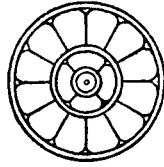


MOTHER INDIA

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. X

No. 5

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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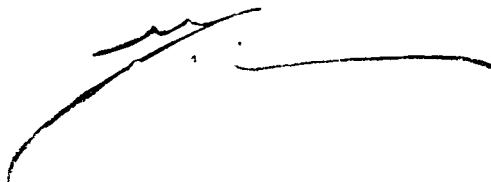
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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Never grumble. All sorts of forces enter you when you grumble and they pull you down. Keep smiling. I seem always to be joking but it is not mere joking. It is a confidence born from the psychic. A smile expresses the faith that nothing can stand against the Divine and that everything will come out all right in the end.

28-5-1954



DEPENDENCE ON THE MOTHER

(Letters of Sri Aurobindo translated from the Bengali original addressed to some lady-disciples and published in "Patravali")

WHO will go away ? Those who have no sincerity, no faith and trust in the Mother ; those who look upon their own imagination as something greater than the will of the Mother, they might go away. But he who seeks the Truth, who has faith and confidence, who wants the Mother, has nothing to be afraid of ; even if there are a thousand difficulties, he will surmount them ; if he has numerous defects in his nature, he will rectify them ; even if he falls, he will rise again and finally one day he will reach the goal of his sadhana.

This is not the right attitude, your sadhana has not been ruined ; the mother has not abandoned you ; she has neither moved away from you nor is she displeased with you—these are vital imaginations and should not be given any place. Keep a simple and quiet confidence in the Mother. Without being afraid of the difficulties call in the Mother's Force. All that you have received is inside ; there will be even further progress.

Remain quiet and conscious. Call the Mother, the good condition will return. To make full surrender takes time. Surrender all that you find still remaining over. Only thus, by repeating it constantly the surrender becomes complete.

Be always calm and let the higher Consciousness of the Mother descend into you—this alone will gradually transform your external consciousness.

Advance quietly by surrendering more and more. Whatever transformation of the old is required will gradually be effected.

There is no sadhak, in spite of his being a child of the Divine, who has not numerous little defects in his nature. As soon as one becomes aware of them, they have to be rejected ; one has to aspire more ardently for the Mother's Force so that these little defects of the nature may slowly be eradicated ; but faith, surrender and reliance on the Mother must always remain intact. To get rid of these defects entirely is a matter of time ; one must not be disturbed because they are there.

This should not upset you. In the path of yoga such a condition invariably comes—when it is time to descend into the physical consciousness and the Subconscious, and it may last long. But the Mother is there behind

DEPENDENCE ON THE MOTHER

the veil and she will reveal herself later on ; this lower Kingdom will be transformed into the Kingdom of light that is above—keep this strong faith and, by constantly surrendering all, advance towards the end of this stage that is full of difficulties.

Relation with the outer world must be maintained but all that must remain on the outer surface. You should live within, close to the Mother and watch everything from there—this is what is wanted. It is the first step of the Karma-yoga. Then from within conduct all external work with the help of the Mother's force. This is the second step. If you can do this, then you will not have any further trouble.

First of all, you must find the Mother within. Later on, when the external being comes under full control, you will constantly feel her even there.

This you should always remember, that if you go forward with full trust in the Mother, then whatever may be the circumstances and the difficulties, however long a time may be necessary, you will most certainly reach your goal—no obstacle, delay or adverse condition can mar the ultimate success.

In this sadhana just as you have to get rid of restlessness, so also sorrow must be given no place. You must rely on the Mother and advance with a steady heart and a quiet and cheerful mind. If you have full trust in the Mother, then where is the place for sorrow ? The Mother is not far away but constantly near you. You must maintain this faith and knowledge.

It is not right to assume from her outer appearance during the pranam or Darshan that the Mother is pleased or displeased. People are constantly making this error that the Mother is displeased, the Mother is severe, the Mother does not want me, she is keeping me away from her etc. and so many other false notions ; then yielding to despair they create their own difficulties on the way. Instead of doing all this, maintain an unshakable trust in the love and help of the Mother within you and go forward on the path of sadhana with a quiet and cheerful mind. Those who do that are safe. When the difficulties come and the ego rises up, they are not touched ; they say, "The Mother is there, whatever she does is all right ; though I may not see her for the time being, still she is with me, all around me; I have nothing to fear." This is what you should do. One has to maintain this trust and continue to do the sadhana.

The condition must be such that the consciousness within remains united with the Mother, her force works in the being and the external consciousness acts as an instrument of that force. But this condition does not come fully or easily. Slowly, and by constant sadhana it becomes complete.

NIRANJAN

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US *

Reminiscences of Various People in Contact with The Mother
(Continued from the last issue)

(5)

THE SAVIOUR GRACE

A FRIEND pressed me to speak to the Mother before I left the Ashram after the February Darshan of the year 1945. I argued that not only did I feel no need or urge to speak but had nothing to say either. Yet he prevailed upon me.

"Mother, the day after tomorrow I am going," said I when I went to her for blessings. She nodded her head in a gesture of consent.

"And I want your Grace," I continued. The Mother nodded her head affirmatively.

A few months after, one summer night at about 10.30 p.m., as I lay in my bed reading the *Bases of Yoga*, in the light of a lamp placed on a tripod beside my cot, an owl ventured to peep and screech through the head-side window of my forest-situated office. I smiled at the idea as to what wisdom the night bird had come to bestow upon me. That the owl is a symbol of wisdom, I had come to know during my last trip to Pondicherry, from a letter of Sri Aurobindo to a captain in Hyderabad. In our own parts it is popularly considered the symbol of the opposite quality.

The usual stillness of the night in a solitary place, harmonising itself with the chirping of the crickets—pierced only by a fake gun-shot from the nearby Hanuman Rice Mills, to scare away the wild boars that used to devastate its paddies—reasserted itself. And then suddenly a heavy thud on the big wooden chest lying at a few yards' distance from my feet broke that calm. A cat had jumped in from outside the window behind the chest, I thought. But could the soft pads of a cat's paws produce such a heavy sound? I wondered for a while and then buried myself in my book, undisturbed, not caring a whit to see what was the matter, thinking myself on the road to *samatā*, spiritual

* Our readers are invited to send their experiences (Editor).

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

equality, a state of unperturbedness even if the heavens fall! A faint sound of some movement on the bags beside the chest succeeded the thud.

Then all was quiet. Suddenly a grasshopper struck and sat on my book. I drove it away. A few minutes later it made its stubborn presence felt on my hand. I shook it off. A third time it sprang on my chest. I caught it and threw it away into the surrounding forest. A few minutes after, while I was almost sure of its disappearance, the mattress near my pillow started rising a little, and I thought that the "little rascal" had reappeared and got under it, though what was happening seemed a little too much for its strength.

I prepared myself to press the mattress down with a blow and so crush the disturber of my precious peace. But something made me stay my hand and sit up on the cot to look before hitting. What did I find?

A big black snake, its fore-part raised from the ground, its head just near the mattress of my bed, in between the cot and the tripod in the comparative darkness below the lamp! Was it not the Grace that without any preconceived idea in my brain deterred me from the blow that would have been lethal—to myself?

THE DIVINE SUPPORT

In 1943, I was working in Bengal in a Government Depot of rice and flour. My superiors wanted to mix rotten rice and wheat full of worms and make money through black business. My friend and myself did not wish to sell this poison to our compatriots. It was the time when millions of men were dying because of famine and unhealthy food. Our disobedience offended our officers. My friend was dismissed and I was arrested under a false charge of theft.

In the prison I felt disappointed and asked myself: Is there not a God who could save me from the danger to which I am exposed?

At night I had a dream and I felt as if some divine presence was supporting me. Three days later I was let off on bail.

After a year, judgment was given in the court against me and I was condemned to two months' imprisonment.

I made an appeal to the higher court. The Mother was informed about it. Every day she sent me her blessing flower as a token of her support for me. They said in Pondicherry that come what might I would be free without any punishment.

And indeed by the Mother's Grace I was saved from the punishment which I did not deserve.

THE DIRECT PROTECTION

There are always ups and downs in spiritual life and I was for a time down and out. The adverse forces seized the opportunity to attack me on all fronts. I became a *persona non-grata* with the bosses though I had done nothing to incur their displeasure. Somehow they wanted to get rid of me and no consideration of truth or honesty weighed with them. My self-constituted judges, as could be expected, passed a verdict of condemnation and used the language of threats and warnings against me.

I at once sought the Mother's protection but did not proceed through any human channel and lo the miracle took place ! I received her instant protection though nothing verbally was conveyed to me. That the Grace was acting very powerfully was evidenced by the almost incredible change of behaviour, without any apparent reason, on the part of the very men who had condemned me overnight. And then the truth of Sri Aurobindo's words flashed like lightning through my mind as tears of gratitude welled up in my eyes : "And when the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear ? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible".

(*To be continued*)

Compiled and edited by HAR KRISHAN SINGH

METEORS AND FIREFLIES

SELF-SATISFACTION is a blank refutation of the yoga of transformation. If we are 'perfectly' happy we have either completed our sadhana or not yet begun.

*

It is notorious how the mind in its surface reasonings is happy to attribute the most shallow of significances to such qualities as bhakti, knowledge, equality and so on.

Bhakti it translates as an outer ritual of flower-offering and physical gestures, knowledge as something bound up in books, and equality as a mere poise of the mind or the personality.

What, say, is Equality ?

When Jesus, hanging stretched upon a devilish instrument of torture, bleeding and dying, raised yet his eyes in a final gesture of blessing and forgiveness, and prayed : "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"—that was Equality.

When the prince Gautama sat at last beneath the Bo-tree and was set upon by all the hellish forces of Mara, yet was able to retain his fixed resolve and calm serenity—that was Equality.

When in our time our own divine Mother day after day, year after year, puts behind her the deep and sublime ecstasies of her Supreme Consciousness in order to come down to attend to the physical and spiritual needs of us, her children, and can yet smile with all her accustomed sweetness—that, that is Equality.

*

Those who know the most have the greatest power to hurt—or to heal.

*

Aloofness is of course just another form of self-protection, and what we protect is an illusion.

So often is an impersonal attitude taken for aloofness, when in reality it is the opposite. An attitude that is truly impersonal is able to dispense with the habitual surface response or exchange; it would seek something deeper below the turbulence and inconsistency of our surface nature. A psychic sympathy or intimacy becomes possible only when we are content to renounce the vital or mental stimulus or excitation on which ordinary society subsists.

*

What we see depends upon what we see it with. When at last we see things with the soul, the psyche, this very world becomes a paradise.

*

A true human love has always meant the giving of one's soul. It could not be otherwise, and in that simple giving it found its delight. But human love is vulnerable to its own imperfections. It is only when we give our soul to the Divine that we may rest assured that it is in the hands of the One who knows best how to care for it.

After all, He created it.

*

Those who lock themselves up in Ideas' cages oft rant against those who would set them free.

*

If we find it hard to believe in God, then let us dream about God, for one day we shall wake to find our dream a Reality.

*

Doubts and misgivings are a misapplied inverted faith, a credence in our own darkness, apprehensions and present limitations, as opposed to the Light which would so willingly manifest within us.

*

How futile it is in so many cases to attempt to read the heart from the expression on the face, for often in our attempt to put two and two together we pathetically arrive at six or seven.

Mahakali Herself may on occasion wear a frown but Her heart is ever full of an unfathomable love for her lost and erring humanity.

*

The human ego abhors a mystery. It will come to a conclusion, any conclusion, generally wrong, rather than suffer the irritation of being unable immediately to solve a mystery. It is like a river running in its well-worn bed of habit—an habitual Ignorance—that dislikes anything that may threaten or impede its smooth, complacent and incontinent flow.

*

The Jivanmuktas are incapable of peevish statements about other people's ignorance. Those who can see the jewel in the lotus are undisturbed by the surrounding darkness.

*

Sensitiveness is not an achievement, nor a refinement, which the oversensitive, presumably in an attempt to create a virtue out of a seeming uncommon fault, would happily believe. It consists more in coddling oneself with a self-protecting tenderness.

Nor is being thick-skinned, unthinking, brazen, anything of an accomplishment. For both are selfish egoistic feelings which seem to be intimately and engrossingly concerned with nothing but themselves.

*

There is a power in Beauty, a power in the aesthetic sense and appeal which we do ill to ignore. By an awareness and an appreciation of the beautiful and graceful we further our own true refinement, which in turn promotes an enhanced receptivity and responsiveness to the Supreme.

It has been well-said that 'to remember Beauty is never to forget God', yet how often we fail to acknowledge, in the sunset and sunrise, in faces and forms, in moonlight and stars, the tender smile of Mahalakshmi!

*

Yoga has been described as an inner psychological discipline. Within certain limits an exterior discipline is of course necessary, but a perpetual, stereotyped, regimented, Army-like discipline, imposed from without or self-inflicted, can become as much as anything else a retarding shackle to the unhampered growth of the soul.

Discipline is necessary only that we may enjoy a secure freedom from our own license.

*

We have as much right to assume that reading a few books on Yoga makes yogis, as reading a railway Time-table makes us steam-engines.

*

A yogi is one who has realised God.

A philosopher, one who has realised the endless ramifications and convolutions of Philosophy.

*

The tendency to mere intellectualising can be formidable and difficult to eradicate. For years we can contentedly employ ourselves in surveying the Path, the wide and high vistas to which we will aspire, the beautiful mountains which we will eventually climb. And doubtless our view is shot through with spirit-thrills of high anticipation. Then we will proceed to compare our path with other paths, our philosophy with other philosophies, the present Aurobindoan revelation with the revelations of the past, and we may even proceed to write lengthy treatises and commentaries on Commentaries which may, or may not, be of help to others.

Thereafter we may die.

But the view was nevertheless splendid, the mountain a vision of serene grandeur. Only it was such a pity we didn't have the time to approach even the foothills, and sadly we are compelled thus to rebuke ourselves : the road to Hell is paved with the best of intellectual intentions.

GODFREY

SRI AUROBINDO'S ASHRAM

A Letter to an American Friend

My dear X,

I received your letter yesterday when I got up from meditation and the whole state of your soul flashed before my eyes. Though for you the tension and anguish through which you are passing is acutely painful I take it all as a very cheering sign. It happens with everybody that when the soul reaches a stage where it outgrows the old values the whole life turns into something drab and utterly meaningless. You are at the crossroads; perhaps the whole of civilisation is standing at the crossroads and even impelled by cosmic necessity to turn the corner or perish. But perish it will not, because behind the present crisis is the ever increasing pressure of the new Light that has descended to dispel this nightmare dream and bring the new dawn.

Sri Aurobindo in his spiritual realisation saw the coming on earth of the Divine Supermind which will enable the élite of humanity to embody the Gnostic Consciousness in which man will discover his spiritual unity with the whole universe and thus lay the foundations of the true ideal of human unity. The spiritual life as practised here has nothing of the ascetic bareness that is usually associated with it. It allows the utmost diversity to blossom and each one has to follow the law of his own soul and thus manifest what he is destined to manifest in the cosmic symphony. We have here engineers, poets, artists, musicians and dancers and also physical culturists. The body is not despised as flesh that ties the soul to earth but as an instrument for divine beauty. The young boys and girls live here a life free from dissipation of all sorts and yet nowhere do you find any signs of suppressions. Everywhere there is health, joy and cheerfulness. I call it a real paradise on earth because the outer harmony here is not anything imposed but the outflowing of the soul, the true soul and not the desire soul.

But surely it is no mere gliding through easy and serene joys. One has to submit oneself to the merciless knife of the Divine Surgeon again and again. You have not to decide once which road to take but every moment of your life. You might perhaps think that when you set sail for India you have taken the new road. No, no, a thousand times no! Every minute you have to be alert, for the old movements are always lying in wait to leap on you and bring to nothing all your heroic efforts and sacrifices. The habits of the past, the thousand attachments of which one is hardly ever conscious spring alive and besiege you again and again. You have to leave behind you all that you are and have been. This yoga happens to be the most difficult because it does not seek an

escape from the world of falsehood and darkness but seeks to confront it and, by triumphing over it, to transform it. Its appeal is very powerful but equally difficult and hazardous is its practice. It is not enough to turn away from the world in disgust or to be mentally convinced by an impeccable logic but to hear the call of the soul that is the divine spark in us often dim and smoke-covered. Much sadhana is needed even to come to the point where one can hear the call of the soul unmistakably.

The condition for being admitted to the Ashram is perfect sincerity. The rest follows inevitably. If you are sincere in your aspiration then the doors of the Divine are open for you: you may have a lot of defects, but the Divine Grace will take you up and by and by enable you to see the sunlit path of yoga and tread on it. You should read some of the books of Sri Aurobindo and then see how it touches your inmost being and even in Chicago prepare yourself till the time is ripe for you to come and stay here.

The Ashram suits the Western people because most of the modern amenities of life are available and the guests are kept in such conditions as can free them from their trivial personal cares so that they are left with ample time to devote themselves to meditation. The atmosphere of the Guest-House is very calm and tranquil and free from distractions and social calls. You stay in your room which is quite tidy and well-furnished, airy and ventilated and most up-to-date in many other ways.

The Mother's presence is a constant magnetic pull lifting us up and coming to our succour in a thousand occult and spiritual ways. As a matter of fact her help can be felt anywhere in the world. The barriers of space do not exist for those who rise to the cosmic consciousness. She has realised the Divine Consciousness in every part of her being and she stands as the representative of the Divine in our midst.

Another wing of the Ashram is the International University Centre. This centre has been established to set the model for a truly international life. The teachers here hail from many parts of the world and thus the children have a very rich life free from all racial and national hatreds and jealousies. The Mother's aim is to make a place where all the cultures of the world can meet in utmost diversity and yet be based on the realisation of the One Spirit as our true reality.

Westerners coming here strike up friendships easily. They find in the Indian soul a lovingness which does not let them feel alien in this land which is otherwise quite foreign in matters of outer life.

I should have written to you more about the radiant personality of the Mother and the Master but I await your response to their literature which is vast and covers every field of human life.

A DISCIPLE

PRAYER

CALMNESS, confidence single-purposed—
Deep-rocked vastness of mountain-top,
Smiling peace of wind-fused trees,
The lulled purple trance of valley-drop.

My mind, pin-pointed like the flame-hued eagle
Soaring without waver to its mountain-crest—
For Your sole impress, an ever-widening void,—
For Your Love, Your Light, a burning quest !

MINNIE

TRUTH AT THE BOTTOM...

What's a well ?
Fathomed well,
It's an "I"
Whose hidden eye
Has never forgot
What skies have got.
Deep in the soil,
Free from all soil
A spirit sees
What moving seas
Always behold
Yet never hold.
Here a still spot
Can ever spot
As selfed in it
The Infinite.

"DOWSER"

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(Continued from the last issue)

III. THE HUMAN CALL AND ASPIRATION

(Continued)

15. MY CLAY IS OPEN AGHAST TO THY SHINE

O MOTHER, let my fire-cry reach Thy feet of Gold,
Let my vertical prayer knock at Thy gates of Grace,
My beseeching heart longs to become the vessel of Thy Love,
My self the vassal of Thy Force, the lever of Thy Light,
My being's clay a slave-instrument of Thy saviour Will,
My earthly life is open aghast to Thy streaming Shine.
A bowl of purity I stand for Thy downflow of Might,
A child new-born I'm thrown on Thy bosom of care divine,
I frittered my past playing with terrestrial toys,
I have lived my adulthood amidst the purposeless fray of the world,
My youth I spent among the luring charms of Maya.
O Last Resort of man's aeonic prayers and aspirations,
Now gather me a babe unto Thy Lap of ecstatic Love,
Let Thy Cradle of Grace be my world of life and death,
Let Thy celestial Arms be my sole-sought haven,
May I never grow into the vainglory of man,
But play on Thy wide Bosom of Grace fondled by Thy pleasure-Will.
Let a submission complete be the pith of my life.

16. ON WINGS OF THY LOVE

O Mother, Thee alone I seek :
No power, no supremacy,
No glory, gaud, no knowledge-peak,
Eternal make me one with Thee.

MOTHER INDIA

O let my heart forever throb
To drink Thy nectar-ecstasy,
My being's one most cherished job
Thy servant and Thy slave to be.

All mist of ignorance remove,
In each thing may I see Thy face,
Carried on pinions of Thy Love
Work out but Thy willed ways.

17. O FILL MY CORE WITH THY RAPTURE-RUSH

O Love, the ineffable Deity of my heart's temple,
O source of all that's astir and all that's mute,
Awake in me the secret founts of pure Godward passion,
Awake in me the upward rush of death-dire longing,
Blossom the ever-fresh petals of the immortalising Rose.
O unclothe my mind to a single trust in Thee ;
Open my heart to look barless on Thy Face,
Let my being burn a flame-flower offered to Thy Sanctum.
O use my body in world-service to Thy Omnipresent Form.

18. TO SHRINE THEE MORE AND MORE

O Mother, flare up holy fire
In my heart's lonely core,
Let every speck of dust aspire
To shrine Thee evermore.

Remove all dark and ignorance,
My being's low rooted stuff ;
Burn dirt, mind's soot, malignant sense
Crouched in me long enough.

Spread everywhere Thy flushing Light,
Thy moon-transparency,
Across which Truth may shine out bright
In milk-pure clarity.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

TAGORE THE UNIQUE

IT is no hyperbole to say that Tagore is to Bengali literature what Shakespeare is to English, Goethe to German, Tolstoy to Russian, or Dante to Italian and, to go into the remoter past, what Virgil was to Latin and Homer to Greek or, in our country, what Kalidasa was to ancient Sanskrit. Each of these stars of the first magnitude is a king, a paramount ruler in his own language and literature, and that for two reasons. First, whatever formerly was immature, undeveloped, has become after them mature, whatever was provincial or plebian has become universal and refined; whatever was too personal has come to be universal. The first miracle performed by these great figures was to turn a parochial language and a parochial literature into a world language and a world literature. The second was to unfold the inner strength and the deeper genius of the language to reveal and establish the nature and uniqueness of a nation's creative spirit as well as the basic principle of its evolution and culture. These two ways, one tending to expansion, the other to profundity, are in many cases mutually dependent and are often the result of a sudden or rapid outburst.

Ballad and folklore are the infant or immature form of a language and literature. Polished and powerful language and literature develop out of that and only subsequently attain their full blossoming. In this respect Dante's marvel is almost without parallel. The language he used in clothing his poetry was a popular dialect; one among various other popular dialects—this he turned into the language of Italy as a whole, the Italian language as it stood before the eyes of the world. A music and rhythm of a great and lofty consciousness infused itself into the elements that had lain neglected in the dust. The voice confined within the four corners of the household and the village underwent a miraculous change in the mouth of a magician; it became a voice of the universe. And, in a language and a literature that are not so immature but have already attained development and elegance, a creative *vibhuti* has brought about a second type of transformation. Virgil, Shakespeare, Goethe and Kalidasa did a work of this category. It cannot be said that English was undeveloped or quite rustic before Shakespeare, although the impression of the grandly real, something truly familiar and intimate that Shakespeare evokes in the heart of foreigners is not given by Spenser, Chaucer or even Marlowe. Shakespeare has revealed something of the universal in the very special style he created—here was a diversity, a plasticity, a suggestiveness, a magic all its own.

There is some difference between the history of French literature and that of any other. First, the French language and literature have grown and matured not through a sudden change or a revolutionary transmutation—their growth and development are the result of a slow and steady process of evolution. In English, on the other hand, the sense of growth seems to consist of a rapid change. In the political field, however, the English and the French have pursued quite reversed policies. The battle for liberty by the English continued from precedent to precedent—the French had always to win freedom through revolutions. But the other speciality of the French literary spirit is the fact that there was no single person who had a kind of all-in-all authority,—although in politics, in old France at least, it was often one man's rule, the tradition of the Roman Emperor that prevailed. In the literary field among the instances cited we find that each nation had a single person of authority, a specially gifted one who moulded its language and literature by the magic touch of his own genius or made them fully mature and self-sufficient. The French are a very social race—they are proud to be called republican, so it is by the combined effort of many, the contribution of more than one genius, that their language and literature have been formed and enriched. Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine (or up the stream to Rabelais)—they are a goodly company; among these whom to exclude and whom to include? And yet here too, perhaps only one can be taken as France's representative spirit. He can be only Racine. Racine embodies in himself the special characteristic, as no other does so completely, of the French and reflects the heart of the French people. What is that characteristic? In one word, the culmination of elegance and sensitiveness. To be sure, this is not the only aspect of the French. Corneille has contributed to another aspect—severity, virility, high seriousness, austere self-control, strictness and bareness. But this may be considered a special quality of a branch line, as it were, of the French language and literature, as if it was an acquired capacity, the sign of a growth towards a greater possibility—but in regard to the other it may be said that what Racine is is the French language and literature; their inherent quality is a spontaneous formation out of the inner soul of this great creator.

These thoughts about the genius of French occurred to me because it seemed to me that there was a great analogy in this respect between French and Bengali. Certainly it would not be quite correct to say that the evolution of the Bengali language was slow and steady like that of French. At least one upheaval, a revolution, has taken place on its coming into contact with Europe; under its influence our language and literature have taken a turn that is almost an about-turn. But this revolution was not caused by a single person,—not even perhaps Bankim. Dante and Homer are the creators, originators or the peerless

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presiding deities of Italian and Greek respectively, just as Shakespeare may be said to have led the English language across the border. But if to anybody it is to Tagore that a similar place can be assigned. He made Bengali transcend its insular circle. As Tolstoy made the Russian language join hands with the wide world or as Virgil and Goethe imparted a fresh life and bloom, a fuller awakening of the soul of poetry, to Latin and to German, so too is Tagore the paramount and versatile poetic genius of Bengal. I think that Tagore has in many ways the title and position of a Racine amongst us. There is a special quality, a music and rhythm, a fine sensibility of the inner soul. The uniqueness is in the heart; a sweet ecstasy, an intoxicating magic which Chandidas was the first to bring out in its poignant purity and which has been nourished by Bankim, has attained the full manifestation of maturity, variety, intensity and perfection in Rabindranath. Here too an aspect of supreme elegance is found. Bengali, like French, has a natural ease of flow. Madhusudan took up another line and sought to bring in an austere and masculine element—*à la* Corneille. Some among the modern writers are endeavouring to revive that line and naturalise it; even then the soft elegance, the lyric grace so natural to the language has attained almost its acme in Tagore. To be sure, among us Tagore is the One without a second.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali essay in "Rabindranath")

THE 'SEEING SOUL' AND THE 'SEEKING MIND'

(Continued from the last issue)

(C) AN AUROBINDONIAN CONTEMPLATES PHILOSOPHY*

XXI. REASON THE GODHEAD

"Of all these Powers the greatest was the last.
Arriving late from a far plane of thought
Into a packed irrational world of Chance
Where all was grossly felt and blindly done,
Yet the haphazard seemed the inevitable,
Came Reason....."¹

"Man is in his characteristic power of nature a mental being, but in the first step of his emergence he is more of the mentalised animal, preoccupied like the animal with his bodily existence ; he employs his mind for the uses, interests, desires of the life and the body, as their servant and minister, not yet as their sovereign and master. It is as he grows in mind and in proportion as his mind asserts its selfhood and independence against the tyranny of life and matter, that he grows in stature. On one side, mind by its emancipation controls and illumines the life and physicality ; on the other, the purely mental aims, occupations, pursuits of knowledge begin to get a value. The mind liberated from a lower control and preoccupation introduces into life a government, an uplifting, a refinement, a finer balance and harmony ; the vital and physical movements are directed and put into order, transformed even as far as they can be by a mental agency ; they are taught to be the instruments of reason and obedient to an enlightened will, an ethical perception and an aesthetic intelligence : the more this can be accomplished, the more the race becomes truly human, a race of mental beings."²

If we study the evolutionary aspect of terrestrial existence, we find that "Nature starts from Matter, develops out of it its hidden Life, releases out of involution in life all the crude material of Mind and, when she is ready, turns Mind upon itself and upon Life and Matter in a great mental effort to understand all three in their phenomena, their obvious action, their secret laws,

* Except for some connecting sentences, this section is in the most part a compilation from Sri Aurobindo's own writings drawn from three of his major works: *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle* and *Savitri*.

¹ *Savitri*, B. II C. 10, p. 283.

² *The Life Divine*, p. 651.

their normal and abnormal possibilities and powers so that they may be turned to the richest account, used in the best and most harmonious way, elevated to their highest as well as extended to their widest potential aims by the action of that faculty which man alone of terrestrial creatures clearly possesses, the intelligent will. It is only in this fourth stage of her progress that she arrives at humanity."¹

Thus, "reason using the intelligent will for ordering of the inner and outer life is undoubtedly the highest developed faculty of man at his present point of evolution ; it is the sovereign, because the governing and self-governing faculty in the complexities of our human existence."²

And in so far as the acquisition of true knowledge is concerned reason is the instrument *par excellence*. It may be conceded that the intelligent reason is not man's only means of knowledge. "All action, all perception, all aesthesis and sensation, all impulse and will, all imagination and creation imply a universal, many-sided force of knowledge at work....But the intellect has this advantage over the others that it can disengage itself from the work, stand back from it to study and understand it disinterestedly, analyse its processes, disengage its principles. None of the other powers and faculties of the living being can do this ; for each exists for its own action, is confined by the work it is doing, is unable to see beyond it, into it as the reason can ; the principle of knowledge inherent within each force is involved and carried along in the action of the force, helps to shape it, but is also itself limited by its own formulations.... Reason, on the other hand, exists for the sake of knowledge, can prevent itself from being carried away by the action, can stand back from it, intelligently study, accept, refuse, modify, alter, improve, combine and recombine the workings and capacities of the forces in operation, can repress here, indulge there, strive towards an intelligent, intelligible, willed and organised perfection. Reason is science, it is conscious art, it is invention. It is observation and can seize and arrange truth of facts ; it is speculation and can extricate and forecast truth of potentiality. It is the idea and its fulfilment, the ideal and its bringing to fruition. It can look through the immediate appearance and unveil the hidden truths behind it. It is the servant and yet the master of all utilities ; and it can, putting away all utilities, seek disinterestedly Truth for its own sake and by finding it reveal a whole world of new possible utilities. Therefore it is a sovereign power by which man has become possessed of himself, student and master of his own forces, the godhead on which the other godheads in him have leaned for help in their ascent ; it has been the

¹ *The Human Cycle*, p. 97.

² *Ibid*, p. 123.

Prometheus of the mythical parable, the helper, instructor, elevating friend, civiliser of mankind”¹

It is quite evident that to arrive at the conception and at the knowledge of the true Truth of existence, we have to exceed the evidence of the senses and pierce beyond the walls of the physical mind. “So long as we confine ourselves to sense-evidence and the physical consciousness, we can conceive nothing and know nothing except the material world and its phenomena. But certain faculties in us enable our mentality to arrive at conceptions which we may indeed deduce by ratiocination or by imaginative variation from the facts of the physical world as we see them, but which are not warranted by any purely physical data or any physical experience. The first of these instruments is the pure reason”².

And the highest power of reason, because its pure and characteristic power, is the disinterested seeking after true knowledge. And this disinterested seeking attains its full *ampleur* in that noble discipline of the human mind: Philosophy. But seeking is not enough; the sure acquisition and the holding of truth is far more important. Here we are face to face with an intriguing situation; for when we try to take stock of the positive achievements of reason in the conquest of truth, we are at first disillusioned by an altogether unexpected and disconcerting discovery. Let us see what this discovery really connotes.

XXII. REASON, THE DIALECTICIAN

“A million faces wears her knowledge here
And every face is turbaned with a doubt.
All now is questioned, all reduced to nought.
Once monumental in their massive craft
Her old great mythic writings disappear
And into their place start strict ephemeral signs;
This constant change spells progress to her eyes :
Her thought is an endless march without a goal.
There is no summit on which she can stand
And see in a single glance the Infinite’s whole.”³

“All human thought, all mental man’s experience moves between a constant affirmation and negation; there is for his mind no truth of idea, no result of

¹ *The Human Cycle*, pp. 125-27

² *The Life Divine*, p. 58.

³ *Savitri*, p. 285.

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experience that cannot be affirmed, none that cannot be negated. It has negated the existence of the individual being, negated the existence of the cosmos, negated the existence of any immanent or underlying Reality, negated any Reality beyond the individual and the cosmos; but it is also constantly affirming these things—sometimes one of them solely or any two or all of them together.”¹

The thinking mind “inquires into everything, questions everything, builds up affirmations and unbuilds them, erects systems of certitude but finally accepts none of them as certain, affirms and questions the evidence of the sense, follows out the conclusions of the reason but undoes them again to arrive at different or quite opposite conclusions, and continues indefinitely if not *ad infinitum* this process. This is the history of human thought and human endeavour, a constant breaking of bounds only to move always in the same spirals enlarged perhaps but following the same or constantly similar curves of direction. The mind of humanity, ever seeking, ever active, never arrives at a firmly settled reality of life’s aims and objects or at a settled reality of its own certitudes and convictions, an established foundation or firm formation of its idea of existence.”²

As a matter of fact, “reason is in its nature an imperfect light with a large but still restricted mission....It can in its nature be used and has always been used to justify any idea, theory of life, system of society or government, ideal of individual or collective action to which the will of man attaches itself for the moment or through the centuries. In philosophy it gives equally good reasons for monism and pluralism or for any halting-place between them, for the belief in Being or for the belief in Becoming, for optimism and pessimism, for activism and quietism. It can justify the most mystic religionism and the most positive atheism, get rid of God or see nothing else. In aesthetics it supplies the basis equally for classicism and romanticism, for an idealistic, religious or mystic theory of art or for the most earthly realism. It can with equal power base austere strict and narrow moralism or prove triumphantly the thesis of the antinomian. It has been the sufficient and convincing prophet of every kind of autocracy or oligarchy and of every species of democracy; it supplies excellent and satisfying reasons for competitive individualism and equally excellent and satisfying reasons for communism or against communism and for state socialism or for one variety of socialism against another. It can place itself with equal effectivity at the service of utilitarianism, economism, hedonism, aestheticism, sensualism, ethicism, idealism or any other essential

¹ *The Life Divine*, pp. 371-372.

² *Ibid.* p. 373.

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creed or activity of man and build around it a philosophy, a political and social system, a theory of conduct and life. Ask it not to lean to one idea alone, but to make an eclectic combination or a synthetic harmony and it will satisfy you; only, there being any number of possible combinations or harmonies, it will equally well justify the one or the other and set up or throw down any one of them according as the spirit in man is attracted to or withdraws from it.”¹

But does this mean that Reason is eternally and absolutely impotent to discover Truth ? What is then the *raison d'être* of Philosophy as such ? What should be its true role, real mission ? Is reason, in the last analysis, an instrument of knowledge ? What is, after all, the nature of Mind ? What is its potentiality as a noetic apparatus ? Is there any such thing as an evolution and ultimate transfiguration of Reason ? What is the *rappor*t between Reason and Intuition ? What role is Philosophy destined to play *vis-à-vis* spiritual experiences ?

Let us now discuss all these and allied questions in the light of Sri Aurobindo's thought.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ *The Human Cycle*, pp. 146-147.

KATHA UPANISHAD

A COMMENTARY

(Continued from the last issue)

I. i. 14

प्र ते ब्रवीमि तदु मे निबोध स्वर्ग्यमग्निं नचिकेतः प्रजानन ।
अनन्तलोकाप्तिमथो प्रतिष्ठां विद्धि त्वमेतं निहितं गुहायाम् ॥२॥*

AND Yama immediately grants his request and says, "Hearken to me and understand, O Nachiketas; I declare to thee that heavenly Flame, for I know it." And on reading this one expects a tremendous revelation to come to us, but one is disappointed, for Yama in this very verse says that this heavenly Flame is hidden in a secret cave, meaning thereby that this knowledge cannot be given to all and sundry. It is a key which would unravel the mysteries of the occult worlds, and the person possessing it can have at his command undreamt of powers and faculties pertaining to those worlds. It is an occult knowledge that Nachiketas demands of him, the knowledge of the other worlds, not an academic knowledge but a practical one which is capable of taking him there and developing very great occult powers in him. For this knowledge of the working of the Divine Will is sure to show him many secrets not only of those other worlds but also of our own world of Matter, which remains a puzzle to us even after so much advance of physical science in recent years. This heavenly Agni is characterised by three very important things, which Yama only mentions in brief, two of which are found in this stanza, *ananta-lokāptim* and *pratiṣṭhām*, and the third one in the next, *lokādīm*.

It is obvious that Yama is revealing an exceedingly secret knowledge to Nachiketas, which to the mind of the modern age would seem to be of no use or value. For the modern age is inclined towards the world whose phenomena we perceive around us rather than those invisible other worlds with which, we believe, we have no connection or concern whatsoever. But this is a mistake committed by the physical mind whose sole preoccupation is with the physical world. This physical mentality concerns itself with only the quite superficial processes of physical Nature and utilises them for its immediate practical purposes, but deliberately chooses to remain blissfully ignorant of all the other unknown factors with which it is constantly surrounded. The result is that when by its external superficial analysis it is able to know a little about the mysteries of

* *pra te bravīmi tad u me nibodha, svargyam agnim nachiketaḥ prajānan; anānta-lokāptim atho praṁṣṭhām, viddhi tvam etam nihitam guhāyām.*

the world, it becomes elated with joy, whereas in reality it has touched only the external fringe of the whole thing and there too it does not know anything thoroughly, for every external object or event is only the last result of a chain or sequence of happenings belonging to the occult other worlds. For instance, the modern sciences of physics and chemistry can tell us what exactly is the structure of an element or an atom, what are its component parts, what its properties and characteristics, the external hows or whys of its formation, but all these explanations explain nothing about its essential form. They can tell us that a particular element is invariably found in Nature in the form of a particular-shaped crystal, but they cannot tell us why it is like that or who or what it is that gives it that shape always. These sciences believe that such questions are neither necessary nor relevant and therefore ought not to be put to them; but the spirit of inquiry imbedded in the human consciousness certainly revolts against any such restriction and wants always to know more even about the external world. The physical sciences have not been able to clarify the deeper secrets of the physical world. For these secrets take us right into the heart of the occult mystery that underlies and encompasses even the apparently simplest and most familiar of physical objects. Every such object has an invisible subtle-physical counterpart, which is its prototype and the occult level on which it exists is known as the subtle-physical world. But this occult world is not the abode of these counterparts only; there are so many other subtle-physical objects and beings which have no corresponding forms here in our gross physical world. Some of those beings may be awaiting their turn to go still lower down in the scale of Involution to take their plunge in the Inconscient and to emerge later on in evolution to become physical beings in the world of Matter, but the rest of them are the eternal denizens of that level and remain fixed to their own form of substance and existence. It is these last type of beings who are the builders of material substance here. They are the wonderful architects and engineers erecting myriads of material forms of minerals and metals, crystals and non-crystalline objects. They are the genii moulding and breaking up and transforming and remoulding the fourfold elemental states of Matter.

Similar is the case with the vital and the mental worlds. Whatever has life and mind here has an invisible vital and mental counterpart in the vital and mental worlds respectively. Those worlds also are involutionary and typical and the beings inhabiting them and native to them are the originators of various forms of life and mind here, the teeming numbers of species and genera and the multitudinous formations of unconscious and conscious impulses and feelings and emotions and thoughts and all the other types of mental structures existing on all the gradations of development commencing from the most incipient to the most highly and deliberately organised types.

It can be seen that but for the existence of all these subtle worlds and their constant work and influence, our world of Matter could never have come into being nor could it remain in existence even for a moment. For the Divine Will operating there is the support or foundation, *pratiṣṭhā*, of our world. This single word *pratiṣṭhā* as used by the seer in connection with these other worlds takes us into some of the most occult regions of the Vedic esoteric knowledge, which we must note here, however briefly, if we want to understand this and the following few stanzas of the Upanishad in their proper perspective.

It is obvious that Yama is imparting to Nachiketas some extremely secret knowledge, *guhya vidyā*, and he is careful not to allow even the slightest detail of it to be put in words. The seer of the Upanishad summarily tells us in one half stanza that Yama told Nachiketas of the Flame and what were the bricks and how many and how they were arranged (St. 15). This statement is all that is made by him about this mysterious and secret lore, and we are left to guess or imagine it as best we can or remain in our ignorance if we cannot. The Upanishad does not help the intellect in any way to understand this profound secret revealed by Yama to Nachiketas. In order to grasp what he has given, we shall have to go deeper into the mystic cult of the ancient Vedic age, which alone can throw some light on this and some other stanzas containing such recondite allusion to truths unknowable by the physical intellect.

Yama is giving to Nachiketas the knowledge of the occult methods by which one can, even while living in this world, enter into other worlds, come into contact with beings of those worlds and know the secrets of the whole universe which indeed includes our world of Matter within itself, but only as one of its many parts. Nachiketas certainly was not sceptical about the existence of these other worlds; on the contrary, he had already had not only belief but faith, for he himself calls himself *śraddadhāna*. This faith is the first essential for any one in order to be able to know and make a practical use of such occult knowledge. It is not a mere question of theoretical intellectual knowledge where only a mental capacity to understand would be enough. The Vedas time and again say that what they give is the secret doctrines, occult practices, *manyā vachāmsi*.

The secret imparted in this Upanishad takes us back into the age of the Brāhmaṇas. These ancient works are now considered almost unanimously by all to be containing only ritualistic details of how various kinds of Vedic sacrifices and rites are to be performed. They are now hardly ever studied by any one, except those academicians who are interested in the study of the development of human thought in the primitive societies of ancient times, as they choose to call them, forgetting all the while or rather ignoring the fact that these Brāhmaṇas were considered by the ancients to be in the same category and deserving the

same respect as that accorded to the Vedas and the Upanishads.

In order to understand what these Brāhmaṇas really signify we must first of all get rid of the idea that they are ritualistic manuals at all. They are, on the contrary, practical records of how the occult truths of Nature were contacted by those ancient spiritual scientists on the various levels of existence. The ancient seers were no fools or idiots toying with the details of external sacrifices; they were wise and patient and industrious; they had, by methods only known to themselves, come into touch with secrets of our existence and consciousness as well as the world's and delved into the arcana of Nature. And the Brāhmaṇas are the manuals of their occult findings. Every word, every slightest detail mentioned by them contains within itself tremendous occult significances, which the uninitiate is almost always apt to ignore. The Vedic Samhitās too, we now know, thanks to the stupendous work of Sri Aurobindo, to be full of profound psychological significance; he has shown us that every word of the Veda is symbolic. But the Brāhmaṇas still await the revealer of their real significance; they are not merely writings containing psychological symbols, but are works on occultism. They are now supposed by almost all to be dealing with Karma-kāṇḍa or ritualistic details and are looked down upon. But it is not Karma-kāṇḍa at all with which they deal, not at least in the sense which is usually given to that word; they give us occult methods by which we can know and practically utilise the secret energies of Nature.

To take one instance out of many, the Brāhmaṇas tell us that one desirous of heaven should perform the *jyotiḥ-ṣtoma* sacrifice, *jyotiḥ-ṣtomena svarga-kāmo yageta*. The word *jyotiḥ-ṣtoma* itself is a symbolic word even as the word *svarga* is. The word *jyotiḥ* means the higher occult or spiritual Light. The word *stoma* is, in its ordinarily accepted sense, a praise, from the root *stu*—to praise; other words like *stuti*, *stavana*, etc., are derived from the same root. So the compound word would mean the praise of Light, the prayer of Light. But this word *stoma* has a far deeper occult meaning; and in order to understand that we shall have to take into consideration several Sanskrit roots which resemble each other in their sound as well as sense. One such root is *stubh* which also means to praise, another is *stumbh*—to stop; a third one is *stambh*—to stop, to hinder, to support, to uphold; a fourth one is *skambh*—to stop, to obstruct, to support, to uphold. All these roots, it can be easily seen, give us more or less the same sense. It becomes important then to find out why these roots come to have this double significance, one meaning to support, to uphold and the other to praise. The nouns derived from these roots like *stambha*, *skambha*, *stubh*, *stobha* etc. all give us the same meaning, *viz.*, a support, a pillar, a post, something that is erected in order to support some other structure placed above it. Even the English word “stop” coming from the Icelandic “stoppa”, through

the Middle English “stoppen”, can ultimately be derived from the Latin “stupa”. The Sanskrit root *stūp* too means to heap up, to pile, from which we get the well-known Buddhistic word *stūpa*. There is another Sanskrit root *sthā*—to stand, which also belongs, even as the original of the English root “stand”, to the same group. The primary element in all these roots is *sta* or *sthā*, which are found to be only two varying ways of pronouncing the same original word, and are interchangeable in many languages of the world.

We can see that the root *stu* and the nouns formed therefrom like *stuti*, *stavana*, *stoma*, all signify the same thing, viz., something that becomes a support or prop, something that helps one to rise up to or ascend up to something. A prayer or a hymn is certainly such a support; a *stuti* or a *stoma* is a *skambha* or a *stambha* or a *stubbh* (compare also *anuṣṭup* or *anuṣṭubh*, *tri-ṣṭup* or *tri-ṣṭubh*); it is a support of the soul in its ascent to the higher levels; it is a pillar or a column.

The word *jyotiḥ-ṣṭoma* would then mean a pillar or a column of Light, a support of Light by which one can rise up to the higher worlds of heaven. It is a praise or a hymn used as a pillar or a column that has to be built up or piled up out of Light; for the word pillar also comes from the root “to pile”. The Brāhmanical sentence states that a person desirous of going to heaven should erect or pile up a pillar or column of Light. In another imagery it is also called a staircase, a ladder and even a bamboo, *vamśa*.¹ All these words are indicative of an ascending movement, a climbing up from level to level and the psychological symbolism underlying them becomes easily intelligible. It is an ascent of human consciousness from plane to plane that is symbolised here.

But that is not all; for that would mean only *Yoga*, whereas the Brāhmaṇas are giving us *Yāga* or *Iṣṭi*, sacrifice or the occult *modus operandi* by resorting to which one could attain not only to the *planes* of consciousness situated in the inner or subliminal being of the individual, but to the *worlds* to which those particular levels are native and which are situated in what we call the universe. The two words *Yoga* and *Yāga* respectively express the inner movement of withdrawal into the subliminal and superconscious and the outer movement into the heart of the things and beings existing in the occult regions of what we call the external universe. *Yoga* means a penetration of the individual's consciousness into the profundities of regions situated within himself while *Yāga* means a similar penetration of the individual's consciousness into the profundities of regions situated behind and above the external physical world.

¹ Cf. *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* I. 40. 5. *atha samidham abhyādadhātū svargasya tvā lokasya samkramanam hiraṇmayam vamśam dadhāmi svāhā* ॥. “Then he offers sacrificial sticks (*samidh*) with the following mantra: I uphold thee, the golden bamboo, the passage to the world of heaven; *Svāhā*.”

Thus *Yoga* is what is later on loosely called an *ādhyātmika* movement, bringing one into contact with the workings of the divine elements within the individual, while *Yāga* is an *ādhibavika* movement which brings the individual consciousness into intimate contact with the occult energies or the gods and their workings in the visible as well as invisible worlds constituting the universe. By *Yoga* one approaches the soul or the Divine in the individual, while by *Yāga* one pursues or adores or worships (*yajate*) the Divine or the soul in Nature. In a sense both these are movements of inward withdrawal, but in one case one goes into the profundities of one's own individual being and consciousness and in the other into the profundities of the world's being and consciousness. To use the rather incorrect but practical distinction, one is a subjective movement while the other is an objective one, but on either side a point is inevitably reached where the two words lose all their distinction and begin to overlap each other and finally become one, for the distinction between them is practical rather than essential, since it is the same energies or gods and the same Divine who are at work in the universe as well as in the individual.

But all the same, the practical difference stands and it determines the path each individual takes in his approach to the Infinite. The Brāhmaṇas for the most part represent the occult path, that is to say, they deal with the manifestations of the soul or the Divine in universal Nature; while the Upanishads generally represent the other, the mystic approach, that is to say, they deal with the soul in oneself or the Divine's working in the subjective existence of the individual; although we find several passages in the Upanishads, especially the oldest ones, which intersperse both these methods. At the same time, we must remember that the two methods were never supposed to be exclusive of each other. As a matter of fact the soul in Nature and the soul in oneself are not two distinct elements; they are identical in essence and complementary in manifestation. Thus the method of *Yoga* at times became identical with the method of *Yāga* or *Iṣṭi* and at other times the two ran parallel to each other and supported each other.

The *jyotiḥ-ṣtoma* also was both a spiritual *Yoga* and an occult *Yāga* or *Iṣṭi* simultaneously. But this *stoma* was only one among the many kinds given in the Brāhmaṇas and this *Yāga* only one among the innumerable kinds found there. Each one was prescribed for the attainment of a different objective; each one had consequently a different method and different means to be used. But the general nature of *stoma* and *Yāga* or *Iṣṭi* remained the same. They were some sort of bridge to be erected between the ordinary human consciousness and the occult levels. They were the basis or foundation or support, *pratiṣṭhā*, on which the human consciousness had to take its stand in order to be able to enter into communion with the hidden worlds.

The heavenly Flame and its worship are the means and method prescribed by Yama to Nachiketas in reply to the latter's question regarding the other worlds. This Flame was capable of taking one towards the attainment of those eternal worlds, *ananta-lokāptim*. These worlds are arranged in a graded series of ascending or descending order, according to the evolutionary or involutionary point of view taken by one. But as Nachiketas is the evolutionary soul rising from the physical world, it is the ascending order that is held forth here; consequently the word *āpti* would mean the attainment in an ascending order, namely, the subtle physical worlds first, the vital next and the mental last. This array of worlds is the same that Aswapathy saw in his Yogic trance-vision and is described by Śrī Aurobindo in a magnificent passage in *Sāvitrī* (II.1), from which we give a few lines below :

There walled apart by its own innerness
 In a mystical barrage of dynamic light
 He saw a lone immense high-curved world-pile
 Erect like a mountain chariot of the Gods
 Motionless under an inscrutable sky.
 As if from Matter's plinth and viewless base
 To a top as viewless, a carved sea of worlds
 Climbing with foam-maned waves to the Supreme
 Ascended towards breadths immeasurable;
 It hoped to soar into the Ineffable's reign :
 A hundred levels raised it to the Unknown...
 Its spire touches the apex of the world;...
 It marries the earth to screened eternities....
 This was a single stair to being's goal.
 It is within, below, without, above...
 It models in us our diviner parts,
 Lifts mortal mind into a greater air,
 Makes yearn this life of flesh to intangible aims,
 Links body's death with immortality's call :
 Out of the swoon of the Inconscience
 It labours towards a superconscious Light...
 Its steps are paces of the soul's return
 From the deep adventure of material birth,
 A ladder of delivering ascent
 And rungs that Nature climbs to deity.
 Once in the vigil of a deathless gaze
 These grades had marked her giant downward plunge.

It has already been noted that the Brāhmaṇas had evolved a double method for contacting the occult worlds, one of them being through the approach of the soul in Nature, and the other being the inner withdrawal into the subliminal and the entry into the universal through the circumconscient. Both these methods were utilised sometimes to the exclusion of each other and at other times simultaneously. We have already noted how Nachiketas had entered into his subliminal being and had requested Yama to reveal to him the secrets of those occult kingdoms. But it is evident from what Yama tells him in this stanza and the next that the method given by him is applicable to both the ways, *Yoga* as well as *Yāga*. In order to understand what this *Yāga* or *Iṣṭi* was we shall have to consider the Brāhmaṇic way of the arrangement of the occult worlds. They considered the universe to be consisting of a hierarchical order of ascending or descending levels of being and consciousness. They, like Sri Aurobindo in the passage from *Sāvitrī* quoted above, gave us the imagery of a ladder or a pillar, which supported the whole framework of the higher and subtler regions. Utilising the Vedic symbology of the earth and the sun, but in quite a different way, so far as the *Yāga* aspect was concerned, they arranged the occult worlds in such a way that the physical earth became the first step of the ladder and the sun was placed on the twenty-first rung. The whole universe was divided into thirty-three levels or sometimes even more, each one being called an *ahar-gaṇa*. This last word means a group of successive "days". The *stoma* or *sāma* was the means by which the consciousness of the aspirant after occult knowledge was made to ascend on the successive levels. For instance, the *trivṛt stoma* (three by three meaning nine) was utilised by them to reach the ninth *ahar-gaṇa*, the *pañcadaśa stoma* for the fifteenth *ahar-gaṇa* and the *ekavīmśa-stoma* for the twenty-first. These were the three steps of the ascending Force which took one to the level of the sun. The twenty-first level was that on which the Fire of Nachiketas, mentioned a little later in the Upanishad, was situated, and was called the *Nāchiketa Svarga*. This level, however, was the central one in a series of seven heavens, beginning from the eighteenth and ending with the twenty-fourth. This was the region of the triple heavens of Nachiketas, *triṇāchiketa svarga*. The names of these heavens were *apōdaka*, *ṛtadhāmā*, *aparājita*, *nāka*, *adhidyauḥ*, *pradyauḥ*, and *rochana*. The first three formed one group and so also the last three; both these groups were attainable by what they called the *svara-sāma*. The *Yāga* or the occult method by which one could reach these levels or heavens was known as *Nāchiketa Iṣṭi*, a description of which is summarily given in the next stanza of our Upanishad.

The *ahar-gaṇas* from one to nine constituted *prthivī*, or the physical level, those from nine to seventeen were included in *antarikṣa* or vital levels and from

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seventeen to twenty-five were called the *svargas* or mental levels. But within these last-mentioned mental levels also there were distinctions based on the various degrees of combinations between the three elements but the predominant element on these particular levels was always the mental. That is why they were especially called *svargas*. The three sub-levels of these *svargas* are distinguished by the immixture of the universal subtle physical and the universal vital with the universal pure mental.

These were the levels about which Nachiketas had asked how they were constituted and what the method of the Divine Will was in them.

(To be continued)

BABHRU

IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT?

(Continued from the April issue)

18

THE evidence of Wang Hiuen-Tse about the contemporaneity of Samudragupta and of Meghavarna of Ceylon receives a new light when seen according to what Majumdar, following Lévi, considers an indisputable chronology for many Ceylonese Kings. In *A New History of the Indian People* (1946),¹ Majumdar decides between, on the one hand, the chronological table of Wijesinha and, on the other, that of Wickremasinghe and Geiger. After mentioning Wijesinha's, he goes on to write : "It computes on the basis of the Buddhist era starting 543 B.C., current in Ceylon, by adding up lengths and reigns given in the chronicles and taking into consideration the traditional dates in the Buddhist era, given in literary sources, for certain important events. Wickremasinghe (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, III. 1-47) and Geiger (*Chūlavamsa*, tr. Vol. II. pp. 1-47) have both elaborated chronological tables prepared on the assumption that a Buddhist era with 483 B.C. as its epoch was current in Ceylon during the earlier period of its history. Wickremasinghe holds that such an era was in use for the whole period dealt with in this chapter² while Geiger opines that its use extended up to the end of Mahāsena's reign.

"The theory has landed both these scholars in considerable difficulties in effecting a transition from one Buddhist era to the other. Chinese references to Ceylon during the period between the fifth and eighth centuries published by Sylvain Lévi (*Journal Asiatique*, 1900, pp. 297 ff, 401 ff) furnish us with indisputable evidence to prove that Wijesinha's dates are preferable to those of Wickremasinghe. *Pien-e-tien*, chap. 66, records that in the fifth year of Iuen-kia (428 A.D.), the king of Ceylon, Mo-ho-nan by name, sent an embassy to the Chinese court. There is no difficulty in recognising the name Mahānāma in 'Mo-ho-nan' and there was only one king of Ceylon by this name. According to Wijesinha's tables Mahānāma reigned from 412 to 434. The date of the Chinese embassy falls correctly within this period. Computing on the basis of the Buddhist era beginning 483 A.D., Wickremasinghe makes Mahānāma

¹ Pp. 262-264.

² 66-543 A. D.

ascend the throne in 468 A.D., forty years after his envoy arrived in China.

"The *Nikaya Saṅgraha*, a work of the fourteenth century, gives 818 B.E. as the date of Mahāsena's accession. Adding up the lengths of intervening reigns as given in the *Mahāvamsa*, the first year of Mahānāma would fall in 953 B.E., i.e., 410 A.D. which enables the latter to be on the throne in 428 A.D. when his envoys were received by the Chinese emperor. On the same computation Sīrimeghavanna should have ascended the throne in 845 B.E. (302 A.D.)."

This is practically in conformity with Wijesinha's 304 A.D., for the same king.¹ Majumdar continues : "There is no valid ground to doubt the general accuracy of the chronicles for the three or four centuries preceding Mahānāma's reign. The great majority of the kings of this period are mentioned in contemporary records and when regnal years are given in these records they do not come in conflict with the date furnished by the chronicles. Syivain Lévi, who has tested numerous dates from the fifth to eighth centuries by means of Chinese chronicles, concludes that 'the accuracy of the Sinhalese annals is triumphantly vindicated by this text'. Vincent Smith, than whom there is no severer critic of the Sinhalese chronicles, confesses that 'there is not, I believe, any reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the Ceylonese dates even for the much earlier time of Duṭṭagāmaṇi, about B.C. 161.' (*J. A.* XXX, 195). The question is not whether the *Parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha actually took place in 483 or 543 B.C., but whether a Buddhist era with 483 B.C. as its starting point was current in Ceylon at any period. The evidence available not only disproves the contention of Wickremasinghe, Geiger and others that such an era was in use during the period covered by this chapter, but establishes that dates were computed during this period in the traditional Buddhist era of Ceylon having 543 B.C. for its epoch."

Now, if Sīrimeghavanna—or, to give him his full name, Kittisīrimeghavanna—is Wang Hsien-T'se's Chi-mi-kia-po-mo, his reign of 28 years² in Wijesinha's chronology which is proved correct by Chinese sources will extend from 304 to 332 A.D. Then, if Samudragupta, son of Chandragupta I, is his contemporary San-miou-to-lo-kiuto, this king must have come to the throne in 332 A.D. at the latest. If he is unlikely to have become king before or in 332 A.D., he cannot have been the contemporary of Kittisīrimeghavanna and there must have been some other Samudragupta to answer to Wang Hsien-T'se's statement. The ruling out of the great Samudragupta would also raise the possibility of Chi-mi-kia-po-mo having been not Kittisīrimeghavanna but Meghavannabhaya of 254-267 A.D.³ with the common honorific Sīri before his name.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 257. ² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

Majumdar¹ tells us that there is no absolute certainty that the Gupta Era of 320 A.D. was founded by Chandragupta I. According to him, it is not impossible that Samudragupta who succeeded Chandragupta I was its founder. To make Samudragupta its founder would accord with the date of Kitisirimeghavanna deduced from Chinese evidence. But, although the paramountcy of Chandragupta I, his being the first Gupta to become Maharajadhiraja ("Supreme king of great kings"), is generally thought to be connected with his marriage to the Lichchhavi princess Kumaradevi who was the mother of Samudragupta, most scholars, as Majumdar² himself admits, consider it very likely that the Gupta Era dates from his accession and that he married Kumaradevi shortly afterwards. Consequently the bulk of the evidence would seem to involve the accession of Samudragupta at the age of 12 at the latest, after having shown, as recounted by the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, ability and prowess which rendered him eligible out of several princes. That is to say, on the supposition, which is the most credible in the context of the currently accepted history, that Chandragupta flourished as king for a while from 320 A.D. we have a palpable impossibility. Of course we may imagine that Chandragupta married Kumaradevi several years before his accession to enable Samudragupta to be old enough for the ability and prowess 12 years after this date or that Chandragupta established the Gupta Era of 320 A.D. some time after he had become king. But if we are to value the actual pointers we have little reason to indulge in such imagination. Hence we have to be as good as reduced to absurdity by the present chronology for the start of the Gupta line.

The absurdity is not mitigated by thinking, with D.C.Sircar³ as against Majumdar, that there was no age-limit of 25 in ancient India for a prince's accession. Even if before 25 a prince could come to the throne by natural process or be chosen for kingship by an abdicating monarch, as was Samudragupta, the expressions used in favour of Samudragupta in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription in connection with the choice by Chandragupta I rule out entirely a mere stripling of 12.

The upshot of our discussion is that the established date for Kitisirimeghavanna puts both Chandragupta I and Samudragupta practically out of court as kings flourishing where modern historians place them, and that the San-meu-to-lo-kiuto of Wang Huen-T'se, whether Chi-mi-kia-po-mo be the later or the earlier Meghavanna, must be some other Samudragupta than the famous one who set up the Allahabad Pillar inscription. All this tends to make the Gupta Era of 320 A.D. what Alberuni said of it rather than what Fleet does—the

¹ *Ibid*, p. 158. ² *Ibid*, also p. 132. ³ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XII, 1942, No. 2, pp. 71 ff.

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end of the Imperial Guptas and not their beginning. As a result the Guptas have to go several centuries earlier. The number of centuries will depend on whether as a result of their recession any other Chandragupta than the father of Samudragupta will be found to equate with Sandrocottus, the Indian contemporary of Alexander the Great. Modern historians¹ are sure of at least 250 years of Gupta sovereignty. So Chandragupta I would recede to at least 70 A.D. But if he does, Chandragupta Maurya who is at present identified with Sandrocottus can never occur in Alexander's day : there is no possibility of accommodating the Mauryas, the Sungas, the Kanvas and the Andhras (Sata-vahanas) within a bare 400 years : the Andhras themselves are admitted to have ruled at the minimum for 300 years ² It is only if we take Chandragupta I to Alexander's time that Sandrocottus can be properly identified. Thus, once Wang Huien-T'se's testimony is found to go against rather than support the current view of the Imperial Gupta period, it automatically leans on the side of the Puranic view which would start that period in c. 324 B.C. From every angle Fleet's interpretation of 320 A.D. remains unconfirmed, if not actually contradicted, by the synchronism in Wang Huien-T'se.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *The Classical Age*, p. 44.

² *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 196, footnote.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Life of Sri Aurobindo, by *A.B.Puram*. Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Pages 316. Price Rs. 6.50.

As the life of Sri Aurobindo has been “not on the surface for men to see” and as very little material consisting of events spectacular, gripping or thrilling to the emotional sense of man is available, especially material relating to the Master’s most important Pondicherry-period after he was drawn away by the Divine Call from his dynamic political work, any book which can give us authentic information about his life is immensely welcome.

Not only that. Owing to many inexact, fanciful, incorrect and even distorted incidents (relating even to his political work which was one of the earliest and most potent factors in awakening the freedom movement in India and spreading it like wild-fire) thronging Sri Aurobindo’s biographies attempted by those who have not taken the trouble to get them verified, it has become essential that there should be a source-book which could be considered reliable and authoritative and to which one could turn safely without falling into the risk of exaggeration on any point.

The book under review fills the gap and serves that purpose very well. But its title carries the suggestion of a biography when it is really something less ambitious. A sub-title would have been appropriate, indicating that the book is more a chronological record up to 1926 than a biographical study. Anyway the author deserves ample thanks for having collected his materials at great personal pains, visiting the various places connected with Sri Aurobindo’s life wherever it was found that that might contribute to making the book more useful and authentic. The research into Sri Aurobindo’s life in England is admirable.

Although the events in Sri Aurobindo’s pre-Pondicherry period are an outstanding part of the history of India’s struggle for freedom, it was yet right that the author should get their details verified by Sri Aurobindo himself, so that a definitive version might be obtained to whatever degree in spite of the Master’s continued reluctance to say or write anything on himself.

Because of this reluctance the work of even the most scrupulous and sincere biographer becomes extremely difficult and it is doubtful if any satisfying account of Sri Aurobindo’s post-political period will ever be written which would satisfy the curiosity of the serious reader. In any case, a book gathering in its unifying and harmonising compass all the available events of the Master’s

life in an authentic, faithful, absorbing and elevated manner, is yet to emerge. Still the few recorded events in Pondicherry, each of which is historically significant and spiritually epical, will always inspire the seekers for all time to come, for they stand as landmarks in the evolutionary steps of future human life and as decisive incidents in Sri Aurobindo's pioneering adventure for perfection and for the divinisation of the human race.

The present book is divided into three parts. Part One contains the Master's Ancestry, Childhood and Education, his Life in Baroda, Political Career, Beginnings of Yoga, events after the detention in Alipore Jail leading to his departure for Pondicherry *via* Chandernagore. Part Two deals with events in Pondicherry connected with his day-to-day life. This part is mostly based on the author's diary notes after the day's discourses by the Master, as well as on his notes about other Ashram incidents and developments. Part Three is mostly compiled from the book *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* and contains quotations from his letters and messages, and an authentic and beautifully written General Note on Sri Aurobindo's Political Life most probably dictated by the Master himself. The book ends with a long Appendix of about 75 pages consisting of the author's personal notes, an illuminating interview, the list of houses occupied by Sri Aurobindo in Calcutta and a bibliography of his works in English.

Part Two, which enhances the value of the book by being based on the author's private record of the Master's daily life in Pondicherry is fascinating in spite of its sketchiness. It takes us closer to Sri Aurobindo. There are in addition some not very well-known events in other Parts, which also make good reading. And if, while going through the book one feels that the continuity of events is not kept up and the enlivening and harmonising factor of unity is somewhat missing, it is perhaps mostly due to the difficulty of the task and the chosen manner of clipping the events apart in a chronological series.

Three other things one notices are a certain shuffling of items as if some of them had got out of their proper places, a tendency here and there to a rather loosely built expression and a number of repetitions which could have been avoided by more skilful editing. The next edition of the book might also keep in mind more careful proof-reading.

The printing and get-up of the book are in keeping with the high tradition of Ashram publications. There are numerous photographic pictures connected with the life of Sri Aurobindo, some of them entirely new.

We recommend the book to all who are interested to know the many unknown and unpublished events of Sri Aurobindo's life.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

Students' Section

THE MOTHER'S TALKS TO THE ASHRAM CHILDREN

(On Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*, Book II, Part 2, Chapter XXIV, "The Evolution of the Spiritual Man", paragraph 1)

Q. I do not understand this sentence of Sri Aurobindo : "In the earliest stages of evolutionary Nature we are met by the dumb secrecy of her inconscience." What is it that is secret ?

From the start Sri Aurobindo tells us that, hidden in the depths of Matter, at the centre of it, there is a Divine Presence and that all earthly evolution is carried on in order to prepare the return of the Creation towards its origin, towards this Divine Presence which is at the heart of everything, it is this that is the intention of Nature.

The universe is an objectification of the Supreme, as if He had objectified Himself out of Himself to see, to live out, to know Himself and in order that there might be an existence and a consciousness capable of recognising Him as their origin and of uniting consciously with Him with a view to manifest Him in the becoming. The universe has no other reason. The Earth is a sort of symbolic crystallisation of the universal life, a reduction, a concentration, so that the work of evolution may be more easy to do and pursue. And if one looks at the history of the Earth, one can understand why the universe has been created. It is the Supreme who gains consciousness of Himself in an eternal Becoming, and the goal is a union of what is created with the Creator, a conscious union, voluntary and free, in the manifestation.

That is the secret of Nature. Nature is the executive Force, it is she who does the work. She takes this creation which in appearance is altogether inconscient but which contains the Supreme Consciousness and the One Reality, and she works so that all this may develop, win consciousness of itself and realise itself fully.

But she does not show it from the beginning. Things develop little by little and it is for this that, at the start, it is a secret which will be unveiled towards the end. And man has come to the point where evolution is sufficient for the secret to be unveiled and for what has been done in an apparent inconscience to get done consciously, voluntarily and, in consequence, much more swiftly, and in the joy of realisation.

In man one can see that the spiritual reality is already on the way to develop itself and that it is about to express itself totally and freely, whereas earlier in the animal and in the plant one would have needed to be very clairvoyant in order to see it. Man is himself conscious of the spiritual Reality, at least in the higher part of his human existence; he begins to know what the supreme origin wants of him and he collaborates in its execution.

Nature wants creation to become conscious of being the Creator himself self-objectified : that is to say, that there is no difference between the Creator and the Creation and that the goal is a union conscious and realised. There ! you have the secret of Nature.

Q. Sri Aurobindo here writes : "her inconscience." Why "inconscience" ? Whose inconscience ?

Q. Nature's.

No ! Nature is not inconscient, it is her appearance that is so. Things have begun with the inconscient, but in the heart of the inconscience there was the consciousness and the consciousness develops little by little. For example, mineral Nature, the stones, the earth, the metals, water, air, all this seems altogether inconscient, though not if one observes attentively—and now science discovers that it is only an appearance, that all this is only concentrated energy, and naturally it is a conscious force that has produced it all. But apparently, when we see a rock, we do not think it to be conscious, it has not the effect of being conscious, it seems totally inconscient.

It is the appearance that is inconscient. It becomes more and more conscious; even in mineral Nature there are phenomena which reveal a hidden consciousness, like certain crystallisations, for instance. If one sees with what precision, what exactitude, what harmony these take place, if one is the least bit open, one inevitably has the impression that there is a consciousness which works there from behind, that here cannot be the effect of inconscient chance.

Have you never seen rock-crystals ? They are pretty, aren't they ?—most artistic objects. And the movements of the sea, the movements of the air, the movements of the wind, one has necessarily the impression that there is a consciousness or even consciousnesses at work behind them. In fact, that is so. It is merely the wholly superficial appearance that is inconscient.

In fact, in each being, the entire process of evolution reproduces itself, as if one passed in review with a giddy rapidity all that had been done, as if it were necessary to relive all that in a flash before taking the next step.

The departure, the great journey into the inconscience, into the obscurity, into the oblivion—then the reawakening and the return into the Light.

May 7, 1958.

(K.D.S.)

QUEEN HATSHEPSUT OF EGYPT

STANDING in front of a portrait of Queen Hatshepsut, the Mother told us the following story when she came to the University Centre Library to open an exhibition on "Ancient Egypt" in August 1954 :

When she was a girl of about eight or ten, she and her brother were taken one day by her teacher to the famous Louvre Museum in Paris. On the ground-floor are galleries of the Egyptian antiquities. As they were slowly passing through the collections, the Mother was suddenly attracted by a beautiful toilet-case inlaid with gold and lapis lazuli, which was exposed in one of the Museum cases. An attendant noticed her great interest and explained to her that the toilet-case had once belonged to the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut. He also showed her a fine portrait of the Queen as a young girl and smilingly remarked that she had a striking resemblance to that ancient Queen. The toilet-case, and particularly the comb, appeared to be strangely familiar to the Mother.

About 3500 years ago, Queen Hatshepsut ascended the throne of Egypt at a time when the word 'Queen' did not exist. She was the first woman to rule over Egypt. In the hieroglyphic inscriptions she was designated as 'the King' and called 'Female Horus'. The word 'Majesty' was put in feminine form for the first time. On solemn occasions she had to wear a pointed beard, the exclusive sign of royalty of the Pharaohs. Beautiful and talented, she became famous for her extensive building activities, an entirely new style of architecture was developed during her reign. The imposing rock temple of Hatshepsut, now known as Der-el-Bahri, was built by her. The energetic Queen sent to the ends of the known world expeditions for fruit trees and flowers to be planted on the terraces of that temple of God. The gigantic shaft of her Karnak obelisk stands even today as a monument to her greatness.

MEDHANANDA

THE SERVICE TREE IN THE ASHRAM COURTYARD

I HARDLY know when first you became a very part of my life. It seems to me as if right from my birth I have known you—as I know the sun, the air, the sky, the seasons !

When you shoot forth your bare sinuous limbs like an unknown Nataraja lost in a rapture-rhythm, my entire being feels like dancing, dancing with every beat of my heart, dancing with the innumerable details of your posture. A subtle ethereal silence haunts me day to day : I shirk my lessons, I peep from the class-room, and let loose the jack-in-the-box of my imagination.

Then comes the season of plenitude : heavy, green, shady. Panting beneath a scorching zenith-sun, I come, I sit, I hug the caressing repose oozing from your thick moss-like boughs : as if nothing existed save you and me.

The message of the South Wind arrives. It rustles through your maiden leaves and whispers to every pore of your majestic trunk. O Indra the thousand-eyed ! You then blossom in gold, and purest gold ! My golden hours are saturated with the certitude of possessing all, knowing all, becoming all. I then, like you, swell like a July river, and sing on ceaseless, eloquent

But alas ! Prayers from the core of the pain-struck earth reach your soul. Your golden petals fall down one by one—and a blessing of pollen and perfume ! After this selfless distribution, naked, stark, you assume the burden of a pregnant trance. Rough brown seeds burst out of your ruthless mood, and you are bare once more. Yet you dance, you dance like a Dervish whose heart awaits a newer blossom of aureate rapture.

Against the evening sky you stand out like a stairway leading to the vast of an immutable Nirvana.

PRITHWINDRA

GARBA DANCE ON APRIL 24, 1958

INTRODUCTORY

LAST year, we had occasion to give a performance of Garba-dance on the Mahakali-day, and the Mother was pleased with the performances.

After that there was a general enthusiasm for the Garba among our children, small and big, and the Mother graciously approved of arrangements to be made for teaching them this art.

Accordingly five Garba-groups were formed from among some 86 enthusiasts, ranging from very young ones to those of the senior grade. These represented almost all the provinces of India,¹ with one of them hailing from Canada.

And, although the Garba is quite a new thing to all except the Gujaratis whose folk-dance it is, all the Garba-groups have shown a remarkable aptitude for it.

Of course, it would be rather too much to expect a very high degree of proficiency from these novices, especially from the young ones who have hardly enough control even over their body.

But let us all hope that, by the Mother's grace and blessings, they will go on progressing more and more in this field also; and when they have again an opportunity of offering their Garba-worship to the Mother, they may be able to give a better account of themselves.

PUJALAL

I. OUR LIGHT

The lamp of gods is for our light,
The lustrous lamp of heavens high;
Blessed with its rays our spirits bright
Enjoy a life that shall not die.

And there we see the human face
Of Mother glorifying our sphere,
She calls us with her smile of grace
And ever draws us near and near.

Her heart of love's our home and hearth,
Her nectars pure we daily drain;
And thus we live like gods on earth,
Adoring her beauty without stain.

¹ Gujarat - 21; Bengal - 19; North India - 17; - the Panjab - 11, Tamil Nad - 10, Andhra 3; Kannada-3; Maharashtra - 1

2. THE BANK OF JAMUNA

Come, let us be quick, to the bank of Jamuna,
For there's our darling, Nand's jewel with his flute.
He's dandy-like dressed with a wind-blown crest,
And his circle of song and of dance is afoot.

Fulfiller of heart's long suffering desire,
He has now let loose from his anklets joy's jingle;
And the skies are resounding with notes that are new;
He is swaying and singing : how the two rhythms mingle !

His bells have awakened his bears in all hearts,
And has startled all minds; O ! stop me not now !
I will never stay mid-way detained by ye boors;
I'll break through all barriers, fulfilling my vow.

He is brimming my vision with his beauty enchanting,
And resounds in my heart his music divine;
His feet and his hands and his eyes are all dancing :
He is smiling sweet love, and each soul is a-shine.

3. O TAKE MY FLOWERS

O! take my flowers, my beautiful flowers,
A world of colours, take, O ! take
My rose and jasmine, fine champeli,
And champa and queen of night awake.

Their faces are fragrant like their hearts,
And every one knows it, I am sure,
They'll make you lovely as they are,
Of heart so charming and so pure !

I'm a flower-maid strange, champeli by name,
From street to street and lane to lane
I wander with my flowers sweet,
Enchanting all; and that's my gain.

MOTHER INDIA

4. THE FLUTE OF VRINDAVAN

The flute of Vrindavan is in the air,
The flute of fortunate Vrindavan;
Boy-Krishna is there in his circle of joy,
And the dance of his beauty divine has begun.

The music of his bells is a magic melodious,
As the steps of his dancing new rhythms create;
All time-beat is Radha, a jasmine creeper,
The love-lost maiden, Kan's sweetheart and mate.

All Gopas and Gopis are mad with their joy;
Sweet gongs resound, and the flute-pipes are played
And the sticks beat time, and the cymbals ring.
A Vaikunth on Earth is Vrindavan's glade.

5. WE

We are flowers of Mother's Eden here
Of beauty true and love divine;
A thousand are our petals bright,
Our hearts of hue are crystalline.

We live on heights of heaven here,
Red rubies we are of priceless worth;
Our necklace plays with Mother's heart;
We kiss her feet that free from dearth.

Sweet Mother's fondlings, we live here,
Bathing in her glory day and night;
We sing her songs with winging voice,
Blessed with her love and God-delight.

PUJALAL

THE FIRST STEPS

FOR those who really seek a spiritual life, a little heart-searching is needed to know where exactly we stand in relation to the spiritual and supramental life which is the goal of the integral yoga. Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated that the Supermund descending on earth will change nothing in a man if he clings to his ego. This dissolution of the ego is not a task which can be achieved in a few or even many years of yoga practice. For what we are at present is ego and nothing but ego to the marrow of our bones and all our thoughts, desires, impulses, feelings, emotions, sensations, actions and reactions are egoistic. To liquidate the ego is to do away completely with our ignorant self, our present narrow and limited personality. We must either reject or cease to be identified with our mental, vital and physical claims, calls and impulsions at each moment and every movement of our being. Then only can the larger psychic, spiritual and supramental life really begin for us. The combined practice of detachment and rejection will give us the much-needed mental control and the preparatory purification of nature, leading to the progressive dissolution of the ego and the emergence of the hidden witness Self in us.

The first secure condition for a spiritual life is a quiet mind, says Sri Aurobindo. Without this quietude, whatever our experiences, nothing lasting can be gained. To gain control over the incessant drift of the mind and make it silent at will, may itself be the work of a whole life-time. To try to build anything on an uncontrolled, restless and incessantly active mind will be like building on shifting quick-sands. It is therefore axiomatic that he who has not a quiet silent mind or a mind of which he is not the master, has not taken the first step towards a spiritual life.

However eloquently a man may speak on the basis of intellectual knowledge or whatever his learned dissertations in writing on spiritual matters, if he has not attempted to realise what he says or writes in his own life, he cannot command much credence. Example is better than precept. In order to carry conviction, we must embody in our life and actions the principles we preach so that our very presence may act as an inspiration to others. Otherwise we shall be dubbed mere prattlers. There is no dearth of learned commentators on spiritual subjects from time immemorial. The Gita itself however is its best commentary as is *The Life Divine* or any other great scripture. No intellectual commentary can give us the truth. "Only the Spirit's vision is wholly true".

We often preach equality to others but in practice we show a pitiful lack of it. This is demonstrated in our preferences, exclusions, attractions and repulsions and feelings of sympathy and antipathy, in the distinctions drawn between the sexes and between ourselves and others. All our present egoistic valuations must be changed. If we think in terms of sex that this is a man or that is a woman instead of seeing the soul or the same divine essence in them, can we claim that we are leading spiritual lives or that we are even on the way to it ?

Untruthfulness is an enemy as bad as, if not worse than, anger, lust, greed etc. Because of the ease with which one can always lie, it is far more dangerous and contagious. It runs counter to the elementary lesson for the spiritual aspirants which is truthfulness. How can we hope to scale the heights of the supreme Truth-consciousness on a basis of falsehood and lies in our mental life ? If we are not courageous, how can we face the thousand and one problems of life ? It is no use constantly blaming this person or that, this circumstance or that for our own deficiencies and weaknesses. If we criticise and complain against others without a probe into our own weaknesses and failings, what divine life can we expect ? *Nayamatma balahunena lavya*. This Self cannot be realised by the weak. "Detect first what is false or obscure in you and persistently reject it, then alone can you rightly call for the divine Power to transform you" (Sri Aurobindo). Once we have chosen the divine life, we must be prepared, says the Mother, to be suspended in the air with nothing to support us except our faith. It is no use grumbling or complaining against persons or circumstances.

The following in brief are some of the first steps gleaned from the Mother's class talks :

1. Thought control ;
2. Rejection of all sympathies and antipathies, feelings of attractions and repulsions ;
3. Seeing the soul or the same divinity in all irrespective of sex considerations ;
4. Following a strict physical discipline so as to be master in our own house (*i.e.* the body). He who is not a master in his own house is a slave. Control of the body is an indispensable first step in the integral yoga.

JIBENDRA

SINCERE WORK—THE NEED OF THE HOUR

KHELARAMPUR is a village, about twenty miles from Calcutta, on the Diamond Harbour Line, about two miles in the interior off the main road. Here is growing up a Matri-Mandir, a temple of the Mother, a Navajiban or New Life institution.

Last year I was invited to the opening ceremony of this institution. A disciple of the Mother had offered her some land.

It was no virtue of necessity made by the owner. The offering is a piece of good property. The land with a betel garden and a brick-built house is situated at a cross-roads in the village. The betel garden is part of the offering. Its annual income, from five to seven hundred rupees, is spent on the work of the institution.

That occasion was but the beginning. I felt at the time that this institution was coming into existence not like others to die an infant's death under the shock of environmental opposition ; it was rising to radiate the Mother's Grace and win over all opposition.

This time I went and found that my guess was not wrong. In the meanwhile one full year has rolled by. After 1957, far from keeping aloof, far from harbouring doubts and raising all sorts of questions, people have assembled to celebrate this anniversary in larger numbers than before, no less than double, men, women, children, old men, old women, all of all ages.

This time they are not inquisitive, not curious as to what it all was about. This time they are all there to hear something more, to understand something more, to gain something more.

Every day of the year that has passed, the institution has seen some work done. Reading, discussion, meditation, celebration of the Darshan Days and maintenance of a primary school for little children. By word and deed, through study and discussion, the Mother's Grace centring round the self-effort of the devotee has overspread the village. Men, sorrowful and distressed, have realised that fear, anxiety and various other troubles are the handmaids of separation from the Divine; where there is the Mother, there are safety and security, hope and confidence.

That is why whenever they have found time, whenever they have had off-moments in their hard life they have come here, offered their pranams to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, heard their immortal teachings, tried to understand them. They have received that hope, felt that confident assurance that nerves man to prepare for a new life. This Matri-Mandir of Khelarampur stands a living example of how the sacrifice and tireless and dedicated work of a single devotee can triumph over time and build up an institution where man finds the path to a new life, finds also the strength to give it shape.

Wherever there is sincerity there is the Mother's Grace protecting her

children all the time. The old environments either become purified or break down, and new surroundings take their place.

During this time in the New Life playground of Calcutta, at Andul, Asansol, Digboi and nearly everywhere else the workers applied themselves to organisational work. The shock and set-back suffered by Habra was not inconsiderable—there also they have resumed their work of organisation.

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In 1957 were opened at Ballygunge the New Life playgrounds. The membership at that time stood at fifty-two. Like gipsies, the children have moved from one field to another. Wherever they have gone they have met with opposition. But opposition collapses in the end in front of sincerity. The very opposition turns into a step to progress.

That is why we see that with every change of the playground new children have trooped in, in bigger and bigger groups. Today the roll strength of the Ballygunge field is over two hundred and fifty.

It is not only in numbers that they have increased. In point of skill and mastery too they have shown some improvement.

On the 15th of August they gave a show. Their stepping at that time was anything but right. On the 24th of November they gave a performance and everybody was pleased with it. On the 21st of February too they performed various items; there were some more which they could not for want of time, but what they did was to the satisfaction of all. This time we observed, much more than on previous occasions, order, discipline, mastery over different movements. Many of the guardians were now found interested, for they have noticed a happy change in their boys and girls, in their bearing, in their health, in their mentality, in their character and in other respects.

What has been achieved is still nothing in comparison with what may be. It is up to us therefore to be on our guard about this. Let there be no swelled head among us. Still we have a long, long way to go.

Yet whatever little has been achieved is not insignificant. This review is meant to remind ourselves of how by overcoming opposition, obstacle, down-heartedness and ill-will the little bit of achievement has become possible. It has become possible because there has been behind the sincerity of the workers the immense blessings of the Mother.

Once more we have had the proof that constructive work, sincerely attempted, takes shape towards the Mother's ideals, doing away with external opposition.

Let us hope that in the new year meeting of the New Life movement we shall take note of this truth, and resolve to throw ourselves into constructive work all over the country, in town and village.

(Editorial-I, "Srinwantu", Chaitra, 1364—translated by Tinkari)