

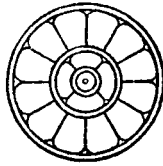
MOTHER INDIA

OCTOBER 1961

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XIII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 5
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO <i>Nirodbaran</i>	... 6
GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO : Letters :	
Difficulty in the Physical Nature <i>from Nagin Doshi</i>	... 10
SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY	
The Gospel According to Surendra Nath <i>Compiled by Sanat K. Banerji</i>	... 12
SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION	
9. National Education (vii) <i>Sanat K. Banerji</i>	... 15
SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM : The Ashram	
Atmosphere : 1948-50 <i>Narayan Prasad</i>	... 20
THE GOD ABOVE GOD <i>Paul Tillich</i>	... 34
THE ONE DIVINE INFINITE—	
GOD PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL (Excerpts from <i>The Life Divine</i> of Sri Aurobindo)	... 38
THE OBSCENE AND THE UGLY—FORM AND ESSENCE (Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali) <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	... 42

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
TWO POEMS : Caskets—White Wisdom <i>Tony Scott</i>	... 45
SIGNPOSTS AND SYMBOLS : "Vingt-et-uns" <i>Chimanbhai</i>	... 46
THUS SANG MY SOUL : Poems to the Mother <i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	... 48
THOUGHTS <i>Girdharlal</i>	... 49
WORLD UNION <i>Review by Prithwindra</i>	... 50
THE PLACE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA <i>Review by K. B. Sitaramayya</i>	... 53
SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA <i>Review by Romen</i>	... 56
VIVEKANANDA THE WONDER-WARRIOR <i>Chinmoy</i>	... 57
SOME QUESTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY AND YOGA (A Letter) <i>A. B. Purani</i>	... 60

Students' Section

RÉPONSES — ANSWERS <i>The Mother</i>	... 65
RAMA'S DECAPITATION OF A 'SUDRA' <i>Bhuvananda</i>	... 66
UNITY (Poem) <i>Leena</i>	... 67

NOTE

The next number of *Mother India* will be a joint one of November and December. It will be published on December 5.

WORDS OF THE MOTHER

L SAYS, "It depends upon the Mother."

No, it does not all depend upon me. If it did, everything would go smoothly. But there is always a person's character in between.

20-8-1961

À chaque moment de la vie on est mis en présence du choix entre la Grâce et la satisfaction personnelle.

At every moment of life you are put in the presence of a choice between the Grace and your personal satisfaction.

13-9-1961

La Grâce est quelque chose qui vous pousse vers le but à atteindre. N'essayez pas de la juger avec votre mental, vous n'arriverez à rien, parce que c'est une chose formidable qui ne s'explique pas par des mots ou des sentiments. Quand la Grâce agit, le résultat peut être agréable ou non — cela ne tient compte d'aucune valeur humaine, cela peut être même une catastrophe au point de vue ordinaire et superficiel. Mais c'est toujours le meilleur pour l'individu. C'est un coup que le Divin envoie pour que le progrès se fasse avec des bonds. La Grâce est ce qui vous fait marcher vite vers la réalisation.

The Grace is something that pushes you towards the goal to be attained. Do not try to judge it by your mind, you will not reach anywhere. For it is something immense which does not explain itself by human words or feelings. When the Grace acts, the result may be pleasant or not—it takes no account of any human value, it may even be a catastrophe from the ordinary and superficial point of view. But it is always the best for the individual. It is a blow of the Divine sent so that the progress may be by leaps and bounds. The Grace is that which makes you march swiftly towards the realisation.

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(These talks are from the Note-books of Dr. Nirodbaran who used to record most of the conversations which Sri Aurobindo had with his attendants and a few others, after the accident to his leg in November 1938. Besides the recorder, the attendants were : Dr. Manilal, Dr. Becherlal, Purani, Champaklal, Dr. Satyendra and Mulshanker. As the Notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.

This is the tenth talk in the new Series which follows a chronological order and begins at the very beginning. The four earliest talks, after Sri Aurobindo's accident, appeared in Mother India in 1952. We are now picking up where we then stopped and shall continue systematically.)

JANUARY 1, 1939

Evening : 5.30

THE conversation was begun by Dr. B. We knew from the peculiar signs on his face that he was preparing and he soon burst forth.

DR. B : What is the effect of fasting ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*knitting his brows as usual at Dr. B's questions*) : What about it ?

DR. B : The effect of fasting on Yoga ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*as if the question now were not so perplexing after all*) : It gives a sort of excitement to the vital being, but the effect does not seem to be very sound. I fasted twice—once in Alipore Jail for ten days and the other time in Pondicherry for twenty-three days. At Alipore I was in full Yogic activity. I was not taking any food : I was throwing away all of it into the bucket. Of course, the Superintendent didn't know. Only the Warder knew and he said to the others, "The gentleman must be ill. He won't live long." Although I lost weight considerably, I could lift a pail of water above my head, which I couldn't do ordinarily.

Then at Pondicherry, while I was fasting, I kept in full mental and vital and Yogic activity. I was walking eight hours a day and yet not feeling tired in

the least. When I broke my fast, I did it straight away with the usual normal food.

N : How is it possible to be active like this without food ?

SRI AUROBINDO : One draws energy from the vital plane instead of depending on physical sustenance.

Once in Calcutta I lived for a long time on rice and bananas only. It was a *very good food.*

N : The trouble is that one can't draw conclusions from your case.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : At least this conclusion can be drawn that it can be done.

Now let me tell you about the invitation to dinner by R. C. Dutt. He was surprised that I was taking only vegetable food whereas he could not live without meat. With vegetable food I was feeling light and pure. It is just a belief that one can't live without meat, and that creates a habit.

As regards fasting, I know of a European who fasted for forty days and became ecstatic over the effect of fasting, but after the fast he had a breakdown.

There are many stories about Jains fasting. What is the idea behind their fasts ?

S : I suppose they believe in the mortification of the flesh for the release of the spirit.

N : Can fasting cure diseases too ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, if you know the process. That's why Europeans fast. Sometimes it is the mental idea that works. You start with the idea of being well or ill and it happens accordingly.

A disease comes from outside. It pierces what the Mother calls the nervous sheath and enters the body. If one is conscious of this subtle nervous sheath, then the disease can be thrown away, as I did at Baroda with the thoughts, before it can enter. In neurasthenic people this nervous envelope becomes damaged.

DR. B : Does neuralgia also come in the same way ?

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : Yes; I suppose you are thinking of your own case ?

DR. B : How then is one to get rid of it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : As I said, you have first to be conscious of the subtle body before you can do it.

C : X told me once how she used to have a headache which remained just above the head and it was very severe. We used to laugh at her because we couldn't believe in a headache of that nature.

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you know there can't be such a headache ? If the consciousness can be lifted above the head and remain there, why not a headache ?

The body is a mere means of responsive vibrations. Everything coming from outside finds a response in it and we get all these things.

S : If everything comes from outside, then what are we ? What belongs to us ?

SRI AUROBINDO : In one sense nothing belongs to us. The physical is made up, you may say, of various predispositions : certain energies due to heredity, your past lives (the sum of energies of the past) and what you have acquired in this life. These are ready to act under favourable conditions, under the pressure of Nature—Universal Nature which gives the sense of “I”, “I am doing everything”. This “I” and “mine” have no truth in the ordinary sense.

S : The other day you spoke of the fundamental personality. I couldn't quite understand you.

SRI AUROBINDO : There are two things here—the personality and the Person—which are not the same. The Person is the eternal Divine Purusha assuming many personalities and thrown out into Time as the Cosmic and the Individual for a particular purpose, use or work. Even as the Individual, this Purusha is all the time conscious of identity with the Cosmic. That is why liberation of the Individual is possible.

N : Is the cosmic liberation static or dynamic ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is both. In the static aspect, it is the Self, infinite, one, without movement, action, duality. In the dynamic, it depends on where your experience feels the unity. If in the mental, your mind feels one with the cosmic mind; if in the vital, your vital becomes part of the cosmic vital; if in the physical, the body is felt as a speck of universal Matter.

Just as there is a wall that separates the outer nature from the soul, the psychic being, so also there is a wall above the head. You break that wall or what is called the lid and you feel your individual self in the Infinite or you feel you are the Infinite. The opening can be vertical or horizontal—at various levels, the vital being, the heart, etc.

C : Is it true that illness comes from Sadhana ?

SRI AUROBINDO : From Sadhana ?

N : I think he means that illness may come in the course of Sadhana for purification.

SRI AUROBINDO : That's a different thing. It can be a circumstance in Sadhana.

C : When I was still a newcomer and having some physical troubles now and then, people used to say it was due to Sadhana. So I used to keep my troubles secret from you lest you should stop your Force when you would know about them.

S : Some Sufis and Bhaktas take illness and other such things as coming from the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO : They are right. They take everything as coming from the Divine, and it is a very good attitude if one can truly take it. If you neglect the chain of intermediate causes, whatever happens is with the sanction of the Supreme. This is a Cause superior to everything.

DR. B : If anything happens due to our negligence, can we call it as sanctioned by the Divine ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I said, "If you neglect the chain of intermediate causes."

DR. B : Could there not be some danger in that attitude ? We may shirk our responsibility and lay it on the Divine.

SRI AUROBINDO : I was speaking about the Bhakta. For the Bhakta whatever happens is for the best and he takes everything in that light. For the Yogi who has to conquer these things, they must come; otherwise what is there to be conquered ? In Yoga, difficulties are opportunities. No doubt, hostile forces are recognised as hostile, but from a special standpoint. Ultimately all powers are from the Divine, assisting in the work. They throw difficulties at us in order to test the strength.

It is the Divine that has created the opposition and sends you a defeat so that you may conquer hereafter. This is necessary in order to go beyond the ego's sense of its own responsibility.

At one time I experienced the hostile forces as gods trying to test my strength in Sadhana.

You act not for success but for the Divine, though that does not mean that you must not work for success. Is this confusing ? That was what Arjuna complained to Krishna—that Krishna spoke in double words. He told Arjuna not to be eager for results but at the same time he said, "Fight and conquer."

GUIDANCE FROM SRI AUROBINDO

DIFFICULTY IN THE PHYSICAL NATURE

Q. I don't know why the working from above is not always there. The suggestion has come that certain things are worked out and then the Force withdraws until one becomes ready to receive further its fiery action. Is this suggestion from the Light?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is right. Everyone has these alternations because the total consciousness is not able to remain always in the above experience. The point is that in the intervals there should be quietude, at least in the inner being, no restlessness, dissatisfaction or struggle. If that point is attained, then the sadhana can go on smoothly—not that there will be no difficulties but there will be no inquietude or dissatisfaction etc. etc. 11-8-1935

...It (inertia) was because of the nature, because the tendency to tamas is there; the outer being is not yet sufficiently transformed. When the inertia rises you have to keep your inner being separate from it and perfectly calm and not to acquiesce in any nervousness or accept any suggestions or allow yourself to lean towards any “active resistance” or dissatisfaction with what is written to you or done for you. If in addition you find it possible to use any active means suggested in past answers, it is well—but if not this at least—what I have written above must be done. And always the aspiration firm and steady—not eager and excited—for the descent and the transformation of the whole nature must be preserved intact.

One can have an aspiration in the inner being if the inner being keeps its separation. 17-8-1935

This difficulty is due to old habits of the physical mind and the vital, which still have the power to repeat themselves by rising from the subconscious and as your physical mind and vital still respond you are not able to stop the inquietude. When they respond no longer, then there will be no inquietude. 17-8-1935

Q. Certain adverse forces are trying to create an active protest.

SRI AUROBINDO : So long as that is possible as a result of the Inertia, the inertia will always insist—for to create an active resistance or protest and so break and not merely retard the sadhana is the main object with which it is brought up. 18-8-1935

The period of no-effort is usually when the physical consciousness is uppermost—for the nature of that is inertia, to be moved by the higher forces or to be moved by the lower forces or by any forces, but not to move itself. One must still use one's efforts if one can, but the great thing is to be able to call down the Force from above into the physical—otherwise to remain perfectly quiet and, undisturbed, expect its coming. 23-8-1935

It means that you are in full grips with the subconscious physical. However heavy and tedious the resistance you have to persevere till you have got the Peace, Knowledge, Force down there in place of the inertia. 27-8-1935

Q. There is a suggestion that our efforts in Sadhana bring an undesirable reaction. But is not the suggestion really due to excess of inertia?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is that. The suggestion is put in order to discourage the dynamic effort and keep one inertly passive. 28-8-1935

From NAGIN DOSHI

SRI AUROBINDO ON INDIA'S DESTINY

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SURENDRA NATH¹

(In our August issue we have seen there were many among our own countrymen who needed to be convinced that India must be free. Another task Sri Aurobindo had to face was to expose the pseudo-nationalism of influential journalists and "leaders" who seemed bent on misleading the nation. Their influence, especially on the younger generation, was so pernicious that it needed a strong antidote.)

THE appearance of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee as an exponent of the "New Nationalism" is a phenomenon which shows the spread of the new spirit, but, we fear, nothing more. We congratulate Babu Surendra Nath on his conversion to the New Nationalism, but we are not sure that we can congratulate the New Nationalism on its convert.

Nationalism is, after all, primarily, an emotion of the heart and a spiritual attitude and only secondarily an intellectual conviction. Its very foundation is the worship of national liberty as the one political deity and the readiness to consider all things well lost if only freedom is won. "Let my name be blasted," cried Danton, "but let France be saved." "Let my name, life, possessions all go," cries the true Nationalist, "let all that is dear to me perish, but let my country be free."

But Babu Surendra Nath is not prepared to consider the world well lost for liberty. He wishes to drive bargains with God, to buy liberty from Him in the cheapest market, at the smallest possible price. Until now he was the leader of those who desired to reach a qualified liberty by safe and comfortable means. He is now for an unqualified liberty; and since the way to absolute liberty cannot be perfectly safe and comfortable, he wants to make it as safe and comfortable as he can. It is evident that his conversion to the new creed is only a half and half conversion. He has acknowledged the deity, but he is not prepared for the sacrifice.

It is always a danger to a new religion when it receives converts from among strong adherents of the old, for they are likely to bring in with them the spirit of the outworn creed and corrupt with it the purity of the new tenets. If leaders of the old school wish to be accepted as exponents of the New Nationalism, they must bring to it not only intellectual assent, but a new and changed heart—a new heart of courage and enthusiastic self-sacrifice,—to replace the old heart of selfish timidity and distrust of the national strength.

In the leading article of last Friday's *Bengalee*² some very important admissions are made. The unlimited possibilities of the organised national strength

¹ *Bandemataram*, Daily Edition, 22.4.07

² An influential newspaper edited by Surendra Nath Banerjee

of India are acknowledged without reservation. "There is no limit to what they can do. We at any rate would set no limits to their ambition....We want our country to be as great in its own way as other countries are in theirs. And we are determined to secure our rightful place in the federation of humanity by methods which are least wasteful in their nature and would soonest bring us to the assured destination." The federation of humanity is one of those sounding phrases, dear to Babu Surendra Nath, which have no relation to actualities; but the rightful place of India among the nations, federated or unfederated, is one which cannot admit of any the least restriction on her liberty. And the description of the methods to be used at least rules petitioning out of court; for petitioning is certainly wasteful in its nature and would not bring us soonest, —nor, indeed, at all, to our assured destination.

There is more behind. "Where is the room for compromise in spiritual life ? Nobody has a right to tell us in regard to a question like this, thus far you shall go and no farther. National expansion and self-realisation is a sacred duty which we cannot lay aside at the bidding of any authority above or below. The charter here is a charter from on high and no mundane authority has a right to undo it." All this is admirable. It is true that the writer in the next breath says, "we have no quarrel with anybody who does not stand in our way,"—an obvious truism,—and invites the Government "not to block the way," promising it as a reward "a happy and not inglorious transformation at no distant date." But the bureaucracy knows, as well as the writer knows, that transformation is only an euphemism for translation to a better world, and there is not the slightest chance of its listening to this bland invitation. However, the fact stands out that Babu Surendra Nath has declared for absolute autonomy to be arrived at by methods which, among other things, would soonest bring us to the assured destination.

Unfortunately the rest of the article is devoted to carefully undoing the effect of the first half. It is practically an attempt to controvert the position which we have taken up in this journal. Our position is that it is imperatively necessary for this nation to enter into an immediate struggle for national liberty which we must win at any cost; that in this struggle we must be inspired and guided by the teachings of history and those glorious examples which show how even nations degraded, enslaved and internally disunited, can rapidly attain to freedom and unity; and that for this purpose the great necessity is to awake in the nation a burning, an irresistible, an unanimous will, to be free.

The *Bengalee* denies all these positions. We must win liberty, it holds, not by an immediate struggle but by a long and weary journey; not by heavy sacrifices, but in the spirit of a Banya¹ by grudging, limited and carefully-calculated sacrifices. We are not to be guided by the concrete lessons of history, but

¹ Tradesman

by vague and intangible rhetorical generalisations about "our increased knowledge and wisdom, our enlarged affections and interests of the present day." We are to curb our will to be free by a "trained intelligence" which teaches us that we are not a homogeneous nation and must therefore tolerate differences.

We will content ourselves at present with pointing out that the *Bengalee's* answer to us is neither effective nor self-consistent. We have tried to establish our position by definite arguments and appeals to well-known facts of human nature and human experience; the *Bengalee* simply denies our conclusions in general terms without advancing a single definite argument. We can only conclude that our contemporary has no definite arguments to advance. The confusion of his ideas is appalling. We are to choose for the attainment of liberty the method which will bring us soonest to our destination; but we must at the same time insist on making it a long and weary journey. We must have the determination to get liberty "at any cost;" but we must not carry out that determination in practice; no, in practice we must get it not at any cost but at the smallest cost possible.

We must really ask the *Bengalee* to clear up this tangle of ideas and discover some definite arguments before it again asks the Nationalists to confine themselves to realising their ideas in practice and to abstain from "quarrelling with everybody who differs from them." It would be no doubt very gratifying to the *Bengalee* not to be quarrelled with, in other words, to escape from the annoyance of finding its intellectual positions and its methods assailed; but we cannot gratify it. So far as possible, our ideas are being realised in practice wherever Nationalism is strong; but for their full effectiveness they need the whole nation at their back and it is therefore our first duty to convince the nation by exposing pseudo-Nationalism in all its workings.

We shall meet the *Bengalee's* position one by one hereafter. Meanwhile we take the liberty of offering one suggestion to Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee. This veteran leader is a declared opportunist, who believes, as he has himself said, in expediency more than in principles. He seeks to lead the nation not by instructing it but by watching its moods and making use of them. Well and good; but even an opportunist leader must keep pace with public opinion, if he does not even go half a step in front of it; he must know which way it is going to leap before the leap is taken, and not follow halting paces behind. The nation moves forward with rapidity; Babu Surendra Nath pants ineffectually after it. It is not by such hesitating pronouncements that he can retain the national leadership.

The times are revolutionary, and revolutionary times demand men who know their own mind and are determined to make it the mind of the nation.

Compiled by SANAT K. BANERJI

SRI AUROBINDO AND EDUCATION

(9)

NATIONAL EDUCATION

VII

"It is amazing," wrote Sri Aurobindo, "that men calling themselves educated and presuming to dabble with public movements should be blind to the fact that the success or failure of National Education is intimately bound up with and, indeed, entirely depends upon the fortunes of the great resurgence which gave it birth. They seem to labour under the delusion that it was an academical and not a national impulse which induced men to support this great effort, and they seek to save the institution from a premature death by exiling from it the enthusiasm that made it possible. They cannot ignore the service done by that enthusiasm, but they regard it merely as the ladder by which they climbed and are busy trying to kick it down. They are really shutting off the steam, yet expect the locomotive to go on."¹

In another article, written for the *Karmayogin* nearly four months earlier,² Sri Aurobindo had given a clear warning that seems to have passed unheeded. "We have long noticed with the deepest disapprobation and indignation the equivocal conduct of the National Council authorities with regard to matters of great national importance, but we have held our peace from unwillingness to hurt an institution established with such high hopes and apparently destined to play an important part in the development of the nation. We can hold our peace no longer. The action of the authorities in forbidding their students to attend a national festival commemorating the inception of the movement by which the College and Council were created,—a prohibition extended by them to the mofussil schools,—is only the crowning act of a policy by which they are betraying the trust reposed in them by the nation, contradicting the very object of the institution and utterly ruining a great and salutary movement. They imagine that by being more servile than the most servile of the ordinary institutions and flaunting their high academical purpose they will save themselves from official repression and yet keep the support of the people. They are wrong. Already there is such deep dissatisfaction with the Council that the mofussil

¹ *Karmayogin*, I.I.10

² 14.8.09

schools are dying of inanition and people are turning away from the new education as differing in no essential from the old. If the authorities persist in their evil course, the public mind will write Anti-national instead of National over their sign-board in Bow Bazar and their schools be left empty of students."

The indictment continues. "The successful organisation of the Bengal National College in Calcutta was the work of its able and enthusiastic Superintendent aided by a body of young and self-sacrificing workers. The National Council which nominally controlled, in reality only hampered it; all that the Council contributed to the system was its defects. The schools in the mofussil were created by the enthusiasm of the Nationalist party, the propaganda of its leaders and the ardent self-devotion of little bands of workers who gave their self-sacrifice and enthusiasm to lay the foundations. The National Council has never lifted a single finger to help the mofussil schools, beyond doling out unsubstantial grants to maintain them merely as necessary feeders of the Calcutta institution. But unless a movement of this kind is supported by wise organisation and energetic propagandism emanating from an active central authority, it must soon sink under the weight of unsolved problems, unsurmounted difficulties and unamended defects."¹

One may perhaps add in parenthesis here the brief autobiographical references to Sri Aurobindo's personal connections with the Bengal National College in Calcutta, which appear in the collection, *Sri Aurobindo On Himself*. "The founding of the Bengal National College gave him the opportunity he needed [to take a direct part in the nationalist movement of 1905-10] and enabled him to resign his position in the Baroda Service and join the College as its Principal. Subodh Mullick had given a lakh of rupees for this foundation and had stipulated that Sri Aurobindo should be given a post of professor in the College with a salary of Rs. 150...² At an early period he left the organisation of the College to the educationist Satish Mukherjee and plunged fully into politics. When the *Bande Mataram* case was brought against him [in 1907], he resigned his post in order not to embarrass the College authorities, but resumed it again on his acquittal. During the Alipore case [1908-09] he resigned finally at the request of the College authorities."³

What precisely, apart from its anti-national bias, were the defects and difficulties which led ultimately to the failure of the National Council of Education? Here was Sri Aurobindo's diagnosis. "The curriculum of the Council is extraordinarily elaborate and expensive, and involves a great outlay for the formation of library, laboratory, and workshops, and arranged as it is on the vicious Western system of driving many subjects at a time into the growing intellect,

¹ *Ibid.*, I.I.IO.

² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

is slow, cumbrous, a strain on the mind of the students, wasteful of time, impossible without an unusual number of good teachers. The financial problem created is one of crushing difficulty, yet the Council think they have done their duty when they have created the problem and do not seem even to dream that there is any call on them to solve it. Even for the Calcutta College in whose maintenance they are more keenly interested, they can only make feeble and spasmodic efforts when, as annually happens, there is a deficit in the budget. The academical problem of teaching so many subjects in so short a time without out-doing the exploits of the Calcutta University as a brain-killing and life-shortening machine, does not seem to occur to these lofty and secluded minds. They are content with creating the problem and maintaining it by their system of examinations.

“Even if funds were forthcoming, there would still be the necessity of providing a regular and plentiful supply of teachers trained in an entirely new system of instruction. This urgent problem the Council has systematically ignored, and not even the elementary steps of establishing a Teachers’ Training Class in Calcutta and issuing a series of suitable books in the vernacular has been attempted. The only problems which the National Council seems willing to grapple with are, first, the problem of supporting National Education without incurring the wrath of the officials and, secondly, the problem of evading the spirit of the clause which forbids it to subject itself to any form of Government control, while observing the letter, so as to prevent the invalidation of its endowments.”¹

Here the indictment ends. Where then was the solution ? Could National Education be abandoned as a hopeless failure ? Sri Aurobindo did not think so. For he went on to add : “But if the National Council is content to fail in its duty, the country cannot be content to allow this great educational enterprise to perish. We do not know how or by whom the Council is elected. It seems to have followed the example of so many bodies in India which have started as democratic institutions and ended as close corporations self-electing and self-elected. But if it is impossible to alter the component character of this body and put into it keener blood and clearer brains, some other centre of effort must be created which will undertake to grapple with the problems of National Education, the supply of trained and self-devoted teachers and of books which will guide them in the imparting of knowledge on new lines, the reawakening of interest, hope and enthusiasm in the country, the provision of the necessary funds to the mofussil schools, the forcing on the Council by the pressure of public opinion of a more rational and a more national system of teaching. But the first condition of success is the reawakening of the national movement all

¹ *Karmayogin*, 1.1.10.

along the line, and this can only be done by the organisation and resolute activity of the Nationalist party.”¹

National Education, at least on its purely academic side, had failed to produce the results the sponsors of the movement had hoped for. But all was not lost. Closely associated with the movement for a new type of academic education, there had been, as we have tried to show earlier, a strenuous attempt to improve the physical training of our boys, and in this Sri Aurobindo had taken a leading part and shown the way in which this should be done. Here the results were striking indeed. The following extracts from *Bandemataram*² might throw some light on an aspect of the movement which should never be forgotten.

“At Comilla the name of Chhatra Babus (College-going young men) has become a by-word of terror to the Mahomedan rowdies. Of the students it is said that they wield the pen as deftly by day, as the lathi by night. The elderly people of Comilla who were very much against the new spirit and most emphatic in their condemnation of the wildness and waywardness of the boys in connection with the Swadeshi movement, frankly admit that it is to the much-abused boys they owe the safety of their lives and the honour of their women...

“From the very beginning of the Swadeshi movement our boys have been its very soul. It is their hearts that have been stirred in every chord by the new national sentiment. They have set it afoot where it was non-existent. They have given pace to it where it was languid. They have fought the apathy, conservatism, scepticism and the timidity of the elders to make it a success. They have been abused, censured, exiled, persecuted. But still they have held out. The loyal or stingy father and the foppish mother have not unoften caught the Swadeshi contagion from their sons. In short, the history of the national movement of Bengal is the history of the Divine enthusiasm, indomitable courage and energy and the wonderful sacrifice of our boys.

“But for their tenacity, courage and sacrifice we would not have heard of a successful boycott, a national council of education, the thousand and one Swadeshi stores and many other good things which the present movement has brought in its train. They organised the meetings, danced attendance on the speakers, begged money for their travelling expenses and made arrangements for their welcome. They canvassed people for using Swadeshi goods, fell at their feet or used threats if necessary and thus won converts. They sustained the scars and bruises to which a vaunted reference is sometimes made in our Congress and Conferences. The boys have in most places inaugurated and kept up the movement. When famine was at Barisal, the students divided themselves into different bands, boarded the tram cars, waylaid the *gharies*, sent round the

¹ *Ibid.*

² Daily Edition, 12 4 07.

hat whenever there collected a crowd, organised singing processions and went on their begging rounds religiously every morning...

"It is the wilfully blind who with such splendid instruments see no way out of servitude....The boys only are the hopes of the country in this her critical time. They have done much and they will do a great deal more...

"Students have done great things in the world. Mazzini depended on young Italy. And it is young Italy that led the mother country once more to emancipation. When the insurrection broke out at Bologna, the leaders were chiefly students of the University who assailed the palace and compelled the signature of a document which placed the troops of the Legation under the provisional Government. Then again when there were disturbances at different places in connection with the boycott of tobacco which was a rich source of revenue to the Austrian Government, the students of Pavia and the military came into conflict. In Milan a crowd assembled before the Government House whereupon the soldiers fired a bland volley to disperse them. A mere boy shouted 'Viva l'Italia' and discharged his pistol at the soldiers and his example was at once followed by the mob behind him. The guard was overpowered, the tricolour hoisted on the Government Buildings and the Governor himself was made a prisoner.

"In our Puranas it is the boy heroes who are said to have done the most splendid things. Their heroism has shed an undying lustre on the pages of the history of Chitore. And if the future can be prophesied from the present, great possibilities are concealed under the unpretentious exterior of the Comilla youths. They are the chosen instruments of God."

A movement that could produce such excellent instruments could not be pronounced a total failure.

SANAT K. BANERJI

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

THE ASHRAM ATMOSPHERE : 1948-1950

(5)

(i)

THE greatness of a personality lies in its creative power, the power not only to influence but to mould the lives of others. The Ashram is a living example of the Mother's creative power. More eloquent than anything are the power and presence that radiate from the atmosphere of the Ashram ; her environment is redolent of divinity.

A devotee's father on a day's visit from Calcutta (1961) was given only one minute's time for Pranam and no talk. On coming down he said, "For long I had been hearing about the greatness of the Mother. To-day I have learnt what is *Brahmatej* (Fire of God).".

As charcoal loses its blackness in fire, likewise our nature, however black it may be, is sure to attain snow-white purity if we keep aflame our faith in the Mother's Grace. One must allow all the smoke to pass and be in the Vedic terms, *tapta tanu*.

Among all the Ashram periodicals, a quarterly called *Bulletin of Physical Education*¹, which started from February 1949, occupies the most important place.

It is regularly published on every Darshan day. It contains mostly Sri Aurobindo's writings and the Mother's talks, thoughts and messages. The Mother's illuminating commentaries on Sri Aurobindo's *Thoughts And Aphorisms* which are often paradoxical and on the *Dhammapada* are an inspiring light thrown on them. Young and old, especially the receptive souls, find in them a growing store of scintillating wisdom and levers of a new life. Apparently difficult passages in *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* she makes crystal-clear by her characteristic qualities of simplicity and directness which sometimes produce thrilling vibrations in the heart.

Just as in the earlier phases of the Ashram Sri Aurobindo's letters guided

¹ From the 1st January 1959, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education is the official name of the educational institution of the Ashram instead of the former name, Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. The *Bulletin* is now the official organ of the institution, and accordingly renamed : *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*.

and stimulated the sadhana of the older generation, similarly in the later phases, when children became almost the dominant feature, the Mother's participation in much of their life had a quickening effect on the creative part of their being and incidentally in the being of the whole Ashram, older people as well as the children. Everybody found in the person of the Mother the very picture of the ideal she set forth in her talks. How she played her human part with divine beauty could abundantly be sensed in her words, in her actions, in her movements.

In all her movements her one aim was to kindle in the children the fire of a higher life and call forth their inherent potentialities.

In the words of a girl student who has been here since 1949 and was then 11, "Whenever there is any kind of depression or uneasiness I turn to the pages of the *Bulletin* and come across some passages which turn my thoughts to a different channel and cheer me up."

Another girl said, "Whenever there is time I turn to the old issues of the *Bulletin*. They are so pleasing to read."

Really speaking, it is a handbook of our sadhana. What is said in it will never grow old.

A member of the Ashram borrowed a copy of the *Bulletin* and in the course of his reading came upon a passage which he liked very much and then returned the copy. A few days after, he longed to read the same passage again, again borrowed the same copy, read and returned it. A third time also he did so. At last he copied out the passage and treasured it. Such is our attraction for the Mother's writings in the *Bulletin*.

About 350 copies are distributed to the sadhaks here. Till 1958 the Mother used to distribute it to all teachers of the Education Centre, to the Playground captains, the Ashram doctors, the engineers and some departmental heads of the Ashram. Now they themselves take it from the office.

The high standard that is maintained throughout is unique. The contents are in English and French side by side. For Hindi-knowing people there is a separate version. Up to 1958 the Mother used to hold a class thrice a week from 5-15 to about 6 p.m. to render Sri Aurobindo's works into French. Later on, these renderings and the Mother's talks in the evening classes passed into the *Bulletin*.

Much of the Mother's literature is in the form of answers to questions. *Words of the Mother*, Part I, was in answer to questions put by Miss Martland who was staying in Balcourt House. Once a week she used to go to Belle Vue House, where an American couple, the Macpheeters, stayed. Mrs. Macpheeter was named Shantimayi by the Mother. Pavitra, Nolini, Amrita used to be present when the Mother gave her talks in 1928. Nolini took notes. The result was the *Words of the Mother* Part I, formerly known

as *Conversations with the Mother*. Just as Sri Aurobindo's *The Mother*¹ is the first book after the Siddhi of 1926, so is this the first book of the Mother after the Siddhi.

An American Professor chanced upon this book in the hands of a visiting sadhak of the Ashram who was then on an all-India tour somewhere in North India. The Professor borrowed it and spent the whole night over it. The eagerness aroused in him by it led him to the Ashram. When he left, he remarked that one day the spiritual force of the Ashram would spread all over the earth. He was known to Nistha (Miss Wilson) and had come here before her coming.

The Mother's writings are generally in French. A German lady whose repeated visits to India were exclusively for the sake of the Ashram, said : "I have learnt English to read Sri Aurobindo in the original, now I shall learn French to read the Mother in the original."

For the same reason most of the adults in the Ashram learn this beautiful language.

In the playground, whenever any of the youngsters spoke to the Mother in English, she would invariably reply in French. All this inspired Tara and Usha, the captains of the smaller group, to speak among themselves in French. When the Mother was informed she wanted to see what they had learnt. She put short questions. The youngest ones of the group were Kokila and Poornima. On the first day there was some fun. The Mother asked Kokila :

"Quel âge as-tu ?"	("How old are you ?")
"Je m'appelle Kokila."	("My name is Kokila.")
"Et comment t'appelles-tu ?"	("And what's your name ?")
"J'ai huit ans."	("I am eight.")

Whenever an answer required some explanation the Mother sat down to give it. This is how her talks started in the Children's Courtyard. It was the youngest of all groups, the Green Group, with which she started. The first day was the 17th November, 1950. In the beginning it was a daily class. On the 19th she spoke something on l'abeille (the bee). From December 5 to December 16, along with all other activities of the Ashram, the class remained closed.² On and from the 17th the Mother gave readings from her *Belles Histoires*. Later on, three days in a week were fixed. Tuesday—recitation; Friday—story-telling by the Mother; Sunday—dictation. From 1955 or so the class was held once a week.

The Red Group joined later. "The Prayers and Meditation" class of the Red Group started on 6th June, 1951, with seven little girls.

¹ "The Mother had not the same origin as the other books mentioned (*Lights on Yoga, Bases of Yoga, The Riddle of this World*). The main part of this book describing the four Shaktis, etc., was written independently and not as a letter; so also the first part." —Sri Aurobindo on Himself. p. 334.

² A period of 11 days after the passing of Sri Aurobindo.

*Her class
in the playground*

As a rule, children below three are not allowed to enter the playground or go to the Mother. But a young boy P of one year and eight months was permitted to see her the very day he came here in August 1948. That was his first visit. From the day of his second visit he was allowed to go to the Mother daily with his sister. He started to prattle with the Mother in English when he was two and half years old. Spreading his little hand he would say "Mader—toffee". And the Mother gave him toffees one after another but not more than four.

In August 1950 he asked for *Darshan* of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother gave him a special written permit. That was the only *Darshan* he could have of Sri Aurobindo. Back in Delhi the boy wrote, "Mother come Delhi." The Mother wrote back, "You come here."

He was allowed to stay in the children's boarding house when three and half years old, the youngest boy to join the Green Group.

One or two instances of how he was free with the Mother. During those days the Mother used to sit in a small chair all through the marching and exercises. He would come and stand by the side of the Mother or catch her by the hand or gently pull her gown. One day he pulled the foot-stool kept for the Mother's use and sat on it. When his sister dissuaded him, the Mother said : "Don't tell him anything." He would often come and sit.

There was a time when people frequently had individual talks with the Mother till 9-30 p.m. in the Playground. One day it broke all record. She left the Playground at 11.30 p.m.

Once X was talking and talking for 45 minutes when P came up and took the Mother away by the hand to his Group. The child's unexpected move was a relief to all.

When he first learned the running and walking race he wanted to play the very same games with the Mother and the Mother actually played them with him. But when he asked the Mother to join him in the rabbit race, the Mother smilingly refused.

To check the playful habit in little children of telling lies, the Mother had asked each member of the green group class to keep count of the lies they spoke in the course of the day. When his turn came to answer P made a gesture with his hand amidst laughter and said, "But I have not counted." To check the habit of telling lies

Apropos the counting of lies we may tell an anecdote. A child had kept concealed the cycle-key of another simply for fun. As the owner looked about here and there he kept on chuckling. After a time the owner left the place. The moment the child (the culprit) remembered he had acted a lie, he ran to give him the key.

P had his first lesson in handwriting by copying a waving line drawn by the Mother.

Would it be believed that the Mother could come down to such trifles to give delight to the children ?

To a question "Why do we not profit as much as we should by our presence here in the Ashram?" the Mother said in a stirring tone :

"Ah ! It is very simple ! Because it is too easy. When you have to go round the world to find a teacher, when you have to abandon everything in order to get only the first words of a teaching, then this teaching, this spiritual aid becomes a very precious thing, like all things that are difficult to obtain, and you try hard to deserve it.

"Here, most of you came quite young, at an age when there was no question of spiritual life or spiritual teaching; that would have been quite premature. You have indeed lived in the atmosphere but without even perceiving it; you are accustomed to see me, hear me, I speak to you as one speaks to children, I have even played with you as people play with children; you have only to come and sit down and hear me speak, you have only to put a question to me and I answer you, I have never refused to say anything to anybody, it is so easy. It is enough to live, sleep, eat, take exercises and go to school. You live here as you would anywhere else. So you have got the habit....

"One day you will say : 'Well, I was here so long, I could have learnt so much, realised so much, and I did not even think of it...'

"That day you will go quick, you will advance with a giant's step."¹

The questions the children put give an insight into the working of their minds.

"When does the spiritual life begin ?"

"When one is united with one's psychic being and conscious of the divine presence, when one gets the impulse for action from this divine presence, when one's will has become a conscious collaborator with the divine will, then that is the starting-point.

"Before this, one can be an aspirant for the spiritual life, but has not got the spiritual life."

The Mother is more than our Guru—"the embodied Divine". She is our own mother in a divine form. Her Motherhood is our OM, our invocation :

ॐ आनन्दमयि चैतन्यमयि सत्यमयि परमे

OM Anandamayi Chaitanyamayi Satyamayi Parame.

The Mantra given us by Sri Aurobindo makes OM the Supreme Power of

¹ *Bulletin*, March 1958. In the course of her talks in the "Prayers and Meditations" class in 1947 the Mother said about the children (as noted by a sadhak) :

"Children have the psychic in front, they dream psychic dreams. They put questions which grown-ups cannot answer. Children know more than their elders. (17.9.1947)

"L'enfant est le symbole de progrès"—"The child is the symbol of progress."

"The best teacher of a child would be one who was in the psychic consciousness." (28.9.1947)

the Mother from which the world has originated and by which it is sustained.¹ It is that power which is to-day among us in human form. She is the living message of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*.

N once asked the Mother, "When far away, I utter to myself your name and call for your aid; do you hear that call ?

The Mother: "When in the midst of my work I make an abrupt halt and give you the answer, do you hear me ?"

We find in the *Bulletin* a question of the same type.

"I am with you"—what does it exactly mean ?

"When we pray or struggle with a problem within ourselves, are we really heard, always, in spite of our clumsiness and imperfection, in spite of even our bad will and our error ? And who hears ? You who are with us ?

"And is it you in your supreme consciousness, an impersonal divine force, the force of yoga or you, the Mother in a body with your physical consciousness ? A personal presence that knows our each thought and each act and not some anonymous force ? Can you tell us how and in what way you are present with us ?

"Sri Aurobindo and you, it is said, form one and the same consciousness, but is there a personal presence of Sri Aurobindo and your personal presence, two things distinct each playing its own role ?"

The Mother : "I am with you because I am, you or your are I.

"I am with you, that signifies a world of things, because I am with you on all levels, in all planes, from the supreme consciousness down to the most physical. Here, at Pondicherry, you cannot breathe without breathing my consciousness. It saturates the atmosphere almost materially, in the subtle physical and extends to the Lake, 10 kilometres from here. Farther, my consciousness can be felt in the material vital, then on the mental planes, everywhere...

"But that apart, there is a special personal tie between you and me, between all who have turned to Sri Aurobindo's and my teaching,—it is well understood, distance does not count here, you may be in France, you may be at the other end of the world or at Pondicherry, the tie is always true and living. And each time there comes a call, each time there is a need for me to know so that I may send out a force, an inspiration, protection or any other thing, a sort of message comes to me all of a sudden and I do the needful. These communications reach me evidently at any moment, and you must have seen me more than once stop suddenly in the middle of a sentence or work, it is because something comes to me, a communication and I concentrate.

"With those whom I have accepted as disciples, to whom I have said 'yes' there is more than a tie, there is an emanation of me. This emanation warns me

¹ "World, then, is the play of the Mother of things moved to cast herself for ever into infinite forms and avid of eternally outpouring experiences."—*The Life Divine*, American Ed., p. 96.

whenever it is necessary and tells me what is happening. Indeed I receive intimations constantly, but all are not recorded in my active memory, I would be flooded; the physical consciousness acts like a filter..."¹

(ii)

Peace was the first thing that the Yogis of the past sought for.

X had frequent descent of peace during the days when there was correspondence with Sri Aurobindo. But the mind had its own way after a time. He could not find a clue to stop thoughts peeping in.

The trouble had started since he had taken up Yoga. Then it was all manner of random thoughts, like the humming of bees round the hive, whenever he tried to meditate. Years passed without any sign of improvement. He then thought of making the mind vacant at least for a minute. He tried but failed and tried again. Hundreds of failures did not deter him from trying again. He tried all the methods given in the *Bases of Yoga*. He would stand at the door of the mind like a sentinel or persuade it like a child to be still for a time. What he found most difficult was to avoid sex-thoughts. In the *Bulletin* of November 1956 he came across the following question and answer :

Question : "I think I am sometimes on the point of having this experience but I always fall back into the ordinary consciousness. Why ?"

The Mother : "Probably you have still maintained a division in you. One part of your being refuses to advance with the rest, a part that clings to itself does not want to move, insists on being what it is. It is that pulls you back.

"One part of yourself delays, stops; and instead of compelling it to follow, you leave it on the way. You close your eyes, you blind yourself, you do not want to see that you have this difficulty, this ignorance or this stupidity. You do not want to see, because it is not very pretty to see, you prefer to ignore it. But simply because you ignore it, it does not cease to exist.

"It serves no purpose to play the ostrich; one day or another you must face it, you have to.

"Otherwise, you see the goal there approaching. Something in you moves forward, you are about to touch it, but never will you touch it if you have these fetters dragging you back."

The passage led X inward to search within. One by one he began to detect his defects. There arose a resolution² from within; this division must go! The result was immediate but short-lived. He could now check the thoughts but

¹ *Bulletin*, Feb. 1958, p. 73.

² "Of course the length of time depends on each individual, but it can be very much shortened if you make a really firm resolve. Resolution is the one thing required—resolution is the master-key." —*Words of the Mother*, Part III, p. 9.

only for a while. The initial success gave him the necessary strength and enthusiasm to keep up the attempt despite frequent failures.

Two years later he happened to read in another issue of the *Bulletin* :

“So long as one has not cut the last root of man’s desire for woman, one possesses only a captive mind and is as bound as a calf sucking its Mother.”

The words sank into his being. He felt the heavy chain so long weighing upon him snap. Now it is so easy for him often to make the mind vacant at will.

A friend of mine wondered why God should put His seeker in the middle of a sea of sorrows, or fling him into a furnace or make his life miserable in a thousand ways. Does He delight in throwing him like an insect into a spider’s web and seeing how he struggles to get out of it ? If He likes man to seek and find Him, why does He subject him to such suffering ?

None of his friends, none of the saints, sages and yogis whom he happened to meet could give him a convincing reply. Sri Aurobindo has dealt with the problem at great length in *The Life Divine*, Chapter XI, “Delight of Existence: The Problem”, and Chapter XII, “Delight of Existence : The Solution.” According to Sri Aurobindo, “If the evil and suffering exist, it is He that bears the evil and suffering in the creature in whom He has embodied Himself.”

And again :

“Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the playground.”¹

When I lighted upon the following passage in the *Bulletin* of April 1959, I thought that no more beautiful answer could there be than the Mother’s exposition. Richness and depth of philosophic reasonings and their penetrating conclusion all simplified into the delicacy of a divine fare for the soul.

The Mother herself raised the question, “...What is the use of having struggled so much, suffered so much, created something which, at least in its outward appearance, is so tragic and dramatic, if it is only to teach you how to come out of it,—better not to have begun at all.”

She gave the answer : “But if you go down to the bottom of things, if you rid yourself not only of all egoism but also of ego, you give yourself totally, unreservedly, so completely, so disinterestedly as to enable you to know that it is not a bad joke, it is not a tortuous path simply to come back—somewhat bruised—to the starting point. It is, quite on the contrary, in order that the whole creation may learn the delight of being, the beauty of being, the greatness of being, the majesty of a sublime life, and the perpetual, ever-progressive growth of this delight and beauty and grandeur.”

Do we not find in each problem the approaches and the solutions by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother complementary to each other ?

¹ *The Life Divine*, American Ed., p. 89.

In the field of sadhana there is the same complementariness.

Ours is not a yoga having nothing to do with life and its associations. If one accepts life one must accept its trials and tribulations. Families are allowed to stay in the Ashram. But families or no families, tensions are bound to arise between person and person so long they are in their common human nature. Victory is to those who emerge out of its grip.

When Y's troubles in the daytime with his office assistants and with others would tell upon his nerves in the night and make him walk restlessly up and down in the verandah (for he would not let his passion burst out but suffer within himself), he would seek relief in the divine words of the Gita and Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The Gita says :

शक्तोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक् शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।
कामक्रोधोद्वेगं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥ ५/२३

"He who can bear unperturbed here in the body the velocity of wrath and desire, is the Yogin, the happy man."

Sri Aurobindo counsels :

"Do not be troubled by your surroundings and their oppositions. These conditions are often imposed at first as a kind of ordeal. If you remain tranquil and undisturbed and continue your sadhana without allowing yourself to be inwardly troubled under these circumstances, it will help to give you a much-needed strength; for the path of Yoga is always beset with inner and outer difficulties and the sadhaks must develop a quiet, firm and solid strength to meet them."

The Mother's precept is so practical, direct and dynamic :

"This, you may say, is the ultimate end, the crown of the effort, the final victory. But what is to be done to reach there ? What is the path to follow and what are the first steps on the way ?

"Since we have decided to reserve love in its full splendour for our personal relation with the Divine, we shall, in our relation with others, replace it by a whole-hearted, unchanging, constant and egoless kindness and goodwill. It shall not expect any reward or gratitude or even recognition. Whatever the way the others treat you, you will not allow yourself to be carried away by resentment : and in your pure unmixed love for the Divine you shall leave him the sole judge as to how he is to protect you and defend you against the ununderstanding and bad will of others.

"Your joys and your pleasures you will await from the Divine alone. In him alone you will seek and find help and support. He will comfort you in all your pain, lead you on the path, lift you up if you stumble, and if there

are moments of faintness and exhaustion, he will take you in his strong arms of love and wrap you in his soothing sweetness."

Another instance. A professor intimately connected with the Ashram learnt that one of his colleagues whom he had helped on several occasions was trying to spoil his chances of promotion out of sheer jealousy. He also came to know that that man made fun of his sadhana and even imputed ulterior motives to his frequent visits to the Ashram and even went so far as to spread the rumour that he was getting mad and, therefore, unfit for the post he was holding. Naturally this enraged the professor and he began to think how to take suitable revenge upon him. He was determined to teach him the lesson of his life. And then in the course of his reading the *Bulletin*, which appeared to him like the whisper of God, he came across the passage quoted above.

At once he realised that it was wrong of him to think of taking revenge. From that moment he does not think much of how others treat him and has made it a part of his sadhana to see that he is not carried away by resentment even on the greatest provocations. He is slowly growing unmindful of what others speak about him.

Let us go into a little more detail about the way the Mother's words serve us like the Gita in a practical manner :

A sadhak was given to fits of anger on the slightest provocation by the workers under him or the members of his family and so on. He felt that his reaction was unjustly disproportionate but he felt helpless. None regretted his loss of temper and of peace more than he himself. It is not that he had not read or thought about control over anger but nothing had so long touched his soul as much as the following lines in the *Bulletin* that he came across in the course of his reading. It was indeed a precious moment in his life.

"If you are not alone and live with others, cultivate the habit not to throw yourself out constantly into spoken words, you will see little by little that an inner understanding has been established between you and the others; you will then be able to communicate with each other with the minimum speech or no speech at all. This outer silence is very favourable to inner peace ..."

At once it opened his eyes to the truth that more work was possible in peace than under the stress of hot words; it opened also what proved to be a pretty long vista of inner struggle which he had not had so long. For the first 15 days he controlled the outburst, suffering within himself the suppressed feeling. Another 15 days passed and yet another. In the meantime whenever, now at greater intervals, hot words escaped his lips, the Mother's words flashed upon his memory and he checked himself on the spot.

The progress was very slow, no doubt, despite his constant vigilance. Even after eight years of effort he cannot claim that he has got entirely free from such invasions but he is no longer a helpless victim. It shows how difficult it is to get even initial victory over one's nature.

(iii)

That there is a charm about the *Bulletin* none can deny. We all love to read it. Its pictures have a special attraction for all.

An account of the far-reaching effect of the pictures of the *Bulletin* will be of interest.

A young girl of 5 or 6 would tell her parents from time to time to take her to someone of white complexion. No one could make out what she meant. Her father used to pay visits to various saints and sages. Once he happened to visit the Ashram. On return he spoke to his daughter about the Mother, showing her at the same time a picture in the *Bulletin*. Seeing the picture the girl at once exclaimed, "Yes, it is she, I want to go to her."

She came with her father in December 1956. In those days the Mother gave prasada to everyone in the Playground. All would line past her, taking her gift. There was no *pranāma*. The girl's father followed the rule, took the prasada and walked on. The girl just behind, instead of following her father and others in the same way, sat down before the Mother with folded hands and kept looking her in the eyes and then fell at her feet. She had had no such example to imitate. Her movements were her own, prompted from within.

Thereafter she insisted upon staying in the Ashram for good. The father could not decide what to do. Next day he went to the Playground with a seven-page letter setting forth the whole situation. When he was about to hand it to the Mother she withdrew into herself. A few seconds after, she received it with a smile.

After two years' stay, they had to go back to dispose of some home affair. One day the father of the girl called together some of the playmates of his daughter who were there and said, "Let us see how long you can all meditate." While other children could not keep their eyes closed even for two minutes, his daughter sat motionless, eyes closed, for 20 minutes.

Another day her father saw that the girl was swinging her body from side to side with eyes shut. On enquiry she said that she saw herself sitting in a boat which the Mother was rowing. The swinging was due to the waves.

About the middle of the 'forties there was a talk in the air, that very fine souls were descending to the earth. When a question was put to Sri Aurobindo he confirmed it.

Here is an instance of a very little boy in Calcutta. While he was still in his Mother's womb she dreamt of Sri Ramakrishna. Even when very young, whatever he spoke about the duration of his own illness or of other people's affairs would come true. Out of a heap of pictures given to him by X, as soon as his eyes fell upon the photo of Sri Aurobindo he said : "This is God," and added "There are two Gods (Bhagawan) there." And, turning to X who had given

him the pictures, he said, "Go and live there." When the case of this boy was referred to Sri Aurobindo he wrote back :

"It is certainly remarkable. But there are a number of children born recently who have their psychic being already awake as if from birth and seem to have a knowledge already acquired in them. This may be one of these children."

These incidents recall to our memory the Mother's statement in the *Bulletin* of November 1953 :

"There are, in the history of the earth, moments when things that have been for thousands of years must give place to things that are about to manifest. A special concentration of the world consciousness, one might almost say an intensification of its efforts, happens at such times, varying according to the kind of progress to be made, the quality of the transformation to be realised. We are precisely at such a turning of the world's history. As nature has already created upon earth a mental being, even so there is now a concentrated activity to bring forth in this mentality a supramental consciousness and individuality.

"Certain beings who, I might say, are in the secret of the gods, have been advised of the importance of this moment in the life of the world, and they have taken birth upon earth to play their part in whatever way they can. A great luminous consciousness soars over the earth creating a kind of eddy in its atmosphere. All who are open receive a wave from this eddy, a ray from this light and seek to give a form to it, each according to his capacity."

A bit of digression. What led wandering X to the Ashram is an interesting story.

Once he happened to be travelling by rail in the same compartment with Tibati Baba, then 200 years old. He told X that he would come in contact with a great Yogi. At the time X did not care much about such things. Then he made up his mind to go out on an all-India tour.

At Amarnath he perceived in the image of Shiva the image of Sri Aurobindo.

On another occasion during his tour an old woman pressed him to perform Puja in her Shiva temple. He refused outright but being pressed again and again he agreed. While offering his last Pranam after the Puja the Mantra that came out of his lips was

ॐ नमो भगवते श्रीजरविन्दाय

Om namo bhagawate Śrīaravindāya.

And as he raised his head he saw the figure of Sri Aurobindo.

After his first experience at Amarnath he had written for a photo of Sri Aurobindo. Photos were rare in those days. The negative answer threw him into a mood of disappointment. While sitting quietly on the bank of the

Jhelum he saw a man walking past. After having gone on for 50 steps or so he turned back and drew out of his bundle a photo of Sri Aurobindo and gave it to him. It was autographed too.

When he wrote to his friend at Pondicherry how his prayer for a photo was fulfilled, his friend wrote to the Master. The reply he received was :

"The vision at Amarnath was Shiva's answer to X's prayer and in the nature of a Call. The bringing of a photograph must have been a continuance of the same Grace. But there are different parts of the nature which can answer to different forces and very often immediately after the call has come..." (11-11-1935)

Regarding the vision of Linga in the same letter he wrote : "The significance is clear—our identity with what is present in the Linga."

While offering lotuses one by one to the Ganges at Hardwar X saw in each floating flower the figures of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. To a question whether this had any symbolic significance the Master wrote :

"The lotuses are souls opening to the Truth with ourselves seated in their consciousness." (30-8-1937)

From Amarnath to Pondicherry he did the journey on foot. On coming here he was given permission for permanent stay. One of his first impressions of the Ashram was that even its trees and plants were absorbed in meditation.

One day (1937) while in meditation he saw Sri Aurobindo seated on a snow-white mountain-top and the Mother was on her rounds on a lion. On being asked Sri Aurobindo explained :

"The lion is the force at work and the movement signifies the Mother's spiritual activity—myself on the summit of Consciousness supporting her action." (30-8-1937)

Sri Aurobindo's writings are part of his missioned work. The Mother is writing new Shastras¹ in the *Bulletin*. The day they will come out in book form they will be hailed as the Scripture of the New World. Day in, day out, we hear stories of people from far and near feeling drawn towards the Ashram, led by the light from the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

A German Justice of Frankfort spent one full year on the studying of the tiny book *The Mother* before he came here once for all. He called it the Upanishad of our age. Likewise *The Four Austerities and the Four Liberations*,

¹ Hundreds and thousands of extracts can be made to show how their teachings are revolutionary. A high place is given to renunciation in the religious world. But in her talks of 1930 the Mother said

"There is in books a lot of talk about renunciation,—that you must renounce possessions, renounce attachments, renounce desires. But I have come to the conclusion that so long as you have to renounce anything you are not on this path; for, so long as you are not thoroughly disgusted with things as they are, and have to make an effort to reject them, you are not ready for the supramental realisation . . . Only when you find such a world disgusting, unbearable and unacceptable are you fit for the change of consciousness."

first published in the *Bulletin* of 1953, reads like the Gita or the Gospel. In what light a visiting sadhak takes it can be gathered from his own words :

"It is the most revolutionary book of our times, for it upsets the applecart of most of our cherished traditional religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. But its deeper value lies in the positive reorientation and rehabilitation of those beliefs and the new transforming canon of spirituality which the Mother really seeks to present to us in this essay.... This little gem of the Mother's writing is really a sort of counterpart to the big, massive, all-comprehensive book on spirituality by Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Like Sri Aurobindo in that book, the Mother is here chiefly concerned with the technique of Yogic Sadhana and the admirably clear-cut four points on 'austerity' and 'liberation' which constitute a kind of four commandments for the follower of the new spiritual Bible—the integral Yoga of transformation of our modern times."

The periodicals of the Ashram serve,¹ each in its own way, to spread the thought of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A visitor from Panna said : "Now the idea has caught on that it is not necessary to burn one's boats in order to seek the Divine. Living in the world one can serve the Divine, surrender himself to the Divine. It is so pleasing to hear about the Mother whenever anyone from the Ashram visits us."

The priest of a family temple happened to come here with the children of his master. In the course of a talk he said, "The age of Saint Kabir is now a thing of the past. Kabir taught : 'He who can turn his back upon his home for ever can follow me !' Now the time has come to make the home itself the abode of God. Not to run about in search of God leaving the home to its fate."

On being asked, "What is it that charms you the most here ?" he said : "What is not here with which one is not charmed ?" These are simple utterances of the common run of men.

One of the last gifts of Sri Aurobindo to humanity was the book now known as *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, compiled, after his passing, from his articles in the *Bulletin*. If these articles had continued, another *Life Divine* would have taken shape. They were started with the very first issue and ran till November 1950.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ "The object is to make the reading public better acquainted with the nature of the Yoga and the principle of what is being done in the Ashram. ..I come in only so far as it is necessary for the public to know my thought and what I stand for." 24.9.1935

—Sri Aurobindo on Himself.

THE GOD ABOVE GOD

(We are reproducing from 'The Listener' (Third Programme) of August 3, 1961, a very striking broadcast by the famous American theologian Paul Tillich. Following it are some excerpts by us from 'The Life Divine' of Sri Aurobindo throwing light on the problem raised by Tillich of the one yet manifold Supreme Being and of the Personal and Impersonal Divine.)

In my book *The Courage to Be* I have used the phrase 'The God above God' within a discussion of radical doubt. The question was : what can you say to a man, for whom all expressions of religious faith have disappeared in the fire of doubt, but a doubt which is serious and not a cynical play ? The answer was : you can take his seriousness as a symptom that something has not disappeared from him, namely the concern about that which concerns man ultimately and for which religion uses the term God.

In such concern the God who is absent as an object of faith is present as the source of a restlessness which asks the ultimate question, the question of the meaning of our existence. This God is not seen in a particular image by him who is in doubt about any possible image of God. The absent God, the source of the question and the doubt about himself, is neither the God of theism nor of pantheism; he is neither the God of the Christians nor of the Hindus; he is neither the God of the naturalists nor of the idealists. All these forms of the divine image have been swallowed by the waves of radical doubt. What is left is only the inner necessity of a man to ask the ultimate question with complete seriousness. He himself may not call the source of this inner necessity God. He probably will not. But those who have had a glimpse of the working of the divine Presence, know that one could not even ask the ultimate question without this Presence, even if it makes itself felt only as the absence of God. The God above God is a name for God who appears in the radicalism and the seriousness of the ultimate question, even without an answer.

A Misunderstood Term

The term 'God above God' has been misunderstood by some. It has been taken to imply the establishment of a kind of Super-God and a removal of the personal God of living faith. But God is not only the God of those who are able to pray to him—he is also the God of those who are separated from him, who do not know his name and are not able to speak to him or even about him. He is

not only the God of the religious people but he is also the God of those who reject religion. He is greater than the churches and their members, he is not bound to the sphere of the holy; he is also present in the sphere of the secular. Neither sphere has an exclusive claim on him. And even more : in God himself the contrast is overcome. The separation of the holy from the secular is a symptom of man's enstrangement from himself, of his predicament in time and space. Man is under the continuous threat of being overwhelmed by the power of finite and transitory things. Therefore he needs a reality which counters this threat, the sacred, in which the infinite and eternal shines through the finite and temporal. If man were inseparably united with the Ground of his Being, he would be without religion, because he would be in the divine Presence at every moment. Since there would be nothing secular, there would be nothing religious. For him God would indeed be 'the God above God'.

God above God, then means : God above the God of the theists and the non-god of the atheists. The word itself loses its meaning. The atheists are those who deny the God of the theists, but they do not deny the God above the God of the theists—they cannot, even if they tried seriously to do so. For their seriousness in trying to be atheists witnesses against their claim to be atheists. And those who are not serious in their denial of God, but who keep him away from themselves through unconcern or cynical irony, are not parties to a discussion about theism and atheism, they are in a preliminary state into which the concern about the ultimate meaning of life can break at any moment. At such moments the question of God will become alive to them.

Transcending Religious Images

But now it may be asked : why are the religious images of God necessary at all ? Is it not better to transcend them from the beginning, even if religion is necessary in the human predicament ? Would such a transcending of religion not remove the conflicts between the religions and the theologies which have been responsible for an unimaginable amount of crime and misery in the history of mankind ? And would it not overcome the destructive splits in the mind of the individual between his religious traditions and his critical honesty ? Let us elevate ourselves from our earliest years—so one could say—to the God above the gods of religion.

That is what many mystics have done for themselves and for their pupils; and many people in our time try to follow this road. They turn to medieval and modern Western mystics, or they turn to Hindu and Buddhist ideas; today it is particularly Zen Buddhism with the help of which they try to transcend the concrete images of God in Christianity and Judaism. The openness of Western man for this kind of Eastern way of religious experience is symptomatic of a state of mind in our present culture. It shows that the unbroken acceptance

of the concrete symbols of our Western religions, especially of Christianity, has become impossible for most thinking people. They cannot accept God as an object among other objects. They reject the traditional symbols, because they do not realize that every symbol points beyond itself and that the myths must be interpreted and deprived of their mythological form in order to become understandable for our time.

In this situation the term 'God above God' can be a help, not only for those who are in radical doubt but also for those who must be assured that the Christian message is not a combination of absurdities—that in its symbolic language the whole depth of the religious dimensions is effective. Christian theology is able to show in its own symbolism the truth about the 'God above God', of which the Asiatic religions have so much to say. And if this is being done adequately, it could be that the images of God in classical Christianity may receive a new affirmation, not as statements about objects but as genuine symbols in which the power of that to which they point is present. The term 'God above God' therefore is not meant as a suggestion that one should relinquish traditional symbols and ascend directly to this transcendent God; but the term is meant as a critical protection against attempts to take the symbols literally and to confuse the images of God with that to which they point, the ultimate in Being and Meaning.

Let us look again at the situation of the man who is in radical doubt. Why are so many people in our time in doubt about the images of God and about God himself? One of the reasons is that they have never understood the truth which is implied in the paradox 'God above God'. They have tried to discover a being called God, among other beings, and they have been unable to find him. Obviously they could not find him in this way. For God is not an object among objects. He transcends the world of objects as well as every subject. And in so far as the images of God make him into an object they must be transcended.

At this point someone may raise a question, perhaps with a serious concern : does this advice to transcend all religious images not destroy the concreteness and intimacy of the religious life? Does it not undercut the I-Thou relation to the personal God? Does not the God above God supersede the personal God of every living religion, so that no prayer is any longer possible? These are indeed serious questions; they have been asked throughout the whole history of religions, and also in the history of the Church, whenever mystical experiences or philosophical analyses of the religious facts have shown vistas beyond those in which the traditional religious life is moving.

Let me try to answer these questions : first of all, the question of the personal God. If we say 'God is a person', we say something which is profoundly wrong. If God were a person, he would be one being alongside other beings, and not He in whom every being has his existence and his life, and who is nearer to each of us than we are to ourselves. A person is separated from any other

person; nobody can penetrate into the innermost centre of another. Therefore we should never say that God is a person. And neither the Bible nor classical theology ever did. In classical theology the Latin term *persona* applied only to the three faces of God as Father, Son and Spirit. The application of the term 'person' to God is a poor invention of nineteenth-century theology and even more of popular talk about religion.

If, however, we say that God as the creative source of everything personal in the universe is personal himself, we are right. He cannot be less than his creation. But then we must make another assertion and say : he who is personal is also more than personal; and, conversely : he who is more than personal is also personal, namely, personal for us who are persons. This makes it possible that in our religious life we can speak to him as an ego speaks to another ego, that we can say 'Thou' to him and that he can address us, as a person addresses another person. But whenever this happens, we must remain aware of the fact that it is God to whom we speak, and it is he himself who makes it possible for us to speak to him by working as Spirit in the innermost centre of our being. The God above God and the God to whom we can pray are the same God. I say this to those who feel endangered by the term 'God above God.'

To the others, to those who are in radical doubt and to those who live in a profound uneasiness about the Christian images of God, I would say : 'Transcend the symbols; they themselves want you to do so. That is what they demand. With your doubt and your uneasiness you witness to that of which the term "God above God" is a paradoxical expression : The Ultimate, the Holy itself.'

THE ONE DIVINE INFINITE— GOD PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL

(EXCERPTS FROM *THE LIFE DIVINE* OF SRI AUROBINDO)

THE quest of man for God, which becomes in the end the most ardent and enthralling of all his quests, begins with his first vague questionings of Nature and a sense of something unseen both in himself and her. Even if, as modern Science insists, religion started from animism, spirit-worship, demon-worship and the deification of natural forces, these first forms only embody in primitive figures a veiled intuition in the subconscious, an obscure and ignorant feeling of hidden influences and incalculable forces, or a vague sense of being, will, intelligence in what seems to us inconscient, of the invisible behind the visible, of the secretly conscious spirit in things distributing itself in every working of energy. The obscurity and primitive inadequacy of the first perceptions do not detract from the value or the truth of this great quest of the human heart and mind, since all our seekings—including Science itself—must start from an obscure and ignorant perception of hidden realities and proceed to the more and more luminous vision of the Truth which at first comes to us masked, draped, veiled by the mists of the Ignorance. Anthropomorphism is an imaged recognition of the truth that man is what he is because God is what He is and that there is one soul and body of things, humanity even in its incompleteness the most complete manifestation yet achieved here and divinity the perfection of what in man is imperfect. That he sees himself everywhere and worships that as God is also true; but here too he has laid confusedly the groping hand of Ignorance on a truth—that his being and the Being are one, that this is a partial reflection of That, and that to find his greater Self everywhere is to find God and to come near to the Reality in things, the Reality of all existence.

A unity behind diversity and discord is the secret of the variety of human religions and philosophies ; for they all get at some image or some side clue, touch some portion of the one Truth or envisage some one of its myriad aspects. Whether they see dimly the material world as the body of the Divine, or life as a great pulsation of the breath of Divine Existence, or all things as thoughts of the cosmic Mind, or realise that there is a Spirit which is greater than these things, their subtler and yet more wonderful source and creator,—whether they find God only in the Inconscient or as the one Conscious in inconscient things or as an ineffable superconscious Existence to reach whom we must leave behind our terrestrial being and annul the mind, life and body, or, over-

coming division, see that He is all these at once and accept fearlessly the large consequences of that vision,—whether they worship Him with universality as the cosmic Being or limit Him and themselves, like the Positivist, in humanity only or, on the contrary, carried away by the vision of the timeless and spaceless Immutable, reject Him in Nature and Cosmos,—whether they adore Him in various strange or beautiful or magnified forms of the human ego or for His perfect possession of the qualities to which man aspires, his Divinity revealed to them as a supreme Power, Love, Beauty, Truth, Righteousness, Wisdom,—whether they perceive Him as the Lord of Nature, Father and Creator, or as Nature herself and the Universal Mother, pursue Him as the Lover and attracter of souls or serve Him as the hidden Master of all works, bow down before the one God or the manifold Deity, the one divine Man or the one Divine in all men or, more largely, discover the One whose presence enables us to become unified in consciousness or in works or in life with all beings, unified with all things in Time and Space, unified with Nature and her influences and even her inanimate forces,—the truth behind must ever be the same because all is the one Divine Infinite whom all are seeking. Because everything is that One, there must be this endless variety in the human approach to its possession ; it was necessary that man should find God thus variously in order that he might come to know Him entirely. But it is when knowledge reaches its highest aspects that it is possible to arrive at its greatest unity. The highest and widest seeing is the wisest ; for then all knowledge is unified in its one comprehensive meaning. All religions are seen as approaches to a single Truth, all philosophies as divergent viewpoints looking at different sides of a single Reality, all Sciences meet together in a supreme Science. For that which all our mind-knowledge and sense-knowledge and suprasensuous vision is seeking, is found most integrally in the unity of God and man and Nature and all that is in Nature.

The Brahman, the Absolute is the Spirit, the timeless Self, the Self possessing Time, Lord of Nature, creator and continent of the cosmos and immanent in all existences, the Soul from whom all souls derive and to whom they are drawn,—that is the truth of Being as man's highest God-conception sees it. The same Absolute revealed in all relativities, the Spirit who embodies Himself in cosmic Mind and Life and Matter and of whom Nature is the self of energy so that all she seems to create is the Self and Spirit variously manifested in His own being to His own conscious force for the delight of His various existence,—this is the truth of being to which man's knowledge of Nature and cosmos is leading him and which he will reach when his Nature-knowledge unites itself with his God-knowledge. This truth of the Absolute is the justification of the cycles of the world ; it is not their denial. It is the Self-Being that has become all these becomings ; the Self is the eternal unity of all these existences,—I am He. Cosmic energy is not other than the conscious force of that

Self-existent : by that energy It takes through universal nature innumerable forms of itself ; through its divine nature It can, embracing the universal but transcendent of it, arrive in them at the individual possession of its complete existence, when its presence and power are felt in one, in all and in the relations of one with all :—this is the truth of being to which man's entire knowledge of himself in God and in Nature rises and widens. A triune knowledge, the complete knowledge of God, the complete knowledge of himself, the complete knowledge of Nature, gives him his high goal ; it assigns a vast and full sense to the labour and effort of humanity. The conscious unity of the three, God, soul and Nature, in his own consciousness is the sure foundation of his perfection and his realisation of all harmonies : this will be his highest and widest state, his status of a divine consciousness and a divine life and its initiation the starting-point for his entire evolution of his self-knowledge, world-knowledge, God-knowledge. (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, Chap. XVII)

The sharp opposition made between personality and impersonality by our mental way of thinking is a creation of the mind based on the appearances of the material world ; for here in terrestrial existence the Inconscient from which everything takes its origin appears as something entirely impersonal ; Nature, the inconscient Energy, is entirely impersonal in her manifest essence and dealings ; all Forces wear this mask of impersonality, all qualities and powers, Love and Delight and Consciousness itself, have this aspect. Personality makes its apparition as a creation of consciousness in an impersonal world it is a limitation by a restricted formation of powers, qualities, habitual forces of the nature-action, an imprisonment in a limited circle of self-experience which we have to transcend,—to lose personality is necessary if we are to gain universality, still more necessary if we are to rise into the Transcendence. But what we thus call personality is only a formation of superficial consciousness ; behind it is the Person who takes on various personalities, who can have at the same time many personalities but is himself one, real, eternal. If we look at things from a larger point of view, we might say that what is impersonal is only a power of the Person : existence itself has no meaning without an Existent, consciousness has no standing-place if there is none who is conscious, delight is useless and invalid without an enjoyer, love can have no foundation or fulfilment if there is no lover, all-power must be otiose if there is not an Almighty. For what we mean by Person is conscious being; even if this emerges here as a term or product of the Inconscient, it is not that in reality : for it is the Inconscient itself that is a term of the secret Consciousness; what emerges is greater than that in which it emerges, as Mind is greater than Matter, Soul than Mind; Spirit most secret of all, the supreme emergence, the last revelation, is the greatest of all, and Spirit is the Purusha, the All-Person, the omnipresent Conscious Being. It is the mind's ignorance of this true Person in us, its confusion of

person with our experience of ego and limited personality, the misleading phenomenon of the emergence of limited consciousness and personality in an inconscient existence that have made us create an opposition between these two aspects of the Reality, but in truth there is no opposition. An eternal infinite self-existence is the supreme reality, but the supreme transcendent eternal Being, Self and Spirit,—an infinite Person, we may say, because his being is the essence and source of all personality,—is the reality and meaning of self-existence : so too the cosmic Self, Spirit, Being, Person is the reality and meaning of cosmic existence; the same Self, Spirit, Being or Person manifesting its multiplicity is the reality and meaning of individual existence. (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part I, Chap. II)

THE OBSCENE AND THE UGLY—FORM AND ESSENCE

OBSCENITY has its place in art, but not ugliness.

Obscenity and ugliness are not the same, nor are decency and beauty.

To maintain and hide the brute in man is a characteristic feature of the civilised world, and this is what is called decency. And to expose this brute nature to daylight is obscenity.

Is there any necessity or usefulness at all in exhibiting the brute nature in any sphere of a civilised society ?

Brute truth may be admitted in the world of scientific research. But the question arises whether an artist also has the same privilege. From the standpoint of the creation of beauty what purpose can obscenity serve ?

Is it not merely idle talk to say that one must not expose the brute nature to public view ? For there have been different opinions in different times and climes as to what constitutes exposing the brute nature.

Decency is that which conforms to social rules and customs, and that means decorum in conduct. And it is natural that there should be difference in social usages in different societies and in different ages. Decency and indecency are but relative terms, they have no absolute value.

An artist may be charged with obscenity when he violates the prevalent standard of good taste in a society. But that need not detract in the least from the value of the beauty he creates.

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A decent thing may be civil and correct, but not necessarily beautiful.

The puritans lay great stress on civility, decency and good conduct. But, on that account, it cannot be said that they are endowed with a great sense of beauty as well. History testifies otherwise. Puritan England is a glaring proof how even decency can be an embodiment of ugliness.

And the pen of Kalidasa gloriously proves that obscene things are not always bound to be ugly.

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When does the obscene happen to become ugly ? On coming down to a particular stage of nakedness ? It does not seem to be so. The obscene may have an inseparable relation with nakedness, but surely not with ugliness. Even

extreme nakedness may turn out to be supremely beautiful, owing to the attitude of the observer, by virtue of the delicate touch of the artist's brush. The obscene appears ugly when one identifies it with untouchability; that is to say, it is so to an acute moral sense, to a profession of good taste, to prudishness; in other words, when we do not give a thing its innate, its soul value, when we fail to appreciate its proper nature and function in the universal play, but sever it from its setting in the whole and assign a false value to it, sometimes too much, sometimes too little. A thing begins, on the contrary, to grow beautiful when it imbibes a universal rhythm, wears the supremely blissful smile of creation. In the bosom of Nature everything is beautiful. The ugly is only that which is artificial and perverse. The decent is ugly when it is merely an outward show of purity without reflecting any inner truth. Indeed often in an inordinate attempt to protect the body from exposure, decency amounts almost to indecency.

Ugliness comes into being only when we endeavour to exhibit something, be it decent or indecent, as a truth which is not realised in the conscious bliss of the heart.

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O artist, have you realised the bliss with which the Divine has filled the ugly and the filthy to the brim? If so, then you have acquired the philosopher's stone which transforms even the ugly into the beautiful.

When Duhshasana, the second Kaurava, unrobed Draupadi, it must have been something indecent to look at. But when SRI Krishna robbed the bathing gopi girls of their clothes, it was supremely beautiful.

The poet says, "Manifest the Divine in your highest creation of beauty and you will discover the supremely beautiful One therein. When you tied God to the gallows, the gallows became the Cross."¹

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There are two varieties of beauty : beauty of essence—the sap of truth—and beauty of form. Youth is beautiful, for it is handsome. Old age too has a beauty of its own, because it is the expression of a ripe and mellow experience, a long view and a large detachment. The beauty of the heavens consists in the beauty of form. The R̥g Veda says : "The supreme Poet used his poetic genius and created the beautiful forms in heaven." But the earth has another delight to give—delight itself. "Of all elements the earth is essentially full of delight," so says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. A smile radiates the beauty of form. A deeper emotion makes tears more beautiful. Happiness is limned by the beauty

¹ Attachez Dieu au gibet, vous avez la crois.—Victor Hugo

of form, while sorrow is carved by the depth of the feeling. We appreciate a comedy through the play of a formal beauty and a tragedy through the poignancy of an emotional substance. Ariel was handsome, hence beautiful. Caliban was high-serious, vibrant with an essential sap of Truth. Sakuntala appeals to our heart, for she was an embodiment of beauty. We can appreciate Lady Macbeth for the intensity of her sombre soul.

Kalidasa has excelled in depicting the beauties of form. Shakespeare sought not beauty but the wide surge of vital truths. Petrarch abounds in the beauty of form. He created more and yet more beauty of form. But Dante is to be appreciated rather through the poetic truths that stood out as unmoving rocks, the tremendous energy petrified as it were in the form. Our Indian poet Vidyapati was mad after the beauty of form. He expressed the pangs of his heart thus :

“Since my birth I have been seeing so many forms, yet my eyes are not satiated.”

Chandidasa seeks the quintessential substance (*rasa*). His heart is dipped in this soul-sap. The form given to beauty is therefore somewhat less impressive in him—he evokes more the *being* and less the *becoming* (speaking metaphysically).

Rasa and *rūpa* are however in the end the two wings of poetic beauty, and the perfect poetic beauty marries the two in an indivisible unity—although actually that is a rare phenomenon.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Chinmoy from the Bengali in “*Rupa O Rasa*”)

TWO POEMS

CASKET

CLOUDS of unbecoming
Sweep before my idle view
Of painted life, their many hues
Dazzle my dark humility.

Pale green caskets brimmed with pearls,
Float down the wandering streams
Of all my destinies....

Yet stay, my soul, for now
The fairest flowers on every bank
Are yours—pluck the stems
And dress my hair with echoed dreams,
Calm my trembling lest I part
From my Beloved once again,
Who waits along the passing years
To wear the jewels I bring.

WHITE WISDOM

FROM that wild, lean roaring
Of my pulsing brain—sodden, thick
With a tempest of blind unknowing,
Plunge through the wastes of remembered sin
To the calm, sweet source of all I am,
And return to clarity,
Still-souled with a long, white wisdom;
For now a fire of sapphire flames
Is burning hollow, mystic rifts
In the marbled plateau of my heart,
Through which will flow the widening floods
Of my high devotion,
And the large awareness
Of Your love's reality.

TONY SCOTT

SIGNPOSTS AND SYMBOLS

“VINGT-ET-UNS”

The poems came to the writer some two decades ago; revised recently, they are now being serially published in batches of twos.

The pieces number Twenty-One in all; and each of them comprises of just Twenty-One lines: hence the cryptic sub-title “Vingt-et-uns”.

Apart from their recondite value as psychological signposts in the growth of the writer's being, the poems might presumably provide amusing and useful material for aesthetic enquiry—as to the adequacy or otherwise of the novel mould into which spiritual experience is here sought to be cast and the technique-mode governing the multilateral symbolism thereof.

Incidentally, the writer knows only now that ‘Vingt-et-un’ is a gambling card-game; and that Knowledge imparts to him the hope that his successful(?) gamble with the new Form may well inspire other lovers of the Muse to try their hand at this new Form-and-Game and come off with better windfalls!

19

Lo, for a Journey Long have I booked myself !
The sumptuous fare have I paid in strictest full
In gesture kingly, coin after ringing coin;
And now I've but to find my proper berth—
And lie in splendid ease of vigilant rest,
Not sparing a thought where the train stops more, where less
So it brings me steadily nearer to my goal,
Minute-by-minute at race with mile-by-mile !

And how these fleeting films and circling sights,
Perennially shot by concerting Time-and-Space,
Now lend me a glory all unbought, unsought !
And how these bracing draughts from pure unravished plains,
Pouring down gorges of all my senses agape,
Fresh-charge my brain-cells with shocks of electric thrill !
And even the settling pall of vexations small,
That these ill-bred nerves so dread and deepen withal,
Is magically cleared one Rosy Flushing Morn,
When the peace ingathered during expectant rest
Matches the vibrant Peace of the restful Haven :
And the very sound and stir and circumstance
Of erstwhile hours transfix into symbol-moulds forever !

20

Wings love not cages : so indeed we deem;
And I've seen myself full many fluttering wings
Straining a space across unyielding bars,
And dashing poor feathery brains to know too late
The steel-hard logic of unrelenting Fate,
And settling at last content, resigned, docile,
Born sky-voyagers 'cabined cribbed, confined' !

And tales have I heard, too, of live-wire throbbing wings
Effecting escape off cage-doors star-oped wide :
Haply to roam at large, and sing, and hop,
Haply to fall, star-crossed, into traps far worse !

But a wondrous sight Thou hast made me see, O Lord,
Of cage-birds keeping to cages flung open wide :
Not that they've lost their power of flight, I trust,
Nor that they love not ample woods and skies,
But that they've tasted in Thine airy cage
What they never did in their wooden nests, I ween—
A Love that can let the fledglings fly free-willed,
So they come back heartened to its enfolding wings,
And a Love that can feed withal even eagle-hearts,
So they soar, cage and all, into highest heavens at will !

CHIMANBHAI

THUS SANG MY SOUL

VIII. MOTHERING THE BOND OF LOVE : PRAYERS AND PRAISES

(Continued from the last issue)

71. INTO THY HEART OF GRACE

For days and hours together
Following the trail of Thy footfalls' tread,
I have lingered on my longings' wearied way, O Mother,
At every step to stumble, sped
Into pits of failure and pools
Of deep disappointment, dark dejection.
Glimpses of Thee have held my heart: Thy farness coo s
My hands that seek to capture
Thy slow-receding train of Love. No more the rapture
Of Thy owning touch of tenderness rare
Or hints of intimate affection
Filling the heedless burdening air
With the breath of Thy divine attraction.
O Bliss enthralling, climb
Not back beyond the bounds of Time.
Thy Robe of Beauty Thou hast condescended
To lend my sorrowful soul, withdraw not; nor
Thy lotus Hands of Compassion, extended
Low unto my back-slided brittle birth. No more
No more, now keep Thyself so hidden
Behind Thy Maya ; come, O ridden
Upon Thy miracling wings of Wonder! pour,
The grief-exiling nectar of Thy gaze,
And own me, earth and soul, into Thy heart of Grace!

(To be continued)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

THOUGHTS

WHEN a rubber ball drops from the air on the ground and bounces up a yard or two and stands suspended in mid-air for a split second, then if anybody takes that state of suspense as the true state of the ball he is mistaken.

Likewise, if somebody thinks that humanhood is man's true state he is grievously mistaken.

Man, whether he is high or low or has bounced up a few yards and been able to stay in mid-air for a while, is still a man.

Yes, when he rises up and stays there then he looks as effulgent as a ball that has become a celestial body and when he falls down he looks as filthy as a ball stuck in mud.

★

★

The difference between Sanskrit and Prakrit is a matter of indifference. Those who lay down that the Veda should be couched in Sanskrit as distinct from Prakrit betray their own puerility. The Veda is accessible to any language whatsoever provided there is a seer fit to receive inspired knowledge.

The seers have the power to express the Veda (revealed Knowledge) equally in every language, be it Sanskrit or Prakrit or be it in silence or in laughter. Though we cannot turn the Cutch desert into a fertile land, a seer hailing from Cutch can express his visions in the dialect of Cutch.

The Veda has no preference for any particular language or time or man. But it seeks for a golden vessel to receive the milk of the lioness.

★

★

Do not fall into this erroneous idea that famine, pestilence and earthquake are the only calamities that overtake us. Calamities can befall us in a hundred ways. The frequent use of phrases like "God's Will" without fully comprehending their deep implication has not in any way ameliorated our lot.

Those who have understood by realisation what these words imply never use them even in their dreams for such trifles. They are very circumspect and measure their words before they utter them.

But others flaunt these words to hide their destitution.

Man has suffered more by the profanation of sacred words than by the most appalling catastrophes.

GIRDHARLAL

(Translated from the author's Gujarati book "Uparāma")

WORLD UNION

World Union (A Bi-monthly Journal) Edited by *Marguerite Lidchi and Jay Holmes Smith*, 24, Rue Dupuy, Pondicherry - 2, (Annual subscription Rs.6/-)

All problems of existence, according to Sri Aurobindo, are problems of harmony. What is harmony, after all ? Etymologically, as everyone knows, the word suggests a fitting together of various parts in order to make an agreeable whole, that gives a sense of completeness, oneness, unity, union. But—it has been often pointed out—unity is by no means uniformity.

The best illustration of this term can be had in the instance of an orchestra. When the instruments individually play *ad libitum* any odd melody in whichever key and rhythm they choose to, it is cacophony. But when the conductor appears before them and they take to a given piece, concentrating on their respective parts—then only the orchestra stands on a common ground, and their motives unite for a common purpose. And thus unity takes birth, which is not at all uniformity : an infinite variety, a host of diversities converge and give rise to what man calls harmony.

All successful and complex harmony welcomes discords which, of course, in the process of 'resolution' transform themselves into concords.

When the Composer (who is also the Conductor) of the vast symphony in space and time, called 'Creation', brought in Man as the most powerful and capable player, and gave him the freedom of virtuosity, He too well expected discords, dissonances which would no doubt add new shades, flavours and shapes to His composition.

But modern man—having abused his rights of virtuosity—has grown much too fond of dissonances. So much so that, at times, he altogether forgets that a 'resolution' has to be brought in, that this chaos cannot continue for ever; or, even if he becomes aware of this imperious need for 'resolution', he finds no way out from the cacophony he himself has introduced right in the middle of the supreme Harmony.

As early as 1915, in the *Ideal of Human Unity* and in *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo not only pointed out the necessity and dangers of the turn towards Unity, but gave in clear and definite terms the ideal solution. He even went further to show the necessity of the Spiritual Transformation. Also, through his unique translation of the Rig Vedic hymns, he reminded man of the ancient path of unity :

"Join together, speak one word, let your minds arrive at one knowledge even as the ancient gods arriving at one knowledge partake each of his own portion.

"Common Mantra have all these, a common gathering to union, one mind common to all, they are together in one knowledge; pronounce for you a common Mantra, I do sacrifice for you with a common offering.

"One and common be your aspiration, united your hearts, common to you be your mind,—so that close companionship may be yours."

And it is encouraging to note how human history has already taken the course Sri Aurobindo had predicted as early as 1915, though the progress be slow, chequered and mostly unconscious.

After the agony of two great wars and with the gloom cast by the possibility of a third one, the symphony 'Creation' is on the verge of completing a significant 'movement'. The planets are going to meet one other in a 'close' chord, and man is going to make fresh experiments with nuclear weapons, as well as attempting to be master of outer space. And yet he is tormented by the question in his subliminal being : "Is that all ? What next ?"

Still there is a beyond, as Sri Aurobindo would put it. But that Beyond has to be reached *within*, not *without* !

And there is now the epoch-making certitude of the advent of the Spiritual Man (a logical sequence of the Rational Man in the process of evolution) who—by replacing the chaotic virtuosity of the groping rational man's impurities and discordant motives—shall take the lead towards a divine 'resolution' as willed by the Composer, that shall bring about the new 'movement' of the Supermind.

These are some of the components of this evidently intermediary 'cadenza'.

At this juncture, optimists regardless of 'bloc' and belief will thrill to find a new bi-monthly called *World Union* which derives its inspiration mainly from the superhumanitarian philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. The editors of the journal say, by way of introduction :

"This journal is one of many voices of the Great Awakening, an organ of the World Union movement. We seek to further the renaissance which has already begun, the world awakening to the most potent fact of life : *The world is ONE*.

"...This truth of the Oneness can become a sovereign fact, a potent transforming force in our lives and in our world, provided we face it, open to it, let it grow in us and move us.

"We look forward to sharing with our readers some of the satisfactions of the greatest adventure left to man, active and conscious participation in the first World Renaissance. We have climbed our Everests, explored the

ocean depths in our bathyspheres, probed outer space with our sputniks, but have not solved the problem of ourselves and our relations with our neighbours on this shrinking planet. But those who look beneath the surface of things see, as a vivid sign of the time, that the Awakening has begun.

"The fruition of the Spiritual Age will be a progressive universal harmony....

"...WORLD UNION offers hospitality to sincere and competent writers of various viewpoints, in the faith that in so doing we shall be furthering a synthesis of views and values which will contribute to human unity."

The present reviewer feels that little comment is necessary to do justice to such a periodical. He can only point out the way the editors have fulfilled their ambitious promise, so far as the editing is concerned. They have really shown a rare catholicity of taste in selecting their articles. Writings from the pen of eminent thinkers and writers of the age have found place in the first two issues of the journal under review, among which names like Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Julian Huxley, Jalaluddin Rumi, Albert Schweitzer, Vinoba Bhave, Rishabhchand, Julie Medlock and K.D.Sethna easily shine out.

A long contribution of world-wide spiritual interest is Marguerite Lidchi's *Yoga Expurgated : An Answer to Mr.Koestler* in the second issue (August 1961). It is certainly the finest and profoundest criticism so far, by a European, of Koestler's entertaining but superficial article in a recent number of *Encounter*.

The get-up of *World Umon* is simple, neat and elegant. The cover design in its sheer simplicity houses indeed a great beauty and evokes a world of suggestions.

Every man of good will and sincere optimism would find a genuine touch of enthusiasm in the pages of this new journal which will no doubt carry out its great mission, keeping always in view the significant role it has chosen to play in the symphony called 'Creation'.

PRITHWINDRA

THE PLACE OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

English In India—A National Perspective—The Presidential Address of the XI Session of the All India English Teachers' Conference, Delhi, by Prof. V. K. Gokak (1960).

Poet and critic, scholar and teacher, linguist and linguistcian and above all seeker of Truth who has found it in Sri Aurobindo and his multi-dimensional achievements, Padmasri Prof. V.K.Gokak is most eminently qualified to assess the place of English in India.

The poet in him seizes the truth that English is not only not alien to us but richly links the old and the new, the East and the West. He exclaims in the poem *English Words* that fittingly concludes the brilliant address (the poem that also appeared in the April issue of *Mother India*)—

Fathomless words! With Indo-Aryan blood
Tingling in your veins ;
The spoils of ages, global merchandise
Mingling in your strains !

The scholar and the critic in him analyse the present situation and his long experience as a teacher comes to his aid to study the place of English at various stages from Secondary School and Pre-University to the Post-Graduate and the Research levels. The linguist in him enables him to see not only the place of English *vis-à-vis* other languages in India but the need of the specialist to learn classical languages like Latin and Sanskrit and modern European languages. The linguistcian presents to us the problems of teaching English as a foreign language. The seeker of Truth and the Aurobindonian are seen everywhere not only in profuse references to the great Master but in brilliant insights, as, for example, in regretting the neglect of the study of Swami Vivekananda as a writer and in stressing the role of imagination and therefore of literature and poetry in the teaching of language.

Though a poet and a scholar, he is not blind to the present situation of English in India. He has no illusions : English can only be a second language. He also emphasizes the importance of the language as a tool. To most it cannot be and need not be any more than a tool. He therefore warns us not to shut our eyes to the changed situation and refuse to do anything but teach literature. And yet, with true perception, he says, “ ‘The secret of morals,’ said Shelley,

is *love*. Similarly the secret of language teaching is literature, I would even say poetry."

While dealing with the Pre-University and the three-year degree course, he stresses the cultivation of language skills and an ability to read and comprehend any English writing. Cultivation of grace of style and elegance of speech is emphasized for students who choose English as their optional 'subject' in the degree class.

Coming to the Special course in English Literature for the B.A. Class, Prof. Gokak rightly focusses our attention on the absence of real literary taste in the students. He suggests suitable changes in the Examination system: he would wish it to require less of information and more of students' ability to see literature as literature.

Speaking of the reorientation of the M.A. Course in English he rightly reminds us of the possible walks of life the candidates may choose after getting the degree. The course should answer the needs of all, of those who choose to be teachers as of those who choose to be writers, research scholars in literature and research scholars in linguistics and so on.

Prof. Gokak is again very clear in his thinking and very frank in his statement when he comes to research work. Nothing is truer than the statement, "Our Ph.D. theses, based on critical interpretations of writers, forms or periods, tend to be collations of various critical points of view rather than original interpretations." We feel happy to find the Professor giving as an example of original interpretations Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta's *Poets and Mystics*. It is given only to a very few to make a real contribution to the fundamentals of literary criticism, says the learned Professor and counts Sri Aurobindo among such rare giants. "*The Future Poetry* of Sri Aurobindo seems to be a very significant contribution from this point of view," he says.

Of the possible subjects for research, for the Indian student Prof. Gokak thinks the work of the Indo-Anglians and the Anglo-Indians the most fruitful field.

In the last part of his address he himself deals with various aspects and problems of Indo-Anglian writing : Literature as well as Journalism. As one may expect, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo receive pride of place among Indo-Anglian writers. Whenever the Professor speaks of Sri Aurobindo, he is not unaware of the unfortunate fact that Indians have yet to become fully alive to the supreme achievement of the Master in the fields of poetry and literature. Hence he quotes from authorities in the West who have paid homage to the Indian Genius. "Sir Francis Younghusband hailed Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* as one of the greatest books of the century and Sir Herbert Read remarked regarding *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo's epic : 'It is a remarkable achievement by any standard and I am full of amazement that someone not of English origin should have such a wonderful command not only of our language

as such, but of its skilful elaboration into poetic diction of such high quality.’”

Among important English journals in India are mentioned *Mother India* and *The Advent* of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Little wonder that the seeker of Truth who has devoted his life to the realm of the word should conclude his talk with the riddle posed to him by the English words “with Indo-Aryan blood / Tingling in your veins” :

In the beginning was the Word
The Word was God.
The Word is in the middle
And the Word is Man.
In the end will be the Word
And the word will be God in Man.

K. B. SITARAMAYYA

SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

A Handbook of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga by T. D. Chatterjee, with a foreword by Dr. S.K. Maitra, published by S. Chatterjee, Shubpur, Howrah, West Bengal: 1961. Price 3-50.

It is a matter of great encouragement to find that Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and philosophy are arousing a living interest not only in the initiate but also in the learned, the élite and the common man. Books so far written on Sri Aurobindo were by the close associates and followers of the great Master. But the present book does not belong to this category. Here is a disinterested study, a frank appraisal and an attempt to follow as truthfully as possible the secrets and depths of Sri Aurobindo's teaching.

It does not, however, profess to have any original standpoint—rather the aim has been to introduce Sri Aurobindo's Yoga to the common reader. But Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is complex, many-sided in structure, a totality that baffles the untrained reason; thus its full import cannot be grasped by the ordinary reader. In order to obviate this hurdle, the author has rightly discussed both the philosophy and the Yogic side of the doctrine. In doing so he has defined very clearly and trenchantly the difference between Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and the older existing systems. Dr. Maitra's foreword also touches briefly but interestingly on this among other points.

The book is divided into sixteen heads. Some are psychological, some yogic and others purely philosophical. There is a clear link between them and a continuity. This makes the book very lucid reading.

The only criticism we can offer is that at places the book reads like notes; this gives the impression that the points are not properly worked out and perhaps a greater analysis and a fuller consideration would have been better.

An index also would have enhanced the value of the book. We hope that the author will see to it in a future edition.

The printing and the binding are not quite satisfactory. But, of course, these are not major defects, and the book is well worth buying.

ROMEN

VIVEKANANDA THE WONDER-WARRIOR

SRI RAMAKRISHNA's unstinted Grace and Naren's volcanic Will combined to create Vivekananda who, to all intents and purposes, created a commotion all the world over. The never-to-be-forgotten words of Sri Aurobindo run :

"...the Master marked out Vivekananda as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it."

Vivekananda came into the world in an age seething with rank materialism. Spiritual values were at a discount. He held the mighty torch of spirituality high. Exceptional was his clarion call to lead the life of the Spirit. The soul-stirring message of Sri Ramakrishna was embodied in him, in this lion amongst men. And as regards the message of India to the world, "Remember," declares Vivekananda, "not the Soul for Nature, but Nature for the Soul."

But there is the amusing story that Vivekananda in his childhood in reply to his father's query said that his ambition in life was to become a coachman like the one who loved him much and whose love he reciprocated.

Another anecdote. Once in his adolescence he asked his father what he had done for the son. "Go and look into the mirror," came the prompt reply. Naren obeyed. He looked at his own reflection in the mirror and walked away quietly. Evidently he became convinced that he owed his magnificent personality solely to his father.

Now let us move on to a more significant topic. Tagore was an adorer of beauty, while the dominant trait of Vivekananda was the expression of power. But Vivekananda too possessed a deep sense of appreciation of subtle beauty. "Beauty," says he, "is not external, but already in the mind." Here we are reminded of what his spiritual daughter Nivedita wrote about her Master. "It was dark when we approached Sicily, and against the sunset sky, Etna was in slight eruption. As we entered the straits of Messina, the moon rose, and I walked up and down the deck beside the Swami, while he dwelt on the fact that beauty is not external, but already in the mind. On one side frowned the dark crags of the Italian coast, on the other, the island was touched with silver light." "Messina must thank me," he said, "it is I who give her all her beauty."

Truly, in the absence of appreciation, beauty is not beauty at all. And beauty is worthy of its name only when it has been appreciated. Further, they are not many in number who really have the power of appreciating it.

"My tastes are aristocratic; my actions are democratic."—Victor Hugo

In the realm of spirituality this truth got full manifestation in Vivekananda's life. His was the heart that pined to realise the lofty Truth. And he did it. But

about his actions, we can however say that they were democratic, that is, his actions were for the good of humanity at large.

Vivekananda looked upon the world as his dear Motherland, and upon mankind as his true brothers and sisters and, come what may, to serve them was his cherished religion. Religion is a unique thirst for the One and the many. Assimilation and toleration are the true signs of the greatest religion. Let us not forget Colton. "Men will wrangle for religion; write for it; fight for it; die for it; do anything but live it." Religions are like the lines of a poem. As each line is helpful, rather responsible for the completion of the poem, even so every religion is responsible for the entire fulfilment of the others. And according to Vivekananda religion is never a mere creed, but an ever-living and enlightening experience. How beautifully he unites the two antagonists, the materialist and the spiritualist. "The materialist is right. There is but One. Only he calls that Matter and I call it God."

It is an undeniable fact that the Western mind has a liking for making plans before it takes up anything. Is it at all advisable ? Not in the least, in the opinion of Vivekananda. The Eternal Will is sure to carry out its work at its chosen hour. Once he had to reprove Nivedita. "Plans ! Plans ! That is why you Western people can never create a religion ! If any of you ever did, it was only a few Catholic saints, who had no plans. Religion was never never preached by planners."

Again, it was Vivekananda who spoke to his Indian brothers about the greatest achievement of the English. "They have known how to combine obedience with self-respect."

Neither are we to obliterate from our mind his solemn warning to the Westerners that they must never hanker after forcing upon others that which they found good for themselves. But his consolation too is very cogent. He elsewhere says, "Never forget that a man is made great and perfect as much by his faults as by his virtues. So we must not seek to rob a nation of its character even if it could be proved that that character was all faults."

God and men are as inseparable as one's head and hair. It is our blind stupidity that fails to find indivisibility between man and God. The gods who are not one of us, who ignore and look down upon us can never be our cherished gods. "I would not worship," Vivekananda boldly exclaims, "even the Greek gods, for they were separate from humanity ! Only those should be worshipped who are like ourselves, but greater. The difference between the gods and me must be a difference only of degree."

"Better to wear out than to rust out." Vivekananda's whole body, rather his earthly life, vibrated with this unique Idea. Mother Earth lost him even when he was on the right side of forty. But his work ? No hyperbole, it can easily be rated as the eighth wonder of the world. Let us cite here his firm conviction with regard to work. "By work alone," he writes, "men may get to where

Buddha got largely by meditation or Christ by prayer. Buddha was a working Jnani, Christ was a Bhakta, but the same goal was reached by both of them."

His was a life of unimaginable sacrifice. And how can India, his Motherland, dare to forget his message of stupendous sacrifice ? "For my own part I will be incarnated two hundred times, if that is necessary to do this amongst my people, that I have undertaken." At this Sri Ramakrishna, if he had heard his disciple, could have done nothing but clap and dance in supreme ecstasy. For it was this very Naren whose heart ached to remain always in samadhi and whom he had to scold fondly by saying, "I thought you had been born for something greater, my boy !"

"Veni, Vidi, Vici." ("I came, I saw, I conquered.")—Julius Caesar

Nowhere else had this truth been proved so wonderfully as it was in the life of Vivekananda. Caesar conquered only empires, but the spiritual Giant of India conquered the heart of mankind. The great Emperor was only of an age, but the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna shall shine for all time.

CHINMOY

SOME QUESTIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY AND YOGA

(A Letter)

LET me take up your questions one by one. First, about psychology. Because psychology has been trying hard to do the one thing which it need not try, the progress it has achieved is very little. It has been trying to become a physical science or at least to behave as if it were a science analogous to physics. This is its radical mistake. And even though we may grant that it has made some progress on the whole we must admit equally that it is far from having the objectivity and exactness of physical sciences.

You will also observe that whereas there is an acknowledged unanimity with regard to the field of investigation in physical sciences there is no such unanimity about the subject matter of psychology.

Secondly, there is a commonly accepted method of investigation in physical sciences. But the same cannot be said of the methods of investigation in psychology. Even after the progress during the last fifty years, diametrically opposite views and principles seem to be prevalent here its about the subject matter and method : *e.g.* behaviourism and introspection are the two methods advocated by different schools showing the divergence of views about the fundamentals of psychology.

We have first of all, before evaluating modern psychology, to consider whether the subject matter of psychology and physical sciences is the same. If we grant that all psychological phenomena are *material* in their origin and action, then indeed we have to pursue it as a physical (material) science. But in that case we should wait till we find the weight of a "thought" and can calculate the "energy" of an emotion or an impulse. Not only that, we shall have to relate those things to the material food and other physical elements which keep the body of man going.

Really speaking, the question to be considered is : What is the origin of man's inner being, his psychology? Is it Matter or Spirit? We might put the same question differently : Who experiences the various psychological phenomena passing in man ? Where, in what medium, do these phenomena occur ? Do they take place only in matter or in consciousness ? Modern psychology has dismissed the "Soul" or "Self" from its field, considering it to be a metaphysical entity not entitled to persist in a *Scientific* Psychology.

In this regard I shall quote a passage from Prof. R.D.Ranade, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy in the Allahabad University: "Modern writers on

psychology give no attention to Rational Psychology; they consider it either useless or metaphysical. As Prof. James Ward points out, Modern Psychologists vie with each other in writing a psychology 'Ohne Seele'. The ancient conception of *Soul* has evaporated and in its place we find a *Self* which is regarded as a centre of interest, and which is supposed to be generated when a new interest springs up and destroyed as soon as the interest terminates. The impasse into which such a view brings the psychologists may be realised at a glance when we consider that some of them have been forced to recognise the continuance of such a bloodless self even after the death of the body, and in place of the old world view of an immortal Soul we find the idea of a 'centre of interest' which survives (!) after the death of the body when the interest is not fulfilled in the person's lifetime. The old world view, as in Plato so in the Upanishads, planted itself squarely on the recognition of the *Soul as an entity* which was free to take on a body as it was also free to go away and transmigrate. Whatever the limitations of such a view, it was a view which one could at least understand; but the modern conception of an anaemic 'centre of interest' which could continue to exist after the death of the body, passes beyond the comprehension of anybody except a metaphysician who makes such concessions to naturalism as to make an entire farrago of his philosophical ideas." (*A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, p.129).

Another interesting book about the study of some of the psychic phenomena is entitled *The Candle of Vision* by A.E. (the pen-name of George Russell), the famous Irish poet.

Watson and W. James hold that psychology must be studied like other material sciences and that values should not be entertained by the student. That is to say, the question of "high" and "low" or "good" and "bad" is irrelevant in psychology. Phenomena should be studied for their own sake.

Dilthey and Spranger hold just the opposite view. They say that psychological phenomena are not like material phenomena. These phenomena occur in respect to "someone". There is no exception to this in psychology. A table or an atom does not give us an impression of being an individual. But every mental act must belong to an individual. Besides, social life and culture are inherent in all psychological phenomena. They require a social field for their exercise and growth. Social currents and tendencies play a very important, and sometimes a decisive, part in producing psychological phenomena: psychology should be considered a social and cultural science. They also plead that as the phenomena are not physical the method followed for their study also must differ from the methods of physical science.

Tichner openly advocates that psychology is the study of consciousness. The method followed should be "Introspection". Watson represents the opposite viewpoint. For him there is no "Consciousness", he lays stress on

“Behaviour”. He advocates the adoption of methods of material science in psychology.

These two standpoints appear at first sight to be irreconcilable. But it is possible to arrive at a synthesis if we grant that the human individuality can be divided into two parts—the mental and the physical or the inner and the outer. Then Introspection can be applied to his inner life and the study of “behaviour” to his outer life.

Gestaltism represents another and a distinct viewpoint. Its fundamental basis is that the whole is not merely a sum of the parts. The “whole”, the “total” has its own characteristics as an entity. These characteristics are different from the qualities of its parts. For example, a chair is not merely four legs and a plank. It is an entity that pre-exists as an organic whole in the consciousness of the maker. To a man who has no conception of a chair, four legs and a board or cane-work will not mean a chair. He won’t be able to construct a chair. Take the study of movement. Gestaltism says that we do not get the concept of movement by adding the little bits of movements from point to point. Our perception of movement is instantaneous and depends on the grasp of our senses which take it as a whole.

The followers of this school naturally find the method of analysis imperfect in studying psychological phenomena.

McDougal gave the “purposive” outlook in psychology. His “Hormism” is based upon the assumption that whereas natural phenomena occur mechanically, psychological phenomena occur with an end in view, with a purpose. This purposiveness explains all the complicated phenomena of man’s psychology.

Feud’s psycho-analysis occupies an important place in modern psychology. You know that he started as a physician and from the study of abnormal cases of neurosis and hysteria, etc. he began to be interested in psychology. His discovery and formulation of the subconscious, complexes, etc. are a very important addition to man’s knowledge about himself. In a way, he tries to say that everything a man does or feels or knows can be explained by tracing the working of the subconscious in him. This is true to a very great extent because the majority of men are those who live almost on their physical and vital planes, without rising into any higher level of consciousness.

This brief summary will indicate to you that there is no such thing as yet which can be called a science of psychology. There has been a collection and study of data and some efforts at finding out and defining the field and the subject matter, some probing of the depths of consciousness.

As psychological phenomena are all “subjective”, *i.e.* happen to someone, there cannot be an “objective” science of psychology.

To study man’s *inner* being by the study of “behaviour” indicates a gross ignorance of the fact that “behaviour” is a very incomplete index of man’s inner movements.

Another difficulty in making this a physical science is that here we do not know all the conditions of the field of operation and all its circumstances. At best, we create artificial conditions for our psychological experiments and trust them. But for the most part our knowledge about other people's psychology is generally based upon our faculty to identify ourselves with others by sympathy or imagination.

Physical sciences follow the evidence of the senses. It is their only support for the study of material objects. If psychology adopts the same method it would mean that we admit that the physical is the only real and also that all knowledge is sense-acquired. This does not seem to be true at all.

A formidable difficulty in applying the method of physical sciences to psychology is that here the very field of investigation is first of all complex and, secondly, is constantly changing. In physical sciences also changes do take place in the field of observation but then they occur as a result of outer forces—which generally the scientist knows and even controls. But here the changes take place from “within”. Let us also remember that not only the “observed”, the psychological object, changes constantly but the “observer” also does not remain the same !

So, we may venture upon the following generalisations :

1. There is want of agreement about the field of psychology among various schools.

2. There is want of a common and accepted method of approach and experiment.

3. There cannot therefore be general rules which could be true in case of all individuals. It is like the general rule—if one can use the word—which speaks in physics about electrons. That is to say it speaks of general behaviour of electrons in the mass but cannot indicate the behaviour of the movement of a particular electron.

The constitution of the individual is so complex that it is impossible to expect a common reaction at all times even from the same individual to the same situation.

4. There is an undue stress on the subconscious of man, especially the sex instinct and complex.

And so far as the *practical* side is concerned I believe that Sri Aurobindo's estimate was quite sound. In the realm of physical sciences the processes are well known and tried. You know the power—electric, magnetic, thermal, or mechanical—you apply and you can even govern the application. But in psychology what is the actual power ? None that is perceptible. At best it may be said to be a mental power or mental energy. Now mental energy is not the highest power and is not certain of success in its working.

Very often the energy applied by these so-called psychologists is not even mental but vital energy. It often brings more striking results than the

mental energy. But all this is like blind man's buff. Take, for instance, the case of cure by auto-suggestion advocated by Coué. He achieved remarkable success in his practice while those who took up his method hardly made any extraordinary impression. The reason, I believe, is that he had perhaps an inborn occult or psychic capacity which brought him success, whereas others, lacking it, naturally, failed in spite of using the same method.

Thus, modern psychology is quite mistaken in taking man's present inner make-up as permanent and normal. Man is an evolving psychological being. This whole globe of earth has been like a grand laboratory of this psychological experiment on a cosmic scale conducted by a Divine Power. There it began with Inconscience and Matter developing Life and Mind. This Mind already holds the potentiality of what is beyond Mind. Modern psychologists by excluding the higher-than-mental potentiality are limiting sadly the field of psychology. They are, I may say, depriving the human being of the advantage of a new power and a new storage of energy and knowledge that might help him to solve his individual and collective problems. A new power when it first emerges in evolution may have an appearance of something extraordinary and even abnormal.

(To be continued)

A. B. PURANI

Students' Section

RÉPONSES — ANSWERS

Q. Douce Mère, ces jours-ci, on imprime ton symbole et le nom de Sri Aurobindo sur toutes sortes de choses, sur tous les milles petits riens de la vie quotidienne, qui doivent être rejetés une fois qu'ils ont servi, comme par exemple: des boîtes d'allumettes, des trayons, des brosses à dents, des peignes, même les bordures d'un sari qui sont bien piétinées. Ces choses précieuses employées si vulgairement et librement, est-ce bon?

Et puis que faire avec ces choses, Mère, quand on n'en a plus besoin? On ne peut pas les rejeter. Les vieux Calendriers par exemple, Mère: on en a un gros tas.

Q. These days, they print your symbol and Sri Aurobindo's name on all sorts of things, on all the thousand little nothings of daily life, which ought to be thrown away once they have served their purpose, as for example: matchboxes, pencils, toothbrushes, combs, even the borders of a sari that are almost trampled underfoot. These precious things used so commonly and freely, is that good?

And then what's to be done with these things, Mother, when one needs them no longer? One can't throw them away. The old Calendars, for instance, Mother: we have a thick pile of them.

R. Le Seigneur est partout, en tout, dans ce que l'on rejette, comme dans ce que l'on garde précieusement, dans ce que l'on piétine comme dans ce que l'on adore. Il faut apprendre à vivre avec respect et ne jamais oublier Sa constante et immuable Présence.

LA MÈRE

A. The Lord is everywhere, in all, in what we throw away as in what we keep precious, in what we trample underfoot as in what we adore. We must learn to live with respect towards everything and never forget His constant and immutable Presence.

THE MOTHER

RAMA'S DECAPITATION OF A 'SUDRA'

THE expression "Rama-rajya", the happy rule of Sri Rama, has long been a traditional household word. Still, Rama is accused of a misdeed : he is alleged to have killed an innocent ascetic who was a Sudra by birth.

It is quite natural that we, who are in favour of equality of all, must be disappointed at such conduct on the part of a benevolent king of the stature of Sri Ramachandra. Why should not all people have equal rights ? If the practice of asceticism and religious austerities is regarded as something good and wholesome, why should then an ardent practicant be deprived of it simply by reason of his being a 'Sudra' by caste ?

Now, the question is : who is a 'Sudra' ? It is only when we regard the caste-system as something arbitrary that such prejudiced treatment appears to be simply intolerable. The Gita puts in the mouth of Lord Sri Krishna : "The four orders (*viz.*, the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra) were created by Me (the Supreme Being) classifying them according to their prenatal qualities and apportioning corresponding duties to them...." Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have also recognised the wisdom displayed by the ancients in the original creation of the caste system before it degenerated.

It cannot be denied that men acquire particular virtues through continual practice of habitual actions. It is quite reasonable that continued butchery should make a man hard-hearted. On the other hand, prolonged worship of God over years may bring about softer qualities like devotion and love. All do not feel interested in the recital of a holy scripture like the Bhagavata. Musical performances do not equally attract all men. The present-day society abounds in 'Sudras' because most people earn their livelihood by service.

The Sanskrit expression, '*parasevā*,' admits of two meanings. To serve another's will is the secondary meaning. Its primary significance implies enjoyments of the objects of the senses. Real Sudras are those who are but slaves to their senses, who are prone to seek their selfish ends, and crave mundane pleasures.

The vow of Brahmacharya, celibacy, is not fulfilled until one overcomes the spirit of selfishness.

It is no joke to overcome one's innate nature. Even an illumined soul, a wise man, behaves after his inherent nature, so says the Gita. So, an ascetic having the disposition of a real Sudra would be inclined to utilise his power for his selfish purpose. Innumerable are the instances of downfall incurred by ascetics as a result of the misuse of Yogic powers.

An angered ascetic had once cursed a man that he would die in a week. Somehow his words came true; people used to fear him and were anxious to please him; he fell from his spiritual height and became tied to physical comforts until he came in contact with a Master Yogi.

Misuse of spiritual powers, especially for petty selfishness, is a clear trait of a Sudra. Traditionally there was no premature death in the holy kingdom

of Sri Rama. A Brahmin suffering from bereavement of his young and only son accused Rama of negligence of duty in not being able to avert some perpetration of sinful act in his kingdom, as a result of which his own son had died before his time.

On enquiry King Rama came to learn that a Sudra was practising severe austerities. The same Rama, who had banished his beloved queen, Sita, to please his subjects was quite within his bounds in decapitating the Sudra ascetic for the welfare of his subjects.

If we regard Ramachandra as an ideal character meting out even-handed justice to all, then it behoves us to admit that he had been satisfied that the Sudra ascetic had done harm or was very likely to do harm to society by the misuse of his newly acquired ascetic powers. That was the reason why he was constrained to perform such an unpleasant act in accordance with the custom of his age.

It is quite unreasonable to conjecture that he killed an ascetic only because he was a Sudra by birth.

BHUMANANDA

UNITY

THE hue and cry for unity,
As bruited far and near.
Is full of incongruity;
To many of us here.
So many times we have been told,
In fact right from the start.
Unity, to have and hold
Must come from one's own heart.
Why, then, do some still blunder,
And only get so far ?
Why not stop, and wonder !
What does create the bar ?

For Mother has *settled* this "problème"
"Change toi toi-même."

LEENA

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