

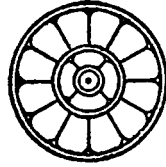
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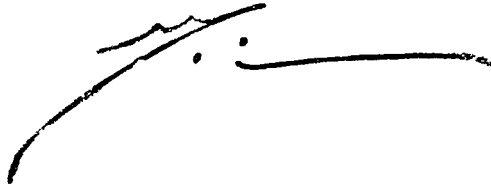


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XV

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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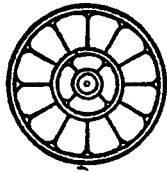
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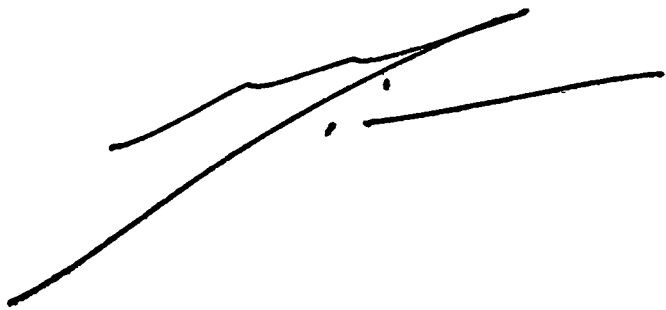
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What have you given
to the Lord or done for
Him, that you ask me
to do something for you?
I do only the Lord's
work.



WORDS OF THE MOTHER

La seule réponse qui ne manque jamais est celle du Divin.
Le seul amour qui ne faillit jamais est l'amour du Divin.
Aime le Divin seul et le Divin sera toujours avec toi.

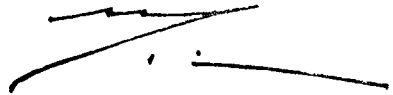
6-8-1963

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**

IL ne faut pas confondre un mental calme et un mental silencieux. Tu peux calmer ton mental et arrêter son activité ordinaire. Mais il peut être encore ouvert aux idées venant du dehors et cela aussi dérange le calme. Et pour que le mental soit tout à fait silencieux, il faut non seulement arrêter son activité propre, mais le fermer à tout ce qui vient de la mentalité des autres. Ce n'est pas facile.

Le plus il faut apprendre à distinguer un phénomène de conscience et un phénomène mental. On peut être *conscient* d'une expérience et que cette conscience ne te formule pas par une ou des pensées. Ceci est très important pour que le mental reste tout à fait tranquille et silencieux.

26-9-1963



The only response that never fails is the Divine's.
The only love that never fails is the Divine's.
Love the Divine alone and the Divine will always be with you.

6-8-1963

*
**

ONE should not confuse between a calm mind and a silent mind. You may calm your mind and stop its ordinary activity. But it may still be open to the ideas coming from outside and that also disturbs the calm. And for the mind to be altogether silent, one has not only to stop its own activity but to shut it to all that comes from the minds of others. This is not easy.

Moreover, one should learn to distinguish a phenomenon of consciousness from a mental phenomenon. One can be *conscious* of an experience but that consciousness does not formulate itself in one or many thoughts. This is very important for the mind to remain altogether tranquil and silent.

26-9-1963

POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE

(BASED ON SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER)

EVEN when doctors say, "Impossible," it is still possible. Science has gone very high, but about one thing it says, "It can be done" and about another, "It can't." So there is a contradiction within Science. Actually, you cannot say "No" about anything. Every time the impossible can become the possible. If people, when doctors say, "Impossible", turn to the Divine about it, the Divine can achieve the impossibility.

The Supreme has every power : there are no limits for Him. And when people will realise that they do not know anything they will realise that to the Supreme's Will all things are possible. In the Supreme, there is a whole universe waiting and ready to make impossibilities actual. Even what is most inconceivable to us now can happen. For, everything is already there, hidden. So, when human beings come to feel they are quite ignorant, at that very moment the impossible will start happening. At present, people think they know everything. O they are so very clever !

9-9-1963

ASPIRATION—WILL—SURRENDER

SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q. How is it that the working of the Force felt at one time is so different from what is felt at another?

SRI AUROBINDO : I can only say as before, that there is "no specific" reason which the mind can determine. It depends on the total condition and interaction of the forces. One has to hold on to the aspiration and look steadily towards the goal without being disturbed by these inequalities and fluctuations. 10-3-1936

Q. Are there not some laws and rules in the fluctuations? Cannot one find out what caused them and then manage them?

SRI AUROBINDO : There are no fixed rules. There are simply a mass of tendencies and forces with which one has to become familiar. It is not a fixed machinery which one can manage by devices or by pulling this or that button. It is only by the inner will, the constant aspiration, by detachment and rejection, by bringing down the true consciousness, force etc. that it can be done.

Q. I read in the "Yogic Sadhan" that the will can do wonders. But it should merge into the Mother's will, shouldn't it?

SRI AUROBINDO : By development it becomes fit to merge into the Mother's will. A will that is not strong is a great hindrance to sadhana. 13-1-1936

Q. When one learns to leave things to the Divine, isn't He bound to give all our real needs?

SRI AUROBINDO : The Divine is not bound to do that, He can give or not give; whether He gives or does not give makes no difference to the one who is surrendered to Him. Otherwise there is an *arrière pensée* in the surrender which is not then complete. 30-1-1936

Q. I feel my will-power is no longer with me. I don't see it—I see only passivity and emptiness.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is the suggestion that has been impressed on you by the physical inertia. It has covered up your will and persuaded you that there is no will left and no possibility of any will. 8-4-1936

To be conscious is the first step towards overcoming—but for the overcoming strength is necessary and also detachment and the will to overcome. 8-4-1936

Q. You have said that when the vital being rejects depression and despair, they will

cease. But I have been trying for years and yet it has not accepted any movement of rejecting the depression.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is because your mind often participates and gets dependent—also because the will to dissociate and push it out is not steady and calm enough. To a calm and steady will the vital would be obliged to respond after a time.

17-4-1936

Q. You have said that there has to be a will in me acting. But the process going on in me seemed carried out independently of me by your Force.

SRI AUROBINDO : The Force can bring forward and use the will.

30-5-1936

A resolution means the will to try to get a thing done by the given time. It is not a binding “promise” that the thing will be done by that time. Even if it is not, the endeavour will have to continue, just as if no date had been fixed.

16-6-1936

These things cannot be done in that way. For transformation to be genuine, the difficulty has to be rejected by all the parts. The Force can only help or enable them to do it, but it cannot replace this necessary action by a summary process. Your mind and inner being must impart their will to the whole.

23-6-1936

It is not a question of “can” or “cannot”—it is a question of what is necessary for the transformation. Theoretically the Force can transform you in one hundredth of a second from an animal to a god, but that would not be transformation or the working out of a spiritual evolution, it would be mere thaumaturgy : i.e. miracle-working without a significance or purpose.

26-6-1936

Q. You had written to me : “You need not bother about it—if peace was needed it will bring itself.”

SRI AUROBINDO : Certainly the main stress should be on the Force, but the active assent of the sadhaka is needed, in certain things his will also may be needed as an instrument of the Force.

28-7-1936

Q. What is meant by a complete surrender ?

SRI AUROBINDO : A surrender of all the parts and all the movements without insistence or claim or desire or demand of any kind.

11-8-1936

Q. You have said somewhere that when the surrender is not complete personal effort is necessary. Is the baby cat attitude possible in the beginning ?

SRI AUROBINDO : If there is not a complete surrender, then it is not possible to adopt the baby cat attitude ; it becomes mere tamasic passivity calling itself surrender. If a complete surrender is not possible in the beginning, it follows that personal effort is necessary.

11-8-1936

Surrender and love-bhakti are not contrary things—they go together. It is true that at first surrender can be made through knowledge by the mind but it implies a mental bhakti and, as soon as the surrender reaches the heart, the bhakti

manifests as a feeling, and with the feeling of bhakti love comes.

21-9-1936

Q. Just as there is love or joy in the higher spiritual planes, is there not also devotion or surrender in them as in the psychic plane ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There can be, but it is not inevitable as in the psychic. In the higher mind one may be too conscious of identity with the "Brahman" to have devotion or surrender.

2-7-1936

A surrender by any means is good, but obviously the impersonal is not enough—for the surrender to that may be limited in result to the inner experience without any transformation of the outer nature.

14-9-1936

It is rather surprising that you should not be able to understand such a simple and familiar statement ; for that has been always the whole reason of this Yoga that to follow after the Impersonal only brings inner experience or at the most mukti—without the action of the Integral Divine there is no change of the whole nature. If it were not so the Mother would not be here, and I would not be here—if the realisation of the Impersonal were sufficient.

15-9-1936

The absolute surrender must be not only an experience in meditation, but a fact governing all the life, all the thoughts, feelings, actions. Till then the use of one's will and effort is necessary, but an effort in which also there is the spirit of surrender, calling in the Force to support the will and effort and undisturbed by success or failure. When the Force takes up the sadhana, then indeed effort may cease, but still there will be the necessity of the constant assent of the being and a vigilance so that one may not admit a false Force at any point.

18-9-1936

It depends on what is meant by absolute surrender—the experience of it in some part of the being or the fact of it in all parts of the being. The former may easily come at any time ; it is the latter that takes time to complete.

21-9-1936

From NAGIN DOSHI

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 right 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 thirty-third instalment in the new Series which, except on two occasions, has followed a chronological order and begun at the very beginning. The four earliest talks, after Sri Aurobindo's accident, appeared in Mother India 1952.)

FEBRUARY 4, 1939

P : I have here a letter of Lala Lajpat Rai to Birla, written a few days before his death. In it he lays bare his inmost thoughts about life, action, God, etc. He has lost his old standard of values of life and action and finds himself an advocate of the theory of Illusion against which he, a prominent leader of the Arya-Samaj and a monotheist, had preached all his life. His relatives and friends have all become unreal, impermanent, and he asks in effect : "What are these worldly relations based on? How can an all-powerful and all-merciful God create this world of misery, suffering and poverty ? Is there any use praying to God ? Are not prayers only for consoling ourselves ? And do I not act because I can't remain without doing something and because mere enjoyments don't give me peace ? I feel for my countrymen and I work for them—but don't I work more for myself than for them?"

SRI AUROBINDO : I see. So if God were omnipotent and all-merciful, he would not create this world !

But I wonder why people in India at the end of their lives come to the same conclusion as Lajpat Rai. Almost all come to regard life and the world as an illusion. Is it the ancestral Indian blood or is it the atmosphere of the place or something personal, a psychological change ? I suppose there may be a strain running in the blood.

But the Christians also have nearly the same idea when they say, "Vanity of vanities ! All is vanity and vexation of the spirit."

P : Lajpat Rai was a Jain by birth. That might account for his turning away from the world.

After this there was some talk about Jainism, Illusionism, Liberation, multiplicity of Souls and Vedantic Unity.

FEBRUARY 5, 1939

These two or three days there was no long conversation. Either the attendants did not have much to ask or Sri Aurobindo was not in the same mood as before. But one thing was noticed : the Mother came to meditate very early—at about 6.15 p.m. And both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother concentrated together till 7 p.m. or thereabouts. So N was obliged to massage Sri Aurobindo's leg after 7; which left hardly enough time for conversation. This evening P began telling Sri Aurobindo about Jean Herbert's wife.

P : She is collecting Sister Nivedita's letters in order to publish them. In one of them it seems to be said that you gave Nivedita the charge of editing *Bandemataram* after you left Calcutta.

SRI AUROBINDO : No. It was the *Karmayogin*. You can tell her that. There is no harm now in saying it, as it is all a long time ago. I saw Nivedita before I left Calcutta for Chandernagore, and asked her to take charge of the paper, which she did. It was from her that I had got the news of my contemplated arrest. She had many friends in Government circles. On getting that news I wrote the article "My Political Will" which stopped my arrest.

P : In one of her letters Nivedita says that Vivekananda tried to dedicate her to Shiva but found her not ready.

SRI AUROBINDO : How not ready ? Not ready means either unwilling or not fit to fulfil the conditions.

P : Perhaps unwilling.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after a pause*) : We were talking about Jainism yesterday. Well, don't the Jains do those violent tapasyas with the idea to transcend Nature and conquer it and not from an idea of world-illusion ?

P : That's right.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then the aim is the same as ours in some respects : only the method is different.

P : But how does that explain Lajpat Rai's sense of illusion ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, it doesn't. His sense of illusion may have been from something in his blood or perhaps from the atmosphere of the place. At London, when I was reading Max Muller's translation of Vedanta I came upon the idea of Atman, the Self, and thought that this was the true thing to be realised in life. Before that, I was an agnostic and even an atheist. How do you explain this ? You can't say it was the atmosphere of the place. It was in the blood or perhaps carried over from a past life. And the curious thing is that as soon as I set my foot on Apollo Bunder in Bombay the experience of the Self began in me—it was a sense of calm and vastness pervading everywhere.

There is a contact with a place that gives you an experience and sometimes the experience is appropriate to the place. For instance, the sense of the Infinite I had on the Sankaracharya Hill in Kashmir or on the Parvati hills at Poona, and the perception of the reality of the Gods at the Karnali temple.

P : To return to the Herberts : I asked Herbert why the Jews are so much repressed and persecuted in Germany. He says the same thing as you did—that they

are a rich minority and so they are made a scapegoat. The same was done, he tells me, to the French aristocracy during the Revolution. In Spain also at present there is a movement against a certain class.

SRI AUROBINDO : The comparison with France and Spain cannot be made. In France it was not against the aristocracy in particular that there was a revolt : the revolt was against the whole history of the past, and in Spain it is against the past repression by the Church.

P : I asked Herbert's wife about the condition of Switzerland. She is a Swiss. She says Switzerland is passing through a critical time. She fears that in case of war the passage of the Germans may be through Switzerland. During the War of 1914-1918 the Swiss had to pass some anxious days. When the Germans chose Belgium as their route, the Swiss felt relieved.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, if the dictators decide to take a course of action, it may be through Switzerland.

It is said that Czechoslovakia's frontier was so strongly fortified that Germany would have found it difficult to pierce it.

P : It is a pity the Czechslovakians gave in without a show of fight. Hitler is now asking for colonies equivalent to those of other powers.

SRI AUROBINDO : But from where will he get them ?

P : From Belgium, Portugal or Holland.

SRI AUROBINDO : Holland has no colonies. Portugal's colonies in Africa are so small that Hitler will hardly be satisfied. The Belgian Congo is big, but England won't dare to do anything about it to placate Hitler, for that will make Belgium furious and she may side with Germany. England can't risk that, for if Germany takes possession of Antwerp it will be a pistol pointed at the heart of England. The same will hold for France.

(Turning to P) Roosevelt has backed out. I thought that in his message to the Congress he had taken up the cause of the democracies, but now he says America has nothing to do with European problems.

P : It may be that the financial interests are behind this.

SRI AUROBINDO : He is not in their hands.

FEBRUARY 6, 1939

P : What is the basic explanation of an attitude like Lajpat Rai's ?¹

SRI AUROBINDO : Generally it is *tāmasic vairāgya*², if it is due to a sense of failure in life. Most people get this kind of world-repulsion when they act for "success" and fail. Failure and frustration lead to what is called *śmasān vairāgya*—the feeling of renunciation that comes to one in a cemetery—a temporary state of world-disgust.

¹ What follows up to the reference to Dante is based on A.B.Purani's record.—Nirodbaran.

² World-repulsion arising from the *guṇa* (quality) of *tamas* (inertia) in one's nature the two other *guṇas* are *rajas* (dynamism) and *sattva* (refinement and poise).

But in Lajpat Rai's case perhaps it is Sattwic and not Tamasic disgust. To the mind at this stage everything seems impermanent, fleeting, and the old motives of action are no longer sufficient. This may be the result of a spiritual development through one's actions in life. It is mind turning to know things. Gautama Buddha saw human suffering and asked: "Why this suffering?" and then: "How is one to get out of it?" That is *sāttwic vairāgya*. Pure *sāttwic vairāgya* is when one gets the perception of the littleness of everything personal—actions, desires, thoughts, and when one sees the vast world, eternal time and infinite space spread out before oneself and feels all human action as if it were nought.

The same truth is behind the saying: "It will be the same a hundred years hence"; and it is true so far as the personal aspect of action is concerned.

P : Can it be said that personal actions and other personal things have an importance in so far as through them an impersonal consciousness, or a divine purpose, works itself out?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes ; in the impersonal aspect even a small personal action may have a significance. Personal actions have an importance in the evolution of the individual. But it is difficult to persuade ordinary men to take this view.

P : Lajpat Rai seems in his letter to doubt even the existence of God.

SRI AUROBINDO : That does not matter. It only means he wants to understand the way of God's working and the nature of this world.

There is a line in Dante which says that even eternal hell is a creation of the Divine Love. I wonder what Lajpat Rai would say to that. And what does Dante mean by it? I don't understand it myself. One can understand being thrown into hell in order that one may rise up to heaven from it ; but how can the Divine Love create eternal hell ?¹

P : Your reference to Dante reminds me of Lascelles Abercrombie's book, *The Idea of Great Poetry*. There he says that poetry to be great requires vitality and intensity of experience and expression, as well as range and variety. According to him, Shelley is not equal in range to Milton

¹ Sri Aurobindo's quotation is from the sentence in Canto III of *Inferno*, occurring among the words seen by Dante as written on the gate of hell. Dorothy Savers renders the sentence .

Justice moved my Great Maker ; God Eternal
Wrought me, the Power, and the unsearchably
High Wisdom, and the Primal Love Supernal.

The attributes of the Trinity are mentioned here Charles Williams, in *The Figure of Beatrice* (p 113) comments thus . "If there is God, if there is freewill, then man is able to choose the opposite of God Power, Wisdom, Love, gave man freewill , therefore Power, Wisdom, Love, created the gate of hell and the possibility of hell " But Sri Aurobindo's point about the eternity of hell is not answered. That in the divine dispensation hell should be possible or actual is one thing , but it is quite another that the hell-gate in Dante should read :

Through me the road to everlasting woe,
and

Abandon hope, all ye that enter here.

How can the Supreme Power, Wisdom and Love condemn a soul to everlasting woe and to an utter abandonment of hope to get out of Inferno ? (Editor)

SRI AUROBINDO : Range ? What does he mean by range ? If he means a certain largeness of vision, then Shelley does not have it. Homer, Shakespeare, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* have range. But neither Virgil nor Milton has range in the same measure. Their range is not so great. Dante's range too is partial.

P : Abercrombie says that although Goethe has range his hero Faust begins as a character and ends as an idea.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not quite correct. Faust is a character throughout the First Part of Goethe's poem. Only in the Second Part he becomes an idea. And the two parts are really two separate books. Goethe wrote the Second Part in his old age. It is entirely different from the First, just as Milton's *Paradise Regained* is from his *Paradise Lost*. Keats also has two versions of his *Hyperion* : in the later version Hyperion tends to become an idea.

P : Abercrombie remarks of *Paradise Lost* that its Satan is a symbol of human will struggling against Fate.

SRI AUROBINDO : Human will ? I always thought it is superhuman will.

RELIGION IN THE NEW AGE

Now that the coming of a New Age in human evolution is imminent, a question of paramount importance is : Will the new spiritual Truth which will create the New Age formulate itself in a new religion ? This question is quite pertinent because in the past history of humanity whenever there was a wide-spread new spiritual awakening it usually resulted in the formulation of a new religion. As Sri Aurobindo has observed : "A great access of spirituality in the past has ordinarily had for its result the coming of a new religion of a special type and its endeavour to impose itself upon mankind as a new universal order."¹ On this analogy of the past there are now a large number of persons who expect that the New Age of the Spirit which is coming soon will create a new religion which will be universally accepted by humanity in that Age. To these persons this seems to be an entirely natural expectation and they eagerly look forward to its quick fulfilment, for they believe that it will be the most significant and valuable boon of the New Age to humanity. Even if they do not use the word 'religion' for what they expect, it amounts practically to the same thing. For they hope that the new spiritual Truth which will create the New Age will give humanity new fixed beliefs and creeds and new set forms of worship which will be free from all the errors and evils of the old religions which have failed to regenerate human life.

Is this expectation justified ? Will the manifestation of the supramental Truth on earth which will create the New Age give humanity a new religion ? The Mother has given categorical answers to this question :

"In the supramental creation there will be no more religions."²

"A new religion would not only be useless but harmful."³

Why is the Mother so radically opposed to the formation of a new religion in the New Age ? Apparently her opposition seems inexplicable because of all the high human endeavours, which try to lift humanity above its normal earth-bound level, religion is the highest since it "aims directly at the Divine, while all the rest seem to aim at it only indirectly and reach it with difficulty after much wandering and stumbling in the pursuit of the outward and the imperfect appearances of things."⁴ The Mother herself has said : "Religion belongs to the higher mind of humanity. It is the effort of man's higher mind to approach, as far as lies in its power, something beyond it, something to which humanity gives the name God or Spirit or Truth or Faith or Knowledge or the Infinite, some kind of Absolute, which the

¹ *The Human Cycle* (First edition), p. 327.

² *Bulletin of Physical Education*, November 1957.

³ *Ibid.*, August 1957.

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 214.

human mind cannot reach and yet tries to reach.”¹ In view of this, religion would seem to be the most helpful factor for preparing the advent of the New Supramental Age as well as for stabilising its manifestation in human life. But the Mother speaks in quite opposite terms; a new religion, according to her, would not only be useless but harmful. Why does she speak in this manner ?

(2)

To understand the Mother’s objection to religion in the Supramental Age we must clearly distinguish between what religion is in its origin and essence and what humanity makes of it while adapting it to actual life. The Mother says that the origin of all the religions of the world is the revelation of some spiritual Truth to a great being who comes to receive and incarnate it upon earth. He is the living embodiment of that Truth and tries to communicate it to his fellow-men who are drawn to him. But in the transmission the Truth gets diluted and perverted due to the admixture of unregenerate human ignorance. His followers and disciples cannot understand his message, much less practise it in their lives. Still during his life-time his message remains a living force because of his personal vivifying example. But after his death, and sometimes even before it, his disciples and followers turn the living truth of his revelation into fixed beliefs, set dogmas and rigid cults. The inner spiritual essence gradually vanishes out of these mental dogmas and cults and only the external forms remain. These empty external forms are erected into an authoritative institution to which an unquestioning obedience is demanded from its followers. A rigid adherence to its creeds and ceremonies is insisted upon and it more and more takes the place of the true inner spiritual seeking and aspiration. This has been the inevitable fate of all the great spiritual revelations brought upon earth by beings whom the world adores as Incarnations and Prophets. They are the fountain-heads of great spiritual influxes into humanity, but sooner or later the streams they release get choked in the sands of human life or polluted in the dark muddy pits of human egoism. As the Mother says : “All religions have each the same story to tell. The occasion for its birth is the coming of a great Teacher of the world. He comes and reveals and is the incarnation of a Divine Truth. But men seize upon it, trade upon it, make an almost political organisation out of it. The religion is equipped by them with a government and policy and laws, with its creeds and dogmas, its rules and regulations, its rites and ceremonies, all binding upon its adherents, all absolute and inviolable. Like the State it too administers rewards to the loyal and assigns punishments for those that revolt or go astray, for the heretic and the renegade.”²

It is this inveterate tendency of human nature to confuse the essential spiritual truth which is at the origin of religion with a particular creed, cult, sect or Church that has led each accredited historical religion to proclaim its own faith and dogma as the supreme Truth and condemn those of others as inferior or false. The same tendency is responsible for all the narrow sectarianism and blind fanaticism resulting in mutual hatreds, persecutions, crimes and violent conflicts of which the religious

¹ *Conversations*, p. 114.

² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

history of mankind is brimful. This tendency is so deep-rooted and universal that even the most tolerant religions have not been altogether free of it. As Sri Aurobindo observes :

“So strong is the human tendency to this error that even the old tolerant Paganism slew Socrates in the name of religion and morality, feebly persecuted non-national faiths like the cult of Isis or the cult of Mithra and more vigorously what it conceived to be the subversive and anti-social religion of the early Christians; and even in still more fundamentally tolerant Hinduism with all its spiritual broadness and enlightenment it led at one time to the milder mutual hatred and occasional though brief-lived persecution of Buddhist, Jain, Shaiva, Vaishnava.”¹

(3)

It needs also to be remembered that this central error of religion with all its evil consequences has not remained confined to man's religious life alone. Almost throughout the long course of human history, except for comparatively brief intervals like the modern period in Europe, religion has extended its powerful influence over all the spheres of individual and social life and dominated them with the same narrow and intolerant attitude as in the religious sphere. All the ancient and medieval cultures of the world bear the stamp of this dominating influence of religion on their intellectual, ethical, aesthetical, political, economic and social life. And in all these spheres, because of its wrong attitude, religion has proved to be “a force for retardation, superstition, oppressive ignorance.”² It was only after a prolonged and often a violent struggle that Europe in the modern age was able to break the suffocating grip which religion had clamped over its whole social life making it stagnant and inert for long centuries. European life and society would have decayed and perished if its choked life-energies had not been released from the obscurantist grip of medieval Christianity and given a new forward impetus to progress in the modern age.

According to Sri Aurobindo, “The whole root of the historic insufficiency of religion as a guide and control of human society”³ lies in this central error. As he points out with very vivid examples :

“Churches and creeds have...stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally misconducted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon Religion and rend her to pieces in order to get a free field for their legitimate development; and this because men in the passion and darkness of their vital nature had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophical truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive. We see too that a narrow religious spirit often oppresses and impoverishes the joy and beauty of life,

¹ *The Human Cycle* (First edition), p. 218.

² *Ibid.*, p. 216.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, though it may be an important side of it, is not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as purity. In politics religion has often thrown itself on the side of power and resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself, in the form of a Church, supported by power and because it confused religion with the Church, or because it stood for a false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God in man and not the kingdom of a Pope, a priesthood or a sacerdotal class. Sotoo it has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated during a long portion of its own history and erroneously concluded that even a necessary change there would be a violation of religion and a danger to its existence. As if so mighty and inward a power as the religious spirit in man could be destroyed by anything so small as the change of a social form or so outward as a social readjustment ! This error in its many shapes has been the great weakness of religion as practised in the past and the opportunity and justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the asesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of the human being against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.”¹

This same error of religion which has been the chief cause of its failure to act as an illumining and uplifting influence on social life has been explained by Sri Aurobindo in yet more forceful terms :

“If we look at the old religions in their social as apart from their individual aspect, we see that the use society made of them was only of their most unspiritual or at any rate of their less spiritual parts. It made use of them to give an august, awful and would-be eternal sanction to its mass of customs and institutions; it made of them a veil of mystery against human questioning and a shield of darkness against the innovator. So far as it saw in religion a means of human salvation and perfection, it laid hands upon it at once to mechanise it, to catch the human soul and bind it on the wheels of a socio-religious machinery, to impose on it in the place of spiritual freedom an imperious yoke and an iron prison. It saddled upon the religious life of man a Church, a priesthood and a mass of ceremonies and set over it a pack of watchdogs under the name of creeds and dogmas, dogmas which one had to accept and obey under pain of condemnation to eternal hell by an eternal judge beyond, just as one had to accept and to obey the laws of society on pain of condemnation to temporal imprisonment or death by a mortal judge below. This false socialisation of religion has been always the chief cause of its failure to regenerate mankind.

“For nothing can be more fatal to religion than for its spiritual element to be crushed or formalised out of existence by its outward aids and forms and machinery. The falsehood of the old social use of religion is shown by its effects. History has

¹ *The Human Cycle*, pp. 218-219.

exhibited more than once the coincidence of the greatest religious fervour and piety with darkest ignorance, with an obscure squalor and long vegetative stagnancy of the mass of human life, with the unquestioned reign of cruelty, injustice and oppression, or with an organisation of the most ordinary, unaspiring and unraised existence hardly relieved by some touches of intellectual or half-spiritual light on the surface, the end of all this a wide-spread revolt that turned first of all against the established religion as the key-stone of a regnant falsehood, evil and ignorance. It is another sign when the too scrupulously exact observation of a socio-religious system and its rites and forms, which by the very fact of this misplaced importance begin to lose their sense and true religious value, becomes the law and most prominent aim of religion rather than any spiritual growth of the individual and the race. And a great sign too of this failure is when the individual is obliged to flee from society in order to find room for his spiritual growth; when, finding human life given over to the unregenerated mind, life and body and the place of spiritual freedom occupied by the bonds of form, by Church and Shastra, by some law of the Ignorance, he is obliged to break away from all these to seek for growth into the spirit in the monastery, on the mountain-top, in the cavern, in the desert and the forest. When there is that division between life and the spirit, sentence of condemnation is passed upon human life. Either it is left to circle in its routine or it is decried as worthless and unreal, a vanity of vanities, and loses that confidence in itself and inner faith in the value of its terrestrial aims, *śraddhā*, without which it cannot come to anything.”¹

This driving of a sharp wedge between life and the spirit is the worst disservice that religion has done to humanity. For especially in its pure spiritual aspect religion in the past has not only tended to be other-worldly and remote from life but has actually been hostile to it. It has condemned human life and its aims as futile illusions which must be abandoned before spiritual salvation could be attained. It has rent earth and heaven asunder with no hope of ever linking them together. This anti-life attitude has been the common predominant feature of all the great religions of the past. But, as Sri Aurobindo observes, “If that be the true sense of religion, then obviously religion has no positive message for human society in the proper field of social effort, hope and aspiration or for the individual in any of the lower members of his being.”²

It is because of this negative attitude towards life that religion even at its best has helped only a few souls to find their individual salvation by escaping from earthly life and its problems, but has not rendered any positive assistance to the collective endeavour of humanity for a perfect life on earth.

(4)

These causes which are responsible for the historic failure of religion to regenerate human life are so deeply ingrained in its nature that any attempt to create a new religion which will be free from them and which can be a guide and helper of huma-

¹ *The Human Cycle*, pp. 279-81.

² *Ibid.*, p. 221.

nity in its future progress is bound to prove a vain hope. The same consequences would inevitably follow, leading only to a deeper disillusionment and a more vehement recoil from religion than in the past.

This issue has a special relevance at the present moment because there is now a growing number of persons who maintain that a return to religion is the only way out of the crucial situation in which modern humanity has landed itself as a result of its excessive materialism and the consequent mechanisation of its whole life.

In the modern age, and especially during the last century, the Western mind, and under its dominating influence the rest of the world, had placed all its hope in reason and science with the conviction that with their aid it would be possible to make continuous progress in all the fields of human life and society and eventually fulfil man's age-long dream of perfection on earth. Religion which had dominated medieval Europe and rendered its life stagnant and moribund was either put in a small corner and not allowed to intrude upon life or was dismissed altogether from life as a blind superstition and falsehood. Increasing secularism and materialism culminating in complete atheism has been the characteristic trend of modern Europe.

Setting aside religion, the Western mind accepted reason and science as the godheads of life and pursuing them with a whole-hearted enthusiasm achieved swift and unprecedented progress in all directions in the external spheres of life. But in spite of this progress the long-awaited realisation of the dream of a perfect human life seemed nowhere to be in sight. In fact the eagerly hoped-for millennium seemed to recede farther in proportion to the increase in material progress and prosperity. For the unbridled application of scientific technology in all fields brought in its wake excessive mechanisation of life with all its ugly and evil consequences often reaching monstrous and hideous proportions. The one-sided progress in the external material and vital life accompanied by a neglect or debasement of the inner values and higher ideals resulted in an extreme unbalance verging on acute crisis. The soulless grinding mechanisation of outer life dried up all the deeper springs of consciousness so indispensable for an inner development and a balanced and harmonious progress.

By following such an ill-balanced line of development the modern Western civilisation has produced a plethora of material comforts and conveniences but has made human life artificial, shallow and meaningless. The modern man therefore suffers incessantly from a deep and growing inner sense of tension, anxiety, unrest, frustration and insecurity in spite of all the material luxury at his disposal and the efficiency and apparent success of his external life and activities. The great increase in the number of nervous and mental illnesses in recent years is a clear proof of the intolerable situation in which the present-day civilised world lives. And, to add to this, the ominous shadow of a global war which might bring unimaginable destruction to the human race looms large over the anxiety-ridden head of the modern man.

Since these have been the actual consequences of the rational-scientific progress, the faith that was initially placed in it has now been altogether belied and the hope of creating a perfect life and society with reason and science as the governing deities has vanished from the modern mind like a mirage. Frustrated at the deep core of his heart, the modern man is longing for something which will soothe his distressed mind, heal his bruised heart, bring harmony and poise to his tormented life and above all

provide a secure foundation for his existence and growth on some permanent truth.

To this predicament of the modern man religion has been offered as the only solution by a large number of thinkers. They maintain that he can find his deliverance out of the present impasse only by turning back through religion to God from whom in his short-sightedness he had turned away lured by the false promises of his arrogant reason and the pretentious claims of science. Having learnt the bitter lesson from actual experience he must now retrace his steps and in all humility make his submission to God against whom he had revolted. A return to religion is the only solution of the dilemma of the present civilisation in the view of these thinkers.

This solution has been readily accepted by an increasing number of persons all over the world. And this turning of the tide backward to religion has carried on its waves not only those who had become temporarily indifferent to it under the false spell of the rationalistic ideals, but even some of the greatest intellectual adepts and scientists of the present age who had previously turned confirmed atheists and condemned religion wholly as a blind and pernicious superstition. Like prodigal sons they are now returning home to their father. And the example of their conversion has all the more swelled the ranks of those who are once again seeking refuge in religion to assuage their long-starved thirst for communion with God.

Many of these have returned to the traditional Church and reaccepted its creeds and dogmas with unquestioning faith. Others have started or joined reformist religious movements in which they try to arrive at some compromise between the orthodox religious creeds and modern rational-scientific ideas to which it is not altogether possible to shut one's eyes in the modern world.

But this solution of the crisis of the modern age by a return to religion is from the point of view of human evolution a swinging back to a past stage of development and not a movement in the forward direction of true progress. It is really a reversal to conventional formal religion, from the error and falsehood of which humanity had in the modern period moved away to a forward curve of development. Even if this reversal does not take the form of an unquestioning reacceptance of the orthodox creeds and dogmas but attempts to reform them or to create some new religious systems, it is bound to fail because the same tendencies which turned the historic religions of the past into shams and falsehoods will sooner or later reassert themselves and the same cycle through which they passed will be repeated. The inherent incapacity of religion to change human life and society cannot be got over, however much the man of today may try to remove it. The same fate which overtook the past religions will again overtake all the new religious movements; it will not be possible to avert it.

Any religion, new or old, cannot therefore, in Sri Aurobindo's view, be a solution of the present crisis of humanity. The true solution can be found only in a direct and total turning of the whole life towards the Spirit. To put it in his own words :

"There is the possibility that in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organised religion, though it can

provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion so conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or surface tinge,—sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalise to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency; but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself.”¹

(5)

It is thus obvious that at the present critical juncture when humanity stands at the cross-roads in dire need of a solution which will decisively help it to turn the corner and enable it to take an assured step in its forward progress, religion can be of no avail. To expect that religion will lead humanity into the new age is therefore a futile hope.

The true line of humanity's future development lies not in turning backward to religion but in moving forward towards an all-embracing dynamic spirituality. No doubt the essential spirit of religion—aspiration and seeking for the Divine—will remain, but it will not be, as in the past, merely an influence on life which more and more recedes in the background and eventually fades away leaving only empty forms and dead conventions which become formidable fetters on the free progressive movement of life. On the contrary, the spirituality of the new age will embrace the whole of life in its ambit and directly and intimately govern all its motives and shape all its movements. It will not be satisfied merely with an inner change but will insist on the transformation of the whole external life too. And it will not hold up as its aim the escape of a few great individual souls into the incommunicable heights of the Spirit, but will constantly act as a living light and a dynamic power for the whole of humanity. Spirit in the new age will not shed occasionally its pale lustre from a distant height at a few isolated points in the obscure life of humanity, but will constantly come surging in massive waves of light inundating all fields of earthly life and illuminating and transfiguring all human activities with its puissant radiance. For so vast and intimate a need of the future man religion would be too poor a means. In the future age, what religion has done in the past half-heartedly, indirectly, incompletely, uncertainly and faultily will have to be done whole-heartedly, totally, all-engrossingly, assuredly and truly. This can only be done when religion's place is taken by a dynamic and all-inclusive yoga. Unless this is done humanity can never find an effective solution of its present crisis and take a decisive turn in the only direction which can ensure its future progress.

¹ *The Life Divine* (American Edition), pp. 937-38.

(6)

If we bear these considerations in mind we can clearly understand why the Mother is entirely against the turning of the supramental Truth, which will create the New Age, into a religion. For such an attempt would only prematurely crystallise the one yet infinitely variable Truth of the Supermind into fixed mental beliefs, limited creeds and rigid dogmas. It would result in an imprisoning of the vast consciousness and the limitless Light of the Supermind into the narrow grooves and limited moulds of human mind and life.

Precisely for the same reason the Mother strongly protests against those who want to treat Sri Aurobindo's supramental teaching as a new religion or to turn it into a new religion. Those who want to do this do not always specifically use the word 'religion'; their attempt mainly is to formulate Sri Aurobindo's teaching into a system of fixed mental ideas and beliefs, set philosophical doctrines and exactly prescribed forms of spiritual practice. Such an attempt, even though it may be made without any deliberate intention of setting up a new religion, would, if it succeeded, lead practically to the same result. But, in the Mother's view, such an attempt, however well-intentioned it might be, would be a very serious error and would amount to doing a grave disservice to Sri Aurobindo. The Mother has said quite explicitly:

"What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme."¹

Coming straight from the Supreme, Sri Aurobindo's teaching is too illimitably vast and all-embracing to be cast into the mould of a religious formula which needs for its very existence fixed mental beliefs and set forms of practice which eventually become rigid and dogmatic. All truths find their right and proper place in the integral totality of Sri Aurobindo's supramental vision which yet transcends them all and unifies them in the One Supreme Truth which is their source and continent.

How sharply the Mother reacts when people speak of Sri Aurobindo's teaching as a new religion can be seen from her answer to the following question on this point:

QUESTION : Many say that the teaching of Sri Aurobindo is a new religion. Would you yourself say that it is a religion?

MOTHER : They who say that are fools, they do not know what they say. You have only to read all that Sri Aurobindo has written to know that it is impossible to base a religion on his works, because, each problem, each question he presents in all its aspects showing the truth contained in each way of seeing and he explains that to reach the Truth, you must effectuate a synthesis which transcends all mental notions and rise into a transcendence beyond thought.

Besides, if you had read what has appeared in the last Bulletin², you would not have put the question.

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, April 1961.

² See the preceding quotation from *Bulletin*.

“But men are so crazy that they can change anything into a religion, such need they have of a fixed frame for their narrow thought and limited action. They do not feel secure unless they can assert, this is true and that is not; but such an assertion is impossible to make for anyone who has read and understood what Sri Aurobindo has written. Religion and Yoga do not lie on the same plane of being and spiritual life can exist in all its purity only when it is free from all mental dogma.”¹

(7)

From the viewpoint of spiritual evolution the Mother gives a further reason why religion of any kind will have no place in the New Supramental Age. This reason rests upon the characteristic difference between the action of the Overmind which has created and ruled the present old world and the Supermind which will create and govern the New World. In Sri Aurobindo's own words, the difference between the two is this :

“The supermind is the One Truth deploying and determining the manifestation of its Powers—all these Powers working as a multiple Oneness, in harmony, without opposition or collision, according to the One Will inherent in all. The overmind takes these Truths and Powers and sets each working as a force in itself with its necessary consequences—there can be harmony in their action, but it is rather synthetic and mostly partial than inherent and inevitable and as one descends from the highest overmind, separation, collision and conflict of forces increase, separability dominates, ignorance grows, existence becomes a clash of possibilities, a mixture of conflicting half-truths, an unsolved and apparently unsolvable riddle and puzzle.”²

The world of the Overmind is the world of the great gods who are the *formateurs* of the present world and the originators and supporters of all its activities in their characteristic manner. The different religions of the world too have been originated and maintained by these gods of the Overmind, and their historical development bears clearly the impress of the characteristic action of the overmental consciousness. For that very reason even the highest overmental synthesis of the separate truths of the different religions cannot suffice for the Supramental Age because it stops short of the inherent integral unity of the supramental Truth. In the new creation which the Supermind will manifest on earth all religions will have to be discarded because the supramental consciousness transcends even their highest overmental synthesis and expresses the supreme indivisible unity in a multiple variation without any separation or division. As the Mother explains :

“The old world, the creation of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind, the Overmental, was in a characteristic way the age of the gods and therefore the age of religions. The flower of man's effort towards that which was higher than him gave birth to numerous religions, to a religious relation between the souls of the select

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, August 1961.

² *On Yoga II*, Tome One, p. 281.

few and the invisible world, and at the summit of all that, as an effort towards a still higher realisation, was born this idea of the unity of religions, of something that is unique, which is behind all manifestation—and this idea was really the ceiling of human aspiration. This conception is on the borderland; it is something which still belongs wholly to the overmental world, to the overmental creation and from there seems to look at another thing, something of which it has only a presentiment, which is a new creation it tries to attain but is unable to seize. To seize it, what is needed is a reversal. One must come out of the overmental creation. But for that, the new creation, the supramental creation must have had taken place.

“And now all these old things seem so old, so antiquated, so arbitrary, such a travesty of the true truth !”¹

We may say that the present old world created by the overmind was the age of religions because it was the age of the gods. But the New Supramental Age, since it will be the Age of the ONE,* will no more need any religions but will live in the infinite unity of the supramental Truth.

This is the essential reason based on the fundamental Truth of the Supermind that leads the Mother to declare in radical terms :

“In the supramental creation there will no more be religions. All life will be the expression, the flowering in forms of the Divine Unity manifesting in the world.”²

No less radical are Sri Aurobindo's own imperative words :

“I may say that it is far from my purpose to propagate any religion, new or old, for humanity in the future. A way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded, is my conception of the matter.”³

10-9-1963

KISHOR GANDHI

* NOTE

The Mother, while reading this article, made a correction here. Before sending the article for publication, the writer had sent it to the Mother requesting her to read it and see if he had explained her views correctly. The Mother wrote to him in reply :

“I have read the article—it is all right. I have made only one change—in the last page, where you write ‘since it will be the age of God’ (*God is still too religious*) I have put ‘... of the ONE’—because it will truly be the age of Unity.”

¹ & ² *Bulletin of Physical Education*, November 1957.

³ *On Yoga II*, Tome One, p. 149.

ON LOOKING AT A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MOTHER

Two Great Mysteries
the sky and the sea
have held an ageless attraction
for the mortal mind and eye.

From the shores of a small island
Victor Hugo, in exile,
kept looking at the sea
all day long.
“How are you going to pass your days of exile ?”
they asked him.
“I shall keep looking at the sea,”
he spoke in reply.

The sea and the sky,
for ever they gaze at each other
the shades of the sky change the hues of the sea
and it stretches its arms of wave
to touch the rim of the sky

In between, here below, on the sandy shore,
plays about the child of Man,
just as he likes
● But all the time someone or something draws him to the horizon,
there where the sky meets the sea !
The more he advances
the more recedes the skyline.
Amazed and bewildered, he seeks for the point
where the Great Mysteries meet.

Two pictures in a frame.
In the Mother's face have I seen
the Meeting of Mysteries :
while Her one eye mirrors
the measureless sky,
the other holds the mystery of the sea.
Two pictures in one frame.

NRIPENDRAKRISHNA CHATTOPADHYAYA

*(Translated by Sisir Kumar Ghosh from the original Bengali “Mār ekti Photo dekhe”,
published in “Purodha” October 1963)*

DO NOT DARE !

Do not dare to say that we are not He,
Not the One who is in each proud lone rock
Or, born into flame-souls of the world to be,
Carries up in His tempest even you who mock !
For we are He.

Do not dare to disdain our radiant child-look
When to our Mother who is radiant bliss we cling,
When bent over dark pages of the sacred book
Only from Her eyes we read, grow under Her wing.
For we are He.

Do not dare to dream that on this sweet black earth
Will be left one corner where we are not !
In us will spread the all-embracing hearth,
The globe immense of love in a tiny dot.
For we are He.

JANINA

SACRIFICE

O, if it be Thy Will, my fate so writ,
Without the smallest word or stir I render
Myself to nought : unwhispered to world's wit
Or vision, must be made my mute surrender;

And if the bitter and devouring truth
Which haunted me, must haunt forever anew,
Or I must be consumed without pity or ruth
By its fire, till rest no ash or residue;

Or if, in Thy firm grip unloosable,
With nought of cavil I must mangled be,
Without a chance for the mulish mind to wail,
If sheer and burning truth must shine in me;

And if Thou willest that without delight
Of Thy sweet smile that makes the whole world move
And one forget the whole world, I die in slight,
Woe-torn, deprived of the nearness of Thy Love;

If thus to be sacrificed in holocaust
Be the one role for me in Thy mystery,
Let my ignoble trace to world be lost :
I lie a happy heart in front of Thee.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

A VISIT TO THE LAKE DAIRY

WHEN Sri Aurobindo is expounding the spiritual and symbolic meaning of the Veda, he quotes in connection with the Vedic Dawn and the Vedic Cows some phrases which remove the veil of the image entirely and tell us that the herds are a figure for the rays of the Light. "Her happy rays come into sight like cows released into movement" (IV.52-5)—"Thy cows remove the darkness and extend the Light" (VII.79-2). And the Dawn-Goddess is called "the Mother of the Herds, the guide of the days" (VII.77-2), and her radiant action is described in the words: "the Mother of the cows has created vision" (I.124-5).

The Veda, the spiritual light and vision, the power of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother—all these were suggested to my mind as I stood looking, in the midst of the splendid simplicity of the Lake scenery, at the new colony of cows founded by the enterprise of our never-tiring ever-aspiring Dyuman and put under the charge of his self-dedicated associate Allan. The quality of "vision" seemed at play on the material level. Here was a growing (as well as glowing) plan to share in the physical support of the great unfolding dream of a spiritual life that the gurus of Dyuman and Allan are realising amongst us, dawn after heavenly dawn, day after earthly day.

Mine was indeed a delightful experience. I should say it was an inspiring surprise. I had merely undertaken to go sight-seeing: I had not expected a touch on the poet-soul in me, a breath of the Vedic *mantra* in the countryside air about me, a burst of symbolic beauty in the shape and colour and movement of the calm, gentle yet strong and sturdy animals—either relaxing or grazing or trooping together or being peacefully productive, yielding sweet milk to the appeal of hands that were at the same time masters and servitors.

Yes, to combine service with mastery is to know the secret of success in every venture. For then, side by side with competence and efficiency, there goes the spirit of love and self-dedication which opens one to the Divine within all things and above all things and calls even into the most mundane concern the sovereign touch of Grace:

All can be done if the God-touch is there...

What I saw in my short visit to the new cow-farm left me in a state of elation as well as admiration. Everything was clean and orderly, and yet there was no mechanical imposition of rule and routine. Life creating its flexible forms by an inner feeling—this was what met me everywhere. And my guide, the mind from whose faith and hope and endeavour the Lake Dairy had taken birth, allowed me to see everything as by a natural process. There was no propaganda, no directed tour. Here lay open the entire farm in its vigorous infancy, telling its own story in words that were deeds. Nothing as yet on a grand scale, but the promise of a fine future in each detail: the revelatory Dawn-Goddess had certainly been abroad

And buried her seed of grandeur in the hours.

For, no less evident than the urging atmosphere of a Vedic past was the beckoning space of an Aurobindonian future. Here was a scheme with various possibilities. It was not just a little idea set going to meet present needs. The eyes were drawn automatically into distances ahead. Out of one thing a host of things seemed to be emerging. The cow-farm with its various breeds—Sindhi, Sahiwal, Kankrej, Jersey, Holstein, Hariana—would not only develop and expand on its own lines and become a stable support to the Ashram's daily life. It would also give rise to the means for a number of enterprises related to it but streaming in many directions—just as the delicious milk which flowed from it not only served as drink or took the form of curd but also turned within the body into warm life-blood and rich tissue and vibrant nerve and dreaming brain-cell, all charged with a creative energy ready to make poetry or build furniture, work dynamos or pave pathways for a new city, feed hungry hearts with "the milk of human kindness" or draw vast world-visions from the Milky Way.

Watching the dairy, scene after scene, or wandering in the neighbourhood which Allan's ingenuity and energy have converted from waste land to green groves and terraces and well-designed houses, I felt that the temper active here should find happy assistance—both personal and financial—from all who were interested in truly productive planning and labour. All the more happily should the assistance materialise, since the planning was for Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, the labour for the Mother and her spiritual children.

And a little symbol of the manifold productivity breathing and moving here in the most natural way stood forth while I was absorbing the quiet joy of the work incessantly going on. There, in the very time I was present, a cow gave birth to a most awkwardly artistic baby ! Very serenely the big and beautiful mother-animal licked her calf, the small sweet striving shape of the future that had come out of her.

K. D. SETHNA

PREMANAND

October 11, 1901-February 10, 1962

A LONG-FORGOTTEN photo, the faded pages of an old diary can sometimes open the floodgates of memory and then the past becomes a vivid present.

As I turned the yellowed pages of my notes on poetry,

“A stream of thoughts and feelings came and went,
A foam of memories hardened and became
A bright crust...”

I could once again feel Premanand living in the poems we had read, scanned and enjoyed together.

Before he joined the Ashram on May 11, 1927, he had graduated in literature and was a school-teacher in his native village Anand. He loved teaching—especially poetry—and many in the Ashram will recall with pleasure the hours spent in his English classes.

His love of the English language and of its literature was even bound up with his spiritual aspiration. After his interview with Sri Aurobindo in the days before the latter's retirement, he remembered not only the spiritual grandeur of the Master's presence but the beautiful way he spoke English—especially how he pronounced the word “call” when he said, “Call the Divine Force down.” And when Sri Aurobindo started making brief comments on the verses of some Ashram inmates, Premanand sought keenly to understand their illuminating hints.

Along with his love of poetry went also his love of friends, particularly if they happened to be poets. His closest and most cherished friendship was with Amal Kiran. They had wonderful times together and there was a bond of rare loyalty between them. Even when Premanand's health began to fail, he never missed any of the appointed meetings during which the two of them followed excitedly the far-winged happy audacities of the English Muse.

It is through the Ashram Library that Premanand found most of his friends. For there he had his “headquarters”—or shall we say “heartquarters”? He was for 25 years the faithful and efficient guardian of this Library. It was a matter of moments for him to pick out any book, so well he knew the place allotted to each volume. With what meticulous care he guarded those “monuments of the mind's magnificence”! Neatness, cleanliness and order reigned in his kingdom of knowledge.

In 1957 his health took a serious turn for the worse and in February 1958 he had to go to Baroda for specialist treatment. The dreaded disease palsy relentlessly crept over his whole body but left his high spirits untouched.

In one of his letters he says :

“I go out for morning and evening strolls but my speed is very slow. I take full two hours to cover 4 miles. During my strolls I recite the Gita verses or some English poems. The landscape is most charming. The different shades of green are so pleasant to the eyes. The fresh air is life-giving, and the chanting of the Gita fills me with ecstasy.”

Again a year later he wrote :

“Your air-letter posted on the 20th reached me on the 27th ! ‘Tis strange, ’tis very strange, ’tis wondrous strange !’ My hands and feet are weak ... I have not gone out of my house for the last six months.... I am a bit crippled but I am as cheerful as a bird on the bough of a goolmohor....I am perfectly sound mentally and spiritually, though my body is not all right....”

To the last day he was to enjoy the Grace of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother whom he had loved and faithfully served for thirty years.

“SUMAL”

THE BEGGAR

A SHORT STORY

ONCE there lived a beggar. Day and night he begged, but not one could give him a loaf of bread. From village to village he went with his bowl. All the doors were shut against him. The indifferent and scornful looks of the villages drove him to despair, and dead silence acted upon his nerves.

He went to a city. He was dazzled by its big and brilliant show. As he went onwards and reached the heart of the city, he saw a distressing sight indeed. Such colossal poverty in the heart of plenty ! The great mansions, the roads and the rich vehicles appeared to him as hungry ghosts feasting upon the flesh and blood of their masters. The whole city was shaking under the weight of "speed" and "sound". He saw the people. They moved like shadows at the signal of the machines. In office or at home, they lived in the red heat of tension. They had erected their temples dedicated to the twin gods "speed" and "sound" in utility's mart.

The air was so thick that the beggar could not breathe. For fear of life he fled from the city. Stricken by grief he lifted his eyes to the high heavens and a mute prayer came to his lips : "Lord ! Thou alone canst save." He kept forming the name of the Lord on his silent lips. He went as though moved by a divine breath. After a travel of many a weary day by the sheer force of the name on his lips he arrived at a spot where he could find fresh air and free light. The place was so inviting. The bright flicker of a star appeared on the horizon. It led him on. The beings he met there were all in festive mood. Like gods they lived and moved. Their eyes were lit by the smile of angels. The white doves of hope kept winging violently in his breast. He slowly moved onwards.

At the gate of a great building he stretched his supplicating hands. The guardian of the gate said, "Why, my friend ! Why this beggar's bowl ? You are cordially invited to share our great feast, for which we are all preparing. You too may prepare yourself. Hurry up ! There is no time left. Put aside your bowl. Take a dip in the pure and cool waters of the river here. That will give you a new look and you will be able to prepare yourself for the feast. Hurry up !"

The beggar was too weak and hungry to wait and prepare himself for the feast. Despair dragged him along. When it seemed all was lost he suddenly saw himself before the gate of a golden temple. There, again, he stretched his trembling hands and begged for a loaf of bread. Whereupon the guardian of the gate said, "No one here need beg. Throw away your bowl and get in, brother ! If you are really hungry and if you are in earnest for the bread, you will get it . . . Yes ! here and now."

The beggar could not believe his ears. The very air he breathed was the air of fulfilment. The beggar's bowl vanished from his hands. He slowly moved in; his soul, heart and head, his whole body merged and melted in the sweet fire of the name of the Lord. He could not bear the flood of the delight and fell aswoon.

When he awoke he saw that he was a god in the company of gods; and he was preparing himself for the great feast fixed in "the Hour of God".

VENKATARANGA

NOLINI'S ATHLETICS

(Continued from the last issue)

2

THERE can be no shadow of a doubt that Nolini could have excelled even in Athletics in his school days as he did in Football, had Athletics been introduced in Bengal at that time.

While the author of *Swapani* was a student at Nilphamari H.E. School in Rangpur District, one day his playmates were admiring highly his skill in Football before their Games teacher, Sri Amulya Banerjee. With a smile he said : "You have not seen his father's (Nolini Kanta) play. Had you seen..."

1945. The late Monsieur Benjamin introduced our rising footballer, Robi Gupta, to the patron President of Cercle Sportif Ground at the end of a football match. His immediate comment was : "Mais il ne joue pas comme son père" ("But he does not play as his father").

Our Austin has so liked Nolini's article on his *Football* that he has sent a copy of it along with Nolini's autographed photo to his Canadian friends who are well-known footballers.

He was not only a brilliant sportsman but also an athlete of the mind. At the age of thirteen only he passed the Matriculation with a scholarship. Because of his tender age his father had misgivings. But his uncle was well aware of the sharpness of his intelligence and memory. Hence he encouraged him to sit for the examination. And the result was a success attained with a scholarship.

RELAXATION IN ATHLETICS

What he has written on Relaxation in Athletics is not only the result of a scientific research but also a deep spiritual truth regarding the body, mind and life based on the realisation of the Yogins. We use the word "Relaxation" in Athletics as one counts the beads of a rosary. But most of us do not know the real signification of it. Indeed, we can derive much benefit from Nolini's personal experience. This calls to mind the famous novelist Saratchandra's words to Dilip Kumar Roy : "Do you know our difficulty, ? Our readers are so lazy that they would refuse to go to Heaven if it meant toiling up the stairs and if a little somersault would land them in Hell."

RELAY RACE

In our Ashram Athletic competition it was the Relay Race that used to give the athletes an automatic *élan*. Competitors of all ages, from children to old men and

women, would take part in this event. Tagore's immortal utterance, "There is a race about being the first to offer one's life" cannot be applied here. Here what holds is : "Who can outrun whom and win the first place ?" Our former groups C and D were like East Bengal and Mohan Bagan. Terrible rivalry. And their supporters also gave themselves up to wild excitements.

1954. Baburam and three other children of Group A outran Nolini's team. And Baburam was beside himself with joy. A youth questioned, him : "By outdoing old people you are so happy?" "No, no. Just because we could defeat the Secretary of the Ashram. Can you dare to defeat him in anything ?" came the prompt reply from Baburam. The poor questioner could not find his tongue.

It is through sports that Nolini could so intimately mix with children. Even now he keeps up that capacity. There is an affinity of soft feeling between Nolini's heart and the children's.

Just one unforgettable incident. On the first of March of 1961, at about 3 p.m., Nolini was standing in front of the room where incense sticks are lighted for us at Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi. A child named Gopal who enjoyed his affection happened to be there. He asked Nolini : "Such a big line, one going behind the other to the Mother for her Blessing, what do you call it in French ?" "Queue," came the reply from Nolini with a gentle smile.

"No, it's wrong. My teacher Jayanti-Bhai told me something else."

"All right. Ask Jayanti-bhai about the French word for 'line' and tell me to-morrow," said Nolini, patting Gopal on the back.

"No, why should I tell you ?"

"I shall learn it from you."

"Then I am ready to ask Jayanti-bhai and let you know the word to-morrow."

One day Gopal will grow old. By that time most probably Nolini's French poems will be brought out in book-form and Gopal will have the opportunity like us to read those valuable works. One day he will hear the great French savant Sylvan Lévi's high appreciation of Nolini's command of French. Gopal may one day study Plato and Aristotle. Plato's comment on Aristotle was: "My academy consists of two parts—the body of my students, and the brain of Aristotle." Perhaps Gopal will then find no difficulty in pointing out the Aristotle of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Perhaps also he will know the Matthew Arnold of Bengal in our Ashram, the author of *Adhumki*, one among the first hundred Bengali books, and Tagore's comment on its rival sister *Sahityika*, "Nolini Kanta Gupta's contribution to Bengali literature is unique." According to Barindra Kumar Ghosh, "Nolini is the intellectual son (*mānas-putra*) of Sri Aurobindo."

Let us end this account of Nolini's athletic career on a symbolic link between it and his spiritual.

Nolini beginning his sprint and finishing the race can be seen in a composite photograph which makes him start from the Mother's feet and arrive at Sri Aurobindo's—a token illustration of his Master's advice : "Accept the Mother. She will bring you to me."

MYSTICS AND SOCIETY

(Continued from September)

CHAPTER I

Mystics and Society

(Concluded)

THE need of such an ideal as the mystic's, of self-finding through self-exceeding, is likely to be questioned by the modern mind. There is virtue in honest doubt. The doubt or question touches upon such ideas as those of : evolution, civilization, science, and the techniques for heightening individual and social behaviour. Let us take each of these briefly, and see what mysticism has to offer.

First, the mystics break through the *cordon sanitaire* of biology. While poets, like Whitman, talk of a "mystical evolution" the mystics know. To them Spirit and Matter appear as poles of the same Existence. The theory is simple, not so the living out of it. As one of them puts it : "We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter, but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or mind out of living forms, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life, because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life and Life a form of veiled Mind Consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond the Mind."¹³ This, briefly, is the mystical view, intellectually stated, that "along with the mental evolution of man there has been going forward the early process of another evolution", of the soul and the spirit in him. As Lecomte du Noüy has tried to show, "Evolution is not ended." The mystics are the "transitional forms", and "Man must fight to prepare the advent of the spiritual being he is destined to become." This is a "test on the psychological plane". Earlier, as a result of evidence collected from far and wide and experiments carried out, F.H.Myers was led to the conclusion that "Man is in course of evolution; and the most pregnant hint which these nascent experiments have yet given him is that it may be in his power to hasten his own evolution in ways previously unknown."¹⁴ But, it must be said, the mystic does not merely state, he does not speculate, he experiences. He has first verified, in personal experience, what he is saying, "reading the text of without from within". He is specially equipped for the task, and it is in terms of his inner vision and a cosmic background that we must look upon human evolution, its past, present and future, upon history and civilization, and every attempt at organized life. All our values are values of civilization, they emerge from and replenish the common stock. What is the

share or contribution of the mystics to the common stock ? Or are they, as has sometimes been heard, merely enjoying privileges which they have done little to earn or to produce ? Are they parasites ? And do they not, the objection goes on, with their uncertain and unverifiable lights, disturb the common man and his *dharma*, the *dharma* of his civilization ? Some of the "characteristic objections" against mysticism have been : that it is not real knowledge; that it has no social usefulness; and that such knowledge does not exist anywhere. But the objections lose their edge from the fact that those who make it are not and have never been mystics themselves. As regards the mystic claim, of leading the community along the path of Light, did they not have a long time to deliver the goods ? Are not spirituality and social progress mutually exclusive ? Either/Or ?

But the pragmatic test, so crudely put, is not a valid test for either the mystic experiment or evolution. To quote Eckhart : "Some people want to see God with their eyes as they see their cow, and to love Him as they love their cow—for the milk and cheese it brings them. This is how it is with people who love God for the sake of outward wealth or inward comfort. They do not love God who love him for their own advantage." Or, as Brother Lawrence has it : "Let us not amuse ourselves, to seek or to love God for any sensible favours (how elevated soever) which He has done or may do us. Such favours, though never so great, cannot bring us near to God." That also is a lesson our age might learn, an age that has begged the God of Machine for favours, fair and foul.

The mystic's real task or service to the race is not so much to help men solve problems in their all-too-human ways as to transcend secular and humanistic values, to transfigure them in the light of the spiritual ideal or the will of God. The mystic brings not peace but the sword—of discrimination—and a sense of the holy, the sacramental attitude in all the ways of one's being. Very few civilizations approximate to that ideal. Are mysticism and civilization working at cross purposes, then ? No, not necessarily. The mystics have played an important, an enormous part in the making of man and civilization. Most early civilizations owe a good deal to this creative minority. In the absence of a sharp division of labour, such as has marked the later periods of our history, the early mystics would also be among the priests and medicine-men of the tribe. (The role is neither extinct nor anachronistic. Incarnations of the devil are equally available ; in fact, more.) Also, beneath the careful and elaborate disguise of initiation rites, of symbols and mythologies, there was not only a belief but a knowledge, pre-logical or not. This idea of an age of mystical intuition or knowledge, at least in a few, before the full growth of reason or intellect the modern mind finds hard to accept. But the evidence of facts points otherwise. In *Primitive Man As Philosopher* Dr. Radin has pointed out, "Orthodox ethnology has been nothing but an enthusiastic and quite uncritical attempt to apply the Darwinian theory of evolution to the facts of social experience." The result of such an uncritical activity, he has suggested, is that no progress in understanding will be achieved unless scholars rid themselves of the curious notion that everything possesses a history *à la* Darwin.

If the mystics enjoyed an importance and were regarded as respected members of the community it is because they spoke with authority. That this authority was now and then abused or mixed up with local and infra-spiritual values, need not

surprise any one. It only shows that the mystic is not, *ipso facto*, a transformed being in every way, also that it is never easy to mass-produce spiritual values. (In his "catalogue of faults" Cassian had noted : gluttony, fornication, vainglory and pride, anger and accidie. Marxists and Freudians could no doubt add a few more.)

Gradually, perhaps because society proved to be delinquent or unwilling or unable to co-operate, the men of God broke away from the men of the world, and a kind of dichotomy has prevailed since then. Hocking has called this "world-flight". So began the Withdrawal of the wise and the ascetic to the margins of society. From the centre they moved on to the periphery and there, for the most part, they have dug themselves in. For instance, it was not St. Anthony's aim, we are told, to reconcile Christianity with culture but to "keep them apart". Eastern parallels to this holy *apartheid* are easily suggested. It is clear that the mood of asceticism and otherworldliness had a large share in this movement towards isolation. There might also have been the expediency of a separate community given entirely to religious and spiritual seeking or experiment. Instead of unduly interfering with or being interfered with by the less evolved life around them, the mystics preferred to cultivate their own gardens. This they did as trustees, so to speak, and as a rule they have been willing to impart their knowledge and way of life to all those whom they considered fit for such instruction. They were perhaps not exactly democrats, in the sense that they did not accept the idea that anyone who chose to think himself fit became fit by that act of faith or presumption. The salvation of every one is assured, that is the larger hope. But there is the time factor too, and the fitness of the candidate depends, as the Indians might say, on his past *karma* and *samskāra*, the stream of his action and tendencies, his temperament. It is an open question whether the mystics were not justified in so confining and concentrating their activities within small communities or whether our political bosses of today who wheedle, cajole or more often coerce the majority are more right. In any case, politics, like patriotism, is not enough. The reason is simple. "Politicians don't know the nature of reality. If they did, they would not be politicians... They act in ways that would be appropriate if such a world as they think they live in really existed. But, unfortunately, it does not exist except in their imagination. Hence nothing that they do is appropriate to the real world. And all their actions are actions of lunatics, and all, as history is there to demonstrate, are more or less disastrous."¹⁵ In *Warriors of God* Walter Nigg concludes what is fairly obvious : "To expect any solution from statesmen is vain. They cannot give what they do not possess."¹⁶

The human mind has a thirst for explanation. Nature seems to satisfy that thirst. The thirst after righteousness is also part of the human psyche. As C.S. Lewis says, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never *meant* to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing."¹⁷ The mystics are, as ever, interested in "the real thing". Now the human mind is so constituted that an explanation in terms of identity seems inherently plausible to it. To the scientist or the scientific view the entity called matter reveals itself as patterns of atom, or energy, or atomic energy, in some ways independent of time and space. This is the basic irreducible unity from which all diversities arise

and to which they, in the end, return. The mystic cosmology has no quarrel with all this. The big difference comes from the fact that whereas the scientist begins, as he must, from the bottom up, the mystic does it in the reverse, from top below. As there, so here. In a characteristic image the Veda compares cosmic existence to a tree with roots above. The principles are above and beyond fact, or are a different kind of fact, if you like. So while the ultimate to which science refers everything back is an ultimate of Matter or Energy, the ultimate to which the mystic refers back to is a spiritual Absolute, absolutely Conscious and Self-Existent. There must be something in the human mind, or some modification of the mind, to which all this corresponds. The mystics believe that modification to be both actual and possible, in fact this is the next higher development of man, in which the opposition of physics and metaphysics might be healed. As to the difference in outlook and the results that follow, it will be enough to say, for the present, that this ancient conflict is not likely to be solved by logic arguing on the data of our ordinary physical existence. The solution can come only by an extension of our field of consciousness or by an unhelped-for increase in our instruments of knowledge. This, as we have seen, is part of the mystic faith and more than that, mystic experience.

This is not to deny the validity of science within its own field. Also, "whether the intellect is a help or a hindrance depends upon the person and upon the way in which it is used. . . . Any part of the being that keeps to its proper place and plays its appointed role is helpful ; but directly it steps beyond its sphere it becomes twisted and perverted and therefore false."¹⁸ Our own hypothesis is that in order to cover all the facts of existence—all, and not merely some of them—including the realm of values we have to admit a hierarchy of the real. Otherwise in our eagerness to assert we are bound to deny one in order to affirm the other. And this is what has happened. The Materialist Denial and the Refusal of the Ascetic are equally one-sided, two sides of the same shield. As Whitehead has pointed out, "Some of the major disasters of mankind have been produced by the narrowness of men with a good methodology."¹⁹ Eddington was even more specific : "There are certain states of awareness," he said, "mystical states, in consciousness that have at least equal significance with those which are called sensations."²⁰ Or as Rufus Jones puts it, "The mystics of Christian history present as solid a front of reliable testimony in their field as is the case with the testimony of science in its field through the time-belt."²¹ Not the "mystics of Christian history alone", that is the only slight change one would like to make in that statement.

So it is that we can and must say that the scientific picture of the world is unreal and distorted, because limited to the quantitative. In *The Crisis of Our Age* Sorokin quotes a young scientist and his confession of faith : "Science," the young man says, "is not concerned with reality. . . . It is not for us as scientists to worry about 'reality'." They have left the worrying to the rest of us. But it is not true that scientists have denied any concern over reality. Most of them have either suggested, affirmed, or taken for granted that the scientific picture of the world *is* a real picture, the only real picture. In *Ends and Means* Aldous Huxley explained the phenomenon at length. The scientific picture of the world is what it is, said Huxley, because men of science combine an incompetence to deal with the purely qualitative aspects of reality with certain special mathematical competences in regard to the purely quantitative

aspects of reality. "They have no right to claim that this product of incompetence and specialization is a complete picture of reality. As a matter of historical fact, however, this claim has been constantly made." With the usual disastrous results.

It is not so well-known how this "impoverished reality" of science is the parent of the philosophy of meaninglessness and that secret hopelessness from which more people suffer than are willing to admit it. Thomas Henry Huxley called it a 'nightmare' conception of the world. The American philosopher, Perry, has referred, in *Present Conflict of Ideals*, to an "alien world". Mumford has spoken of the "abolition of man". Rufus Jones, whom we have quoted earlier, has this to say: 'Most of our present-day philosophy ends in thinness and sterility because the creators and interpreters of it have been misled into the easy belief that all the issues of life can be handled by the same methods and the same categories that have worked with astonishing success in physical, chemical and biological laboratories.'²² The effect of such a short-sighted and pseudo-scientific approach to the problem of human living and social reform can be seen in the complete disregard of the human personality and all ethical considerations, a free charter to violent revolutions and all manner of dictatorships and brainwashing. From these consequences there is no escape, unless we can find a more total world-view than the one our sciences have to offer. It is the claim and service of mystical experience that it gives one "the meaning of the whole" as nothing else can: nothing else makes the 'alien world' into our home. In the stirring words of the Quaker mystic: "We have conquered the outward world, and put it in our nets, but the explorers of it are not yet 'at home' in the universe. We have immensely improved the means of life, but we have somehow failed to discover to expand *the meaning and significance of life*... We must explore the 'labyrinthine ways' of our own selves. We must knock at the doors which lie within... We have had our 'Westward Ho', our 'Northward Ho', our 'Southward Ho', and 'Stratosphere Ho', but we now need a ringing call to 'Inward Ho'.'²³ The mystics have been ringing the bell for ages.

This brings us to our final issue—social planning. Planning is all the rage these days. "The agonised individual conscience... is no longer fashionable," wrote Bennett. "The social conscience is now in vogue... But one may raise the question whether they (social ends) are best served by being thus set in the foreground of the mind."²⁴ Our socialists know better, in fact know nothing else. In this the evidence of Professor Laski will be as good as any other. In one of his later books, *Faith, Reason and Civilization*, he writes, "our victory will be thrown away unless we devote it to great ends." But what are these "great ends" according to Laski? He does not keep us in the dark for long. "I do not think," he continues, "that anyone can examine with care our contemporary situation without being continually reminded that we again require some faith that will revitalise the human mind." And he has no doubts whatever where that revitalising faith is to be found—in the Soviet Republic. "Despite all its cost in blood and toil and suffering, the dream has brought unbreakable hope to one-sixth of the surface of the world. It is not, of course, as yet, the fulfilment of the dream. But no one can easily deny that there is in the inner ethos of the Russian Revolution the clue to the secret which each race of men has ever pursued and from which it derived the dynamic of a revitalised freedom."

The challenge of that "inner ethos" need not be denied. It is a challenge indeed, in a sense other than Laski meant. But in terms of the ends that the mystics have put forward, the Russian Revolution would look like a heresy, a symptom rather than a remedy. In retrospect the brutal strategies of an unspiritualised soviet may turn out to be a consummation devoutly to be avoided, a red rather than a green signal. And unlike Laski, we cannot afford to overlook the "cost in blood and toil and suffering" visited on others by the party machinery. Here is what another economist, with a mind finer than Laski's, has to say on the problem of economic reconstruction :

"The day is not far off when the economic problem will take the back seat where it belongs, and the arena of the heart and head will be occupied or re-occupied by our real problems—the problems of life and relations, of creation and behaviour, and religion."²⁵ The men of science, economics and politics might feel disturbed by the way things are going, but by themselves, in terms of their special disciplines, they are unable to bring about any permanent solution of our persistent problems. They can tinker, they cannot transform. The "difficult alchemy, the transformation of men" is known only to the mystics and contemplatives and none else.²⁶ They alone have the right knowledge and make the right effort. They know, more than others do, that "only a total spiritual direction given to the whole of life and whole of nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself". Whether there will ever be a sufficiently receptive group that will work out the implications of such a profound change in human affairs is quite another question. It is however significant, as Underhill has pointed out, "that many of these experiences are reported to us from periods of war and distress : that the stronger the forces of destruction appeared, the more intense grew the spiritual vision which opposed them. We learn from these records that the mystical consciousness has the power of lifting those who possess it to a plane of reality which no struggle, no cruelty, can disturb. . . . Rather it gives them a renewed vitality."²⁷ This gives us hope and one will not be surprised to find an echo, in modern terms, to St Augustine's cry : My life shall be a real life, being wholly full of Thee. For even the modern man has had occasional glimpses of this truth, of the whole man, glimpses that are soon lost in the humanistic cloud. But a glimpse is not enough, what we need is an organised intuition, a steady lightning as the Veda puts it. How otherwise are we to welcome the Dawn of God, the dawn of "human history" of which the Ancients had seen the far-off promise ? We must set all our resources to fulfil this pledge and promise, or go under. In the midst of our modern anarchy, all the fear and trembling, the confusions of the twilight, as Sorokin has called it, the voice of the mystic, "a man the sciences have never known", rings out with clear confidence. As then, so now.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness :
Prepare the way of the Lord,
Make his path straight.

As St Paul said, Now is the day of salvation. Or, at the risk of heresy, Eckhart : "It (mystical union) ranks so high that it communes with God face to face as He is. . . . (It) is unconscious of yesterday or the day before and of tomorrow and the day after, for in eternity there is no yesterday nor any tomorrow but only NOW." So now we

must learn to discern and follow the mystic voice. It speaks to you. For He *is* you. "The land which they see and which they report to us, is the land towards which humanity is going."²⁸ In the words of Tagore, the mystic is a bird of the dawn,²⁹ the forerunner of the soul-change to be. Pioneer of the spiritual world, in Time he waits for the Eternal's hour, the substance of things hoped for. Or, as William Blake said :

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball;
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate—
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

Only wind it into a ball.

SISIRKUMAR GHOSH

Notes :

13. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*.
14. F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival after Death*, 29.
15. *Grey Eminence*.
16. P. 15.
17. *Christian Behaviour*, 57.
18. The Mother, *Conversations*, 52-3.
19. A. N. Whitehead, *Function of Reason*, 8.
20. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, 334.
21. Rufus M. Jones, *The Eternal Gospel*, 159.
22. Rufus M. Jones, *Some Exponents of Mystical Religion*, 9.
23. Rufus M. Jones, *The Eternal Gospel*,
24. C. A. Bennett, *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism*, 163.
25. James Maynard Keynes.
26. See : "Man made the universe; he has made its nightmare, arbitrary quality (of polytheism), its inaccessible righteousness (monotheism), its blind, inhuman necessitarianism (of mechanism). Each of these has been a part picture of an aspect of his nature. He has only been able to see in outer nature what confirms and answers to his inner nature. The invisible replies and rationalizes in the form in which it is summoned and imagined ...
"As man dares act (this is the fact of creative faith) his apprehension-construction grows and he sees not subjectively but objectively a new reality. For he brings into being that which he has dared to desire."
Gerald Heard, *The Third Morality*.
"The world is tired of individualism (which economic-dominated minds call by its economic symptom, capitalism)...The compulsory economic communism is based on hate. The psychological communism is

based on love.... If the psychology is right, then the right economics, the only economics bearable... will follow." Gerald Heard, *The Social Substance of Religion*.

Again : "If evolution is to continue... it cannot continue unless we consciously co-operate with this, its next step, the evolution of consciousness), men who are forwarding that evolution must make for themselves not merely personal and private ways of life but also a new social pattern of living which permits and expresses their new type of consciousness....

"What then prevents intelligent people availing themselves of this way of deliverance ? Nothing but the fact that society is, and must always be, based on psychology and have as its consequences and symptom of that psychology, an appropriate economics.... In fact, the reverse is true, that economics is basic and psychology the resultant.... We simply endure a diseased economics inevitably springing from an evil psychology....

"Only those who have discovered the path of evolution, what is the next step and how we are to co-operate with that development, can know themselves as part of a self-transcending purpose." Gerald Heard, *Sex, Pain and Time*.

27. Evelyn Underhill, *Practical Mysticism*, ix.
28. There has been too great a tendency, among a section of critics, to look upon the mystic as a lonely wolf, 'outsider' as the phrase is today. True, the great are always alone, but the simple fact is that the mystic is a pioneer of a new mutation, engaged, as Colin Wilson has said, in the "creation of a higher type of man... with a broader consciousness and a deeper sense of purpose." "In the greatest mystics we see the highest and widest development of that consciousness to which the human race has yet attained.... The germ of that same transcendent life... is latent in all of us...." Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*. Mysticism, as Alexis Carrel, himself a scientist, but a scientist with a broad vision, has pointed out, is among "the fundamental human activities".
29. "...they are like birds in the sky, placed on high, that is, in God, so that they know no limitation." Abbé Bremond, *La Conquête Mystique*.

A PILGRIM BIRD

I LOOK at tours, my tours, with an attitude different from the general one I do not go out and move from city to city specifically to meet people in order to awaken them to the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, nor do I make any effort to popularise the organisation I represent, although both these ends get automatically served.

Tours for me are an experience by themselves—an experience and a process of self-unfoldment, which brings me nearer to my goal. They are a means by which I get the opportunity of studying myself—my weaknesses and faults, my shortcomings and ignorance. For, unlike the Ashram, the purifying and transforming spiritual abode, free from outside interferences and influences, nestling under the protective wings of the Mother, they throw me into the open furnace of cosmic ignorance, passions and prejudices, which often evoke kindred vibrations in me.

Every event, however little it may outwardly appear, offers a severe test within. Take an example : somebody (naturally an admirer) offers me some money saying, "It is for your own personal use." Now, externally it looks so simple, but it entails difficulties of vast dimensions that can cut me off from my moorings and throw me back thousands of years so far as my sadhana is concerned. How ? I may have desires of many kinds. To possess money or spend it according to my satisfactions may be one of them; and I may have begun to be conscious of these desires. As soon as I am offered the money, my mind may advance many arguments and reasons to justify its acceptance and its use according to the dictates of my desire-soul. Money is a power, and if I use it for purposes other than the Divine's it degrades my consciousness and, in consequence, there may be a fall from my sadhana. When I seek the Divine, all the elements of my being should seek the Divine—no elements shall, under any circumstances, be left open to outside influences. In this case, willynilly, I may have given an open invitation to the very forces which I am trying to get rid of.

But, after acceptance of the money, if I offer it to the Divine without using the same according to my sweet will to serve my personal ends, I have wrested the money power for the service of the Divine. Therefore, this situation gives me two very important advantages : one is that it affords me an opportunity to study my own psychology, to observe in the context of such tempting offers whether or not there are any desires rising in me; and the second is that by accepting the money I become a dynamic agent in bringing to the Divine the money-power which is now generally controlled by the undivine forces. Similarly in regard to the circumstances in which desires for food, name, fame, praise, honour, etc., can be observed and rejected with firmness. There is also the apparently laudable desire to serve humanity. But that too is a desire—a desire of the enlarged ego in us, and has to be ruthlessly eschewed, if we would become perfect instruments of the Divine.

Another result I get from my tours is that I become acutely aware of the divine intention which is seeking its self-fulfilment through me.

When I go out on tours, then whether I want it or not I have to meet people, address them, and answer their varied questions. They expect sound answers, ready solutions of their personal and worldly problems, and so on and so forth. Among them there may be persons who have an aspiration for the Divine. They want to know about the Divine as soon as they come to know that I am a sadhak; and I find myself immediately bombarded with a volley of questions.

It is an open test. Now, if I am quite conscious within and can catch intuitively or through my psychic feeling the divine intention, and answer all the questions in the light and force of that feeling, I become a mere transmitter of the divine will. My answers are likely to produce an electric effect upon my interrogators. Their doubts are set at rest, they receive help and guidance. This will happen only on condition that my mind is silent, and passively receptive to the Mother's inspiration.

Discussions and meetings then become meditation. It is, indeed, an outstanding experience provided by tours that words can be more effective than dynamite, and crack the thick crusts of people's minds.

This is the situation so far as I am aware of the Divine's intention within myself. But I have also to be aware of the Divine's intention behind the movements of persons and events around me.

Every creature under the sun and even each god is an expression, a part and parcel of the Divine, and each one here or elsewhere is destined to fulfil his role by the law of his nature. Each one has his stage of development, and has reached there through millions of births. Each stage is, therefore, significant, and has got to be recognised, respected and understood in its real perspective. What has been revealed to me as the Truth may not be so to others who come to see and interrogate me, or may not be viewed and judged by them from the same standpoint. They have their own way of understanding, for their nature is different. And I must be able, by empathy, by intuition to enter into their ways of thinking and feeling.

If I am conscious of the Truth the Divine is seeking to manifest through my life during my present terrestrial pilgrimage, it should be my next endeavour to be conscious of the Truth the Divine is seeking to express through His universal manifold creation. Truth is one but many are the ways of its manifestation. To realise the One in the many is as essential an experience as realising the One in His ineffable Absoluteness. "He who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me," Sri Krishna says in the Gita about the complete devotee. The joy of this realisation cannot be compared with any material pleasure or happiness. Each being is the Absolute. Each one has a line of action and a purpose in life, a contribution to make and a goal to realise—the Divine in him to manifest here. And here or elsewhere, consciously or unconsciously, he is advancing as a pilgrim towards that goal.

What material results accrue from my tours need not concern me as a spiritual seeker. Whether humanity is served by them or not will depend upon God's Will and not mine. I must act, moved by God's will, for a purpose decreed by His infinite Wisdom, and not serve my own or anybody else's ideal or interest.

Any work can be an outer manifestation of one's inner development, and a tour a part of the integral Sadhana—a Sadhana which benefits the world as much as it benefits me; but in the inscrutable way of God, and not in any other. Life is one, humanity is an indivisible unity, and God is the Truth and Constituent of this Unity. To be united with God is, therefore, to be united with the whole creation. To serve God and to manifest Him in life is to serve the universe. My tours have made me more and more aware of this all-embracing Truth of existence.

ANIL MUKHERJI

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

FUNDAMENTAL BASES OF LINGUISTIC UNIFORMITY

Bhasa, a Quarterly Hindi Magazine, Central Hindi Directorate, Ministry of Education (Government of India), Rs. 3.30 Annual.

Six issues of the magazine are before us. The magazine contains eight or ten sections. The first one deals with various problems of the Hindi language. In this section we find articles from the pens of eminent personalities like: Dr. Rajendra-prasad, the ex-president of India ; Dr. Dolat Rama Kothari, the President of the University Grant Commission and Scientific and Technical Terminology Commission ; Dr. Kalumal Srimali, the Central Education Minister, etc. In an article, Sri Ramadhari Singh Dinkar has beautifully described how during the reign of the East India Company there was a controversy over the medium of education in India between, on the one hand, Lord Macaulay, the Governor of Bengal who with the help of Christian missionaries intended to anglicise all the Hindus through English education, and on the other hand Mr. Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, together with Thomas Munroe and Captain Kennedy who were sincere well-wishers of India's culture and languages. The statements of two of these are worth noting :

"Hindus were not inferior to natives of Europe. If civilisation were to become an article of trade between the two countries, I am convinced that England would greatly benefit from the import of cargo" (Elphinstone's statement before the Privy Council).

"Sanskrit I conceive to be the grand store-house from which strength and beauty must be drawn for vernacular languages" (From a report by Captain Kennedy on the Education Policy of Bombay.)

There are two other sections in which selected poems and writings of certain distinguished persons have been translated from Hindi into regional languages and *vice versa*. From the following verse of a Malayalam poet named G. Shankar Kurupa one can easily see how near Malayalam is to Sanskrit:

*"Jaya Jaya Bhārata medini, pāvani, śubha śaline, janani !
Swayannaṇayuka, saubhāgyattin, Sṛṅgonmata tata tirtham,"*

But here only the transliteration is given, not translation and so Hindi readers fail to appreciate the beauty of thought underlying the poem.

There is another section with the heading "Sabda Sri" in which certain words of Indian languages and their uses are critically examined. In an interesting article P. A. Barannikova, a Russian scholar, has explained various words, prefixes, suffixes and affixes of different languages which have mixed together and have become current in Hindi, e.g., *Head-Pandit* (English-Sanskrit), *Rail-gādi*, *Ticket-ghar* (English-Hindi), *Bhojan-gādi* (Sanskrit-Hindi), *māla-gādi* (Arabic,Hindi), *Topa-*

gādi (Turkish-Hindi), *Agni-bimā* (Sanskrit-Persian), *jail-khānā* (English-Persian) *Chhāpa-Khānā*, *Chamaka-dār*, *Sher-ni* (Hindi-Persian).

In another section Mr. Vidyabhusan has pointed out that there is a tendency among Hindi writers to write anuswār in place of five nasal consonants: for instance,

ककाल, चंचल, पंडित, बंधन सपादक कलङ्की, चञ्चल, पण्डित, बन्धन, सम्पादक,

He says that this can be done in the first two classes of consonants, because the nasal consonants are not clearly pronounced there. But, Hindi being a phonetic language, this should not be done in the other three classes because there three nasal consonants are clearly pronounced and so ण (ṇ) न (n) म (m) should be written and it is more convenient in press-composing too. It looks really awkward to compel readers to pronounce anuswāra where even the efforts of a Hercules and a Bhagiratha will have to accept defeat. Vidyabhusan's suggestions therefore are worth accepting.

In another section S.K. Chatterjee, the well-known multilingualistic scholar, writes :

“Considering the present conditions of India, Hindi is the only language which has a capacity, more than other languages, to become the Indian national language. After Sanskrit we cannot conceive of any language other than Hindi for a national language. Hindi has the quality of being the easiest tongue and due to that it has been extended throughout India easily.”

There is another section in which the activities of the Central Hindi Directorate, the Ministry of Education, Government of India, are being described. The Directorate has published an English-Hindi glossary of technical terms, a review of which has already appeared in the June issue of *Mother India*. The terms included in it are meant to be used in all the Indian languages so that there may be uniformity in all of them. An arrangement has been made to get a large number of popular and standard books translated from English into Hindi and other Indian languages and from one Indian language into another. The main object of the paper is to develop Hindi, the national language, together with all the regional languages and bring them close to one other without impairing their special characteristics.

A critical study of Hindi and other Indian languages and a scientific approach to their problems with a view to bring out uniformity among them, as seen in the magazine, deserves our whole-hearted appreciation. But we still find that Sanskrit and a common script, those two fundamental bases of linguistic uniformity, require more attention. Indian culture is based upon the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Smritis, Darshanas and various other works written in Sanskrit. In spite of certain differences in faith we have all respect for them. Vedic hymns and the Sanskrit language are being taught in a large number of families to their children from the very beginning in the south as well as in the north. All our Indian languages have drawn inspiration from Sanskrit literature and, through it, are related to one other. What therefore we require at present for the sake of their uniformity is the expansion of Sanskrit teaching. We would like to propose a few points in this connection :

(1) Sanskrit Vidyālayas in which Sanskrit may be taught in an orthodox method should be increased to the largest possible number.

(2) Students reading in them should be given sufficient scholarships.

(iii) Just as there are several Sanskrit examinations in Bengal—*Adya*, *Madhya* and *Upādhi*—or in Varanasi *Prathmā*, *Madhyama* and *Shastri*, etc., so also three or four examinations of such standard should be organised by all the States.

(iv) Students reading in such Vidyalayas should be provided with facilities to read English at their free will.

(v) Such Vidyalayas should be situated near to some Arts and Science colleges so that sanskrit students desiring to learn Arts or Science Subjects may be able to attend those classes.

(vi) Fee concessions should be given to the students who after passing the Madhyana or Shastri examination wish to join inter and higher classes.

(vii) Students of Arts and Science Colleges should be encouraged and provided with facilities to study Sanskrit in such Vidyalayas by the orthodox method.

(viii) In all government services, especially where teaching or literary work is required, preference should be given—other qualities being equal—to such students as have passed some Sanskrit examination and at least two or three years' age concession should be given to them where there is an age-limit.

There arises the question of money for this purpose. Well, there are thousands of temples in India whose annual income is probably several crores. A greater part of that sacred public money goes into the pockets of a few persons. If tactfully tackled it can be utilised for the teaching of Sanskrit. Religious-minded people also can generously contribute a lot for this work. With grants from the Central and Provincial Governments no scarcity of money can stand in the way. What is needed, therefore, is to realise the importance of the work and a strong will to carry it out.

Secondly, scripts are the main obstacles in the way of the Indian languages coming closer to one another. As long as that barrier stands, although efforts for their uniformity are essential, they will produce very little result, no matter how great they may be. If that barrier is removed, it will not be difficult for the average graduate to learn three or four Indian languages and more than 75% of our linguistic problem will be solved.

All our Sanskrit works are written in the Devanagari script. We have respect for those works as well as for that script. From a phonetic standpoint, this script is considered to be more perfect than other scripts current in the world and all the Indian languages can be written easily in it. If there are certain imperfections in it, let the representatives of all the Indian languages sit together and calmly and quietly discuss the matter and try to remove those defects. If defects are found to be irremovable let us try to evolve a new script in conformity with our past tradition and genius and, till it is evolved, accept Devanagari or whatever script is considered to be the best among those which are current.

Our ancient Rishis, who evolved a culture more durable than any other culture in the world, must have possessed a very high type of genius. But we believe that so far as genius is concerned we in the present age have not become bankrupt. A nation which has achieved victory in a freedom fight, without arms, against the greatest power of the world, cannot be said to be lacking in genius. What is needed at present is a broad-mindedness, a large-heartedness, a greater sense of patriotism, a deep insight into that which is best in our cultural tradition and an unswerving devotion to it.

A few points may be proposed in this connection as a preliminary step :

1. The governments of Non-Hindi-speaking States should allow the students of matriculation and higher classes to write answer papers in Hindi, the national language, and also in regional languages in the Devanagari script till any common script acceptable to all is evolved.

2. The central Hindi Directorate may publish text-books in regional languages written in the Devanagari script (or the common script) and these may be given freely to the students of those States willing to write answers in that script.

3. The Central Hindi Directorate may publish readers in regional languages written in the Devanagari (or the common) script and these may be taught in schools in the Hindi-speaking states.

Considering that Sanskrit and a common script are the fundamental bases of linguistic uniformity, the more we devote our energies to working them out, the more solid will be the foundation and more durable the structure. A stage will soon arrive when India will be able to produce a huge army of writers and scholars and statesmen working naturally for linguistic uniformity and national integration and the Indian languages will play their role melodiously, having unity in diversity, like different instruments in an orchestra.

The paper of the magazine is good, the printing fine, the price, Rs. 3-50, for about 700 to 800 pages is really nominal. We wish this publication the largest possible circulation in the literary world.

K. D. SHASTRI

ON HUMAN UNITY

WE still hear the voice of the Rishis of the Upanishads, "OM is this imperishable word, OM is the Universe, and this is the exposition of OM. The past, the present and the future, all that was, all that is, all that will be is OM Likewise all that may exist beyond the bounds of time, that too is OM " (*Mandukya Upamshad*)

Again,—“Harī OM. In the beginning the spirit was one and all this (universe) was the spirit, there was nought else moving. The spirit thought, Lo, I will make me worlds from out of my being.” (*Aitareya Upamshad*, Chap. I, Secn.I)

It transpires, therefore, that the spirit and the world are one and undivided. They seem to be many and divided in manifestation only. But in this division and multipleness is implanted the urge towards that original unity and oneness. It is as if the Truth has veiled itself under the garb of ignorance and untruth giving birth to a world of darkness and division. A self-willed slumber, as it were, of the seed of Light within the soil of night. Why? Different philosophies and sciences of the world have found and still strive to find an answer to this Why. The answers found are controversial and dissimilar according to the diverse cults, creeds, religions and beliefs. But what appears to us the most credible and convincing is the reply that the spirit wanted to find itself revealed anew, from the condition of inconscience and obscurity, by a creation of harmony and truth-consciousness. The self-finding of the sleeping seed in the blossoming tree of fragrance and beauty—that is why amidst the sounds of war drums and bursting of bombs the *Sanātana Vāñī*, The Eternal Sound, resounds throughout the length and breadth of the universe, “Arise, awake, find out the great ones and learn of them” (*Katha Upamshad*, First Cycle: Third Chapter 14.)

Now let us turn our attention to the present-day world situation. Sri Aurobindo says, “At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny.”¹ The statement can be resolved into two parts—one, “evolutionary crisis” and the other “choice of destiny.” If we try to probe into the depths of these two aspects we shall stand face to face with the practical side of our initial assumption, i.e. a concealed truth in the core of existence pressing to express itself against the opposing material and outer nature. To know and appreciate the secret will, spirit and love at the back of everything is a matter of inner realisation. But the action of the resisting forces without can be detected and seen in their effects on day-to-day life. A daily paper or a periodical provides us with ample proof of it. It seems, therefore, that the universe stands on the equilibrium of these two interacting forces. But at times the outer conflicting tendencies reach such a grievous state that this equilibrium gets terribly shaken and human life and security are at stake. Such a juncture is a period of crisis for the world. But God is ever vigilant to extend His helping hand to save His creation and to show the path of God to man. This He does, if needed, with pressure and compulsion although the nature of such

¹ *The Life Divine*

enforcement is different from the usual meaning we give to the term. That is why there come the heavenly messengers with indomitable will, and heart full of glorious love, and mind charged with eternal wisdom.

Sri Krishna came upon Indian soil when India was on the verge of a suicidal war between two camps of powers, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. He came at a time when these two were ready to rush against each other in a deadly embrace. He sided with the Pandavas, the followers of the Dharma, and left an immortal message for the safety and guidance of humanity and the world. The Bhagavat Gita is and will remain a source of inspiration and help to the seekers of Truth at all times and in all countries. Sri Aurobindo wrote in one of his letters, "I practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads. These were the only books from which I found guidance; the Veda which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry, rather confirmed what experiences I already had, than was any guide to my sadhana. I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it."

India today is also faced with a crisis, a crisis which is not confined this time to her soil alone. It is a global affair with an infinitely complex bearing. The means of its remedy are complicated and unforeseen by the mental view. The intervention of the incredibly advanced modern science has made its issue still more dangerous and uncertain. But the possibility of such an upsurge was not altogether unanticipated and we find words of caution in the following lines of Sri Aurobindo: "In Asia a more perilous situation has arisen, standing sharply across the way to any possibility of a continental unity of the peoples of this part of the world in the emergence of a communist China." ¹ The saviour spirit has descended this time in a person whose instrumentality is rightly equipped with the need of the time. The truths contained in books like *The Life Divine*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Human Cycle* and others are not only in keeping with the mind and spirit of modern times but they are also the Vedas of the world to be. In them are embodied and synthetised the mystic knowledge of the past, the living picture of the present and the future vision of the life divine in an integral wholeness.

Now let us see what may be the meaning of the expression "choice of destiny". Sri Krishna sided with the Pandavas and at the same time the Pandavas also chose and accepted Sri Krishna as their guide and guru. As a rule the Divine does not impose Himself. Man is a mental being and at this stage of self-unfoldment of the evolutionary spirit he is apparently free to make his choice. Says Nicholas Berdayev in his *Destiny of Man*, "There is a demonical element in man, for there is in him the fathomless abyss of freedom, and he may prefer that abyss to God." Had it not been so the omnipotent Divine would have transformed the world according to His plan within no time by the power of a supreme miracle. But perhaps that should not be. The creation should pass gradually all the stages of its ascent. That is the divine *līlā*, the ecstatic dance of Shiva. According to Sri Aurobindo, "what the Bhagavan intends to do with man is to enable him to realise God in life, in the individual as well as in the collective society." ² The power requisite for the purpose is there within

¹ *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

² *Sri Aurobindo's Letter to Barrin*.

each one of us. Over and above our mental capacity we have in us our psychic being, the eternal portion of the Divine which can help us to see and discriminate the lines that lead towards the goal and the divine fulfilment of our life as against the others which oppose that attainment.

Fate is a balance drawn in destiny's book.

Man can accept his fate, he can refuse.

Savitri, page 519.

There is a will and purpose behind the cosmic evolutionary process. If our choice is in conformity with it we may be certain of our final attainment and victory. For, then the victory is not ours but the Divine's. The directing will of the Divine behind the life of the individual can be experienced and known by the individual himself according to his own way of nature. But the purpose and process of the collective growth can be studied and traced from observations made by the great seers and thinkers. The theory of evolution tells us that man, the mental being, is the third step of the evolutionary ladder. Two other steps, namely, plant and animal representing respectively the principles of matter and life, had already been traversed before the mental stage was reached. Now whether this third stage is the final or ultimate status of the evolutionary spirit is a matter of debate and controversy. But we are fully convinced by the following clear and definite exposition of Sri Aurobindo: "The soul is not bound by the formula of mental humanity: it did not begin with that and will not end with it; it had a prehuman past it, has a superhuman future." So exceeding the mind man must grow into the state of supermind or the truth-consciousness and it is said that that is inevitable in the nature of things to come. In the same way a study of the history of the human aggregate or collectivity will reveal that before the attainment of nationality, the present largest aggregate, it has passed successively through a number of other smaller groupings, namely, family, clan, tribe, etc. This growth also cannot stop short with reaching the state of nationality only. It must embrace the whole human race and form a world aggregate. But this unity must not be merely superficial and constitutional; it should be real, mainly inner and psychological. Our ideal and aspiration are towards this unity and presumably that is also the purpose and will of the Divine.

(To be continued)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

Students' Section

THE DESCENT OF THE BLUE

ACT II

SCENE I*

(1923. Sri Aurobindo and a Gujarati disciple, Punamchand)

PUNAMCHAND : Before I settle down here as a permanent sadhak, may I have your permission to go home and come back with my wife ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. What is Champaklal doing there ? Bring Champaklal also with you.

(To Champaklal this remembrance of him by Sri Aurobindo and the spontaneous call to him are a most cherished memory. He first came to Sri Aurobindo in 1921 as a boy of 18. Now in 1923 he comes to stay for good.)

(The Mother and Champaklal)

CHAMPAKLAL : My Mother, I intend to wash my Father's dhoti.

MOTHER : I shall speak to Sri Aurobindo.

(Exit the Mother)

(Enter Sri Aurobindo)

SRI AUROBINDO : You want to wash my dhoti ! People will laugh at you, joke about you, mock you. Are you ready ?

CHAMPAKLAL (*firmly*) : I am, Father.

SCENE 2

(June 5, 1923. Sri Aurobindo and C.R. Das. Sri Aurobindo's residence, Pondicherry).

C.R.DAS : A serious problem, Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO : What's that ?

* Adapted from Narayan Prasad's *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram*, which is in the Press.

C.R.DAS : I wish to take to spirituality.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*) : How can it be a problem at all ?

C.R.DAS : It *is*, Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO : How ?

C.R.DAS : Politics dogs me night and day.

SRI AUROBINDO : But you know the two cannot go together.

C.R.DAS : Ah, you have understood my problem. Aurobindo, help me into the spiritual life.

SRI AUROBINDO : I wish I could.

C.R.DAS : What prevents you, dear friend ? Aurobindo, you are to me something far more than even a dear friend. And you know that.

SRI AUROBINDO : Chitta, you must be aware that you cannot make satisfactory progress in your inner life if you do not move away altogether from absorption in politics.

C.R.DAS : You are perfectly right. But...

SRI AUROBINDO : I understand your difficulty. All right, then; you go on with your political activities, but at the same time do your best to live your inner life. Gradually you may find that your interest in politics is giving way to your interest in a higher life.

C.R.DAS : What a burden you have taken off my shoulders ! I see a way of light and breathe in a little fresh air. But one thing more. I need your help also in another matter. Our "Swarajya Party" needs your unstinted support.

SRI AUROBINDO : I feel strongly for it. I give its stand my full inner support. You will always feel my presence in it.

C.R.DAS : I feel doubly relieved. With your presence in me all will go well with me. Do you remember my prophecy about you at the Trial ?—"His words will be echoed and re-echoed...."

SRI AUROBINDO : But what would Norton think of you if he were to overhear you ?

C.R.DAS : Oh, he is now a different man. He works hand in hand with me. He now appears against Government in political cases.

SRI AUROBINDO : Good that he is now on the side of the weak and the striving. His chivalry will pay.

SCENE 3

(1923. Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo's residence.)

(Enter T.V.Kapali Sastri, an eminent Sanskrit scholar of South India.)

KAPALI (*bowing his head to Sri Aurobindo*) : Sir, six years back when I first came to you I asked you about India's possibilities and you gave me the inspiring answer, 'not possibility but certainty'. This time you are giving me another inspiring thing—your golden complexion. It is no more deep-brown as before. In you, Yoga incarnate carries now its true complexion.

Now I have come, my mind made up once for all, to throw myself at your feet and upon your Grace for ever. Pray how should I proceed in the first step of your Yoga ?

SRI AUROBINDO : My Yoga aims at transformation of the whole being, not excluding the physical.

KAPALI : How and where to begin ?

SRI AUROBINDO : One has to bring the Divine Consciousness right down into the very cells.

KAPALI : Too difficult even to think of. But I would not try the too-hard so soon. I repeat I throw myself at your feet and upon your Grace, now and for ever. Do with me as you please.

(Sri Aurobindo gives a gracious smile and a nodding assent. With a parting praṇām Kapali leaves the Master's Presence, profoundly happy.)

SCENE 4

(1925. Pondicherry. Naren Das Gupta visits Sri Aurobindo)

SRI AUROBINDO : Naren, how are you getting on with your Sadhana ?

NAREN : My Sadhana ! that you know better than I.

SRI AUROBINDO : Of late I have received a number of letters about you from the Professor of English, Feni College. Some time ago your indifference to earthly life and austere way of sadhana caused much fear in your friends. Besides the Professor, others too have written to me of your exclusive absorption in sadhana. What I have replied to them, you know ? I have asked them not to disturb you in any way, adding that all will be well.

NAREN *(shedding tears of delight)* : They did all that ! And received directions from you ! I was all in the dark. Now I have a prayer.

SRI AUROBINDO : What's it ?

NAREN : I wish to see the Mother before I leave for Bengal.

SRI AUROBINDO : Ah, that's your prayer !

(Exit Sri Aurobindo)

NAREN *(to himself)* : Oh my Guru, strange are your ways, more so is your affection for your sons. Pondicherry is a far cry from Feni. Your Grace and Presence nullify Space and Time.

(Enter the Mother)

NAREN *(prostrating himself before the Mother)* : Mother, I must leave for Bengal.

THE MOTHER : You must ?

NAREN *(apologetically)* : Yes, Mother. There is no other way.

THE MOTHER : Why do you want to go ?

NAREN : It's the family pull, Mother.

THE MOTHER : How long will it go on ?

NAREN : I am now going to pull the family here and leave it at your Feet.
 THE MOTHER (*with a compassionate smile*) : That's fine.

SCENE 5

(November 24, 1926. Amrita comes down from upstairs and starts informing the disciples of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to assemble in the upstairs verandah facing the Prosperity room.)

(6-30 p.m. Barin, Nolmi, Amrita, Purani, Champaklal, Pujalal, Rajani Paht.... Twenty-four all told are seated on mats.)

(7 p.m. Enter the Mother and Sri Aurobindo)

NOLINI (*looking all around*) : Satyen has not come. Shall I call him ?
 THE MOTHER : Yes, all, all.

(Sri Aurobindo takes his seat in a low cushioned chair, while the Mother is on his foot-rest a few inches to the left. He stretches out his left hand over the Mother's head, and with the right begins to bless all the disciples who are bowing to him and the Mother, one after another. A complete silence. Sri Aurobindo looks omniscience and omnipotence. The Mother looks Eternal Love and Compassion.)

DATTA (*inspired*) : "The Lord has descended. He has conquered death and sorrow. He has brought down immortality."

RAJANI (*in a whisper*) : Barin-da, I have a special request. I am in a terrible fix.

BARIN : What's it ?

RAJANI : I feel I am in Heaven. The pressure is simply unbearable. Please tell the Mother that I must tell her a few words.

BARIN : Rajani, you are not the only case. It is more or less the same with every one of us.

RAJANI : Maybe. But that is no concern of mine. I pray you to plead with the Mother for my sake.

BARIN : I'll try. More than that is beyond me to-day.

RAJANI : Barin-da, how I wish to hear from you what has actually happened to-day ?

BARIN : Rajani, (*with a broad smile*) your Barin-da is as blind as you.

(*To be continued*)

CHINMOY

THE VALUE OF REJECTION

REJECTION and non-attachment do not seem far remote. If one goes on continually rejecting a particular thing or a movement that allures one, then there comes a time when the allurements cease; apparently there develops a kind of non-attachment. Thus self-control, or say, repression through the power of will, leads to what looks like non-attachment, dispassion. But a subtle secret sense of lack remains, casting a "long lingering look behind." The seed of desire is still left intact. Under suitable circumstances this seed can sprout and grow. Herein lies the cause of a set-back. Many an advanced aspirant has met with retrogression, often called a downfall.

Take, for instance, a spiritual seeker who discovers that he has a great desire for icecream. Once he determines not to touch that delicacy, what will happen? Every time he controls his desire he grows stronger in his will and finally that very dainty dish will lose all its charm for him. Self-control involves a struggle; the desire-mind wants something, the rational mind objects to it and the determined will overcomes the desire. Finally, when self-conquest becomes a habit, there is no conscious struggle, no effort is necessary, it becomes automatic and natural as it were. Habit is second nature. He is no more tempted by icecream for which he had such an inordinate passion. Our late first President Rajendraprasad was a lover of icecream. He used to take only one plate of icecream for himself while he would buy and offer to his friends as many as they liked. This was his habit when he was a student of the Presidency College, Calcutta, and an inmate of the Eden Hindu Hostel.

Self-control has its limitation. One has to be on one's guard all the time. At any unguarded moment the enemy can again overpower one. Mussolini was so fond of grapes that once when he sat at the table an aeroplane was sent over across the Alps to fetch grapes from Switzerland before he finished his meal.

It is our every-day experience that snuff-addicts can give up the habit, but once they relax themselves on some pretext or other and begin to take just a pinch of snuff, in no time they become a victim to their old habit.

It is clear that the practice of self-control cannot eradicate the seed of desire.

As soon as a live seed falls into a favourable soil, receives water and sunshine and gets time enough, it naturally germinates. A fried seed will never sprout. But how to fry the seed of desire? It is the fire of self-realisation that can make the seed of desire inert and inactive.

When the Divine is realised, a spontaneous freedom from the objects of the senses develops. Then there is no fear of a downfall.

The Gita says : "Sense-objects cease for him, who does not enjoy them with his senses; but the taste for them persists. This relish also disappears in the case of the man of stable mind who sees the Supreme."

The Katha Upanishad says : "None who has not ceased from doing evil, or who is not calm, or not concentrated in his being, or whose mind has not been tranquillised, can by wisdom attain to Him."—Tr. Sri Aurobindo

Once a holy man said to his audience : "The Supreme Lord is the Friend of the helpless and the redeemer of the fallen ones; but our ego does not allow us to consider ourselves helpless and fallen; if we can just feel that we are helpless and fallen the Lord is there to befriend us and to redeem us."

Once a devotional old woman frankly said : "The path of self-control is not for us householders; our way is to increase our devotion and love for the Supreme Lord; when our attraction for Him will increase, sense-objects will automatically become insipid."

A rich man's son once appeared before a spiritual Teacher and expressed his inability to forego the sex-life, yet he wanted to tread the spiritual path; the Master advised him to cultivate devotion and earnest prayer. And that, he said, would radically solve his problem.

BHUMANANDA

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY

The second Annual Session of the members and representatives of branches and centres of Sri Aurobindo Society will be held in Pondicherry on 23rd and 24th November 1963.

Friends are also cordially invited to attend the Session.

For further information regarding programme, reservation of accommodation etc. please contact The Secretary, Reception Committee (Session 1963) Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry-2.

SIMPLICITY OF EXPRESSION IN EMILY DICKINSON'S POEMS

SIMPLICITY is the result of much effort or great labour. It is an art to express a great thought or suggest a world of experience with the maximum economy of words. Emily Dickinson is an adept in this field. The following poem conveys a great thought in simple language. We cannot do anything about motion or rest; we can only look at the situation, the presence of the mystery :

Some things that fly there be,—
Birds, hours, the bumble-bee :
Of these no elegy.

Some things that stay there be,—
Grief, hills, eternity :
Nor this behooveth me.

There are, that resting, rise.
Can I expound the skies ?
How still the riddle lies !

The use of the word 'still' (silent and motionless) is remarkable. The contrast between hours and eternity; and the association of eternity with grief and hills (as old as the hills and as everlasting as grief) reveal her skill in poetic expression.

Another poem which records the anguish of bereavement in simple language is called : *The bustle in a house*.

The bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth,—

The sweeping up the heart,
And putting love away
We shall not want to use again
Until eternity.

In this poem we see that the momentousness of death to Emily Dickinson's imagination did not prevent her from stating the anguish of bereavement in terms of broom and dustpan. The whole experience is conveyed in the language of the household : bustle, sweeping up, putting away, want to use again. Especially the word 'use' (as in relation to articles of daily use) is powerful. Such precision, brevity, and simplicity we see also in Yeats' line in *Byzantium* :

An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve,

and in Donne's lines in *A Valediction : forbidding mourning* :

Our two soules therefore, which are one,
Though I must goe, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate—

and in Sri Aurobindo's phrase in *Savitri* : Book One, Canto One :

The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.

C. SUBBIAN