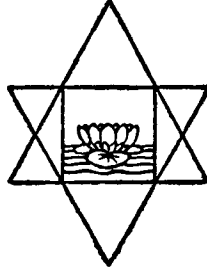


MOTHER INDIA

FEBRUARY 21, 1956 : THE MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

Price : Re. 1.



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

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

SRI AUROBINDO

* * *

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

Sri Aurobindo

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

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. VIII

No. 1

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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TO THE MOTHER

On Her Birthday: February 21

I

O golden silence, mystery of the Far,
Embodied thou hast come
And made earth a pilgrim home
Lit by the unsullied beauty of a star.

Thou bringst strange memories of heavenly gold
Kindling a cosmic fire
In which, like a moth, desire
Burns and the impurities of our mortal mould.

Thy ocean-calm buoys us upon its waves,
We feel an unknown bliss;
The importunities
Of Nature fall from us, no more her slaves.

We find our silent source of thought in thee
And our life's aim on earth:
Thou art the immortal Birth
From the womb of our flickering mortality.

II

MOTHER INDIA

II

The beauty of thy face changing from hour to hour
Reveals a miracle of God;
Each delineation speaks of an inscrutable power
Locked in thy bodily abode.

It shapes our life in the light of thy apocalypt moods;
Each fugitive expression leaves
A lightning mark upon the mind's closed solitudes
And with its darting fire it cleaves

Spaces of shadowy thought that hide behind its veil
The treasures of the fathomless soul;
Earth-passions droop like a withered flower on the pale
Background of death, their journey's goal.

Beyond the furthest star-heaven my vision flies
And settles on gold wings of a sun
Under whose plumed magnificence all creation lies
In a trance of self-oblivion.

NIRODBARAN

THE MOTHER AND HER WORKINGS

(From Sri Aurobindo's Unpublished Letters¹)

Q. We look upon the Mother as divine. Does she carry the full divine Shakti in her and the working of all the divine forces?

There is one divine Force which acts in the universe and in the individual and is also beyond the individual and the universe. The Mother stands for all these, but she is working here in the body to bring down something not yet expressed in this material world so as to transform life here—it is so that you should regard her as the Divine Shakti working here for that purpose. She is that in the body, but in her whole consciousness she is also identified with all the other aspects of the Divine. (16-6-1933)

Q. Is it always necessary for us to understand what the Mother's Force is doing in us for the progress of our Yoga?

Plenty of people progress rapidly without understanding what the Force is doing—they simply observe and describe and say “I leave all to the Mother.” Eventually knowledge and understanding come. (17-7-1933)

Q. Somebody told me: “Before Sri Aurobindo gave us the Mother as our guru, he never used to teach us anything about the Yoga. He would tell us to follow our own knowledge.” Did you really give this advice?

I am not aware of that. But now also the Mother does not teach, she asks all to open and receive. But she does not tell them and I don't think I told people to follow their own “knowledge.” (26-4-1933)

Q. My mind was trying to become conscious of the Mother's thoughts and to receive them. Is this activity right?

¹ Except the first letter.

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It is not altogether the way—if the mind is active it is more difficult to become aware of what the Mother is bringing. It is not thoughts she brings, but the higher light, force etc. (22-3-1933)

Q. Today I felt the Mother filling my head with her light. Was I imagining things or did she really do so?

She does it every time, only today you not only received but were consciously receptive. (8-5-1933)

Q. Is it not true that one who sees the Mother often and talks with her receives more Light by being in her presence?

No. It depends entirely on the condition of the person and his attitude. Especially if they insist on seeing her or on remaining when she wants them to go or are in a bad mood and throw it on her, it is very harmful for them to see her. Each should be content with what the Mother gives them, for she alone feels what they can or cannot receive. Mental constructions of this kind and vital demands are always false. (3-4-1933)

Q. The Mother does not seem to turn away from people who are not faithful. She often allows them to do what they like.

It is the Mother's business. She alone can say what is the right way to deal with people. If she were to deal with people only according to their defects, there would be hardly half a dozen people left in the Ashram. (26-3-1933)

Q. Sometimes the Mother looks at us with a smile as if she were pleased; at other times quite differently, in a rather serious way.

Why not? The Mother cannot be serious, absorbed in herself? Or do you think it is only displeasure against the sadhaks that can make her so? (18-6-1933)

Q. One sometimes catches from the atmosphere a depression when people are passing before the Mother for pranam; it is chiefly connected with her smiling or not smiling.

THE MOTHER AND HER WORKINGS

That is because many sadhaks are full of this idea. They are looking to see if the Mother smiles or how she smiles or what she does, instead of being quiet and concentrated to receive from her. So the atmosphere is full of that.

(6-10-1933)

Q. If people constantly have the Mother's protection around them, I don't think they will ever have depression and doubt or anything hostile to the Divine.

These things may try to come but they will not be able to enter or stay.

Q. All would like to allow the Mother's protection to remain with them; but perhaps certain conditions have to be fulfilled?

There are very few who allow it. There is a general protection around all, but most go out of it by their attitude, thoughts or actions or open the way to other forces.

(24-8-1933)

Q. When one works, one aspires for the Mother's Force to take up one's activity in due course. What should one aspire for when one is not working?

For the Mother's power to work and bring down by the proper stages the higher consciousness. Also for the system to be more and more fit—quiet, egoless, surrendered.

Q. What is meant precisely by surrender to the Mother?

Surrender means to be entirely in the Mother's hands, and not to resist in any way by egoism or otherwise her Light, Knowledge, Will, the working of her Force etc.

(31-8-1933)

NAGIN DOSHI

THE WORK HERE

(*A Talk by the Mother to the Children of the Ashram*¹)

FROM the worldly standpoint, from the point of view of result achieved, certainly things can be done better. But I am speaking of the effort put in, effort in the deepest sense of the word. Work is prayer done with the body. With that effort in your work the Divine is satisfied, the eye of the Consciousness that has viewed it is indeed pleased. Not that from the human standpoint one cannot do better. For us, however, this particular endeavour is one among many; it is only one movement in our sadhana. We are engaged in many other things. To raise one particular item of work to something like perfection requires time and means and resources which are not at our disposal. But we do not seek perfection in one thing, our aim is an integral achievement.

An outside view may find many things to criticise and criticise much, but from the inner view what has been done has been done well. In an outside view, you come with all kinds of mental, intellectual formations and find there is nothing uncommon in what is done here. But thereby you miss what is behind: the *sadhana*. A deeper consciousness would see the march towards a realisation that surpasses all. The outside view does not see the life spiritual; it judges by its own smallness.

There are people who write wanting to join our University and they ask what kind of diploma or degree we prepare for, the career we open out. To them I say: go elsewhere, please, if you want that; there are many other places, much better than ours, even in India, in that respect. We do not have their equipment or magnificence. You will get there the kind of success you look for. We do not compete with them. We move in a different sphere, on a different level.

But this does not mean that I ask you to feel superior to others. The true consciousness is incapable of feeling superior. It is only the small consciousness that seeks to show superiority. Even a child is more developed than such a being; for it is spontaneous in its movements. Rise above all smallness. Do not be interested in any other thing than your relation with the Divine, what you wish to do for Him. That is the only thing interesting.

30-11-1955

¹ On the occasion of the celebrations of December 1 and 2, 1955.

THE SUPRAMENTAL DESCENT

We are moving nearer and nearer the hour of its complete triumph. Once the world conditions are ready the full descent will take place carrying everything before it. Its presence will be unmistakable, its force will brook no resistance, doubts and difficulties will not torture you any longer. For the Divine will stand manifest—unveiled in its total perfection. I do not, however, mean to say that the whole world will at once feel its presence or be transformed; but I do mean that a part of humanity will know and participate in its descent—say, this little world of ours here. From there the transfiguring Grace will most effectively radiate. And fortunately for the aspirants, that successful future will materialise for them in spite of all the obstacles set in its way by unregenerate human nature.

"Words of the Mother", Series 3

THE MOTHER

★

Q. It is nearly 30 years since you started the work of bringing down the Supermind!

30 years too little or too many? What would have satisfied your rational mind—3 years? 3 months? 3 weeks? Considering that by ordinary evolution it could not have been done even at Nature's express speed in less than 3000 years, and would ordinarily have taken anything from 30,000 to 3,000,000, the transit of 30 years is perhaps not too slow.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE MOTHER'S TALKS

(To the Children of the Ashram)

Q. When one gets possessed by the hostile forces, what becomes of one's psychic being, the true soul?

It depends on the degree of the possession. Generally the possession proceeds by stages. First, one comes under an influence—and that too not totally but in some part of the being and for a certain time. Then the influence grows permanent and the part suffers a deterioration and becomes a constant medium expressing the influence. Afterwards, the hostile force which has put forth that influence tries to enter this part. As a result there is a conflict, a kind of inner battle in the person. The attempt to resist creates a crisis, sometimes even nervous and unhealthy—and considerable disequilibrium is produced by the constant conflict, even physical disequilibrium.

But if you do not know how to resist and if you do not succeed in shaking off the hold, then little by little the being which has seized a part of you acts like an octopus and spreads its tentacles, slowly and everywhere; in the end the possession is total. At the moment of total possession the person who is possessed either becomes altogether unbalanced or turns into a sort of monster and his psychic being quits him. Happily, these are extremely rare cases. Generally, in the human being, the psychic is strong enough to resist, and the most frequent case is that of constant conflict between the two sides until the person, particularly if his psychic knows how to depend upon a greater Power than itself, is able to throw off the influence and get free. Only in the extreme case of total possession does the psychic go away.

At times it happens that a child is born dead—that is to say, it dies at the moment of birth or a few minutes after or a few hours later. Then the psychic decides not to use the body. But if the doctor in charge is a clever man or if the nurse who is there is skilful and they bring back life by artificial respiration or some other means, it is often a hostile force that takes hold of the body. There have been instances of children who seemed dead and whose psychic being had left the body, but, before the body could die completely, what we here call a vital being entered it and took the place of the psychic. This vital being is

THE MOTHER'S TALKS

a demon and such children become veritable demons in life. Fortunately, they are not many.

Some vital beings of a superior type—emanations of the Asura, for example—decide for one reason or another to try converting themselves, to be no longer anti-divine and to enter into relation with the Divine. They know that the best way to be converted is to get identified with a human body so that they may be under the control of a psychic being. And they incarnate themselves in human bodies—but not with the intention of driving out the psychic: on the contrary, they try to put themselves under its influence in order to be converted. There are also cases, though not frequent, in which human beings are gifted with very exceptional capacities but also have to face very exceptional difficulties because the power incarnated in them is a power which at least was, if it is not still, a hostile one. These difficulties, these movements of revolt are indeed hard to cure: sometimes it takes a whole life to do so.

There are also the Asuric beings who have attempted to convert themselves and have not succeeded. They have had to quit the bodies they had chosen. It was too up-hill a work for them, calling for great effort.

Of course all the cases I have just spoken of are rather rare. One does not meet at every street-corner a man who is an incarnation of an adverse force or who is totally possessed. However, it is pretty often that somebody is under an influence and expresses the influence. Especially like that are people who take up Yoga without being sufficiently purified beforehand. When people begin Yoga out of ambition or vanity, it very frequently happens that they put themselves under the influence of certain hostile forces.

And there are also many who fall under such an influence in a peculiar way. One cannot exactly call it “accidental”—but, you see, there are some psychic beings who choose a particular environment for incarnating themselves because they think they will have there the experiences they want—and then the environment happens, owing to several circumstances, to be exposed to a hostile influence, with the result that the body which the psychic being puts on comes in a certain measure under that influence and the soul has to fight against it in a terrible way all throughout life. As I have said, if the soul knows how to lean upon a Power greater than itself, it can defeat the influence and gain a great victory. To get rid of an adverse force is indeed a great victory. Such victory passes beyond the personality of the individual and has a repercussion on the state of the entire earth.

Each such victory gained by an individual is an important step towards the moment when the earth will be completely relieved of the presence of hostile forces. It represents a great terrestrial progress.

Q. Is it possible for the hostile forces to convert themselves?

If they want to do so, why not? Everything in the universe has the same one origin—that is to say, a supreme divine origin. The hostile forces have it, like the rest. And if they renounce their revolt and their separation, if they aspire to return to their origin, surely they can convert themselves. Evidently they may have to make more effort than is necessary for a human being to cure his defects. Theirs is a task far tougher and above all goes much more deep, because the root of their revolt is deeper; but ultimately they can reach there. They have the power also, for they are very powerful beings who, if they resolve to get converted, can do it. And then they become some of the most marvellous instruments of the Divine Work—even they who were amongst the most formidable adversaries.

Q. Is mental disequilibrium due wholly to the hostile forces?

Very often, but not always. It can be due to several causes. One cause is simply a defective physical formation, a cerebral insufficiency. Now you may say that the cerebral insufficiency is probably the expression of an inner vital disequilibrium. But generally it is a hereditary or an organic thing—a defect produced at conception. Then you cannot say that it is due to an influence which comes to join the human being: the influence at work was there before birth, and he who suffers from such disequilibrium of mind is not under a direct adverse force: his defect is a consequence of malformation.

Now, there are people who are mentally divided. In one part of their mind they aspire to the Truth, to transformation, but in another they do not, and they not only resist but also revolt. This kind of division happens often. It creates a terrific inner struggle, first mental and afterwards cerebral, and it can produce a serious disequilibrium.

Then there are cases where the cause is the opening to a hostile suggestion, an adverse influence, an opening which comes of a wrong movement, a movement of revolt or of hate or of violent desire. One can open oneself, for example, in a movement of fury to a hostile force and start an influence which may end in possession. In the beginning, all this is relatively easy to cure, if there is a conscious part of the being and a very strong will to get rid of the bad movement and influence. When the aspiration is sincere, one can succeed pretty easily; but if one looks at things with complacency and says, "Ah, it is like this, it cannot be otherwise", then there is danger. One ought not to tolerate the enemy in the house. The moment one perceives his presence, one should fling him off, as far as one can, without pity.

Q. Sri Aurobindo uses the phrase: "to be pure". What does it mean?

No one is truly and perfectly pure except when all the being in all its elements and all its movements adheres fully and exclusively to the Divine Will. Purity does not depend on any moral or social law, any kind of mental convention. It depends entirely on the total adherence of the being to the Divine Will. And there are steps, there are degrees. For example, insincerity, which is one of the greatest impurities, arises always because a movement or a series of movements, an element of the being or a set of elements, wish to follow their own will and not to be an expression of the Divine. Such wishing produces either a revolt or a falsehood. I do not mean that one utters falsehood; I mean that one is in a state of falsehood, of insincerity. And then the consequences are more or less grave, more or less extensive according to the gravity of the movement in itself and of its general importance. But if you look from the point of view of purity, here are the very things that are impurities. From the moral view-point, which is itself altogether a falsehood from the spiritual, there are plenty of people who conduct themselves in a way quite perfect in appearance, who conform to all the social laws, to all the usages, to all the moral conventions but who yet are a mass of impurity. From the spiritual view-point they are beings who are profoundly impure, whereas a lot of poor people who do all sorts of things, who are born as it were with a sense of liberty and who do what is not considered very respectable from the social or moral point of view can yet be in a state of inner aspiration and inner sincerity which makes them infinitely purer than the others. One of the biggest difficulties as soon as one talks of these matters is the deformation produced in the consciousness by all the social and moral conventions. No sooner do we talk of purity than a moral movement presents itself before us and falsifies completely our notion. And note here that it is ever so much more easy to be moral from the social point of view than from the spiritual. To be moral from the social point of view means just to take great care to do nothing that is not approved by others. This can be at times more hard and at times less, but it is not impossible and one can be a monument of insincerity and of impurity while doing it. On the other hand, to be pure, from the spiritual point of view, means a vigilance, an awareness and sincerity in all tests.

However, I must put you on guard against something to which Sri Aurobindo also has drawn attention. There are people who live in the vital consciousness and say, "Oh I am above moral laws, I follow a superior law, I am free from ethical rules." They say this because they want to indulge in all kinds of disorderliness: they have then a double impurity, for they are spiritually impure and in addition socially impure. They have usually a very good opinion

MOTHER INDIA

of themselves and they affirm with an unequalled impudence their will to lead their own lives. We do not want such people.

But I may tell you that on the whole the people whom I have found the most difficult to convert are the very respectable ones. I regret to say this, but I have encountered more difficulty with these paragons of respectability than with their opposites. The trouble was that they stood so high in their own esteem!

The true achievement is really hard. One has to be extremely vigilant, master of oneself, very patient and full of good-will under all tests. Also, one should not neglect to have a small dose of humility, just the sufficient amount, and one ought never to be satisfied with the sincerity one has: one should always wish to have more.

22-12-1954

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

POETIC INSPIRATION AND YOGA

NIRODBARAN: *Need one aspire even for writing poetry?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Aspiration is an essential part of the sadhana.

NIRODBARAN: *If one waits calmly, does not the Grace descend by itself without our asking?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Not unless one is in a state of Grace—in a psychic condition.

NIRODBARAN: *If a person asks and doesn't get it, he is likely to get disappointed.*

SRI AUROBINDO: If he asks with the vital, yes. Your mind is too active in these matters. Get your mind silent, learn to feel within, to aspire from within—then things will come more easily.

NIRODBARAN: *Please give me one direct and decisive rule to follow.*

SRI AUROBINDO: Aspire for the opening to the right place of inspiration.

(10-5-1934)

*

*

NIRODBARAN: *For some time past the inspiration has stopped.*

SRI AUROBINDO: You must remember that you are not a “born” poet—you are trying to bring out something from the Unmanifest inside you. You can't demand that that should be an easy job. It may come out suddenly and without apparent reason like the Ananda—but you can't demand it.

(8-6-1934)

*

*

SRI AUROBINDO: You say it is only by effort that one can write poetry—that is, what is written is something constructed by mental effort. It follows that anybody who makes the necessary effort can become a great poet. Up till now it was thought that there was some mysterious thing called inspiration. There are plenty of people who have made Herculean and untiring efforts

night and day but have not succeeded in writing anything that others would call poetry—they may have just produced good or bad verse. That however in the light of your luminous rationality is evidently an agelong error. As X might say “I labour and write poems day and night and people give the credit to something (not my own great self) they call Inspiration. Are you going to tell me that inspiration after all exists? Can’t be.”

*

*

NIRODBARAN: *We feel that your Force gives us the necessary inspiration for poetry, but I often wonder if you send it in a continuous current.*

If it were so, we would not write 15 to 20 lines at a stretch and then go on for days together producing only 3 or 4 lines.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course not. Why should I? It is not necessary. I put my Force from time to time and let it work out what has to be worked out. It is true that with some I have to put it often to prevent too long stretches of unproductivity, but even there I don’t put a continuous current. I have not time for such things.

That depends on the mental instrument. Some people write freely—others do so only when in a special condition. (12-6-1935)

NIRODBARAN: *I don’t think a latent faculty brought out by Yogic Force would achieve the same result as a faculty which manifests in the natural way.*

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course not so long as it is latent or not fully emerged. But once it is manifested and settled there is no reason why it should not achieve equal perfection. All depends on the quality of the inspiration that comes and the response of the instrument.

NIRODBARAN: *This means that the quick emerging of a faculty depends on a favourable adhar. But on what does this favourableness depend?*

SRI AUROBINDO: How can one say on what it depends? It depends on all the past and all the future and on what is behind the present also!! The mental instrument is what has been formed for the present life—naturally if it has by present nature a marked beginning of capacity in a certain direction, it will be more easy for something that is pressing to manifest, to develop through it than it will be for an instrument not so naturally responsive. But “more easy” is all one can say. It does not follow that the facile instrument will do more than the difficult one. There are poets who produce with no difficulty; there are poets who produce with difficulty; there are poets who produce with occasional facility and customary difficulty. All kinds go into the cosmic hotch-potch.

THE SECRET OF VEDA

SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XIII

DAWN AND THE TRUTH

USHA is described repeatedly as the Mother of the Cows. If then the cow is a Vedic symbol for the physical light or for spiritual illumination the phrase must either bear this sense that she is the mother or source of the physical rays of the daylight or else that she creates the radiances of the supreme Day, the splendour and clarity of the inner illumination. But we see in the Veda that Aditi, the Mother of the Gods, is described both as the Cow and as the general Mother; she is the Supreme Light and all radiances proceed from her. Psychologically, Aditi is the supreme or infinite Consciousness, mother of the gods, in opposition to Danu or Diti,¹ the divided consciousness, mother of Vritra and the other Danavas—enemies of the gods and of man in his progress. In a more general aspect she is the source of all the cosmic forms of consciousness from the physical upwards; the seven cows, *sapta gāvaḥ*, are her forms and there are, we are told, seven names and seven seats of the Mother. Usha as the mother of the cows can only be a form or power of this supreme Light, of this supreme Consciousness, of Aditi. And in fact, we do find her so described in I.99, *mātā devānām aditer anīkam*, “Mother of the gods, form (or, power) of Aditi.”

But the illumining dawn of the higher or undivided Consciousness is always the dawn of the Truth; if Usha is that illumining dawn, then we are bound to find her advent frequently associated in the verses of the Rig-Veda with the idea of the Truth, the Ritam. And such association we do repeatedly find. For, first of all, Usha is described as “following effectively the path of the Truth,” *ṛtasya panthām anveti sādhu*. Here neither the ritualistic nor the naturalistic sense suggested for *ṛtam* can at all apply; there would be no meaning in a constant affirmation that Dawn follows the path of the sacrifice or follows the path of the water. We can only escape from the obvious signi-

¹ Not that the word Aditi is etymologically the privative of diti; the two words derive from entirely different roots, *ad* and *dī*.

ficance if we choose to understand by *panthā ṛtasya* the path, not of the Truth, but of the Sun. But the Veda describes rather the Sun as following the path of Usha and this would be the natural image suggested to an observer of the physical Dawn. Moreover, even if the phrase did not clearly in other passages mean the path of the Truth, the psychological significance would still intervene; for the sense would then be that the dawn of illumination follows the path of the True or the Lord of the Truth, Surya Savitri.

We have precisely the same idea repeated but with still clearer and fuller psychological indications in I.124.3; *ṛtasya panthām anveti sādhu, prajānātīva na diśo munāti*: "She moves according to the path of the Truth and, as one that knows, she limits not the regions." *Diśah*, we may note, has a double sense; but it is not necessary to insist upon it here. Dawn adheres to the path of the Truth and because she has this knowledge or perception she does not limit the infinity, the *bṛhat*, of which she is the illumination. That this is the true sense of the verse is proved beyond dispute, expressly, unmistakably, by a Rik of the fifth Mandala (V. 50. 1) which describes Usha *dyutad-yāmānam bṛhatīm ṛtena ṛtāvarīm svar āvahantīm*, "of a luminous movement, vast with the Truth, supreme in (or possessed of) the Truth, bringing with her Swar." We have the idea of the Vast, the idea of the Truth, the idea of the solar light of the world of Swar, and certainly all these notions are thus intimately and insistently associated with no mere physical Dawn! We may compare VII.75.1. *vyuṣā avo dvijā ṛtena, āviṣkrvāna mahimānām āgāt*; "Dawn born in heaven opens out things by the Truth, she comes manifesting the greatness." Again we have Dawn revealing all things by the power of the Truth and the result described as the manifestation of a certain Vastness.

Finally we have the same idea described, but with the use of another word for Truth, *satyā* which does, not like *ṛtam*, lend itself to any ambiguity, *satyā satyebhur mahatī mahadbhur devī devebhur*, "Dawn true in her being with the gods who are true, vast with the Gods who are vast." This "truth" of the Dawn is much insisted upon by Vamadeva in one of his hymns, IV.51; for there not only does he speak of the Dawns "encompassing the worlds immediately with horses yoked by the Truth," *ṛtayugbhir aśvaih* (cf. VI.65.2) but he speaks of them as *bhadrā ṛtajātasatyāḥ*, "happy, and true because born from the Truth"; and in another verse he describes them as "the goddesses who awake from the seat of the Truth."

This close connection of *bhadrā* and *ṛta* reminds us of the same connection of ideas in Madhuchchandas' Hymn to Agni. In our psychological interpretation of the Veda we are met at every turn by the ancient conception of the Truth as the path to the Bliss. Usha, the dawn of the illumination of the Truth, must necessarily bring also the joy and the beatitude. This idea

of the Dawn as the bringer of delight we find constantly in the Veda and Vasishtha gives a very positive expression to it in V.81.3. *yā vahasi puru spārham ratnam na dāśuṣe mayah*, "thou who bearest to the giver the beatitude as a manifold and desirable ecstasy."

A common Vedic word is the word *sūnṛtā* which Sayana interprets as "pleasant and true speech"; but it seems to have often the more general sense of "happy truths". Dawn is sometimes described as *ṛtāvārī*, full of the Truth, sometimes as *sūnṛtāvārī*. She comes uttering her true and happy words, *sūnṛtā irayantī*. As she has been described as the leader of the radiant herds and the leader of the days, so she is described as the luminous leader of happy truths, *bhasvatī netrī sūnṛtānām*, (I.92.7.). And this close connection in the mind of the Vedic Rishis between the idea of light, of the rays or cows, and the idea of the truth is even more unmistakable in another Rik, I.92.14, *gomatī aśvāvātī vibhāvārī...sūnṛtāvārī*, "Dawn with thy shining herds, with thy steeds, widely luminous, full of happy truths." A similar but yet more open phrase in I.84.2 points the significance of this collocation of epithets, *gomatīr aśvāvātīr viśvasvīdah*, "Dawn with their radiances (herds), their swiftnesses (horses), rightly knowing all things."

These are by no means all the indications of the psychological character of the Vedic Dawn that we find in the Rig-Veda. Dawn is constantly represented as awakening to vision, perception, right movement. "The goddess" says Gotama Rahugana, "fronts and looks upon all the worlds, the eye of vision shines with an utter wideness; awakening all life for movement she discovers speech for all that thinks," *viśvasya vācam avidan manāyoḥ*, (I.92.9). We have here a Dawn that releases life and mind into their fullest wideness and we ignore the whole force of the words and phrases chosen by the Rishis if we limit the suggestion to a mere picture of the reawakening of earthly life in the physical dawning. And even if here the word used for the vision brought by the Dawn, *cakṣuḥ*, is capable of indicating only physical sight, yet in other passages it is *Ketuḥ* which means perception, a perceptive vision in the mental consciousness, a faculty of knowledge. Usha is *pracetāḥ*, she who has this perceptive knowledge. Mother of the radiances, she has created this perceptive vision of the mind; *gavām janitrī akṛta pra ketum* (I.124.5). She is herself that vision,—"Now perceptive vision has broken out into its wide dawn where nought was before," *vi nūnam uchad asatī pra ketuḥ* (I.124.4). She is by her perceptive power possessed of the happy truths, *cikīrtit sūnṛtāvārī*.

This perception, this vision is, we are told, that of the immortality, *amṛtasya ketuḥ* (III. 61. 3); it is the light, in other words, of the Truth and the Bliss which constitute the higher or immortal consciousness. Night in the Veda is

the symbol of our obscure consciousness full of ignorance in knowledge and of stumblings in will and act, therefore of all evil, sin and suffering; light is the coming of the illuminated higher consciousness which leads to truth and happiness. We find constantly the opposition of the two words *duritam* and *suvitam*. *Duritam* means literally stumbling or wrong going, figuratively all that is wrong and evil, all sin, error, calamity; *suvitam* means literally right or good going and expresses all that is good and happy, it means especially the felicity that comes by following the right path. Thus Vasiṣṭha says of the goddess (V. 78. 2), "Dawn comes divine repelling by the Light all darknesses and evils", *viśvā tamānsi duritā*; and in a number of verses the goddess is described as awakening, impelling or leading men to right going, to the happiness, *suvitāyā*.

Therefore she is the leader not only of happy truths, but of our spiritual wealth and joy, bringer of the felicity which is reached by man or brought to him by the Truth, *eṣa netrī radhasaḥ sūṃtānām* (V. 76. 5). This wealth for which the Rishis pray is described under the figure of material riches; it is *gomad āśvāvad vīravād* or it is *gomad āśvāvad rathavac ca rādhaḥ*. Go, the cow, ashva, the horse, *prajā* or *apatya*, the offspring, *nr* or *vīra*, the man or hero, *hiranya*, gold, *ratha*, the chariot, *śravas*,—food or fame, according to the ritualist interpretation,—these are the constituents of the wealth desired by the Vedic sages. Nothing, it would seem, could be more matter-of-fact, earthy, material; these are indeed the blessings for which a race of lusty barbarians full of vigorous appetite, avid of earth's goods would pray to their primitive gods. But we have seen that *hiranya* is used in another sense than that of earthly gold. We have seen that the "cows" return constantly in connection with the Dawn as a figure for the Light and we have seen that this light is connected with mental vision and with the truth that brings the bliss. And *āśva*, the horse, is always in these concrete images of psychological suggestions coupled with the symbolic figure of the cow: Dawn is *gomatī āśvāvatī*. Vasiṣṭha has a verse (V. 77. 3) in which the symbolic sense of the Vedic Horse comes out with great power and clearness,—

*Devānām cakṣuḥ subhagā vahanṭī,
śvetam nayantī sudrśikam āśvam;
Uṣā adarśi raśmibhīr vyuktā
citrāmaghā viśvam anu prabhūtā*

"Happy, bringing the gods' eye of vision, leading the white Horse that has perfect sight, Dawn is seen expressed entirely by the rays, full of her varied riches, manifesting her birth in all things." It is clear enough that the white horse (a phrase applied to the god Agni who is the Seer-Will, *kavīkratu*, the

perfectly-seeing force of divine will in its works, V. 1. 4) is entirely symbolical¹ and that the “varied riches” she brings with her are also a figure and certainly do not mean physical wealth.

Dawn is described as *gomatī aśvāvatī vīravatī*; and since the epithets *gomatī* and *aśvāvatī* applied to her are symbolical and mean not “cowful and horsed”, but radiant with illuminations of knowledge and accompanied by the swiftesses of force, so *vīravatī* cannot mean “man-accompanied” or accompanied by heroes or servants or sons, but rather signifies that she is attended by conquering energies or at any rate is used in some kindred and symbolic sense. This becomes quite evident in I. 113. 16. *yā gomatīr uṣasah sarvavīrāḥ . . . sa aśvadā aśnavāt somasutvā*. It does not mean “the Dawns that have cows and all men or all servants, those a man, having offered the Soma, enjoys as horse-givers.” The Dawn is the inner dawn which brings to man all the varied fullnesses of his widest being, force, consciousness, joy; it is radiant with its illuminations, it is accompanied by all possible powers and energies, it gives man the full force of vitality so that he can enjoy the infinite delight of that vaster existence.

We can no longer take *gomad aśvāvad vīravad rādhaḥ* in a physical sense; the very language of the Veda points us to quite another truth. Therefore the other circumstances of this god-given wealth must be taken equally in a spiritual significance; the offspring, gold, chariots are symbolical, *śravas* is not fame or food, but bears its psychological sense and means the higher knowledge which comes not to the senses or the intellect, but to the divine hearing and the divine vision of the Truth; *rayim dārghaśruttamam*, *rayim śravasyum* is that rich state of being, that spiritually opulent felicity which turns towards the knowledge (*śravasyu* and has a far-extended hearing for the vibrations of the Word that comes to us from the regions (*diśaḥ*) of the Infinite. Thus the luminous figure of the Dawn liberates us from the material, ritual, ignorant misunderstanding of the Veda which would lead us stumbling from pitfall to pitfall in a very night of chaos and obscurity; it opens to us the closed door and admits to the heart of the Vedic knowledge.

¹ The symbolism of the horse is quite evident in the hymns of Dirghatamas to the Horse of the Sacrifice, the Hymns of various Rishis to the Horse Dadhikravan and again in the opening of the Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad in which “Dawn is the head of the Horse” is the first phrase of a very elaborate figure.

Students' Section

GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG

(Unpublished Letters of the Mother)

1933-1934

Ce n'est pas la Mère qui prend ou qui repousse, c'est l'enfant qui s'approche ou s'éloigne.

It is not the Mother who takes up or pushes back, it is the child who draws near or moves away.

*

*

Non, ce n'est pas par manque d'intérêt que je n'ai pas répondu par écrit—j'ai fait une réponse silencieuse.

Quand je ne réponds pas c'est que la réponse est trop subtile pour pouvoir être donnée en quelques mots et je n'ai pas toujours le temps d'écrire longuement.

No, it is not for lack of interest that I have not answered in writing—I have made a silent reply.

When I do not answer, it is only because the reply is too subtle to be given in a few words and I do not always have the time to write at length.

*

*

There was nothing wrong, but you ought to understand that I can be absorbed in some inner work and not smile although I am not in the least displeased.

*

*

GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG

Les bateaux, comme les trains, les automobiles et tout autre moyens de transport sont le symbole de la sadhana, la discipline qui conduit vers le but.

The boats, like the trains, the motor-cars and all other means of transport, are a symbol of the sadhana, the discipline that leads towards the goal.

*

*

Il y a en chaque homme une volonté—Il faut que cette volonté refuse son consentement aux mouvements du vital et donne son plein appui seulement aux mouvements du psychique.

There is in every man a will.—This will should refuse its consent to the movements of the vital and give its full support only to the movements of the psychic.

*

*

Évidemment il vaut mieux être joyeux que morose, mais il y a quelque chose de mieux encore, c'est de vivre dans un bonheur calme et concentré.

Evidently it is better to be cheerful than morose, but there is something better still, it is to live in a happiness calm and concentrated.

*

*

Vous dites vous-mêmes que ce sont des pensées inférieures qui passent, il n'y a qu'à les éloigner de vous sans attacher votre attention sur elles.

Restez calme, dans le calme l'aspiration se fera sincère et spontanée.

You say yourself that it is the lower thoughts that are passing; there is nothing for it but to put them away from you without fixing your attention on them.

Remain calm, in calmness the aspiration will become more sincere and spontaneous.

*

*

Si je comprends bien ce que vous dites, vous pensez qu'il est des propos qui peuvent insulter le Divin. Il faut vous détromper, le Divin ne peut être insulté par rien ni par personne. Ainsi s'il y a insulte, elle retombe sur celui qui l'a faite.

MOTHER INDIA

If I understand correctly what you are saying, you seem to think that idle gossip can insult the Divine. You need to be set right. The Divine cannot be insulted by anything or anybody. So if there is insult, it recoils on the one who makes it.

*

*

(Quand vous nous donnez le lotus rose qui est le symbole de Sri Aurobindo, nous recevons de vous la conscience du Suprême, n'est-ce pas?)

When you give us the red lotus which is the symbol of Sri Aurobindo, we receive from you the consciousness of the Supreme, don't we?)

Je ne peut pas donner la conscience du Suprême car qui serait capable de la recevoir!—Lorsque je donne le lotus rose j'établie simplement un rapport entre les sadhaks et Sri Aurobindo—ou plutôt je renouvelle ce rapport.

I cannot give the consciousness of the Supreme, for who would be capable of receiving it?—When I give the red lotus I establish simply a relation between the sadhaks and Sri Aurobindo—or rather I renew this relation.

NAGIN DOSHI

THE GARLAND OF UNITY

FEBRUARY 21, 1956

O CHILDREN of Life and of many lands
United beneath the Sun!
Come raise your hearts, lift up your hands,
We salute our Mother as one.

You have come from the very ends of the world
To garland Her shining feet,
And the flag of the spirit stands unfurled
Where the flags of humanity meet.

You have come as a heart calls to a star,
As a soul cries for the Dawn—
As a Voice that whispers from afar
That earth to heaven is born.

O rivers of ecstasy! seas of delight!
Like a myriad stars that shine
You stand an oriflamme of Light
Around our Mother divine.

You have come from the pages of the Past,
You children of the Sun—
From continents wide and countries vast
Where the life of the world begun.

From nations big and nations small,
From all the lands of the earth
You have come—brave seekers one and all
To attend Her Glorious Birth.

MOTHER INDIA

You have come from shining worlds on high—
From fields of psychic sleep,
Into this dim mortality,
Into the inconscient Deep

That man may learn to live at peace
With himself and with his brother—
That Light and Love may find increase
In Life and one another.

You have come to change all wars and strife
To a power of vibrant youth—
To awake the sleeping heart of Life
To the flaming worlds of Truth.

O Mother of Light! our prayers arise,
The human spirit breaks
Free from its bonds to mount the skies
Where God in us awakes.

Today New Powers from worlds above
Have entered a Golden Birth,
New Powers of Ecstasy and Love
Have touched the aspiring earth.

For the Age of Light is born with Thee,
The Age of the Truth and the Sun—
The Age of Immortality,
When the souls of the world grow one.

NORMAN DOWSETT

DESCENT OF LIGHT

A BLISS-FRINGED flame rose upwards
And was merged in the spirit's beatitude;
All now was calm, eternal, absolute.

In the soul's rapturous immobility
The transient clay quivered from its sleep
To recapture its lost immortality.

Star-shaped drops of white-gold light
Came showering down upon my little brain—
A rare gift from the hidden Sun.

NAGIN DOSHI

MOTHER INDIA

THE BIRTH OF THE ETERNAL MOTHER

It was the time when earth was not yet born,
When ripples corroded not the shores of the sea,
When all was dark and quiet, unshaped and crude,
A fireless and a fumeless Infinity.

But there a dumb stir crept with an unknown aim
And began a journey which was never to end,
The Eternal set out in eternal search,
No tracks, no signposts had a clue to lend.

Slowly a pregnant matter dead, inert,
Rose from the void and in quest of life it bloomed,
The Infinite commanded an infinite play,
The conscious out of the unconscious loomed.

Out of a changeless simple and single Vast,
Complexities arose in local life,
And contradictions with contradictions fought,
Existence became a field of varied strife.

When limitations on limitations leaped
And the joy of living turned to abiding pain,
The trailing stir that pursued its endless course
Linked to the Idea in the Original Fane.

Since the eyeless start millenniums ago,
A pinnacle light has tracked this under-earth,
The Boundless stooped to chase the blind steep path:
This was the Mother Divine's eternal birth.

HAR KISHAN SINGH

THE IDEAL OF FORGIVENESS*

SLOWLY the queen of astral virgins moves
Across the giant embrace of teeming clouds.
Below, the runnel meanders murmuring high.
The panorama of the moonlit gloom
Captures the hearts of the lovers of beauty's core.
Our earth's splendour and delight now grow sublime.
The trance that guides Vasishtha's fire-pure hut
Is far beyond all mortals' straining view.
No equal his trees and buds and flowers have.
The flood of their torrent magnificence compels
Eden to bow to them with all its lustre.
A dart of sombre pangs tortures its heart.
It cries aloud, "O Lord! behold my balm.
My pride is broken, I am now a piteous thing."

Quintessence of deep peace in his sage eyes,
With a dawning smile Vasishtha in silence commands,
"Arundhati! some salt from the mighty sage
Viswamitra I desire, therefore, speed forth."
"Thy words break all my body, I see my doom.
Sorrows of the whole world within me rage.
Alas! no soul to soothe my woeful heart.
It was Viswamitra, the cruel king,
Who slaughtered my hundred sons of endless knowing.
My children's spirit-stirring hymnal song
I hear no longer; alack! my heart no more
Feels now their calm and joy of the Spirit's gaze.
Thou art, my Lord, the root of my bosom's pangs.
For Thee have passed beyond the eternal bars
Those hero-fires sprung out of my flesh.
Why stayed thy voice back from the saving words
'Viswamitra, truly the greatest sage?'"
Through the deep of night Vasishtha unveiled the truth.
"My love for him is boundless, Arundhati.
Infinite sparks of bounty within me burn.
The knowledge supreme he has still to con: O then
How can I falsely title him Brahman-rapt?"

* After a Story in Bengali prose by Sri Aurobindo

MOTHER INDIA

To be the seer divine his bosom craves.
Unique his high aspiration's fiery wings."

Flushed quivering with tempest-ire had come
Viswamitra, unbeheld, to the sage's cote.
"The time is ripe, I must slay him, if he still
Pronounce me not the God-omniscient sage."
Suddenly a vision revealing flashed through his mind
As he heard the matchless seer's bounteous words.
Down he fell and kissed the Master's hallowed feet.
"Arise, O king of all the seers, arise."
"Alas! my sire, shame not this mortal self.
The titan eyes of my naked cruelties
Deserve not, I know well, thy pardon divine."
From vastness-stilled summit Vasishtha spoke,
"What urgent need impels thy advent rare?"
The doleful voice of Viswamitra broke,
"My heart now flames to own Brahman, the One.
My bosom's Lord, fulfil my white desire."
"Speed thou to Ananta—the eternal Snake,
The endless upbearer of this created sphere.
Doubt not my love shall ever harbour thy soul."

"O Lord Ananta! thy grace sublime I invoke.
Reveal the sunlit path to know the One."
"Viswamitra, that stupendous power I have.
But ere I fulfil thy choice, thy strength divine
I needs must weigh. Become thou now all ears.
Seest thou the earth's globe?—that whole vast is mine!
If thy strength is sure to hold its mighty weight
To thee I shall give the knowledge of the Sole."
The proud sage-king replied, "Upon my head
Leave all: I shall bear the earth's gigantic load."
Lo! he was sunk in disaster's greatest gulf.
Alas! too fast the globe moved round his sense,
The ceaseless terror tortured his living veins.
No volcano-will could calm the universe,
A tenebrous void before his mere man's form.
But Ananta smiled and spoke: "Thou hast known at last
The measure of thy might. Hear me, O sage!"

THE IDEAL OF FORGIVENESS

Use for thy strength the fruits of the company
Of sacred souls if any such thou knewest.
Call to thy aid at once the memory
Of their high mood. Away from thee shall pass
Danger." In a twinkling Vasishtha's giant name
Broke on his mind. Ananta's high command
He carried out. All silent was the earth.
Tranquillity was in flood within its heart.
"O Lord Ananta! now fulfil my quest."
"O reckless fool! Vasishtha's bounty implore.
None on this earth but he can meet thy hunger.
The enormous power of his diamond presence
Saved thee from perilous juncture and strengthened thy heart
To bear the colossal earth, O unseeing soul!
Go pray his haven, the time is fleeting fast."

He came again to high Vasishtha's hut.
How base his doom no soul on earth can dream.
"O Master, I beg of Thee, by thy feet august.
Drive me not from thy door this time, I pray."
"Thy eagle-high aspiration clasps the Crown.
Viswamitra, to thee I give victory.
Envy and pride could veil thy mind, and so
The knowledge supreme I gave thee not before.
Thy humble mind and brave heart win it now."

What is chimera's mist or miracle today
Was the immaculate truth divine of yore.
Immeasurable by our human thought
Was regal Vasishtha's presence and bright power.
But from above yet greater souls unmatched
Over our Ind imperishably shall lean.
The might of seers antique shall fade away
Before the souls to come with Light new-born;
And she shall sit on splendour's throne in the world.

CHINMOY

A TWO-FOLD VISION OF THE MOTHER

ONE Saturday, in Shilong, the capital of Assam, Panchanan (whose surname and family title was Brahmachari) dismissed his primary school earlier as it was a half-holiday and returned to his own place. Suddenly he saw a conflagration near about the house of Bhupal Bose, the father-in-law of Sri Aurobindo. At once he ran to the spot and found that one thatched house had already been considerably gutted by the fire which could by no means be extinguished. So he turned his attention to the adjacent house which was also about to catch fire. He asked the few Khasia coolies who were present there to draw water from the gorge below and supply him with bucketsful of it. Somehow he scrambled to the thatched roof and took a bucket from the coolies. As he tried to pour it out in order to drench the roof a gust of wind blew away the major portion of the water. Now he got to the top of the roof and before he could devise any means of action he found himself surrounded by fire. The very first flush of fire scorched his face. In extreme agony he recalled his 'Istha Devi' and cried out "Mother! Mother!" Forthwith he heard: "Fear not. Fear not" and saw as if the Mother had rushed with dishevelled hair to the spot to save her child and had spread out her arms to withdraw the fire. Then he fell down unconscious.

When he woke up, the coolies were still there. Some of them cried aloud: "Babu! Are you still alive?" The sun was about to set. With the help of the coolies he managed to get down. One cooly said: "Babu! We saw you surrounded with fire, your face has been burnt, yet not a straw bears any mark of fire, how is this"? Without a word he went to his residence. Some friends said that the face would bear white marks throughout life, others that there would be ugly scars. At this his heart became sorrowful. He retired to his room and wept till he fell asleep. He woke up at the usual hour of 3 a. m. and sat down for his meditation which he would rarely miss. Lo! the Mother made her appearance before him. This was the second vision of his life, the first one had been in the midst of the fire. But what a contrast! There she was impetuous and furious, rushing to save her child. And now how calm and serene, with a gentle smile on her sweet face! The Mother spoke: "You are sorry over your scorched face. Ask of me for the boon, it will be whole and quite normal immediately." Panchanan replied: "Mother! Do not allure me, I have much more valuable things to ask of you. This I

A TWO-FOLD VISION OF THE MOTHER

shall retain as an ornament given by you." The Mother said: "My visit will not go in vain, on an appointed day when you will take your bath at a certain place your face will become whole again." Then after naming the day and the place, the Mother disappeared.

A few days passed, but Panchanan could not keep the matter secret. He told a few friends about this prophecy of the divine Mother. Soon he became repentant. He feared lest this prophecy should not prove true; it would be a slur on the divine Mother, men would lose faith in her divinity. The nearer came the day the more he wept and prayed. Sri Radha had to draw water from the Jamuna river in an earthen pot with a thousand holes as a test of her chastity but had she failed it would have been the question of her own shame. Panchanan thought his case was worse than that of Sri Radha. He did not care for his own shame but how could he bear the slur on his Mother's name? At last the appointed day arrived. In the morning he wept and prayed to his heart's content. Then suddenly he forgot all about it. As usual he went and performed his ablutions in the same sacred water. On his return, as he was exposing his wet clothes to the sun, a friend came forward, looked at his face and cried out: "Your face has become normal indeed!" The news got wide publicity, so Panchanan thought it proper not to withhold it from his wife and other relatives. In a letter to his wife, who lived at Bhola subdivision of the district of Barisal, he gave a full description of the event. The present writer came across a true copy of the original letter about 42 years back, and knew persons who were acquainted with Panchanan.

BHUMANANDA

THE FOUR AGES OF INDIA'S CULTURAL CYCLE

(I) HUMAN PROGRESS THROUGH CYCLES OF CIVILISATION

WE Indians are today trying to know more and more about our culture, and with that idea more and more thinkers have been probing into our books for a true knowledge of it. Books like "The Vedic Age" by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, "India's Culture through the Ages" by N. Vidyarthi, "India as known to Panini" by Agarwal, "Sacrifice in R̥g Veda" by Poddar, "Cultural History from Vayu Purana" by Patil, are some of the many books which have attempted to give us a true historical knowledge of India's cultural past. A study of the old texts by advanced thinkers and an interpretation of them in modern language is very much needed at present; for, readers in general can understand our ancient traditions more easily from such interpretations than by perusing the original books whose meaning is shrouded in symbolism. Indian History written in a scientific manner is available to us only from about 700 B.C. The history of a people is not merely the history of its political, social and economic life, but also the history of its culture and civilization; so it includes the history of its aesthetic, intellectual, ethical, religious and spiritual life. The material for such cultural history of India, from the very beginning of its cycle of civilization, is accessible to us in its Smritis, Srutis, Puranas, Itihasas, Tantras and other books. Owing to the idea that Srutis and Smritis have not to be read by Non-Brahmins who form 97% of India's population, a vast mass of people lived in darkness about the ancient Indian culture all these centuries. Owing to the secular and commercial outlook spread by the British ruling class for nearly 200 years many Brahmins became job-seekers and neglected our ancient culture, while the non-job-seeking Brahmins lacked the inclination and capacity to foster it and educate the masses about it. The Brahmin tradition was that the Vedas should not be published or read by others than Brahmins. However, it was the advanced thinkers of Europe who read our ancient books, specially the Vedas, in Sanskrit, translated them into Western languages and published them and brought light to the reading public about life in the Vedic age. From these translations, a large mass of Indians have been able to read and understand India's past culture. Now the old texts are being published in Vernacular languages also, though they are not being understood on account of their symbolism. It is the correct interpretation of these books and their publication in modern language in non-symbolic terms that can give us a right know-

ledge of our ancients and their culture. If we have to know, respect, follow and live in the spirit of our ancients, we have to do the work of interpreting them correctly in modern terms; it is this that has to be undertaken in all seriousness both by the public and the universities and achieved efficiently. Then alone can we know the dignity, the truth, the height of our ancient culture and cultivate its best tendencies in ourselves.

For some decades, histories of cultures, including all life-aspects, of almost all important ancient civilised peoples have been getting published in great numbers in Europe and America. Books like "The Story of Civilisation" by Will Durant, "What Happened in History" by Gordon Childe and similar books not only give us a comparative knowledge of past cultures but also help us to know what each has bequeathed to the world and how humanity has profited by them. A study of all such books written both by Indian and Western thinkers makes us realise how ancient Indian culture affected and influenced the other cultures of the time and was to a great extent instrumental in moulding the later cultures all over the world, directly by itself and indirectly through others. These books reveal to us that of all the ancient cultures, it is the culture of India and perhaps the cultures of China and Japan up to a point that have been able to survive in their original spirit in the present peoples of these countries. We also find that the spirit of the youngest of the ancient cultures like those of Greece and Rome has not been maintained in the present-day peoples of those countries, though it is a fact that the modern culture of the West is only a mixture of what has been bequeathed by the ancient Greco-Roman culture, the Judaic Christian culture and the newly developed scientific materialistic culture of the last three centuries. So in view of all this it is the duty of all progressive Indian thinkers to make a right approach to our ancient books and write a history of Indian culture from the beginning of its cycle of civilization up to the present time, basing it on a true scientific method of history.

However, in modern days different theories of the scientific method of history have developed. They are (i) the rationalistic theory of history as it is being followed at present almost by all; (ii) the psychological theory of history as enunciated by Lamprecht which is not being followed in its completeness perhaps by any, though recognised by most to contain a large amount of truth; (iii) the spiritual theory of history which can be gathered from Sri Aurobindo's books but has not been given serious attention so far by thinkers either in India or abroad. Yet there are signs everywhere of thinkers trying to interpret ancient books in the true perspective of their religious, philosophical and spiritual culture.

The rationalistic theory of history is based on an objective view of life and,

in it, history demands the act of comprehending life by its practical day-to-day requirements. The psychological theory of history is based on a subjective view of life, and, in it history demands the act of comprehending the workings of life within the complex psychology of man, both individual and collective. The spiritual theory of history is based on a spiritual view of life and, in it, history demands both the above acts and also the act of comprehending how human life is evolving not only practically and psychologically but also spiritually. According to the rationalistic theory man's life advanced not through cycles of ages but in a straight line; man was an aboriginal being in the beginning and progressed through the stages of palaeolithic savagery, neolithic barbarism, the higher barbarism of the copper age, the lower barbarism of the bronze age, the semi-civilised barbarism of the early iron age and so on till he reached the present civilisations of the East and the West, each phase claiming to be superior to the other and struggling for existence. This theory can be better understood by knowing that the objective view of life is based on the principle that there is only one evolutionary process of human life which is that of Nature-Force, on account of which the consciousness in man develops from physical mind to vital mind and from vital mind to intellectual mind, with the faculty of reason as its ultimate goal. Here man works by Nature-Force as his instrument and is not independent of it.

According to the psychological theory as propounded by Lamprecht, the life of a civilised people of the world has always advanced everywhere through a cycle of four ages,—the symbolic, the typical and conventional, the rational and individualistic and finally the subjective which is a passage to the beginning of a new cycle. As such the life of a civilised people or of a nation is continuous and does not cease as the life of an uncivilised people does. Such uncivilised peoples either lose their identity and merge in other civilisations or else get extinct altogether. This is what we are actually finding in the case of many tribes of the world. Lamprecht's theory can be better understood by realising that the psychological view of life is based on the principle that the evolutionary process by Nature-Force works in the inner being of a man to develop his inner physical-vital-mental consciousness so as to enable it to get identified with the inner physical-vital-mental consciousness of other beings and know the truth of its contents. Here also man works by Nature-Force and in Nature, but as he grows he gets independent of Nature-Force and himself becomes as it were a second Nature-Force.

According to the spiritual theory, human life on earth as a whole progresses not through one cycle of human civilisation but through many cycles, and each such cycle carries in itself for all humanity a certain divine figure in man and fulfils it by realising it freely in individuals and making it

available for all aspirants for realisation, and then passes on to the next cycle with a new higher divine figure in man to be realised in the course of it by mankind on earth. Sri Aurobindo has clearly given these ideas in his books and they can serve as a guide to us in writing a cultural history based on this theory, about the fast-ending cycle of the present civilisation. According to this theory, out of the several civilised peoples of the world, some have a soul-idea in them and some others a life-idea; these ideas get represented in their leaders who pursue them first in their individual beings and afterwards carry the mass with them towards the fulfilment of the national genius. Just as an individual in the course of his life on earth, while pursuing his soul-idea or life-idea, passes through childhood, youth, maturity and old age and then dies and pursues in succeeding lives, if necessary, his unfulfilled idea, so also peoples with life-idea or soul-idea pass through childhood, youth, maturity and old age by developing an organised group life. A people with a weak life-idea perishes; but one with a soul-idea, by the very nature of the soul, does not perish; at the most it passes through a transition period for a new cycle of life. Such is the Indian people and hence the greatness of its culture. Its cycle of culture is a cycle of four ages, the Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali yugas of the Hindu theory. The figure of godhead in man with which India started at the beginning of the cycle is that to which the Rishis gave shape. But then the question arises, what is the nature of the divine figure in man, how was it given shape by them, has it got fulfilled through the four ages and what may be the figure of the divine in man in the next cycle? And it is the answers to these questions that have to be dealt with in a history of India's culture through the four ages. Whether the significance of these questions in all their implications have been understood and whether correct answers have been attempted in their books on this subject by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Mr. N. L. Vidyarthi,—these points have to be considered by the critics. Sri Aurobindo has not written any history book on India's culture, but he has given us in his works enough ideas which can guide us to put all the data available in our ancient books into the form of a history book on India's culture through the ages. From his work some salient points are given below, which can form the basis of such a history.

I. The spiritual view of life is based on the principle that all manifestation which we call the phenomena of physical, vital and mental nature, has its source in the Divine and its unmanifest spirit; it is by the realisation of this that the spiritual values of all manifestation are realised. Before man possesses a spiritual view of life, he has to pass through a double process of evolution, one by Nature-Force and the other by soul or spirit which gradually absorbs Nature's process into its own process.

2. In far-off antiquity of which no correct date has up to now been fixed by

anybody, the Vedic Rishis who were adepts in mystic and spiritual lore laid the foundation for a new cycle of spiritual culture in India. They realised first in themselves the figure of the divine in man that had to be achieved in humanity in the course of the cycle, and acquired the power to mould the primitive people's life for the achievement of that ideal. Thus with words of these people's own religion of Nature-worship, and with words of their external life and circumstances they built up a spiritual and religious culture in the form of sacrificial rituals and Mantras. The Mantras had their external significance for the primitive people who lived in the external mind, but the performance of the external rites not only got them physical gains but also had the power to awaken the performers to psychological and spiritual truths. Those that could thus be awakened were initiated by the Rishis into the disciplines of either psychological life or spiritual life. Thus a foundation was laid and a beginning made by the Rishis in India at the start of this cycle for a spiritual life in the whole of humanity.

3. Ethnologically there is nothing like an Aryan race which is different from the Dravidian race or even from the other races. The people of India from Afghanistan in the north to Cape Comorin down in the south are all of one race. Only, the Vedic Rishis gave the word Aryan to the people who followed their sacrificial culture. All those who did not follow this culture were called non-Aryans. The word Dravidian was applied to the very same primitive people as of the north but those who lived in the south followed their primitive culture for a longer time than the people of the north; and these too were finally absorbed into the Aryan culture at a later time, though in a way that left in them some distinctness of their previous culture, specially in language.

4. The Dravidian languages of the south of India are as closely related to Sanskrit as the Aryan languages of Europe, if not more. This means that the source of the Sanskrit language and the Dravidian languages must be the same. It might or might not be that the whole of the present Indian race came from the Arctic regions or from the North Asian parts to India after the last glacial period. But to say that the Aryan race alone came from the North Asian parts to the north of India and drove the Dravidians to the south is altogether a myth.

5. The Rig Vedic culture is the earliest Aryan culture of the present cycle of human civilisation and is quite different in ritualistic significance from the later Vedic ritualistic culture, even that of the Brahmanas. The difference between the two is so great that till now nobody has been able to know the real nature of the Rigvedic ritualistic culture. The Rigvedic culture has three aspects,—ritualistic, psychological and spiritual. While the ritualistic aspect has been lost even to the Rishis of the Brahmanas, the psychological and the spiritual aspects of that culture have been saved by the Upanishadic

Rishis. The present-day Vedic rituals are not the same in form as the Rigvedic ones. The spiritual and psychological culture of the Vedas is carried on without break through the subsequent religious literature of the Upanishads, philosophies, yoga sastras and such other writings. Only the ritualistic culture has changed from the early Vedic through the later Vedic, post-Vedic, Puranic and Tantric to a mixture of all at present.

6. India's cycle of its ages is spiritual and the cycle of the ages of the Western civilizations is psychological in their evolutionary processes. The ages of the two cycles do not correspond with each other either chronologically or in their evolutionary significance. From the point of view of the latter, the Satya yuga of India corresponds with the symbolic ages of the Western countries; similarly the Treta and Dwapara yugas of India with the typical age of the West, and the Kali yuga of India with the conventional age of the West. India's cycle of ages does not include the age of Reason and Individuality and the age of Subjectivism which are the last two ages of the West. India's Renaissance period which begins from the 19th century can be termed its age of Reason and individuality, but the Indian Renaissance is not merely intellectual but spiritual also. For India, the age of Subjectivism must be the beginning of a new cycle, while the Renaissance period forms the transition from the previous cycle to the next cycle not only of India's civilisation but also of all mankind's civilisation. The previous cycle began with the figure of the Overmind Divine in man and the next cycle is to begin with the figure of the Supermind Divine. Through Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the Divine is ready to achieve the beginning of the next cycle by an act of physical manifestation of the Supermind in man on earth.

The above are some of the salient ideas on which the whole interpretation of our ancient books has to be based and there are more too which we shall find when actually the work is undertaken. When the seed ideas given to us by Sri Aurobindo on the subject are accepted, the inconsistencies and contradictions that otherwise arise in the materials of such a history book will disappear, and a true and harmonious version of the whole cultural history of India will of itself develop in the minds of the persons who undertake the work. In the book, "The Vedic Age" published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, in which many persons have written their own views on the various subjects that form part of it, we find the views contradicting one another and we are at a loss to know which of them is to be accepted. The philological theories, the geological theories, the ethnological theories, the religious and other various theories enunciated by the several writers and pursued by them, each in his own way, have confused the whole issue and have given a quite discordant version.

The president of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan has at the very outset

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in his foreword said, "The central purpose of a history must....be to investigate and unfold the values which age after age have inspired the individuals of a country to develop their collective will and to express it through the manifold activities of their life. Such a history of India is still to be written." When one reads this sentence, one hopes to see its sentiments realised in these books. But when one reads the first volume one finds that "such a history is still to be written." But in fact a basis for such a history has been given by Sri Aurobindo in the *Foundations of Indian Culture* and other smaller books; he deals in these writings not only with the aesthetic, intellectual, religious and spiritual aspects of life in the past ages of India but also with political, social and economic aspects. His treatment of it may not be a detailed chronicle of events in the manner of text-books on history; but it gives the broad lines of the historical development of India and the true spirit of her ancient culture. On the basis of ideas set forth by him, data could have been collected and can be collected from *Srutis*, *Smritis*, *Puranas*, *Itihasas*, *Tantras* and other books to give a harmonious and connected version of the whole Indian culture in all its different aspects through the four ages of the cultural cycle. A history of Indian culture through the ages which conveys only the religious and spiritual aspects of life and not the religious and spiritual basis for other aspects of life is no history at all. The spiritual motive has been in India the guiding factor of all other aspects of life and it is that that has prepared not only India but all the rest of humanity to enter with one united spiritual ideology into a new cycle of peaceful, harmonious and illumined life over the entire earth.

C. NARAYANA REDDI

“CLASSICAL” AND “ROMANTIC”

*(An expansion of Notes given to the First Year Poetry Class at the
Sri Aurobindo International University Centre)*

IV

As a poet of Romantic drama, Shakespeare is—to quote Sri Aurobindo’s words—“unique in his spirit, method and quality. For his contemporaries resemble him only in externals; they have the same outward form and crude materials, but not the inner dramatic method by which he transformed and gave them a quite other meaning and value; and later romantic drama, though it tried hard to imitate the Shakespearian motive and touch, has been governed by another kind of poetic mind and its intrinsic as distinguished from its external method has been really different. It takes hold of life, strings together its unusual effects and labours to make it out of the way, brilliant, coloured, conspicuous, Shakespeare does not do that, except rarely, in early imitative work or when he is uninspired. He does not need to lay violent hands on life and turn it into romantic pyrotechnics; for life itself has taken hold of him in order to recreate itself in his image, and he sits within himself at its heart and pours out from its impulse a throng of beings, as real in the world he creates as men are in this other world from which he takes his hints, a multitude, a riot of living images carried on a many-coloured sea of revealing speech and a never failing surge of dramatic movement. His dramatic method seems indeed to have usually no other intellectual purpose, aesthetic motive or spiritual secret: ordinarily it labours simply for the joy of a multiple poetic vision of life and vital creation with no centre except the life-power itself, no co-ordination except that thrown out spontaneously by the unseizable workings of its energy, no unity but the one unity of man and the life-spirit in Nature working in him and before his eyes. It is this sheer creative Ananda of the life-spirit which is Shakespeare; abroad everywhere in that age it incarnates itself in him for the pleasure of poetic self-vision.”

Sri Aurobindo continues: “All Shakespeare’s powers and limitations, —for it is now permissible to speak of his limitations,—arise from this character of the force that moved him to poetic utterance. He is not primarily an artist, a poetical thinker or anything else of the kind, but a great vital creator

and intensely, though within marked limits, a seer of life. His art itself is life arranging its forms in its own surge and excitement, not in any kind of symmetry,—for symmetry here there is none,—nor in fine harmonies, but still in its own way supremely and with a certain intimately metric arrangement of its many loose movements, in mobile perspectives, a succession of crowded but successful and satisfying vistas. While he has given a wonderful language to poetic thought, he yet does not think for the sake of thought, but for the sake of life; his way indeed is not so much the poet himself thinking about life, as life thinking itself out in him through many mouths, in many moods and moments, with a rich throng of fine thought-effects, but not for any clear sum of intellectual vision or to any high power of either ideal or spiritual result.”

To realise the dissimilarity of note in the very stuff of the utterance between the creative Life Force and the creative Intelligence we have only to juxtapose Shakespeare and Milton. Even a descriptive passage will serve: Shakespeare on wind and water apropos Sleep’s sealing up the eyes of the shipboy upon “the high and giddy mast” and rocking his brains

In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
And in the visitation of the winds
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them
With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds—

and Milton on the same theme, adopting as Shakespearian a style as possible to him yet betraying the less nerve-thrilled more deliberate spirit of the intellect and its more generalised manner:

Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
And surging waves, as mountains to assault
Heaven’s height, and with the Centre mix the Pole.

To get a clearer perception, listen to Hamlet’s soliloquy:

To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream; ay, there’s the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There’s the respect,
That makes calamity of so long life...

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The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of!
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought...

or the soliloquy of Claudio:

Ay, but to die and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world.

As Sri Aurobindo puts it, “the words get, one might say, into the entrails of vision and do not stop short at the clear measure of the things seen, but evoke their very quality and give us immediately the inmost vital fibre and thrill” of what is described and interpreted. Now bend the ear to the accents of Belial’s speech in *Paradise Lost* to appreciate the poetic vision active and vibrant as if directly in the grey cells rather than as a reflex there from the guts:

Our final hope
Is flat despair; we must exasperate
The Almighty Victor to spend all his rage,
And that must end us; that must be our cure,
To be no more. Sad cure! for who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated Night,
Devoid of sense and motion?

Even where in Shakespeare there is ostensibly a judgment on life, an idea that seems to belong to the thinking mind in its own rights, there is really a throw-up from the emotional or sensational being. Sri Aurobindo has instanced that “thought” from *Macbeth*:

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Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing,

and compared it with a nineteenth-century poet's voicing of a similar notion of transience:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments....

His comment is: "The one has the colour of an intuition of the life-soul in one of its intense moods and we not only think the thought but seem to feel it even in our nerves of mental sensation, the other is the thought-mind itself uttering in a moved, inspired and illuminative language an idea of the pure intelligence."

Dwelling further on Shakespeare's powers and limitations, Sri Aurobindo writes: "His development of human character has a sovereign force within its bounds, but it is the soul of the human being as seen through the outward character, passion, action, the life-soul, and not either the thought-soul or the deeper psychic being or the profounder truth of the human spirit. Something of these things we may get, but only in shadow or as a partial reflection in a coloured glass, not in their own action....Nevertheless his is not a drama of mere externalised action, for it lives from within and more deeply than our external life. This is not Virat, the seer and creator of gross forms, but Hiranyagarbha the luminous mind of dreams, looking through those forms to see his own images behind them. More than any other poet Shakespeare has accomplished the legendary feat of the impetuous sage Viswamitra; his power of vision has created a Shakespearian world of his own, and it is, in spite of its realistic elements, a romantic world in a very true sense of the word, a world of the wonder and free power of life and not of its mere external realities, where what is here dulled and hampered finds a greater enlarged play of beauty, curiosity and amplitude."

Next to Shakespeare in stature as representative of the Romanticism of the Renaissance stands Spenser. In him the strain of sheer vitalistic beauty in a fluid fineness, which is one of Shakespeare's qualities, reaches its fullest

abundance, together with a vein of dreamy subtlety which too in the stir and passion of the master dramatist is not always in independent prominence. In both, the Life Force is not preoccupied with mere externalities: it demands to feel itself more and presses into the subjective being. The penetration, however, is not to a great depth. Sri Aurobindo hits off very well the Spenserian achievement in Romanticism as compared with the Shakespearian. After noting in the poet of *The Faerie Queene* a fault in the initial conception, a failure due to an over-absorption in the allegorical turn and to the weaving of an over-tangled skein of allegory and after pointing out also defects in the execution by which what was intended as an ethical interpretative poem loses its way in faeryland and becomes a series of romantic descriptions and incidents, "a diffuse and richly confused perplexity, not a unity"—after dwelling on shortcomings of constructive power at the centre of Spenser's genius, Sri Aurobindo spotlights the essence of the Elizabethan Romanticism:

"Whatever Shakespeare may suggest,—a poet's critical theories are not always a just clue to his inspiration,—it is not the holding up of a mirror to life and Nature, but a moved and excited reception and evocation. Life throws its impressions, but what seizes upon them is a greater and deeper life-power in the poet which is not satisfied with mirroring or just beautifully responding, but begins to throw up at once around them its own rich matter of being and so creates something new, more personal, intimate, fuller of an inner vision, emotion, passion of self-expression. This is the source of the new intensity; it is this impulse towards an utterance of the creative life-power within which drives towards the dramatic form and acts with such unexampled power in Shakespeare; at another extremity of the Elizabethan mind, in Spenser, it gets farther away from the actuality of life and takes its impressions as hints only for a purely imaginative creation which has an aim at things symbolic, otherwise revelatory, deeper down in the soul itself, and shadows them out through the magic of romance if it cannot yet intimately seize and express them. Still even there the method of the utterance, if not altogether its aim, is the voice of Life lifting itself out into waves of word and colour and image and sheer beauty of sound. Imagination, thought, vision work with the emotional life-mind as their instrument or rather in it as a medium, accepted as the form and force of their being."

The emotional life-mind rather than the intellect proper can be traced at once as Spenser's poetic source if we hark back to the accents of Belial's speech or of that passage about Heaven's light and earth's shadows and set them over against the lines in which Despair is represented as trying to lure man to self-destruction with the bait of peace and with the example of one who is pictured as having attained life's goal by dying:

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He there does now enjoy eternal rest
And happy ease which thou dost want and crave,
And further from it daily wanderest:
What if some little pain the passage have,
That makes frail flesh to fear the bitter wave?
Is not short pain well-borne that brings long ease,
And lays the soul to sleep in quiet grave?
Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, death after life does greatly please.

Spenser gives us merely a semblance of the reflecting mind; immediately we can recognise a poignant melliflence of the same power that in Shakespeare is all a-tremble with passion: it is again as if not from the grey cells the poetry took off but from the guts though now with an imaginative rhythm sweetly lulling us into persuasion with a luxury of exquisite sensations posing as thoughts.

Both in Shakespeare and Spenser the flowing over of the Life Force in colourful or lambent extravagance changes the entire sense of poetic form from what it was under Classicism. And the change may best be described as an uprush of individuality within the aesthetic *ensemble*, corresponding to the same phenomenon in the psychology of the Renaissance. The spirit of Hellenistic humanism turned man's attention to himself and his personal possibilities: he was no longer a mere unit in a feudal social system functioning under divine sanction. Social conformity or a grovelling before a supramundane authority ceased to be his main work. And this stress on the human individual and his vitalistic freedom affected aesthetics. As already noted, the clearness and orderliness of the Classical intellectual vision strove to subdue details to the totality and one of the main characteristics of an artistic product was that it could be felt very vividly as a whole. In Romanticism at its best there is still a feeling of the whole, for without it there can be no true art; but it becomes much relaxed and the details acquire a lot of importance—they assert themselves individually, even claim a certain right to stand by themselves in their own freedom—and, as a result, we have on the one side a greater richness of the parts than in Classical poetry and on the other a diffuseness of the general effect. This diffuseness has two aspects—a subtlety which is a lack of facile or too clear obviousness in the sense of form, a looseness which is a lack of keen focus in the view of a totality. The one is a quality, the other a defect: we have the former in Shakespeare, the latter in Spenser.

In several of Shakespeare's and Spenser's contemporaries we have a far

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more glaring version of the same defect in the basic idea and its execution.¹ And this conceptive and constructive defect in relation to a whole is just the large-scale working of a mental peculiarity which is almost everywhere in the Elizabethans. “The Elizabethan intellectual tendency”, Sri Aurobindo has aptly said, “runs always towards conceit and curious complication and it is unable to follow an idea for the sake of what is essential in it, but tangles it up in all sorts of accessories; seizing on all manner of disparates it tends to throw them together without any real fusion.” And the parts themselves of the Elizabethan Romantic *ensemble* suffer at times from a lack of balance induced by a certain explosiveness in the details, a certain vehemence of tone and exuberance of mind. Thus many expressions, particularly in poets inclined to be continually forceful, are found scattered with failures to make striking images poetic or else with images that are themselves too artificial. Chapman yields place only to Marlowe in sheer force, but his vital gusto seizes on his intellect for ingenious effects that are Romantic poetry gone astray. For instance, he forgets Homer’s nobility of restrained yet strong emotion and, not content to substitute muscular vigour and nervous rhythm, translates two magnificent lines from the Greek by a couplet in which the first part is padded rhetoric and the second a violent and extravagant conceit empty of all true or high feeling:

And such a stormy day shall come, in mind and soul I know,
When sacred Troy shall shed her towers for tears of overthrow.

Even when a verse is free from such startling falsities, there is often a jerkiness flawing it. An exceedingly fine phrase is another rendering from the *Iliad*:

When the unmeasured firmament bursts to disclose her light.

But with a most sensitive ear Sri Aurobindo has commented that here is a rhythm which does not mate with the idea and the diction. There seems to be a strained and abrupt reaching out towards poetic height of tone, not the assured continuity of the really grand rhythmic ascension, a reflex of which we can feel in even Tennyson’s translation of the same passage:

the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine...

¹ We may make an exception of Ben Jonson and grant that he has the idea of construction, but, as Sri Aurobindo points out, his execution is heavy and uninspired, the work of a robustly conscientious craftsman rather than a creative artist.

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Perhaps the jog-trot ballad metre disguised by Chapman as a fourteenner makes it difficult to achieve more than a quick sudden canter instead of the epic roll and rise. But something in the very nature of the Romantic life-soul has a risky *penchant* for the loud and the bursting just as the Classical soul of the Intelligence has in its nature a dangerous proclivity to the flat and the rigid.

In summing-up successful Romanticism of the Elizabethan kind we may adopt four heads to match those we took from Denham for Classicism. In the first place, we may talk not of clear depth but of a leaping inner coruscation showing up sharply or largely some general aspect of things. Sidney takes us straight, by such coruscation, into the midst of the Romantic genius when he seeks inspiration to write worthily to his love and ends the sonnet of his search:

Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my tongue and pen, beating myself for spite,
“Fool,” said my Muse to me, “look in thy heart and write.”

Marlowe makes Tamburlaine the mouthpiece of the vaulting ambition let loose by the Renaissance to combine power and knowledge:

Our souls whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

Spenser suggests the joy of life that is the aim of the age by a lovely pointing of what is to be avoided—a line of melodious art in which, as a critic has marked, the pathos is enforced, after the rapid movement of the opening words, by the slowing down of the pace at the close, with two stressed syllables which disturb the iambic rhythm:

Let me not die in languor and long tears.

Kyd has on rare occasions an emotionally dramatic as well as illuminating generality:

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Oh eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears;
Oh life, no life, but lively form of death;
Oh world, no world, but mass of public wrongs.

Shakespeare—inexhaustible energy and endless imagination—comes with a vivid advice to be ever on the move, alert to time’s challenges:

Perseverance, dear my Lord,
Keeps honour bright: to have done, is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way,
For honour travels in a strait so narrow
Where one but goes abreast: keep, then, the path;
For emulation hath a thousand sons
That one by one pursue: if you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an entered tide they all rush by
And leave you hindmost;
Or like a gallant horse fallen in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O’errun and trampled on.

With equal vividness he flashlights too the ignorance and emptiness of ambitious human activity:

O, but man, proud man!
Drest in a little brief authority;
Most ignorant of what he’s most assured,
His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
As make the angels weep.

And the poet of life abounding can suddenly conjure up a picture of all things as a glorious illusion:

The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

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A most pregnant summing-up by him in a semi-Stoic semi-mystic tone is:

Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
Ripeness is all.

In the second place, we have not as in Classicism a lively or firm gentleness but a subtly penetrating charm. Spenser is full of it, from the exquisite observation of a butterfly

Now sucking of the sap of herb most meet,
Or of the dew which yet on them does lie,
Now in the sun bathing his tender feet,

or of gnats in summer,

Their murmuring small trumpets sounden wide,
or of vague hill-water,

A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down,
to the sensitive description of regal arras

Woven with gold and silk so close and near,
That the rich metal lurkèd privily,
As feigning to be hid from envious eye;
Yet here, and there, and everywhere unwares
It showed itself and shone unwillingly;
Like a discoloured Snake whose hidden snares
Through the green grass his long bright burnished back declares,

or of extreme remoteness from the world's din:

careless quiet lies
Wrapped in eternal silence, far from enemies.

A more quivering note of charm enters into other Elizabethans. Thus Ford:

You have oft for these two lips
Neglected cassia or the natural sweets
Of the spring-violet: they are not yet much withered.

"CLASSICAL" AND "ROMANTIC"

Shakespeare excels here with unanalysable undertones—

or In maiden meditation, fancy-free,

Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang,

and with equally mysterious overtones that can make magic of what may seem nonsense:

Take, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn:
But my kisses bring again,
 bring again,
Seals of love, but sealed in vain.

Not so elusive but still with a fascinating fantasy borne along on a baffling confluence of undertones and overtones is the dirge:

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are corals made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

Shakespeare is no less successfully “rich and strange” with a far more seizable meaning:

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.

MOTHER INDIA

In the third place, there is instead of strength without rage a certain fiery gust. Marlowe is the grand exemplar in this type, either formidably,

Give me a look that when I bend my brows
Pale death may walk in furrows of my face,

or passionately,

Is it not passing brave to be a king,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?

or frantically,

Lo here, my sons, are all the golden mines,
Inestimable drugs and precious stones,
More worth than Asia and the world beside...
And shall I die and this unconquerèd?

or else piquantly:

To make whole cities caper in the air.

Davenant in a couple of exultantly powerful phrases shows his recognition of Marlowe's commanding strength: he says that Marlowe

Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had; his raptures were
All air and fire...

Chapman has now and then a phrase striking with an exceptionally vivid vehemence at the imagination, like the one about Zeus who, favouring the Trojan Hector and looking wrathfully at the Greek galleys afar which Hector wanted to be set on fire,

wished in any wise
The splendour of the burning ships might satiate his eyes.

Shakespeare, less volcanic, is Marlowe's and Chapman's match with a finer force: Romeo by the dead Juliet:

"CLASSICAL" AND "ROMANTIC"

O here
Will I set up my everlasting rest
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh—

or Hamlet with his father's ghost—

...the sepulchre
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again! What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous?—

or Othello in a Marlovian outburst which still carries the finer Shakespearian self-possession within it and even hints the massed Miltonic style:

Like to the Pontic Sea
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
Even so my bloody thoughts with violent pace
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up—

or Lady Macbeth providing a more weird and Romantically quivering analogue to the Classical Clytemnestra of Aeschylus:

Come, come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage of remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,

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Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes;
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, 'Hold, hold!'

In the fourth place, instead of fullness without overflowing, an arrowy poignancy meets us, wonder-striking, passion-piercing, delight-evoking. Marlowe's Faustus stands in ecstasy before the vision of Helen,

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And shook the topless towers of Ilium?

or agonises at the moment of his own death when Mephistophilis threatens his soul:

O, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—
See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!...
One drop of it would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ!...
Where is it now? 'tis gone: and see, where God
Stretcheth out his arms and bends his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!

The minor Elizabethans have also a transcendent piercingness at times, as Webster with

Cover her face; her eyes dazzle; she died young—

or, less subtly yet at the end no less effectively, with

I have lived
Riotously ill, like some that live in Court,
And sometimes when my face was full of smiles,
Have felt the maze of conscience in my breast.
Oft gay and honoured robes their tortures try:
We think caged birds sing when indeed they cry.

“CLASSICAL” AND “ROMANTIC”

Webster can also mate the piercing with the picturesque:

I am acquainted with sad misery
As the tanned galley-slave is with his oar.

Ford is sometimes Webster's equal in both poetic and dramatic heart-arrowing:

O my lords,
I but deceived your eyes with antique gesture,
When one news straight came huddling on another
Of death! and death! and death! still I danced forward.

Shakespeare brings it in many modes: Romeo rapturously imaginative—

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear—

Othello at once opulently and wistfully fantastic—

Had she been true,
If heaven would make me such another world
Of one entire and perfect chrysolite,
I'd not have sold her for it—

Lear with a fantasy of vehement sorrow:

Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness,
I never gave you kingdom, called you children,
You owe me no subscription: then, let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here, I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man—

or of a sorrow that is most naive yet a heart-shattering distractedness:

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir—

Hamlet with a profound insight converting personal pathos into a world-cry about whose third line a critic observes, "The breast actually labours to get through it":

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story—

Macbeth deeply and desperately visionary—

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;
Raze out the written troubles of the brain;
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?—

Antony figurative with both grandeur and simplicity of passion—

I am dying, Egypt, dying; only
I here importune death awhile, until
Of many thousand kisses the poor last
I lay upon thy lips—

Cleopatra bearing the deadly asp at her breast and gathering into a brief intense metaphor the whole drama of the situation and of her soul, what Sri Aurobindo terms "the disdainful compassion for the fury of the chosen instrument of self-destruction which vainly thinks it can truly hurt her, the call to death to act swiftly and yet the sense of being high above death":

Come, thou mortal wretch,
With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate
Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool,
Be angry, and despatch.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA