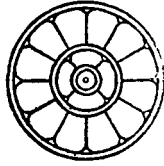


MOTHER INDIA

January 1959

Price : Re. 1.



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. II

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

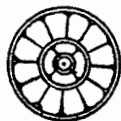
CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THE NEW YEAR MESSAGE ... <i>The Mother</i> ...	I
THE WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO ... <i>The Mother and Sri Aurobindo</i> ...	2
"BLUE MOON" : A Letter ... <i>Sri Aurobindo</i> ...	3
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO : HOMEOPATHY—II ... <i>from Nirodbaran</i> ...	4
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE CALL TO RE-ENTER POLITICS : A Letter from Sri Aurobindo to Joseph Baptista ...	8
SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS TO MRINALINI Translated by Niranjan from the Bengali ...	II
SRI AUROBINDO AND A WESTERN SEEKER : Letters ...	17
HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US Reminiscences of Various People in Contact with the Mother <i>reported by</i> ... <i>HarKrishan Singh</i> ...	22
THE SHRINE OF SRI AUROBINDO AT DELHI (Poem) ... <i>Naresh Bahadur</i> ...	24

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
THUS SANG MY SOUL : Poems to the Mother <i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 27
NEW ROADS (Poem) ... <i>Norman Dowsett</i>	... 28
VICTIMS OF VIRTUE ... <i>Godfrey</i>	... 32
ENGLISH STYLE ... <i>K.D. Sethna</i>	... 36
JAGADISH CHÂNDRA BOSE (Translated by Tinkari Mitra from the Bengali) ... <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	... 41
BUDDHISM VIS-À-VIS HINDUISM ... <i>Ramswarup</i>	... 44
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE	
THE INCREDIBLE SAI BABA by Arthur Osborne. <i>Review by</i> ... <i>M. P. Pandit</i>	... 47
Students' Section	
A REMINISCENCE OF SRI AUROBINDO ... <i>S. R. Das</i>	... 49
THE CALL OF SRI AUROBINDO ... <i>S. C. Palit</i>	... 52
MOTHER IS COMING ! (Poem) ... <i>Janina</i>	... 53
A PRAYER (Poem) ... <i>Tim</i>	... 54
SAUMITRA (Poem) ... <i>Chinmoy</i>	... 55
GREEK LITERATURE ... <i>Ramraj</i>	... 56
ARISTOTLE'S "POETICS" ... <i>Syed Mehdi Imam</i>	... 58

THE NEW YEAR MESSAGE



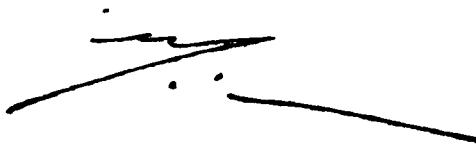
1959

At the very bottom of the
inconscience most hard and rigid
and narrow and stifling I struck
upon an almighty spring that cast
me up forthwith into a formless
limitless Vast vibrating with the
seeds of a new world.

THE WORK OF SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO came to tell us, "One need not leave the earth to find the Truth, one need not leave the life to find his soul, one need not abandon the world or have only limited beliefs to enter into relation with the Divine. The Divine is everywhere, in everything and if He is hidden, it is because we do not take the trouble to discover Him."

(From a "Talk")



The object of our Yoga is self-perfection, not self-annulment. There are two paths set for the feet of the Yogin, withdrawal from the universe and perfection in the universe; the first comes by asceticism, the second is effected by tapasya; the first receives us when we lose God in Existence, the second is attained when we fulfil Existence in God. Let ours be the path of perfection, not of abandonment; let our aim be victory in the battle, not the escape from all conflict.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sri Aurobindo".

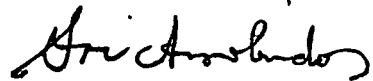
“BLUE MOON”

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Do you hope that a “blue moon” will ever rise in my heaven ?)

I trust that a blue moon will rise in everybody's heaven who has on one side the patience to go through and on the other no fundamental and self-expulsive wickedness in his nature. Even for these others the blue moon will rise one day, though later; if they have once sought for it.

25-12-1935

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sri Aurobindo".

(From Nirodbaran's Correspondence)

•CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

HOMEOPATHY

II

28-12-1935

MYSELF : While crushing my rigid mind, do you want to establish the long-neglected and much-maligned merits of homeopathy as beyond all dispute and harangue by allopaths ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Not at all. I don't care a penny for homeopathy (or allopathy). I only wanted to poke some jokes at your allopathic mind.)

MYSELF : R gives a high-blood-pressure patient on the verge of heart-failure "moderate" licence in eating, drinking etc. He calls it "leaving to Nature !"

SRI AUROBINDO : Well, I have followed that system with myself and others and gone on the basis that Nature is very largely what you make of her or can make of her.

*

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The Force needs an instrument and an instrumentation also sometimes. The instrument was R, the instrumentation partly at least his drugs. I don't believe in the story of the inefficiency of homeopathic drugs only because they are homeopathic. Also, I don't believe that R knows nothing about them and can't properly apply them. I have noted almost constantly that they have a surprising effect, sometimes instantaneous, sometimes rapid and this not in R's evidence alone, but in the statement of his patients and the visible results. Not being an allopathic doctor, I can't ignore a fact like that.

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Tumour, syphilis etc. are specialities, but what I have found in my psycho-physical experience is that most disorders of the body are connected, though

they go by families, but there is also connection between the families. If one can strike at their psycho-physical root, one can cure even without knowing the pathological whole of the matter and working through the symptoms as a possibility. Some medicines invented by demi-mystics have this power. What I am now considering is whether homeopathy has any psycho-physical basis. Was the founder a demi-mystic ? I don't understand otherwise certain peculiarities of the way in which R's medicines act.

MYSELF : Now about diagnosis, about which you have joked, why take a muddle as an instance and ignore other cases ? I should say that a mistaken diagnosis of the appendix, for example, is very rare.

SRI AUROBINDO : Good heavens ! It happened in scores and scores of cases when there was the appendicitis mania among doctors in France—and they have other manias also.

MYSELF : Why ignore wonderful things due to thousands of right diagnoses and let sporadic cases of error loom large in your eyes ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Sporadic cases ! I have heard of any number of them, they are as plenty as blackberries in Europe. And as for the difference of diagnosis it is almost the rule except when doctors consult together and give concessions to each other. Don't try to throw allopathic dust in my eyes, sir ! I have lived a fairly long time and seen something of the world before my retirement and much more after it.

MYSELF : I think an allopath like M would be able to cure many people just as R has done—and also without some of R's mistakes.

SRI AUROBINDO : M has an admirable knowledge and masterful movement in his treatments, but Mother finds that he is an overdruggier. He pours drugs on his patients as some painters overload their canvas with colour. He almost killed himself in this way and we had all the trouble in the world to tone him down. He admitted it frankly, but since professional bias was too strong for him, when he fell ill, he could not help drugging and drugging.

MYSELF : In a case which we diagnosed from blood-vomit etc. as T.B., R brought up the verdict : "Vicarious Menstruation" ! Well, blood-vomit he may stop, with the Divine Force acting through him and his drugs—but what about the T.B. itself ?

SRI AUROBINDO : R swears that ordinary doctors who have not had sufficient gynaecological experience can and do take V.M. for T.B....

Now if we look beyond pathology to what I may call psycho-pathology (non-allopathic, non-homeopathic), this hysteria is usually accompanied with some disorder of the genital parts; wrong menstruation is itself often due to sexual trouble. T.B. again is always (psychologically) due to a psychic depression—I use psychic in the ordinary, not the yogic sense. This psychic depression may arise from sex frustration of one kind or another or from some reaction of the sexual order. So if R is wrong in suspecting V.M., psychologically he may be right.—There may be, not vicarious menstruation, but its psychological equivalent. All that may no doubt be Greek (not medical Greek) to you, but I know what I mean—and so long as that is there, the cure of the T.B. by D.F.¹ is rather problematical. In X's case I saw at once that nothing could be done. That is why R got his chance. The allopaths could have cured the T.B., but it would have come back worse than before. However he is so disgusted with all the storm of opposition raised against him that he seems inclined to throw up the cases and even (other things ending) to leave the Ashram. If so, all will be peace in Jerusalem, S will go back with his liver into orthodox hands, G fulfil his allopathic destiny and an interesting phase will be over.

Actually, apart from anti-allopathic jokes and speculations, I don't say anything. I am not in the habit of jumping at conclusions when there are many possibles without a complete certitude, but wait till knowledge comes. I do not believe that D.F. has done everything in all these cases and they would have been ameliorated equally well if anybody else had been there. I count R for a remarkable though too resonant instrument.² I see there is something in his treatment and medical ideas which is out of the ordinary and cannot be gauged by traditional standards. I am trying to see what it is. Is it that he has an intuition into psycho-physical forces and throws his drugs at them in a successful way, partly intuitional, partly experimental, while his physical renderings of them (attempts at diagnosis) are mere façade or error—except when they happen to be right ? It may be, but that sounds too easy and plausible an explanation to be true.

You may say what you like about the homeopathic theories, but I have seen R work them out detail by detail in cases where he had free and unhampered action and the confidence of the patients and their strict obedience and have seen the results correspond to his statements and his predictions based on them

¹ Divine Force

² 20-3-37

Myself : Have you asked R his opinion of the trouble with the new patient ?

Sri Aurobindo : Haven't asked him. Afraid of a resonant explanation which would leave me gabrified and flabbergasted but no wiser than before.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

fulfilled not only to the very letter but according to the exact times fixed, not according to R's reports but according to the long detailed and precise reports of the allopathic doctor in attendance. After that I refuse to believe, even if all the allopaths shout in unison, that homeopathic theory or R's interpretation and application of it are mere rubbish and nonsense. As to mistakes all doctors make mistakes and very bad ones and kill as well as cure ... One theory is as good as another and as bad according to the application made of it in any particular case. But it is something else behind that decides the issue.

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To bring out the latent illness and counteract it is a recognised principle in homeopathy and is a principle in Nature itself....Neither R nor V are infallible. So often I have seen diagnosis made on all the symptoms which turned out to be the wrong one. It is like a condemnation on circumstantial evidence.

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I have put down a few comments to throw cold water on all this blazing hot allopathism. But all these furious disputes seem to me now of little use. I have seen the working of both the systems and of others and I can't believe in the sole truth of any. The ones damnable in the orthodox view, entirely contradicting it, have their own truth and succeed—also both the orthodox and heterodox fail. A theory is only a constructed idea-script which represents an imperfect human observation of a line of processes that Nature follows or can follow; another theory is a different idea-script of other processes that also she follows or can follow. Allopathy, homeopathy, naturopathy, osteopathy, Kaviraj, hakim have all caught hold of Nature and subjected her to certain processes; each has its successes and failures. Let each do its work in its own way. I do not see any need for fights and recriminations. For me all are only outward means and what really works are unseen forces from behind; as they act, the outer means succeed or fail—if one can make the process a right channel for the right force, then the process gets its full vitality—that's all.

From NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE CALL TO RE-ENTER POLITICS

A LETTER TO JOSEPH BAPTISTA

(This letter, written in January thirty-eight years ago to the Indian Christian barrister Joseph Baptista who was also a nationalist leader, is perhaps the last full-length statement of Sri Aurobindo dealing directly with the nationalist struggle in British India. There seems little doubt that, behind Baptista's invitation to Sri Aurobindo to edit a new paper which would be the organ of the Socialist Democratic Party in Bombay, there stood Tilak who was extremely anxious to have his valued and trusted comrade of one time back by his side. The invitation was made after the Amritsar Sessions of the Congress and came at a period which may be considered the junction or else the transition-stage in Indian politics between the age of Tilak and the age of Gandhi. Sri Aurobindo, although sympathetic in general, appears not to have been quite satisfied with either the purely political trend of the moment or, we may assume, even the moralistic turn lately given to the nationalist struggle. Besides, there was the special spiritual work he had undertaken for India and the world. The letter sets out in clear terms his real reasons for refraining from re-entry into the field in which he had laboured with far-reaching effect for eight years. As such, it has great historical interest and will dispel all misunderstanding or half-understanding of Sri Aurobindo's position vis-à-vis the repeated appeal to him from eminent political leaders to leave Pondicherry and guide them from their midst.)

Originally in the possession of Gangadhar Rao Deshpande, the manuscript of the letter has been kindly allowed to pass into the hands of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The following transcript gives for the first time a reading correct and faithful in all details.)

Pondicherry

Jan 5, 1920

Dear Baptista,

Your offer is a tempting one, but I regret that I cannot answer it in the affirmative. It is due to you that I should state explicitly my reasons. In the first place I am not prepared at present to return to British India. This is quite apart from any political obstacle. I understand that up to last September the Government of Bengal (and probably the Government of Madras also) were opposed to my return to British India and that practically this opposition meant that if I went back I should be interned or imprisoned under one or other of the beneficent Acts which are apparently still to subsist as helps in ushering in the new era of trust and cooperation. I do not suppose other Governments would be any more delighted by my appearance in their respective provinces. Perhaps the King's Proclamation may make a difference, but that is not certain since, as I read it, it does not mean an amnesty, but an act of gracious concession and benevolence limited by the discretion of the Viceroy. Now I have too much work on my hands to waste my time in the leisured ease of an involuntary government guest. But even if I were assured of an entirely free action and movement, I should yet not go just now. I came to Pondicherry in order to have freedom and tranquillity for a fixed object having nothing to do with present politics—in which I have taken no direct part since my coming here, though what I could do for the country in my own way I have constantly done,—and until it is accomplished, it is not possible for me to resume any kind of public activity. But if I were in British India, I should be obliged to plunge at once into action of different kinds. Pondicherry is my place of retreat, my cave of tapasya, not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention. I must finish that, I must be internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it.

Next in the matter of the work itself. I do not at all look down on politics or political action or consider I have got above them. I have always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity would differ considerably from anything now current in the field. I entered into political action and continued it from 1903 to 1910 with one aim and one alone, to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it in place of the futile ambling Congress

methods till then in vogue. That is now done and the Amritsar Congress is the seal upon it. The will is not as practical and compact nor by any means as organised and sustained in action as it should be, but there is the will and plenty of strong and able leaders to guide it. I consider that in spite of the inadequacy of the Reforms the will to self-determination, if the country keeps its present temper, as I have no doubt it will, is bound to prevail before long. What preoccupies me now is the question what it is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future ?

You may ask why not come out and help, myself, so far as I can, in giving a lead ? But my mind has a habit of running inconveniently ahead of the times, —some might say, out of time altogether into the world of the ideal. Your party, you say, is going to be a social democratic party. Now I believe in something which might be called social democracy, but not in any of the forms now current, and I am not altogether in love with the European kind, however great an improvement it may be on the past. I hold that India having a spirit of her own and a governing temperament proper to her own civilisation, should in politics as in everything else strike out her own original path and not stumble in the wake of Europe. But this is precisely what she will be obliged to do, if she has to start on the road in her present chaotic and unprepared condition of mind. No doubt people talk of India developing on her own lines, but nobody seems to have very clear or sufficient ideas as to what those lines are to be. In this matter I have formed ideals and certain definite ideas of my own, in which at present very few are likely to follow me; since they are governed by an uncompromising spiritual idealism of an unconventional kind and would be unintelligible to many and an offence and stumbling block to a great number. But I have not as yet any clear and full idea of the practical lines; I have no formed programme. In a word, I am feeling my way in my mind and am not ready for either propaganda or action. Even if I were, it would mean for some time ploughing my lonely furrow or at least freedom to take my own way. As the editor of your paper, I should be bound to voice the opinion of others and reserve my own, and while I have full sympathy with the general ideas of the advanced parties so far as concerns the action of the present moment and, if I were in the field, would do all I could to help them, I am almost incapable by nature of limiting myself in that way, at least to the extent that would be requisite.

Excuse the length of this screed I thought it necessary to explain fully so as to avoid giving you the impression that I declined your request from any affectation or reality of spiritual aloofness or wish to shirk the call of the country or want of sympathy with the work you and others are so admirably doing. I repeat my regret that I am compelled to disappoint you.

Yours sincerely,
AUROBINDO GHOSE

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS TO MRINALINI

(Translated by Niranjana from the Bengali original in "Sri Aurobinda Patra")

23, Scott's Lane,
Calcutta.

17th February 1907.

Dearest Mrinalini,

It has been long since I wrote to you. That is my eternal fault and if you do not pardon me out of your own goodness, then I am helpless. What is in the marrow cannot be got rid of in a day. I may have to spend this life in trying to correct this vice.

I was to meet you on the 4th of January but could not do so. This did not happen of my own accord. I had to go where the Divine led me. This time I did not go for my own work, but for His work. The state of my mind has undergone a change; more than that I cannot reveal in this letter. Come here, then I shall tell you all I have to say. The only thing that can be said at the moment is that I am no longer my own master; wherever the Divine takes me, there like a puppet I shall go; whatever He makes me do, that I shall accomplish. At present it will be difficult for you to grasp the sense of these words. But it is necessary to inform you; otherwise my movements may be a cause to you of lamentation and suffering. You may feel that I am neglecting you because of my work. But you must not think so. Already I am guilty of many sins against you and it is quite natural that you have been unhappy about them. I am no longer free, and you have to understand that all I do does not depend on me any longer but is done at the command of the Divine. When you come, you will be able to seize the meaning of my words. I hope that the Divine will show you the light of His infinite Grace which He has shown me, but that depends on your will. If you want to be my wife, sharing my dharma, then you have to strain every nerve so that, as a result of your sheer will-force, He may reveal to you the path of grace. Do not show this letter to anybody, because what I have said is extremely secret. I have not spoken about it to anyone else. That is forbidden. So much for today.

Your husband...

N.B. I have written to Sarojini about the family matters. When you see the letter, you will understand that it is unnecessary to write to you separately about them.

*

*

Dearest Mrinalini,

I have received your letter dated 24th August. I was pained to hear about the bereavement of your parents but you have not mentioned which brother died. Even if there is sorrow, so what ? In this world he who seeks happiness finds sorrow in the bosom of that happiness itself. This law holds good not only in case of desire for children but is the inevitable accompaniment of every worldly desire. To offer all happiness and sorrow with a tranquil mind at the feet of the Divine is the only solution for man.

Instead of twenty rupees I read ten rupees, so I wrote about sending you ten rupees ; if you need fifteen I shall of course send fifteen rupees. This month I have sent the money for the clothes which Sarojini bought for you in Darjeeling. How am I to know that in the meanwhile you have got into debt ? I have sent the fifteen rupees you needed, next month as you require three or four rupees extra I shall send twenty.

Now let me tell you about the other thing. Most probably by this time you have discovered that the person with whose fate yours is linked is of a very strange type. In my mental outlook, aim of life and domain of work I am unlike others of the present day in this country. I am different, uncommon. I suppose you know what name petty people give to uncommon opinions, uncommon and uncommonly high hopes. They label such ideas as madness, but if the lunatic happens to succeed in his field of action, then instead of calling him a lunatic they hail him as a great genius. But how many do succeed ? Out of a thousand persons ten are uncommon, out of that ten only one succeeds. Far from having any success in the field of action, I have not yet fully entered into it ; so I must be considered a lunatic. It is very unfortunate for a woman to fall into the hands of a madman, for all her hopes are confined to the happiness and sorrow of the family. A lunatic can never bring happiness to his wife, he only makes her miserable.

The founders of the Hindu religion understood this well ; they loved very much extraordinary character, effort and hope, they revered extraordinary men without caring whether they were great or insane ; but these things brought appalling distress to their wives, so what was to be done ? The Rishis decided upon this way, they said to women, “ ‘Your husband is your supreme Guru :’ consider that to be the only mantra for women.” The wife shares the dharma of her husband. She will help him, advise him, and encourage him in the

work he chooses for his dharma ; she will obey him as a god, feel happy in his happiness and suffer in his suffering. It is the man's right to choose his work, to help and encourage him is the right of woman. Now the question is : which will you choose, the path of the new cultured dharma or the path of the Hindu dharma ? You have married a lunatic and that is the fruit of an evil action in your previous life. It is better to make a settlement with one's fate, but what manner of settlement will it be ? Swayed by the opinion of others, will you also dismiss him as a lunatic ? Nothing can stop the lunatic from running after his folly. You will not be able to hold him back. His nature is stronger than yours ; will you then just sit in a corner and weep or try to be the mad wife to match the mad husband like the queen of the blind king who, by tying a cloth over her eyes, dressed up as blind. In spite of the education you have received in the Brahmo school you are still a daughter of the Hindus, the blood of Hindu ancestors still flows in your veins and I am sure you will choose the latter path.

I have three follies. Firstly, it is my firm belief that the virtue, the talent, the high education, the knowledge and the wealth that God has given me belong to Him. One has the right to spend only as much as is necessary for maintaining the family and on absolute essentials. What remains should be restored to the Divine. If I spend all on myself, for my own comfort and luxury, then I am a thief. According to the Hindu Shastra, he who does not repay to God the money taken from Him is a thief. Up till now by giving only a trifle to the Divine and spending nine-tenths on my own happiness I have settled the account and remained immersed in worldly pleasures. Half of my lifetime is wasted ; even an animal feels gratified by feeding its family and itself.

When it became clear to me that all this time I was leading the life of an animal and a thief, I repented and hated myself. This must stop. I abandon this sinful act for good. Giving to the Divine means using the money in holy work. I have no regrets for the money I have given to Sarojini or Usha because to help others is a dharma, to protect those who depend on you is a great dharma but the account is not settled if I help only my own brothers and sisters. In these unfortunate days the whole country seeks my protection ; out of thirty crores of brothers and sisters, many are dying of starvation and most of them are dragging on a most unhappy and miserable existence. They must be helped.

What do you say, will you be my wife sharing my dharma ? We will eat and dress like ordinary people, buy what is truly necessary and give the rest to the Divine. This is what I would like to do. If you agree to it and accept the sacrifice, my intention will be fulfilled. You were complaining of not making

any progress ; now I have shown you a path of progress. Will you walk it ?

The second folly that has taken possession of me is that by any means I must have a direct vision of the Divine. The religion of today is to utter lightly God's name, to pray in front of everybody for demonstrating how pious one is ; I do not want it. If God exists, then there must be a way to feel His existence, to meet Him face to face ; however difficult the path might be, I have made the firm resolution to follow it. The Hindu dharma tells us that the path exists in our own body, in our own mind and has given indications how to proceed. I have started observing these rules and within a month realised that the words of the Hindu dharma were not untrue. I am experiencing the particular signs mentioned by it. I would very much like to take you also on the path. You will not be able to keep up with me as you have not yet so much knowledge but there is nothing to prevent you from following me pretty closely. Anybody can have the realisation by following the path but it depends on your will to enter it; no one can force you to do it. If you agree, then I shall write more on this subject.

My third folly is that whereas other people consider their country to be a material object, a number of fields, plains, forests, mountains and rivers, I look upon my country as the Mother and thus I revere and worship her. What does the son do when a demon, sitting on his mother's breast, prepares to drink her blood ? Does he sit down content to take his meal ? Does he seek pleasure in company of his wife and children or does he run to save his mother ? I know I have the strength in me to save this fallen race; it is not a physical strength; I am not going to fight with a sword or a gun but with the power of knowledge. The force of the warrior is not the only force; there also exists the power of the Brahman which is founded on knowledge. This feeling is not new or recent, I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission. At the age of fourteen the seed began to germinate and when I was eighteen it was firmly established.

From the words of your Aunt you formed the idea that an unknown character had induced your simple and good-natured husband to take to evil ways. In fact it was your good-natured husband who brought that person and hundreds of others to this path, be it good or evil; he will still bring thousands of others to it. I do not say that my work will be crowned with success during my lifetime, but it will most certainly be achieved.

Now what do you want to do in this matter ? The wife is the Shakti, the force of her husband. Are you going to be a disciple of Usha and adulate the Europeans ? Should you diminish the power of your husband by indifference or double it by your sympathy and encouragement ? You may reply, "What can an ordinary woman like me do in such a sublime work ? I have neither will-

power nor intelligence. I am afraid to think about these things." There is a simple solution for it, take refuge in the Divine, step on to the path of God-realisation; He will soon cure all your deficiencies; fear gradually abandons the person who takes refuge in the Divine. If you have faith in me and listen to my words instead of listening to others, I can give you my own force which will not suffer any loss but, on the contrary, increase. We say that the wife is the Shakti of her husband, that is to say, the husband sees in his wife his own reflection and finding in her a response to his own noble aspiration receives double force.

Will you remain like this all your life, "I shall dress well, eat well, sing and dance and enjoy all the pleasures" ? This state of mind cannot be called progress. Nowadays the life of the women of our country has assumed a very mean and narrow form. Abandon these things and follow me. We have come to accomplish God's work in this world, let us begin it.

There is one defect in your nature, you are extremely simple; you listen to what anybody says, with the result that your mind is never at peace; the intelligence cannot develop in this way and you will not be able to concentrate on the work. You have to rectify this defect; you must acquire knowledge by listening to one person only, accomplish the work with a tranquil mind without ever forgetting the aim and keep your devotion firm by paying no attention to the slander and jeering of others.

You have another defect, not of your own nature, but of the times. The times have become like that in Bengal. Men cannot listen seriously to any profound talk; they laugh at and make fun of everything, dharma, philanthropy, noble aspiration, high enterprise and liberation of the country; with a grin they want to dismiss anything serious, all that is high and noble. You have developed this fault a little by your long association with the Brahmo School; Barin also has it and we are all in a lesser degree contaminated with this fault; it has increased surprisingly in the people of Deoghar. With a strong resolution you have to chase away this state of mind; you will be able to do it quite easily if you cultivate the habit of thinking, and your real nature will blossom. You are much attracted by philanthropy and acts of unselfishness. What you lack is the will-power; adoration of the Divine will bring you will-power.

This is my secret. Please do not divulge it to anybody else and reflect on these things with a tranquil mind. There is nothing in it to be afraid of, but plenty to think over. In the beginning, it is quite sufficient to do every day half an hour's meditation on the Divine, to formulate our strong desire in the form of a prayer to the Divine. Gradually the mind will be prepared. You should pray to Him, "May I become, at every moment, the helper of my husband

MOTHER INDIA

and serve him as his instrument instead of being an impediment in the path of his goal and God-realisation."

Will you do it ?

Yours...

*

*

6th December, 1907

Dearest Mrinalini,

Your letter reached me day before yesterday ; the same day, the shawl was also sent. I fail to understand why you did not receive it. What with the responsibility of doing the writing, looking after the Congress work and settling the "Bandemataram" affair, I have not got a moment to spare. I can hardly cope with it all. On top of these things, there is my own work which cannot be neglected.

Will you listen to a request of mine ? This is a period of great anxiety for me ; being pulled in so many directions. And now, if you also get upset, it can only increase my worry and anxiety. An encouraging letter from you will give me special force, and cheerfully I shall face all threats and dangers. I know well how hard it is for you to live by yourself in Deoghar, but if you can be firm in your mind and have faith, then suffering will not be able to overwhelm you to a great extent. As you have married me, this suffering is your inevitable lot ; occasional separation cannot be avoided, because, like ordinary Bengalis, I cannot make the happiness of my family and my relatives the cardinal aim of my life. In these circumstances my "dharma" is also your "dharma"; if, for the success of my appointed work, I am unable to consider your happiness, there is no way out of it. I have another request to make. Most of the persons with whom you live are elderly ; even if they say a harsh or unjust word, do not be cross with them and do not believe either that what they say is their true opinion and meant to hurt you. Many a time, words come out of anger and it is unwise to hold on to them. If it is really impossible for you to stay there, then I shall speak to Girish Babu to arrange for your Grandfather to come to live in the house while I am away at the Congress Session.

Today I shall go to Midnapore. On my return, after settling the affairs here, I shall start for Surat probably on the 15th or 16th December and be back on the 2nd January.

Yours...

SRI AUROBINDO AND A WESTERN SEEKER

TO SRI AUROBINDO

New York,
24th April, 1947.

FIVE years ago this spring I had a mystic experience, or psychic opening, or "vision"—I don't know what to call it. In a curious way that moment in my life marks the year. O, for ever since it I have been a different person. I am writing to ask you the meaning of it all.

Immediately after this experience there was a period of elation, a season of living on a relatively high plane. There were many beautiful moments when time stopped and I entered into the life of things about me. Then there was the descent through the stages of the way I had gone up, rapid steps down the ladder of disenchantment into depression. Then a long, dead, empty period, the depth of which was in direct proportion to the earlier height. I became a vegetable, incapable of loving anything.

When I began to realise that the wonderful thing which had happened was not at all usual, that it was nothing which I might share with anyone else, and that clearly it was not going to happen again—I was an outcast from the light that I loved so—then I began to read, to search in books for the answer. I found your *Essays on the Gita* in the little Gateway bookshop here, and then other books of yours, and others. One by one I brought them home, read them, reread them and treasured them. The little one called *The Mother* I often carried around with me (still do) carefully wrapped up—partially to keep it clean, partially so no one should see.

I read of Margaret Woodrow Wilson coming to you, and briefly I thought, "Ah that's what I must do." But then there was the war and the impossibility of travel. The idea was in no way practical. Now in retrospect, that I did not come to you then I take as a sign that I was not ready, or that the executive power that manages my life and all things would not yet have me.

Then recently at a party I met Bharati Sarabhai. She asked me why I was so eager to go to India, what I was interested in. I found her enormously sympathetic, someone to whom I could talk at last and, as so seldom happens, we became friends immediately. It is she who has suggested that I write to you. I am very grateful for this bridge.

Though it is now some time since that moment out of this world, it was such a moment as to make all life in this world pale. I still think about it (perhaps this was a mistake), wondering how to recreate it. However pleasant, successful and well-coordinated my surface life is (and it is all of these), there was always with me a substratum of questioning and longing. Often I am vague and absent-minded like a person who has lost something and who goes about constantly wishing he could find it.

Have I attached too much importance to a tiny moment ? Or is the light that I saw the real world and, if so, is there a way for me to return to it ? A revolutionary at heart, I could drop my life, give up everything I have carefully built over the years, and do whatever it is necessary to do—come to you pleading for instruction, for example. However, just because I am an extremist by temperament, I should probably aim to do things less drastically. My husband assures me that India is no place for an American woman to travel alone, especially with the difficult times that may be ahead, but I am not frightened, and you can see that I am turning over in my mind ways that might get me to Pondicherry. “

I want to see you. Tears come as I write these words. But tears come easily when no one is looking. Sometimes they come at the mere sight of your books. (That’s one reason why I keep them hidden.) To me your books have the quality of powerful Symphonic music. Their outside pristine whiteness fills me with emotion—that sense of longing, and a sort of fury with myself that I am not big enough to encompass what you say with full understanding, and as a whole. I want to contain it.

I wonder if the particular path which led me up into the light in the first place is of any importance as a link in my story ? Certainly it is one which baffles me in view of all that I have since read. I went “through the shutter in the top of the mind” while making love with my husband. I would say that the period of preparation leading up to this covered approximately two years, though the renunciation spoken of in mystical literature is foreign to me. I gave myself because it is the woman’s role to do so. It just happened that I asked nothing in return. Is that so unusual ? Why should a miracle, if it is a miracle, come to me, and not to others ? Who am I ? What is my status on the evolutionary ladder ? Where lies duty ?

If the purpose of human life is spiritual evolution, then I am inclined to want to get on with the main business of living now, and with proper help. To stay in the hit-or-miss world with its stumbling, delay, diluted experience, fickle satisfactions, questionable and retroactive prizes seems to me to be wasting time. If there is a battle to be fought, what am I doing sitting around eating cream puffs that I don’t like the taste of, anyway ?

Often I am bored with the repetition of it all. There is a feeling of ineptness, isolation ; I am weighed down and hemmed in by the shell that I know sooner or later will be shed. Must I wait ? Certainly there is a goal, even for the human being on the mundane level. Why cannot I take even the first steps on the way to it? Surely a little progress is better than no progress at all ; and wandering around in the maze hardly seems appropriate for one who at least feels that a goal exists.

It seems to me that the rhythm of life is a dynamic thrust from a relaxed centre of gravity. Ideally this is a rhythm of all activity, yet how can the thrusts be dynamic if the centre of gravity is not consistently calm ? How can one be efficient at anything if one is not in and of this basic rhythm ? From a ruffled centre the thrusts become petty jabs, missing their mark, stirring up confusion, accomplishing nothing.

I see this and feel it in my present state in a dim sort of way. I should like to feel it again intensely. I should like to find that centre from which action springs—efficient action, with a minimum of effort and a maximum of result. And I feel that I could, if only I might go off quietly away from all the noise and business and just concentrate ardently on one thing—a person, or an idea, or I don't know what. But I need help, or I need to get out of the West, probably both.

When I ask myself what single thing I want out of life I have but one answer ; I want to return to the light. It's like an inward cry with me, and pathetic because I realize how slim are my chances at my present tempo and temperature. Life is a struggle, especially in energetic and competitive New York. It takes a great deal of energy just to go along with the current. Is it worth it ? Cannot that same quantum of energy be directed into a more fruitful, more lasting, more fundamental effort ? I don't like waste, and I feel I am dissipating will, frittering it out in little bits that don't add up to anything but the perpetration of the general confusion in the world. Where is my place ? Where should I set my sight ? What seeds of resolution can I sow now that I may one day re-enter the light, or if that is not to be given, that in the world I may live in the great pulse ?

Thank you, Great Sir, for any help that you are willing to send my way. Thank you for your books, and for your work in the world. Thank you for what you are.

With deep respect and the longing that brings tears.

SRI AUROBINDO'S REPLY THROUGH A DISCIPLE*

It is no longer necessary to answer Mrs. X's original question about the occasion for her experience and the circumstances under which it came, since she has received a complete answer from the passage in the *Words of the Mother* and has understood its meaning.¹ But I may say that the opening upwards, the ascent into the Light and the subsequent descent into the ordinary consciousness and normal human life is very common as the first decisive experience in the practice of Yoga and may very well happen even without the practice of Yoga in those who are destined for the spiritual change, especially if there is a dissatisfaction somewhere with the ordinary life and a seeking for something more, greater or better. It comes often exactly in the way that she describes and the cessation of the experience and the descent also come in the same way. This first experience may be followed by a very long time during which there is no repetition of it or any subsequent experience. If there is a constant practice of Yoga, the interval need not be so long; but even so it is often long enough. The descent is inevitable because it is not the whole being that has risen up but only something within, and all the rest of the nature is unprepared, absorbed in or attached to ordinary life and governed by movements that are not in consonance with the Light. Still the something within is something central in the being and therefore the experience is in a way definitive and decisive. For it comes as a decisive intimation of the spiritual destiny and an indication of what must be reached some time in the life. Once it has been there, something is bound to happen which will open the way, determine the right knowledge and the right attitude enabling one to proceed on the way and bring a helping influence. After that, the work of clearing away the obstacles that prevent the return to the Light and the ascension of the whole being and, what is equally important, the descent of the Light into the whole being can be begun and progress towards completion. It may take long or be rapid, that depends on the inner push and also on outer circumstances but the inner aspiration and endeavour count more than the circumstances which can accommodate themselves to the inner need if that is very strong. The moment has come for her and the necessary aspiration and knowledge and the influence that can help her. It is not absolutely necessary to abandon the ordinary life in order to seek after the Light or to practise Yoga. This is usually done by those who want to make a clean cut, to live a purely religious or exclusively inner and

* Excerpts from this letter have been published in "Letters of Sri Aurobindo" (Second Series), pp. III-III2, 465, 481-482.

¹ A second letter was written to Sri Aurobindo before receiving his reply to the first, and there a reference was made to the *Words of The Mother*. (Editor)

spiritual life, to renounce the world entirely and to depart from the cosmic existence by cessation of the human birth and passing away into some higher state or into the transcendental Reality. Otherwise it is only necessary when the pressure of the inner urge becomes so great that the pursuit of the ordinary life is no longer compatible with the pursuit of the dominant spiritual objective. Till then what is necessary is a power to practise an inner isolation, to be able to retire within oneself and concentrate at any time on the necessary spiritual purpose. There must also be a power to deal with the ordinary outer life from a new inner attitude and one can then make the happenings of that life itself a means for the inner change of nature and the growth in spiritual experience. This was what was recommended to Miss Wilson when she first wanted to join the Ashram; she had already acquired the habit of inward concentration and it was suggested to her to proceed further in this way, opening herself towards the spiritual and psychic aid she could get from there, until she had made further progress; later on we acceded to her request to join the Ashram. The Ashram has been created with another object than that ordinarily common to such institutions, not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit. There is no general rule as to the stage at which one may leave the ordinary life and enter here; in each case it depends on the personal need and impulsion and the possibility or the advisability for one to take the step, the decision resting with the Mother.

The objection of the difficult times ahead and the idea that it is unsafe for an American woman to travel alone in India seem to be based on an erroneous impression; as a matter of fact, American and European women do very ordinarily travel alone in India without any fear of mishap. The difficulties in this country have been recently between Indians and Indians and not between Indians and Europeans; in these disturbances no Europeans have been the object of attack or suffered any trouble.

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

Reminiscences of Various People in Contact with the Mother

(*Continued from the last issue*)

(II)

THE SECRET CARE-TAKER

THE year was 1952 when, in the Kumbh Mela at Allahabad, there was a bridge-crash.

Myself, my mother and two other Gurubhais were on a pilgrimage. We reached the Kumbh Mela a day before the actual date. We were put up in the Bharat Sevak Samaj buildings. We came out of the building and went to the bathing ghat of the Yamuna. My mother took a dip in the holy waters. My friend suggested to me that we should leave my mother at the Samaj building so that we could be free to move about and see the mela.

While on our way to the Samaj building, we saw a big party of sadhus coming in a procession. As the procession was nearing us, two of our men stood aside while we—myself and my mother—were surrounded by spectators and they came in such a rush that many people fell down layer upon layer. We too fell on a group of persons and another group of persons fell upon us. "I am undone," came my mother's cry. We could not get up and were trod upon by other persons. My mother felt helpless. But she started calling to the Divine Mother. For two or three minutes we were under the pile of people. But I pulled myself out and turned towards my mother, lifted her out and took her to one side.

As I was in an old military khaki dress, the people thought me to be a military man. Coming out of the human débris, I asked the crowd to sit down. They all sat down. In the meantime the military police came. They also gave the same order and asked all to sit down. My mother could not move because of severe pain. But she went on calling to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

We somehow took her to the camp in a rickshaw. No doctor was available at that time. We did hot-water fomentation and sent a telegram to the Mother informing her of the condition of my mother. She was very weak. But I felt

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US

that if the night passed without any serious trouble, she would survive, because by the next morning the Mother at Pondicherry would have got the telegram and as a result her Grace was sure to act. As soon as we sent the telegram, we happened to meet a homeopath doctor. He gave some medicine. The night passed without trouble.

The next day we left for our home town and from there wrote a detailed letter to the Mother. We got her blessing-flowers and my mother was completely cured soon without the use of much medicine and thus, despite her old age, survived the stampede of a crowd.

SAVED IN A MOTOR ACCIDENT

A few years ago I was working in a plantation. One day I went to another town for work. Although the work was almost finished on the same day and I could very well have avoided personally going there on the next, yet I felt impelled to motor my way through the 30-mile rough road for that small work left unfinished.

As soon as I passed over a bridge on the way, my jeep toppled over it, from a height of about 15 feet, but leaving me, strangely enough, on the bridge itself. I got only a slight injury, the jeep down the bridge was completely smashed.

A boy who accompanied me in the automobile went down with the jeep but miraculously enough he had only a small cut from the broken front glass and received no other injury.

This incident was the crowning one in a whole series that had occurred during those days to sabotage my determination to go permanently to the Ashram. Yet the Mother's Protection and Grace were with me at each critical moment of the play of the hostile forces.

After a couple of days I received the joyous news from the Mother that she had allowed me to join the Ashram permanently. And it is interesting to note that her decision was taken on the very day of the accident ! Her divine Action had met by a definitive master-stroke the final all-out attack on one destined to devote his energies to her service.

(To be continued)

Compiled and Reported by
HAR KRISHAN SINGH

THE SHRINE OF SRI AUROBINDO (AT DELHI)

O GREEN-SET modest-bodied pearly shrine !
A grace seraphic breathes its native air,
And peace uplifting comes and nestles here
Mid intimations of the veiled Divine.

Miniature silhouette of a design immense—
That vast temple of consciousness and force
Linking the cosmic base to the apex source,
From whose far corners rise four columns tense

Of the coiled energy coursing serpentine
Released at last in some supernal poise
An answering all-sustaining dome enjoys.
(Above this universal, looms the line

To the stark Beyond to which up-beckons the spire.)
Under this vault of heaven the altar base
Behold resplendent with a deity's face —
A marvel fulfilling God's and man's desire.

On the teeming waters of plurality
Two trinities met ; for aeons they journeyed on
In a forlorn quest of this reunion
To give the earth a new felicity.

In a mystic square courtyard a glory shone —
A mighty lotus in celestial bloom :
The Eternal manifested in the gloom
Of Time; a curtain was for ever drawn

On the Lords of previous Dawns; the Supermind
Emerges on the scene; the subtle zone
In the golden image of the Real has thrown
All that deformed and fragile here we find.

THE SHRINE OF SRI AUROBINDO (AT DELHI)

A luminous bodying-forth the rest shall be :
Two forms of the same Godhead collaborate
From covert and overt planes to recreate
A world resurgent with divinity.

Creating and perfecting march afield
A spearhead van of four main Energies
And a rear of twelve great Powers, that find release
From the lotus-will the Master and the Mother wield.

But to quicken one red life-efflorescence
His own gold-dust he laid as soil and seeds,
And dug deep for the inconscient roots of weeds
And stormed the shades that breathe inconsequence.

And still the toil goes on — he knows no rest;
Past saviours came and gave bright hopes, but left
The world as ever baffled and bereft —
But no drawing back for him till all be blest.

The assault begins now from another base,
Another involution-strategy
He presses home; his armoury shall be
Hierarchies of matter and consciousness

Welded, through some catalytic alchemy
Of contact with his divinised body's parts,
To bliss-keen potencies that nothing thwarts —
The weapons forged for immortality.

Rose-wood, sandal, and silver sanctuaries
Are all a-glow with the supramental sun
Vibrant in the innermost, the golden one :
All grades of matter doth his Presence seize.

A hidden stone-niche plays the host to God,
A tiny crypt houses immensitudes !
In the pit itself a veiled epiphany broods :
Spirit's own grandeur now awaits the clod.

MOTHER INDIA

His symbol-body guards on every side
His fortress-cube; paeans of victory
From the figures rise; against the Enemy
Are granite standing writs no more to hide

But greet the grace of that informing Light
And feel the stress of that sweet ravishing Love
Which makes Life like its aureate fount above
Immune from all the nescient broods of Night.

NARESH BAHADUR

THUS SANG MY SOUL

(II)

V. SELF-FATHOMING AND SOUL'S STRUGGLE

(Continued)

30 CRUCIAL STRUGGLE

O MOTHER, the crucial struggle draws ever nigher.
The hostile forces plan a ceaseless war
Against my inborn growing luminous star
Lest it become an unconquerable fire.

To carry on their stubborn reign on earth
On every side is large Night's falsehood-force;
In silent prayer, my gathered heart implores
The Mother Kali's past-erasing birth.

31. FALSEHOOD'S HIRELINGS GATHER...

O Mother, Falsehood's hirelings gather
With their black feather
And many-weaponed wraths
Behind my back.
They wait for the zero-hour
When they can press their power
On evil paths
In an overall attack
On my unguarded humbleness.

Unmoving I marshall my aspiration
Pulling from deep-sunk light-recess
Soul-atoms of quick annihilation
To blast the base
Of hostile powers, so never more
Along the aura of my being may lie
Any dare-dint of mass obscurity,
And everywhere till the end of cosmic shore
May reign forever purity and grace.

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

NEW ROADS

BOOK VII

THE TRAVELLER'S ASCENT

The Road led upward from the valley of men
Towards a distant spur haloed in light—
A spur which seemed to call the Traveller on
To greater vistas far beyond the rim
Of normal consciousness—yet which was once
Seen as a future promise in the heart.
No haste was there, but an insistent calm
Gave force to a growing confidence and joy
Which seemed the centre of a subtle change
That pressed upon the rhythm of his days.
All outer circumstance, the play of life,
Had ceased to mar the inner certitude.
All suffering, pain, diversion or delight,
Were stones or flowers along the Road he trod;
As wickedness and evil in the world
Were ignorance or ciphers out of place
Within the man-made standards of an age.
High up beyond the margin of a tor,
He turned and, looking back, saw far below
The winding pathway to the valley floor
Lost in the shadows of the brooding earth.
The earth from which his consciousness had sprung,
From which this very mountain Road took birth
Before man's advent in the Dawn of the world.

Rounding the rocky path beyond the brow,
He came upon a plateau rising high
Towards new towering peaks of Night and Day.
The light not only issued from above
But from below like rings of vibrant warmth,
Its colours penetrating rock and stone
As if to animate the sleeping mass
To living shapes which longed to take a form.
There rose a growing Presence all around

NEW ROADS

As if no thought once formed would here be lost
But stand created, solid as these stones—
A Presence which informed the atmosphere
With tender sweetness, beauty, colour, sound,
Which held within itself the secret power,
The Seal and Sanction of created things.

On striving to ascend with eager heart,—
This plateau leading to more noble heights,
The Traveller found a mind-form held him back.
The force and memory of terrestrial laws
Which yet remained within his consciousness
Became as chains to mar his bold ascent,
As powers to here impose their earthly right
By virtue of the press of memory
When memory played clown to ego-rule.

One threatening chain of gold held fast his neck,
A golden chain which oft man thinks adorns
His life, and which he calls the Karmic Law—
The Fate and Circumstance of every Age.
The next of silver, girdled firm his waist,
The laws of justice and of human love,
Which when men think or deem as absolutes
Bring often misery and even strife—
(For justice oft demands what love abhors
And man's imperfect nature knows them not).
The third chain was of iron and held him fast
Around the ankle like a prison gyve,
The shackling Debt man pays to life itself,
A debt which even when once truly paid
Will linger on, a memory of the Night,
A guilt in the subconscious fields of sleep.

Bare rocks reflected their own marvellous light,
The earth was sere, no shade was overhead.
The noon-high seated sun in a golden trance,
Vast in the severies of a vaulted sky,
Shone out upon a million worlds at play,
Retraced the boundaries of the finite laws
To an unending and expanding universe.
The Traveller, a tiny flame of light
Absorbed in a cosmic immobility,

MOTHER INDIA

Looked deep within his heart to find a way
To overcome these trammels of the mind.
What new tapasya had to be endured
To break the bonds which bound him to the past ?
He now no longer fought the circumstance
Which held him prisoner on this wide ascent,
But strove to find within himself the key
To unlock the triple chains of Ignorance.

His meditations led him deep within,
Through corridors of inner fortified walls
Until he visioned the chaotic world
As one vast Play of universal force
Striving to adjust its rhythm'd urge
To varied movements set in various times.
Against this seeming monstrous play of Chance
He realised the insignificance
Which dared intrude its infinitesimal "I"
Upon the structure of a universe—
And yet this too was only half a truth,
For that same Vastness into which all merged
Was seen to be the measure of a Self,
The inner worlds from which his spirit rose.
The wickedness, the evil of the world—
That seemed eternal obstacles to man,
Were seen as forms and movements out of place,
Lost to the proper rhythm of their time
Upon the surge of his mortality.
Thus seen, the still crude gropings of the earth,
The rude opposing circumstance of life
Grow out of man's inherent ignorance—
A half-formed consciousness wishing to act
Upon a flood of forces yet unknown.
Not to oppose the surging cosmic sea,
But to surrender to a higher Law
Was seen the Secret of the Universe.
His meditations led him deeper still,
Into a Mother-Consciousness, retired
To days of Silence where he saw Her throned
On zones of radiant Peace where ecstasy
Ruled the worlds from Her one golden Eye.

NEW ROADS

Lost was his being in days of silent Bliss.
At last his eyes were lifted to Her Smile
Which woke the glories of another Age.
His heart arose to meet new forms of Light
That came towards him out of the golden Glare,
New forms of Truth veiled in the light of the Sun,
Love, with a garland-staff to break his chains ;
Surrender, with power to bear him in her arms
Beyond the limitations of the world.
His spirit wakened to a new demand,
His soul rose up to peaks of ineffable Joy.
He climbed the Road, his eyes on heights above,
Higher than Nature's own nobility—
Surrenderd to Truth and Knowledge and Delight,
Led by the hand of a marvellous Certitude
Accross the plateau's sharp ascending rise,
His footsteps ventured to the Great Unknown.

NORMAN DOWSETT

VICTIMS OF VIRTUE

“My Lover took away my robe of sin and I let it fall, rejoicing; then he plucked at my robe of virtue, but I was ashamed and alarmed and prevented him. It was not until he wrested it from me by force that I saw how my soul had been hidden from me.”

This delightful and succinct saying of Sri Aurobindo¹ comes, like all the others, with a force of revelation and a lively refreshing stimulus. And like many of them it is significant and appreciable on more than one level of comprehension.

Since we are willing to be rid of it, the robe of sin is perhaps easier for the Divine to remove and, since it bears the stains of our transgressions, who would want to keep it ? But the robe of virtue is a different matter. It is something that to our own eyes, and often to the eyes of others, shines and sparkles with an uncommon and heavenly lustre; and who would not be clothed in virtue after wearing the foul garments of sin ?

Indeed we forget that it is a robe at all, so attached to it have we become, nor can we readily see how effective is its power to obscure. If we have at one time been attached to our sins, then now we are even more violently in love with virtue, clinging with the same force of intensity to the one as was our rejection and eschewal of that other.

For perhaps our love of virtue springs from our hatred of sin, and we fail to see the face of the Beloved because of the passion-stirred dust of duality.

That, however, is on the soul level, and the soul, being universal as well as individual, is apt to attach itself to the manifestation of good, instead of the absolute Good, and so see, both in good and bad, the supra-ethical One.

But it is also on the egoistic level that ‘virtue’ claims its victims. The self-pleasing awareness of our moral worth, our subtle self-congratulation when we smugly compare the intensity of our aspiration with the less intense endeavours of ‘others’; in short, our self-righteousness and too-happy consciousness of virtue can often prompt us to act like a maiden aunt at a funeral or perhaps like the sedate Queen Victoria at a busman’s picnic.

¹ *Thoughts and Aphorisms*

We are either most properly solemn, or simply not amused at those unseemly goings-on of life. God may enjoy his own Becoming : we disapprove of the whole business. Moreover we will sometimes do our utmost to conceal from others the lamentable and humiliating fact that we are human beings, capable of weakness and failure and the occasional necessity of blowing one's nose. Or failing this we will assume an expression that is suitably suggestive of sanctity, and succeed in looking as if we were already suffering the pangs of hell.

For surely there are few who at some time or other have not had the desire to appear virtuous before others; and do we not consciously or unconsciously seek their approval ?

Some time ago a young man was pacing with measured tread up and down the playground here of the Ashram. He felt that he carried on his none-too-broad shoulders not only the burden of the Ashram but a considerable portion of the Universe as well. His gravity was most becoming, albeit a trifle strained and self-conscious.

Presently he became aware that a few on-lookers were furtively chuckling at something going on immediately behind him. Quickly he spun round to discover that three little children—two little boys and a girl—had been following him in single file and solemnly emulating his dignified deportment.

Caught in the act, they looked up at him, their big brown eyes now full of apprehension—for they were only tots. The young man took in the situation with amazement but any indignation he might have felt swiftly melted when he realised how extremely comical must have been the scene in which he was an unwitting player; and he laughed at its ludicrousness, and at the children, and at himself,¹ which was the most relieving of all.

It is said that 'a little child shall lead them';² true, but nothing is said of the devastating methods they will sometimes employ !

There is an amusing story about an old Scottish minister, a man who was by nature loving and gentle. But, as soon as he donned the ecclesiastical robes on a Sunday to conduct the services of his church, he became a veritable tyrant of rectitude.

He would not permit his wife to even touch him, and he would storm and rant if everything about the house was not in its 'rightful' place. His insistence on rightfulness was so great that even the cat would miserably take itself off, presumably in the fear that its whiskers were not properly straight.

On one such occasion whilst he was preparing to do battle with his sinful Sunday congregation, he was visited by his little grand-daughter. She sat watch-

¹ The writer ² The Bible

ing his dramatic and awesome movements, then looking up at his forbidding and vengeful countenance, lisped :

“Grand-dad, is God always angrier with us on a Sunday than any other day?”

Still, if there be a light and entertaining aspect of the question, there is also a darker side from which we cannot escape ; for ‘self-regarding virtue’ can paradoxically enough be as vicious a deterrent to our enlightenment as any vice.

In the attempt to be ‘virtuous’, the ego can often inflict on the being a tremendous—and useless—punishment. It goads and pushes and drives in a frantic endeavour to make itself worthy so that God might nod His head in an unstinting approval, and lean down (with a complete disregard for any others) and bestow an exclusive blessing on His distinguished and righteous child. As yet, it has not perceived that what it seeks is not God, but the sensations of its own worth, its own virtue, and God has very little to do with it. It is, to quote the Master, a ‘pretentious impurity’.

To the merely intellectual (conceptual) viewpoint, the thing seems obvious, and it may well hasten to interpret this kind of egoism as the whited-sepulchre variety. But it is not quite so simple as that. For although it may be of the same genus, it is much more subtle, being an acquisitive movement of the ego—‘a satisfying of the lower members’—and is consequently more dangerous.

The ordinary hypocrite knows well his hypocrisy and quite often makes a good job with his pot of whitewash in hiding it, but there is nothing deliberate in the victim of virtue who remains blithely unaware of being a victim. And despite its apparent naiveté it is only by an inner experience, by the grace of the Divine and not merely by an intellectual conceiving, that we are enabled to see this, as well as any other manifestation of the egoism that binds us. For its ways are full of an ‘endless cunning’ and a myriad ‘subtle deceptions’.

The humble Christ was one day accosted by a garrulous woman who proclaimed in glowing terms his attributes of goodness. Quietly he looked at her and said that there was ‘only one Good, and that was God.’

The victim of virtue, were he so accosted, would perhaps reply in different terms. He would remark in tones of petulant irritation, “Well, blast it, if you would try as hard as I am trying, you would one day be as good as I am.” For much of the egoism of virtue subsists, and is bolstered by, the imagined lack of goodness and aspiration in others, and lives either by a happy (self-congratulating) or unhappy (self-commiserating) comparison with ‘others’.

Self-righteousness, subtle or otherwise, is the very father of intolerance, and the seeds of Torquemada, which presumably reside within all who are human, must be seen and destroyed before they break forth into an evil growth.

In passing, it will be recalled that it was not sinners who were responsible

for the slaughter of Christ, but extremely respectable and virtuous highpriests.

As it is, there is often an almost virulent criticism of others and a refusal to acknowledge any kind of holiness except its own.

It is the quality that refuses to believe a man can be holy unless he be draped in black or have his loins girt in an ochre robe, or perhaps not wear anything at all except a frown and a string of beads. (The writer, of course, has nothing of prejudice against any of them.) It is a sense of propriety, intensified until its possessor becomes as unbending as a poker or crippled for life in a plaster-cast of rigid formality.

It makes a constant reference to the god of Tradition, and any departure therefrom is looked upon with suspicion, if not with immediate condemnation; there is even an exultation in the denunciation because it seems thereby to add a greater gleam to its own home-made halo.

It is quite often a denial of universality and an assertion of pious individuality, for even among the most sincere and ardent strivers after God, there is a movement, a psychological formula which protests: "I am striving for a noble ideal—but you, what are *you* doing? Very little it seems to me. Therefore I am different from you, and not merely different but quite distinct. You can have nothing of me, and I want nothing of you." Thereupon rejection and condemnation take the place of communion and universality. The robe of virtue is drawn tight and close until the sense of oneness and unity with others is strangled or suffocated.

Even in its subtlest forms, it still exists by an egoistic comparison with others. Virtue, in this sense, can have little meaning without vice, and one cannot securely indulge pleasant sensations of virtue unless he sees others as somewhat vicious and, if not vicious exactly, then not at all up to the mark.

There can come a pleasure of separation, a self-willed isolation, a self-flattery for our own sincerity and endeavour; but alas, there is the sad loss of our sense of humanity and the touch that makes us kin. There can be no wide fellowship, no seeing of oneself in others, no soul relationship with kindred struggling souls.

And even if in the end we reach a selfish salvation, with whom in our strict isolation could we share the joy of the Divine? For even there, "imperfect is the Joy not shared by all."

It seems then we must beware of our virtues as well as of our vices since both can hold us enthralled.

And perhaps the simple prayer of a little girl—overheard by her parents—has more to it than is at first apparent: "Dear God, make the bad people good, and the good people nice."

GODFREY

ENGLISH STYLE

AN English friend has written for the benefit of foreign aspirants to authorship in his language :

"In English, and especially in Modern English, one has to be very careful about over-emphasis and over-statement. The word 'great', for example, which makes such a show in many other languages, is but sparingly used. We may apply it to men or women whose importance resides not in their position, not even in the stir they may have made in the world, but in the genuineness of achievement tested by time. It is felt to be too big, too judicial a word to be lavished on what is contemporary.

"A critic in a review will hesitate before describing a writer of the eminence of, say, Mr. T.S. Eliot, as a 'great poet' although he may be acknowledged to be one of the best now writing in English. This is so much a characteristic of the English as to be a fact of usage, in spite of the cry from other peoples using the language for a richer, more elaborate, more ornate, even more verbose style to accommodate Oriental or American tastes. But I suppose, after all is said and done, it is a matter of 'taste in ties'—or there is no other go than to leave one to one's own certitude."

Two-thirds of the above pronouncement—the reference to the word "great" and to T.S.Eliot—echoes almost the words of Bernard Blackstone in his *Advanced English For Foreign Students* (page 264). And there is some sound advice in the pronouncement. But one is afraid Blackstone himself is a little too anxious to save the expansiveness of foreigners from ringing false in an acquired tongue which lets itself go less often than theirs; and, when the advice is cut off from Blackstone's own context to be given a still sharper and more exclusive turn at the beginning and also at the end where English usage is sought to be pin-pointed, it loses its value further by the very fault underlined—over-emphasis and over-statement. Not that the expression runs away with the writer ; but the fault can lie in the thought no less than in the expression. And what is here counselled strikes one as an extreme view. Even the conclusion with its moderating air does not really balance it : the Oriental or the American is allowed his own "taste in ties", his own "certitude", but not quite granted that he is using English in the truly English way. The English way in all ages and yet more in modern times is believed to be symbolically summed up in the sparing use of epithets like "great".

A recent issue (October 31, 1958) of the *Times Literary Supplement* is at hand. On glancing through its advertisement columns one finds short quotations made from reviews of several books by writers of less eminence than T.S. Eliot. Still, what does one observe? On page 619 *The Human Condition* by Hannah Arendt is advertised and underneath we have the opinion of Philip Toynbee as expressed in the *Observer*: "A great work of the mind and the imagination." On page 623 Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead is cited as saying about John Magee's *Reality and Prayer*: "A great book... Its insights again and again are startling in their originality." As for equivalents of "great" or else at least approximations to it, we light upon them almost everywhere. On page 628 Dr. J.H. Plumb characterises *A Study in English Kingship* by J.P. Kenyon: "A remarkable book, based on very sound scholarship... immensely readable." On page 620 we have J.B. Priestley pronouncing J.G. Cozzens' *By Love Possessed* to be "one of the major pieces of fiction of our post-war age".

Priestley on Cozzens' book is worth pausing over for a minute. He is admitted by all to be very English, and Cozzens is an American whose novel has received considerable slating from some English reviewers for what was regarded as over-writing and pretentiousness. Priestley evidently takes another view of the qualities seen thus by them and finds also merits they have overlooked; nor does he merely give grudging praise, as if to say, "The book is good, considering it is after all American." Could it be that there is no sharply fixed English attitude to style? Might there be not Englishmen and Englishmen, with one or the other of two opposite sides in prominence, and might not both these constitute in a subtle harmony the genuine English genius? Do we not also find responsible English critics ready to let themselves go in the matter of superlatives?

Over-emphasis and over-statement are, no doubt, defects, but in the review of books one must discriminate between a false encomium and a true or at least a plausible one and not be too facile in condemning a writer's phrases if they are not restrained. It is the quality of mind brought by a critic to bear upon a book, that should determine one's acceptance or rejection of words like "great" in his piece. And also there is no reason why a book, if it deserves enthusiastic recommendation, should be covered with a wet blanket for fear of slipping into an un-English style. It would seem that to be habitually restrained in writing is not necessarily to be English.

Even apart from the question of giving a fair amount of praise where praise appears due, the quality of restraint requires careful analysis. The exaggerative and the effusive are always to be avoided. However, to equate over-emphasis and over-statement with certain orders of style—the rich, the elaborate, the ornate—is an error. A style that is rich, elaborate and ornate need imply

no more than a mode of thought and vision and emotion different from the mode that gets expressed in a bare and clipped style. Several sorts of styles can each make authentic literature and be in a fundamental sense sincere, whereas over-emphasis and over-statement always bring in falsity. Who would think of censuring out of hand a prose style like Sir Thomas Browne's, Jeremy Taylor's, Donne's, Gibbon's, De Quincy's, Landor's, Carlyle's, Ruskin's, Meredith's, Henry James's, Chesterton's, Charles Morgan's, Sir Winston Churchill's ?

These very names—three of them contemporary—should make one hesitate also to declare that the typically English style is the opposite of the rich, elaborate and ornate. In our own day the simpler, more curbed, more conversational style has found greater favour, but here too there are degrees and few modern styles are quite as bare and restrained as Swift's at his best. Even Bernard Shaw who has been most compared with Swift has his flourishes, his rhetorical colours and complications. And, apropos of *Sparkenbroke*, at once the most richly and the most subtly written of Charles Morgan's novels, did not James Agate in the *Daily Express* describe its author as "probably the most distinguished (living) master of English prose" ? Then there is the very recent phenomenon of Lawrence Durrell, poet turned novelist, whose *Justine*, *Balthazar* and *Mountolive* have obtained an unusually good press. On *Mountolive*, which is hardly four months old, Elspeth Huxley¹ spoke on the BBC : "I am lost in admiration at Mr. Durrell's superb use of details...and, above all, at his sheer 'imagination.'" The *Times*² hailed this novel as "a delight" and the *Manchester Guardian*³ as "masterly". But Durrell is far indeed from writing a plain hand. Richard Mayne,⁴ in the *Sunday Times*, declares : "His prose beguiles us with marvels of virtuosity." And even Pamela Hansford Johnson⁵, who finds the book wanting in a centre, criticises it by saying that one reads it for just "the glittering, elaborate, lyric beauty of the style."

Yes, even today richness of expression is still with us and earns bouquets from good English critics—and may it never leave us ! The least likely are imagination and eloquence in diverse manifestations to leave England of all countries, in favour of a single order of style and that too the subdued functional. For, English is especially a many-strata'd many-strained affair. The stratum and the strain our friend has in mind are mostly those of Englishmen at common

¹ Quoted in the *New Statesman*, 1 November 1958, p. 597.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The *New Statesman*, 25 October 1958, p. 567.

talk among themselves about ordinary things : there the bare and the clipped have much play. But when Englishmen pass from quotidian speech to the finer and deeper utterance of literature, many other elements in the complex English consciousness come up—modes of thought and vision and emotion that are Celtic, Greco-Roman, Italian, Hebrew, even Oriental, in addition to the Anglo-Saxon, the Teutonic, the French. All of course are assimilated into something that can be distinguished as English, but to define what is English so trenchantly as our counsellor has done is rather an injustice to the veritable solar spectrum that is the English spirit in its creative mood.

Besides, English invites by just its flexibility and varied responsiveness the play of personality and individual character. There is indeed some sort of norm, but it is never very clear-cut and never rules the writer very strictly, as for instance the easily recognisable norm of *netteté* and *ordonnance* may rule the writer in French. This is dangerous doctrine and not to be shouted from the teacher's chair—hardly even to be whispered without serious caveats to the Indian student lest the already luxuriant Indian mind run riot, forgetting that in English we cannot indulge in luxuriance with absolute impunity. Even to the English student it should be offered with care, for, where the writing of literature is concerned, people to whom a language is native are not proof against going astray (any more than they are invariably apt to write better in it than foreigners of genius, like Conrad, Santayana, Madariaga, Maurois, Saurat, Capetanakis, Nehru, R. K. Narayan, Tagore, Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo). But the doctrine remains true and, provided the writer has sufficient mastery over the elements of the language and a living sense of its genius, individual idiosyncrasy no less than psychological "Orientalism" or "Americanism" may be given its head and asked only to attend to four fundamental "No"s : it should see that there is no excess of sound over significance, no intricacy of word that does not really answer to an intricacy of idea or experience, no weakly trailing movement of clauses, no *gaucherie* of rhythm.

In certain small matters which are more syntactical than stylistic, the feel of the form—the feel of how a sentence would shape if it ran in one way or another—may be the only guide. We should refrain from making a fetish of "common usage", though we may not encourage habitual flouting of it. Grammar books and pundit manuals deserve respect: they help us to learn a language. What, however, they can at most do is to equip us to write a workman-like prose. Surely such prose is not to be disdained, but in itself it is not style. It can be the basis of a certain type of style when the artist-sense takes it up and makes an effective instrument out of it. But all literature is not called upon to be a transfiguration of such prose and of its syntactical conventionalism.

MOTHER INDIA

A sentence can be structured in various manners : a manner is not incorrect just by being unusual. Wide and intimate acquaintance with literature will guard us from being extra-suspicious of the unusual and from running our blue pencil too sharply through a student's phrases. Style is a creative, not a stereotyped, activity ; and, so long as the four "No"s we have mentioned are kept in view, the less rules we make about it the better.

To those that are creatively inclined let us teach a double capacity : to be simple and restrained or to be subtle and splendid, as the occasion demands. And let us teach also a blend of the two powers, a blend faithful to the specific spirit of prose as distinguished from poetry and yet not devoid of the essential poetic touch—the style perhaps which Sir Herbert Read¹ in our own day recommends when he praises as the finest prose in the language the *Centuries* of that Restoration mystic, William Traherne. Thus only can a multi-shaded and individualistic tongue like English be rendered fully alive for the Indian turned creative in it.

K. D. SETHNA

¹ Quoted by Kathleen Raine in the *New Statesman*, 1 November 1958, p. 598

JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE*

JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE is a scientist ; his field is the world of matter—his function is to discover the truth of matter by material means. The truth has to be proved by demonstration and to be established. Science denies the truth that does not come within the purview of the senses. Observation by the external senses and examination and analysis by the intellect—these are the approved and accepted instruments of knowledge for the scientist.

Scientists are rationalists ; the senses and the mind or the reasoning intellect are all they hold on to. In their quest for truth they do not rely on other faculties ; for other faculties fall under the categories of guess, imagination and poetry. Science demands direct knowledge of the truth ; the scientist will act in accord with the brain pure and simple ; to utilise any other faculty is, for him, a frightful abuse of the scientific way. Besides, the concern of the scientist is wholly with the material world ; sufficient for the discovery of the facts and principles of this domain are the five senses and the reason ; there is no necessity to seek other aids.

Again, the scientist can certainly be a poet, can have feeling, can be contemplative, can be spiritual. But that is a matter entirely for another field, another world. When the scientist is occupied with science he must shut the door upon this his other aspect. A combination of the two creates confusion. Scientific research has to be carried on under the strict vigilance of the brain and the senses. If into that there intrude hopes, desires, feelings of the heart, life or imagination, then in place of science there will emerge romance, fiction. Eddington and Lodge, despite their being great scientists, have not escaped this fault. They have always brought in extraneous things and mixed them up with things scientific. This is the mental attitude or the viewpoint of the orthodox scientist. Perhaps ordinary lovers of science also will support it.

About science and scientists this is no doubt the prevailing rule. But in actual practice we find something else. What distinguishes Jagadish Chandra Bose is that he is a scientist, yet, while being a scientist in the true sense of the term, he is also a poet ; and this his poetic part is not something different from his scientific self. It not only is not separate but is the very spring and mystery, the hidden power of his scientific genius. The poet does not mean a weaver of words ; the poet means one who has a divine vision and who creates by the

¹ His birth-Centenary was celebrated on November 30, 1958 (Editor).

force of that vision. By virtue of this power Jagadish Chandra often appears more like a miracle-maker than a scientist. This is not to say that Jagadish Chandra is unique and matchless in this respect. In all creative spirits even in the realm of science we find in more or less degree an evidence of this power; for at the root of all creation this power is bound to exist. In the brain of all discoverers from Galileo to Einstein has played the high light of a suprasensuous, supra-intellectual vision. All their achievements, at any rate, all the achievements of Jagadish Chandra, show how this vision has been brought down into the framework of the mind and the senses, proved and objectified.

What is it that we call a divine vision ? It means an identity of feeling; we get at the truth of a thing by identifying ourselves with it. In other words, it is direct knowledge. Orthodox scientists, that is to say, those who do not create, who deal with finished articles, those who are only, or for the most part, commentators or organisers, look askance at this faculty. As already stated, they have no faith in it because they have no mastery over it, no possession of it. Theirs is the easy familiar path of sense-knowledge. They move from a particular to a general conclusion; from the effect to the cause; from the material to the less material; from sense-proof to suprasensuous proof, or, as in mathematics, to inference. Diametrically opposite is the course of direct knowledge. Here the knower does not separate the subject from himself and place it before him, does not break up its physical form for an analysis of and research into its properties and actions; at the very outset, the knower gets unified with the object to be known, his consciousness infuses itself into its being; in a sense he becomes the object itself, just as Sri Radha felt that through constant remembrance of Sri Krishna she had become Sri Krishna himself. In this state the truth, the mystery, the properties and functions of the object transmit themselves to the consciousness of the knower and become clear to it as daylight. This direct knowledge of an object from inside, through no external medium of proof, if correctly attained, is infallible and above doubt, and has the rhythm of its unity and completeness.

It is not that Jagadish Chandra seized the truth by dint of his sharp intellect and keen observation through the senses, however much he might have used these two faculties. With his domain of matter, particularly with the plant world, he established an identity, a unity of consciousness with its being; and, as a result of that, the truth and nature of that world reflected themselves in his mind. But then his achievement — perhaps it may be called a purely scientific achievement — is that he has tested these truths attained by an inner knowledge, verified them, arranged them clearly in proper order, and proved their genuineness by practical demonstration by means of the physical mind and intellect, through the medium of the senses, with the help

of material instruments. In this latter respect too—in the invention and employment of the physical instruments and processes—he has shown a strange skill and simplicity, a magic, that too has been possible by that very intuitive insight.

The speciality and distinctiveness of the truth and knowledge of the object that Jagadish Chandra has found without the accepted means and processes of knowledge arises from a speciality of that very direct insight and of that divine vision, the fundamental truth of which is oneness. All matter is one—even to a scientist this truth is not new—but then the unity and oneness that has attained such intensity and perfection in these days was not a familiar fact of the olden times. Jagadish Chandra has traced a new line of unity in the unity of matter, he has raised the unity of matter to a higher level and invested it with a new quality; over and above the unity of matter in the world there is a unity of life; behind the rhythm of matter is the rhythm of life. Even mineral objects feel fatigued, they faint from the application of poison, they look dying, then die. Plants also are no mere sum of material elements; they too have pulsation and nervous response, vibration of the heart and feeling of joy and sorrow, they have an involved consciousness. Jagadish Chandra has in this way brought matter through the corridor of life right almost to the door-step of consciousness. The ancient Aryan vision of our land has objectified itself in his genius.

All that we see is one, not many. That one is not inanimate matter, it is instinct with life, it is living, nay, not only living but conscious. The truth that the Rishi in his divine vision has seen, and experienced in his soul, how it manifests itself, how it proves itself, how the rhythm of the subtle has played into the gross, how the Self of the Spirit has not concealed itself outside or beyond its creation but has infused itself into the whole of creation, how its light has made the creation luminous—*tasya bhasa sarvamdāṁ bibhāti*, “his light illumines all this”—something of this knowledge Jagadish Chandra has placed before the physical eye of our ordinary belief.

Thus do we find in Jagadish Chandra as well the message of a large and profound synthesis, harmony and unity: on one side the hoary East, on the other the modern West; on one side the suprasensuous, on the other the senses; on one side Spirit, on the other Matter—a bridge between this two-fold Truth.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Tinkari Mitra from the author's Bengali book
BANGLAR PRAN).

BUDDHISM *Vis à Vis* HINDUISM

(Continued from the previous issue)

II

We discussed the similarity and even the sameness of the Buddhistic experience of Nirvana and the Upanishdic experience of the Ultimate Reality. We must now also account for some of the differences both primary as well as secondary. As one reads the literatures of Hinduism and Buddhism, one cannot help being impressed by the fact that each creates a very different atmosphere or ethos. All transcendental experiences are incommunicable and inexpressible in the language of the mind, but the fact that one uses one particular language rather than another in reporting the mental impression of the transcendental experience is not accidental. This impression does carry however imperfectly something of the nature of that experience, and the difference in language conveys a difference in that nature. But the differences do not invalidate the truth of One spiritual life, or One spiritual reality. The Divine is capable of and permits multiple contacts which when expressed in human language may even seem to an external view to exclude one other, but which in reality indicate the fact that the Ultimate Reality which is One in essence is infinite in its expression and revelation.

DRYNESS OF BUDDHISM : ITS 'ABSTRACTIVE' APPROACH

As one studies the early Buddhist literature, one encounters a certain atmosphere of dryness, of narrow and laborious self-culture, of strenuousness. One misses the atmosphere of effortlessness, fullness, ease and self-abandonment, which one comes across in, say, reading Chaitanya, Mira, the Alwar Saints. In Buddhism, though one comes into intimate contact with the transcendental realm, one is particularly struck by the omission of any reference to God or soul, those mighty facts of spiritual experience which, except for the illusionist monism of Shankara and the scholastic renderings of Sankhya, figure so much in the Upanishads, the Gita, the Mahabharata and in the religious consciousness of the country in general.

Regarding the nature of the Ultimate Reality, there are two traditions in

India. One tradition images It impersonalistically as a featureless Brahman, as a formless, relationless Absolute. As one went on abstracting from the lesser and more mixed expressions and forms of the Ultimate Reality, one contacted Its highest attributes of Shanti, Sat, Chit and Ananda. The supreme Reality could be experienced as peace or liberation, but It could also be experienced as bliss and consciousness. Further it was possible to abstract even from these attributes. Bliss, Peace, Liberation and Consciousness would recede and one would be left aware of One *Presence* alone, One *Isness*, Something ever-present without a 'name and habitation'. One could possibly abstract even from this 'Presence' and might experience the Ultimate Reality as some "Blank" or "Shunya" or even a "Nihil".

Buddha, it would appear, was in line with this too abstractive approach to the Divine. The Buddhist Nirvana, therefore, came to mean two things :

(1) a rather too complete emptying out of the world and the mind, of all forms and relations, and a complete dying out of all phenomenal consciousness; and

(2) a rather too full abstraction from all the forms, attributes and planes of the Divine — even from the attributes of *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*.

In the first sense, Nirvana acquired several names all meaning more or less the same thing : emptying the mind of all thought-forms and desire-complexes and even of all substantiality. It was called a letting go, a losing hold, a complete cessation, a complete fading out, a relinquishment, the perishing of passion, the perishing of hatred, the perishing of infatuation etc. In this sense, Nirvana was the beginning as well as the consummation of the Buddhist Way. It began with the practice of Buddhist shila and ended in the dawn of Buddhist prajna, the supernatural knowledge regarding the unsubstantiality and painfulness of earthly life and earthly goods and the way out of it.

The process of progressive abstraction continues also on the intermediate plane of the Buddhist system of meditation. The point is well brought out in the Buddhist accounts of a deepening trance. The first trance is characterized by *vitarka* and *vichara* (reasoning and reflection), *piti* (exaltation), *sukha* (joy). In the second trance, *vitarka* and *vichar* cease. In the third trance *piti* also ceases and one acquires *upekha* (indifference). In the fourth trance even *sukha* ceases and only *ekaggata* (one-pointedness) and supreme *upekha* remain. As the samadhi deepens, the process of negation and abstraction continues. Of one who has entered the realm of the infinity of space, the perception of form has stopped; of one who has entered the realm of the infinity of consciousness the perception of the realm of the infinity of space has ceased; of one who has entered the realm of nothingness the perception of the realm of infinity of consciousness has ceased; of one who has entered the realm of neither percep-

tion nor yet non-perception, the perception of the realm of nothingness has ceased; of one who has entered the cessation of perception and sensation, perception and sensation have ceased.

SAGUNA BRAHMAN : GOD AS LORD

But this Ultimate Reality can be experienced not only as a featureless absolute, but also as the lord, friend, sustainer, lover, a personal God to whom the secret aspirant in man gives his all, his mind, his soul, his strength, his heart. There is nothing petty or small or limited about this way of experiencing God. It is vast, deep, sweet and total. Here is the Purushottama of the Gita who can be experienced without any form or attribute, but who also comes to His devotee in the form in which he worships Him — and comes quite as fully and wholly. He is *paramānand*, *sanātan*, *purna*. He is not only transcendent, but immanent too. He is the sole Godhead who also becomes the jivas and the world. As Sri Chaitanya would say, the Ultimate Reality is Sri Krishna, who also becomes the gopis, above all, Sri Radha, to taste and relish His own love-in-separation of Himself. Through Radha alone He knows how sweet, heart-ravishing and mind- and soul-captivating He is.

Christianity and Islam accusing Hinduism of atheism and claiming all theism to themselves yet retain important elements of absolutistic, monistic impersonalism on two counts. First, God is conceived only as a Judge or as a Father, which is the image of a withdrawn, aloof and severe being. But in Hinduism where theism, like absolutistic monism, has found its completest expression, God is conceived as father, mother, friend, master, playmate, consort, lover and in a hundred other ways. St. Teresa and Sufi Rumi confirmed these relationships avowed by Hinduism, but their experiences went beyond the theological bounds of their own respective religions. Secondly, God is not only a person and has attributes (as Christians and Muslims would agree) but also possesses His Divine Form or Forms, name or names, indulges in the Divine Lilas, Divine Pastimes, has Divine Associates and Abodes (dharma). Thus Vaikuntha, Vrindavan, Golok, Kailas are not mere images but transcendental realities of the highest order.

In Buddha we find a complete omission of any reference to the Personal Aspect of the transcendental Reality, to that Reality being a friend or a guide or a teacher. This also makes Buddhism dry, intellectual and heartless.

(To be continued)

RAMSWARUP

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Incredible Sai Baba, By *Arthur Osborne*. Pp. 100. Publishers : Orient Longmans Ltd., 36-A Mount Road, Madras. Price Rs. 5/-

It is certainly strange, as Mr. Osborne observes, that there should have been so far no biography published in the West, in any European language, of a saint as eminent as Sai Baba of Shirdi. Sai Baba has been the most unconventional of the holy men of modern India. All who came into contact with him were shocked out of the accepted standards and notions of spirituality, religion, Yoga. He lived in a mosque but had an overwhelmingly preponderant Hindu following. He not only did not refuse to touch money but actually demanded it from those who sought his help. He performed miracles with a 'flamboyance' that truly scandalised the susceptibilities of sophisticated minds. He effected cures in the most bizarre fashion. He belaboured visitors and followers with an ostentatious disdain of all elements of hospitality. And yet his flock grew and has continued to grow even years after his death. To the Indian mind such a life does not at all strike as something 'incredible' though it may to a western eye trained under different conditions. It is not unusual in India to find cases of yogis behaving in an unconventional rude sort of way. Tradition here recognises certain states among men of God in which they move and act, so to say, in intoxication, *unmattavat*. Normal standards no longer apply to one who has gone beyond them in his consciousness, particularly if he has not related his inner state to the outer. Be that as it may, the present book forms an engaging account of the saint of Shirdi by a most sympathetic observer from the West. It is objective, brief and readable.

Nobody knows the antecedents of Sai Baba. In fact even his original name is not known. 'Sai' (Persian) 'Baba' (Hindi) simply means saintly father. All that is definite is that he came of a middle class Brahmin family in Hyderabad. At a young age he left home to follow a Muslim Fakir after whose death a few years later he got attached to a Hindu Guru whom he called 'Venkusa'. He said of the Guru : "I loved to gaze on him. I had no eyes except for him. I did not want to go back. I forgot everything but the Guru. My whole life was concentrated in my sight and my sight on him. He was the object of my meditation. In silence I bowed down." (P. 5.)

He stayed with him for twelve years at Selu and when he left he took

care to take with him a brick which the Guru had given him. He kept it with him throughout his life as a precious link.¹ He came to Shirdi and settled there in a dilapidated mosque where he lived for nearly fifty years. Nobody could say why he chose this out-of-the-way place till one day, "he told a devotee to dig at the foot of the neem-tree where he used to sit on his first arrival there; a tomb was unearthed and he declared that it was that of his Guru, not in this life but in a previous incarnation." (P. 3.)

By and by devotees were drawn to him and the place became a centre of pilgrimage. He gave no formal initiation nor had he any set Teaching. His devotees felt their natural way to God was through the Guru and acted accordingly. The author describes with enthusiasm the variety of miracles worked in the environs of the saint and quotes one of his famous sayings, in explanation : "*I give my devotees what they want so that they will begin to want what I want to give them.*" His narrations of Baba's teaching through symbols, the occult character of his movements and actions, are indeed interesting, though we wish the author had paused a little to explain the rationale of his application of occult science by the saint, especially his 'travels with an invisible body'.

He passed away in 1918. Before the end came, he "sent word to another Muslim saint : 'The light that Allah lit he is taking away', and the saint received the message with tears. The body was buried. Why not cremated, asks the author and answers : "Actually it is a tradition that the body of a Realized Man should be buried. He has passed through the fire already; there is no need to do so symbolically after death." (P. 97.) We might add that in the Indian tradition Yogis and Siddhas are not burnt but buried because a body which has received and assimilated the divine Light and Consciousness shall not be destroyed. The vibrations of the Spirit ever continue to emanate from that material form and that is the reason why the spot where such a body is entombed becomes a centre of spiritual force. "My relics," said Sai Baba, "will speak from the tomb."

M. P. PANDIT

¹ It is interesting to learn that this brick dropped and broke in 1918, shortly before his death.

Students' Section

A REMINISCENCE OF SRI AUROBINDO

(From the speech delivered by S. R. Das, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India, at the ceremony of the Silver Jubilee of Dr. Agarwal's Eye Institute and the Opening ceremony of the Sri Aurobindo Mandir Library on 16th October, 1958, at 15 Darya Ganj, Delhi—7.)

ON account of my unfamiliarity with the subject I am not competent to hold any discourse on the philosophy of life that Sri Aurobindo propounded, practised and preached...I shall, therefore, be content to confine myself to saying only a few words about Sri Aurobindo as I saw him about fifty years ago in the days of my boyhood.

On April 30, 1908, an unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of Mr. Kingsford, the District Magistrate of Muzzaffarpore by two fearless young men, Khudiram Bose and Profulla Chaki. In order to avoid arrest Profulla Chaki shot himself dead. Khudiram, who was captured and arrested, was subsequently tried in due course and cheerfully paid the extreme penalty of the law. In the meantime in the early hours of the morning of May 3, 1908, the police raided the Manicktolla garden in the suburbs of Calcutta where the Secret Society was located and a lot of country-made bombs, swords, daggers and revolvers were recovered by the police. Simultaneously a number of revolutionaries, including Sri Aurobindo's brother Barindra Kumar Ghose and Ullaskar Dutt, were arrested on the spot. Sri Aurobindo himself was arrested in Calcutta on the same day.

After the usual commitment proceedings Sri Aurobindo and thirty-five others were sent up for trial before Mr. Beachcroft, the Sessions Judge of Alipore, who was none other than Sri Aurobindo's fellow candidate in the Civil Service examination and who in order of merit, had been placed several places below Sri Aurobindo. Then followed a forensic fight in the court of law between two giants at the Bar, Eardley Nordon leading the prosecution team and my illustrious cousin C. R. Das leading the defence. It was a long-drawn epic struggle in which the Government of the day employed all its resources to obtain a conviction

of the accused persons and in particular of Sri Aurobindo in order to break the backbone of the entire revolutionary movement in Bengal of that period. I was then a lad of 13 or 14 years of age but I distinctly remember how the newspapers, full of the report of the court proceedings of the previous day, were read with avidity by members of the younger generation. Sensation followed sensation. The approver Naren Gossain was killed by the under-trial prisoners, Kanai Lal Dutt and Satyendra Nath Bose, with revolvers procured by them in jail in some mysterious way which has not up till today been solved. The Public Prosecutor assisting Mr. Eardley Norton was assassinated in broad daylight and one of the notorious police inspectors was shot dead in the precincts of the Calcutta High Court. I remember I used to go to my cousin's house and quietly stand at the corner of the front verandah on the first floor of the house where the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan is now located and hear the discussion carried on by the elders as to how the case was progressing. I used to get absorbed and filled with a sense of emotion. To my young mind Sri Aurobindo whom I had never up to that time seen became a hero with a radiant halo round his head.

It was during the progress of this momentous trial that I went to the Alipore court one day and waited the whole day to get a glimpse of Sri Aurobindo. At the close of the day's proceedings the prisoners were escorted out of the court premises and put inside the black police van then drawn by horses. There came Sri Aurobindo at the head of the party. He looked up to the skies—a distant look in his eyes—oblivious of his immediate surroundings—and disappeared into the interior of the ugly police van. The rest of the accused persons filed in, one after another, and after a final counting the doors of the van were closed. As soon as the van started moving, the accused persons started a song in Hiadi, keeping time by the clapping of their hands. Up till today I distinctly remember the opening bar of that song which was :

*Ao Mardana, jangi jowana,
Jaldi jaldi leo hatiar.*

As the car passed out of sight the refrain of the song became faint but it kept on vibrating in my memory. I returned home in a dazed state of mind, overwhelmed by the glimpse of the benign countenance of Sri Aurobindo and the eager and earnest expression on the face of his young workers who had staked their all under the spell of his inspiration. I remember I could not resist the temptation of waiting in the court precincts on a few more occasions to have a darshan of Sri Aurobindo and his band of selfless workers.

At long last the trial came to a close. The defence argument of C.R. Das

was a masterpiece of forensic art. He adroitly dealt with the evidence, emphasising the many infirmities in the prosecution evidence. The counsel's legal talents and legal acumen, mingled with the sincere affection and respect of the friend and admirer, culminated in a passionate appeal addressed not only to the judge who was trying the case but to a superior and higher tribunal deciding the destinies of men. The high esteem in which C.R. Das held Sri Aurobindo and the veneration the former had for the ideals of the latter will be evident from the following sentences with which he closed his memorable speech :—

“My appeal to you, therefore, is that a man like this...stands not only before the bar of this court but before the bar of the high court of history and my appeal to you is this that long after this controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation will have ceased, long after he is dead and gone he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India but across distant seas and lands.”

In due course the fateful day of judgment came. On May 6, 1909, Mr. Beachcroft delivered his judgment. Barindra, Ullaskar and several others were found guilty and sentenced. Sri Aurobindo and the rest were acquitted and set at liberty. Those who were acquitted came straight to my cousin's house. The younger lot bathed and swam in the tank in the compound and felt hilarious at their being set free from the dirty and degrading prison cells. After the midday meal they rested awhile in a room, and we, the younger boys of the house, were trying to peep into the room to have a glimpse of them. Sri Aurobindo sat among them—the same wistful, distant look in his eyes—outwardly unconcerned and unperturbed. He had, as it were, drawn his mind into the depth of his being.

THE CALL OF SRI AUROBINDO

*From the Paper read by S.C.Palit, I. A. S. (Retd.), at the meeting
at Cuttack on the Sri Aurobindo Siddhi Day, November 24, 1958.*

SRI AUROBINDO lived a divine life himself and has been and is still acting through the Mother. But we, before attaining the stage of proper understanding, are apt to stand up and shout, argue and quarrel about matters which pass our comprehension and parade our so-called fool-proof arguments while the Purushottama looks on and smiles. We can only hope that some day we may feel the touch of the Purushottama which will bring illumination and peace and we shall look on in mute adoration, our doubts and squabbles stilled for all time.

We would probably prefer to cling to a few broad facts lest we lose our way. You have seen in your homes a child learning to walk. He gets up, walks a step and then drops. Up he rises again undaunted by failure and walks a few more steps. Something in him is urging him to try again and again, to go forward and forward. Well, he sees his mother sitting yonder with a loving smile and outstretched hands and he goes ahead to clasp her. Can we not also feel the presence of our Divine Mother and rush or stumble ahead in complete confidence and serene surrender, our whole being concentrated on the sole object of getting nearer and nearer to Her so that we can have Her blissful fragrance more and more and then be entirely at Her disposal, to be guided and inspired as She pleases?

Our life is short ; the sands of time are running out. Why wait for the next life ? Why wait for the morrow ? Why waste this precious human life in running after fleeting things and not start the race for a divine life here and now ? It will not mean running away from this life, its rights and duties, its joys and sorrows with which we are so much in love. It will only mean changing our attitude, our angle of vision, our centre of gravity. We are to raise a temple out of brick and mud and not a wall to shut off kindly light.

God is doing *Tapas* for us. His Grace is incessantly at work to transform our gross matter into ethereal effulgence. The Supramental is at work here, there, everywhere. It is for us to cooperate, to perform *Tapas* in order to elevate ourselves and be a fitting receptacle for the drop of immortality, for His Grace. This is the inevitable destiny of mankind. By the sure and steady process of evolution we are progressing towards this desideratum. Man is born to be an angel and is going to be one. The dust is becoming deity. Such is the reassuring, ennobling and inspiring message of Sri Aurobindo.

MOTHER IS COMING

MOTHER is coming !

I painted the sky. A very black black !
I hung the moon—a lamp on clouds a-sway—
I ordered the stars to stand in rows straight—
And spread for Her feet the soft Milky Way.

Mother is coming !

I went to say to the murmuring sea :
“What is going to happen—just now—soon ?”
And it jumped with its laughing waves on me
And went swinging high with the hanging moon.

Mother is coming !

I awoke the trees from their longing rest
And they spread their arms in a triumphal arch.
I whispered to the birds in their warm nest
And I made them sing in a choir with the stars.

Mother is coming !

I roused other children with Victory Songs.
They lit gay lamps and put flowers in their hair.
They met Her with beating hearts and gongs,
For this was true—and not a fairy-tale.

She was coming !

JANINA

•

A PRAYER

OH ! Thou sweet compassionate Mother Divine,
Around Thee joyfully our lives we entwine ;
To Thee unendingly our prayers upsoar,
At Thy Feet Divine all our troubles we pour.

Unanswered never has been a cry sincere,
Always to Truth Thou hast taught us to adhere ;
A sorrowing heart finds Thy solace within,
Taking new birth in Thee fresh lives we begin.

Breathing Thy breath, in Thy Radiance we live,
In the baby-cat attitude ourselves we give
To Thee, Sweet Mother, whom our souls adore.
Preserve thyself ever for us, we implore.

TIM

SAUMITRA*

PARTING is no farewell of souls, O friend !
Only a flight afar beyond our sight.
Hallowed shall be the golden chain of love
In the holy fire of remoteness-night.

Back to the West, your home, from the East you wing
Stamping behind a memory's spell.
The teeming flame-flares of love shall burn
On either nation's citadel.

Your glad arrival has brought on Indian soil
The high message of union.
Your kindly love has won the radiant name
"Saumitra" from the Mother of Eternal Sun.

Our wisdom's sheaf was garnered like Spirit-corn
In the living barn of Aryan brain.
Let this communion and barter grow
The honey-flood of changeless gain.

Who dares to chant, "Farewell, brother Saumitra"?
Your memory dwells in our bosom's sky.
Once in the loving arms of the Mother Divine
No wakeful child away can fly.

3-12-1958

CHINMOY

¹ Werner Haubrich, who came from West Germany to coach the Ashram sportsmen for three months and got from the Mother this new name meaning "Friend to all" and was given a very cordial send-off in December last year (Editor).

GREEK LITERATURE

"GREAT literature, past or present, is the expression of great knowledge of the human heart; great art is the expression of a solution of the conflict between the demands of the world without and within; and in the wisdom of either there would seem to be a small progress."

All European literature is founded on the relics of the Greek literary genius and the human mind first took its flight in the Hellenic period which, perhaps, attained to the highest perfection. In the Renaissance period, the revival of literature meant first the rebirth of the great Greek works and an insight into the Hellenic genius. Greek literature has such a deep influence on the entire Occidental mind and life, that it is impossible, perhaps absurd, to study any European literature without delving into the literary genius of Greece. The instinct of beauty and grace, the idealistic and philosophical outlook on life, the sense of perfection and the realistic observation of the world around and, above all, the principle of individual liberty, and of freedom in thought and action are inherited from the serene master-mind of the Greeks.

In the Middle Ages, the Church played a very important role in the lives of the people, but the Greeks never permitted the priests to interfere in their daily life and they were never influenced by them. The priests said: "Thus far and no farther. We set the limits to thought." The Greek mind declared: "All things are to be examined and called in question. There are no limits to thought." The right of a man to say what he pleased was fundamental in Athens. It was there that democracy first took birth. "A slave is he who cannot speak his thought", said Euripides. Perhaps the only exception to this golden rule was the persecution of Socrates.

In Greece there was no dominating church or creed. This does not rule out the possibility of inner growth: on the contrary, the Greeks did discover the aim of life and the relation of life to art, for the sentence which Plato says was inscribed at Delphi is a summing up of all wisdom: "Know thyself."

The Greeks hardly distinguished between their aim of life and their expression of beauty because all Art for them was an expression of their inner state of being; it was no mere outburst of feeling and sentiment but a happy harmonious adjustment between the mind and the heart. Thus the Greek literary genius is endowed with deep feeling, deep thought, and a very simple

GREEK LITERATURE

expression of truth. "We are lovers of beauty with economy," said Pericles. Words were to be used sparingly like everything else. "Nothing in excess", was their motto in life, thought and expression. And never once have the Greeks failed to maintain it, whether it be in poetry or drama. And their passion for learning, their love of reason and of life, their delight in the use of the body and mind show us a perfect combination of intellectuality and vitality; and what seems most striking in their unique achievement is their perfect balance of the power of Poetry and the power of Science. Although the former demands a highly imaginative intuition and the latter is based on reason, yet the Greeks proved equally brilliant at the two opposite poles of unveiling truth and beauty.

The most striking feature in Greek poetry is, no doubt, the simplicity of expression; the lines are used to reveal a thought and no ornamentations seem necessary. Thus Aeschylus says: "Men search for God and searching find him." Not a word more is added. In contrast, to cite an example, we can quote Hebrew poetry: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you; for everyone that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." The same difference can well be noticed between the methods marked in another parallel where the wicked man is shown praying to deaf ears. In the Bible it runs: "When distress and anguish cometh then shall they call upon me but I will not answer; then they shall seek me but they shall not find me." The Greek expresses the bare idea with not a syllable extra: "And does he pray, no one hears." Thucydides gives in a single sentence the fate of those brilliant youths who sailed away to conquer Sicily and slowly died on their way: "Having done what men could, they suffered what men must." One sentence only for their glory and anguish. When Clytemnestra is told that her son is looking for her to kill her, all she says of all she feels is: "I stand here on the height of misery."

Thus we perceive the glory and the master-mind of the Greek poets who lift just one corner of the curtain and thus set the reader's mind to work and leave a free scope to his sensibility to discover the beauty of sound and the splendour of suggestion through simple undecorative expressions.

RAMRAJ

ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*

AN EXPOSITION AND AN INTERPRETATION

(H) THOUGHT, DICTION, SPECTACLE

AFTER the discussion of Plot and Character, the central subject of the *Poetics*, Aristotle considers the remaining elements of Tragedy, namely, Thought or Idea, Diction, and Spectacle. Thought is treated as a part of the Art of Rhetoric and is passed over cursorily. He states that Thought is effected by the language of characters arousing emotions and displaying their mental action. Details of this subject are not discussed and therefore are involved in some obscurity.

Diction which seems to include language and melody, the pleasurable accessories of the stage, is similarly considered as a branch of Elocution. Next, Aristotle deals with the diction of Tragedy in general, the different terms of the Greek language, and the characteristics of the language of Poetry. This becomes a technical discussion of the Greek language leaving the province of the main subject of the *Poetics*—the theory of the Drama.

Spectacle, that is, the setting up of the stage, is dismissed in a few sentences as an extra-technical subject. Aristotle's theory of the Drama therefore rests mainly upon the treatment of Plot and Character and the differentiation of Tragedy as a special form of Mimesis. The *Poetics* closes with the discussion of the rules for the construction of the Epic, the indication of the points of resemblances of Epic and Tragedy. After a short consideration of objections and answers to questions relating to the Epic and to Tragedy, Tragedy is held to be superior to the Epic because it deals with Language, Rhythm and Tune simultaneously.

(I) ORIGIN OF TRAGEDY, SATYRIC DRAMA, COMEDY

Aristotle's treatment of the origin of Greek Drama is short and obscure. Tragedy is said to have originated from the songs of the Dithyramb sung around the altar of Dionysus by dancers. The nature of the Dithyramb is not indicated nor the ceremony nor the recitation around the altar of the god. Aeschylus is said to have increased the actors to two, curtailing the work of

ARISTOTLE'S POETICS

the chorus and enlarging the spoken parts. Sophocles is said to have added the third actor and also the scenery. What part Euripides played in the development of the Drama is not told.

It is evident that the *Poetics* is only a jotting of points for lectures and not a systematic discussion of the origin of Tragedy. Tragedy passed out of the stage of the Satyric Drama discarding short stories and ludicrous diction and acquiring with the change of metre from the Trochee to the Iamb the dignity of tragic language. In time, pluralities of episodes and acts were added. Thus the nucleus of Tragedy was formed. The changes of Tragedies were not recorded.

Comedy is said to have developed from the phallic songs around the altar of Dionysus. They dealt with the ridiculous and the ugly. Early Comedians were recognised by the State. But all references to plurality of actors, masks, prologues, and the rest were lost. The second part of the *Poetics* contained the discussion as to Comedy which has also not survived.

(To be continued)

SYED MEHDI IMAM

Published by

P. Counouma, Pondicherry

Yearly Inland Subscription: Rs. 10/- Single Copy. Re. 1/-

Foreign- £0-16-0; \$ 2.50

Printed at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press,

Pondicherry 1238/1/59/900