frequent quotations from Perceval Landon's book *Nepal*.

Izzard has written quite a lot on the Sherpa community and the "coolies" who are so indispensable to the expeditions. One reads of their honesty, sincerity and devotion, and of the conditions in which they work. Izzard writes: "Very few sherpas are ever likely to reach the standard of technical perfection of a first-class Alpine guide". This statement is challengeable now. With the inauguration of the Himalayan institute the other day by our Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, there is every chance that with their superior assets and very good training they will at least equal if not surpass the standards of a first-class Alpine guide.

Frequently in the book, Izzard writes of his taking pictures of the expedition

camps as also of the beautiful scenery. It is a pity that he has inserted none in the book, for their inclusion would surely have enhanced its value.

Izzard has devoted a full chapter to a discussion on the Abominable Snowman. He treats this subject pretty exhaustively. He quotes profusely from what Himalayan mountaineers have written on this subject. He also tells us of special researches on this mysterious creature.

Now and then, throughout the book, the author refers to the political situation in Nepal and points out how some parties take advantage of the disputes that arise over the expedition (the nationality of Tensing, for example). And he discusses the possibility of infiltration by mischief-making elements.

The book provides fascinating and enjoyable reading, giving at the same time the story of Izzard's adventures and plenty of information on Nepal and its inhabitants.

BINU

Sanskrit Studies by M. Hiriyanna (Kavyalaya Publishers, Mysore. pp.63, Rs. 4)

This volume is not designed to present a systematic method of Sanskrit study but is a compilation of eight articles by the late Professor Hiriyanna of renowned scholarship, some of which have already appeared in a few journals. As they were written at different times and on different occasions, one cannot expect from them any sequence nor a consistent thought running throughout: here are only various lights cast on certain phases of high Sanskrit literature.

In the first article *Sanskrit Poetry* the professor tries to place before the readers the two well-marked tendencies in Sanskrit poetry which bear to each other a relationship of historical sequence and show that the change of ideal implied by them is in perfect harmony with the general development of mental life in ancient India. Sanskrit poetry, he holds, starts from the Vedas themselves, and is not characterised by nature worship alone but is replete with historical and aesthetic values also. He passes then to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and points out their descriptive nature, though he does not forget to mention the implied beauty embedded in them. He alludes to the famous fable and the event of intense pathos that plays "primary part in the creation of the Ramayana" of which he speaks very highly and whose author Valmiki, the *adi kavi*, he hails as the morning star of Indian classical song. He evaluates Valmiki's service as being equal to Dante's in Italian and Chaucer's in English in the formation of the *lingua franca* of the time. With the march of time, a new curve of human feelings and of higher emotions gets traced in poetry, and in the composition right up to the age of Kālidāsa as well as in Kālidāsa's own creations, the writer points out the predominance of implied suggestion—*dhvani*—and unity of

rasa. He also states that its character changed from nature-poetry to soul-poetry even as man grew from naturalism to idealism.

The second article entitled *Vision of Vasavadatta* is an account in brief of the famous work of Bhasa, *Svapna Vasavadatta*. He mentions in passing, however, that the chief excellences of this particular drama are "the simplicity and nobility of the life it depicts."

His third article under the head *Kalidas* is a critical study of Kalidas as a man and Kalidas as a poet. He sheds light on the poet's vast learning and his religious faith, his belief in the law of Karma and the Gods of the Hindu Trinity. He also gives his own independent view about love in Kalidas's poetry: "the writer has the least to do with the love of flesh." He does not overlook, however, the richness, lustrousness and nature-love with which his poetry is suffused. "It is love in the highest sense that we find in Kalidas and to him belongs the credit of having given the best poetic expression to the ancient Hindu idea of love and life." In the fourth article the professor adds, while reviewing the *Vocabulary of Megha-sandesh* by one Swamiji, that such works will be of great use for Sanskrit students.

The fifth article entitled *Malati Madhava* attracts the reader's attention intensely. It is a brief narration of the full story of the drama of that name. He gives some account of the famous dramatist, Bhavabhuti and his eminence in Sanskrit literature. He is of the opinion that "Bhavabhuti writes in a chaste and elevated style and achieves distinction both in the constitution of plot and in the development of character." In the sixth article on *Uttara Ramcharita* a drama by the same author is examined by the professor as regards its plot, characterisation and *rasa*. The threefold treatment bears testimony to his deep learning and great appreciative faculty.

The seventh and eighth articles are but reviews of Keith's *Classical Literature* and *A History of Sanskrit Literature*. He brings out elaborately the usefulness of the latter and concludes that "it gives us a splendid survey of the entire range of classical Sanskrit literature."

With the ninth article *The Study of Sanskrit* the volume comes to its close. It was originally an address delivered at the inauguration of a Sanskrit Association at Mysore many decades ago. Bharat has been the home of Sanskrit. But the irony has been that though this language of languages was neglected at home it found her ardent votaries in distant lands like Germany, France and England. The times are now changed. With the advent of Swaraj the time of its renaissance has arrived and it will once more attain its pristine glory and prestige if the precious advice given by the learned author in his Mysore address in 1916 is followed to-day. What he said in 1916 holds equally good even in 1955.

KUNJ BEHARI