

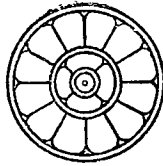
MOTHER INDIA

DECEMBER 5, 1963

Price: Rs. 2-0-0

Annual Subscription: Inland, Rs. 10.00: Foreign, Sh. 16 or \$ 2.50

Mother India : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2



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. 10, 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
MESSAGES OF THE MOTHER	5
DECEMBER 5, 1950: THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO	6
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO <i>Nirodbaran</i>	7
THE UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO	16
EMPTINESS AND BLANKNESS:	
Some Letters of Sri Aurobindo <i>from Nagin Doshi</i>	18
SOME REMINISCENCES OF SRI AUROBINDO <i>R. K. Mookerji</i>	20
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE U.S. <i>Sisirkumar Ghose</i>	22
SOVIET GYMNASTS	
(Translated by Sisirkumar Ghose from the Bengali) <i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i>	30
SPIRITUAL CAUSERIE <i>"Prabuddha"</i>	36
SURFACE LIVING <i>Jobst Muhling</i>	39
SRI AUROBINDO — THE POET <i>K. D. Sethna</i>	41
NEW ROADS (Poem) <i>Norman Dowsett</i>	66
NEW CONSTELLATIONS (Poem) <i>Janina</i>	68
A PRAYER (Poem) <i>Prithwi Singh</i>	69
THE GOLDEN DAY (Poem) <i>Sailen</i>	70
DIVINE ECSTASY (Poem) <i>Niranjan</i>	71
HOW LONG ? (Poem) <i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	72

CONTENTS

		Page
MY LIFE'S AIM (Translated by Har Krishan Singh from the Bengali)	<i>Dulali</i>	73
HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US A Pilot's Experience	<i>Kritin</i>	74
MYSTICS AND SOCIETY Chapter II : The Doctrine of the Mystics	<i>Sisirkumar Ghose</i>	77
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE A Study of <i>Savitri</i> : by Prema Nandakumar	<i>Review by Ravindra Khanna</i>	85
Silence Speaks: by Girdharlal	<i>Review by C.K.</i>	89
ILA THE WONDERFUL—A SOUL'S LOVE (A Story) (Adapted from Pashupati Bhattacharya)	<i>Bhumananda</i>	91
ON HUMAN UNITY	<i>Chumlal Chowdhury</i>	99

Students' Section

THE DESCENT OF THE BLUE : A Drama	<i>Chinmoy</i>	102
T.S. ELIOT : The Four Quartets	<i>Norman Dowsett</i>	108
WHAT DO THE LIVES OF GOD-MEN TEACH US ?	<i>Narayan Prasad</i>	114
INSPIRATION IN ART	<i>Kiran Mehra</i>	115
GOD DISPOSES (A Poem)	<i>Robert</i>	116
RALPH WALDO EMERSON	<i>Madal</i>	117

Edited by : K. D. SETHNA

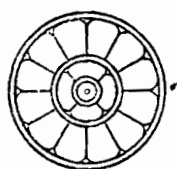
Published by : P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERRY—2

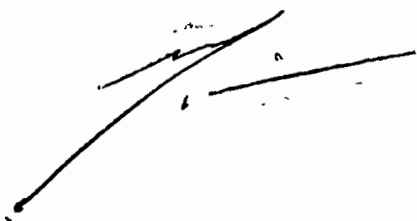
Printed by : AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry—2

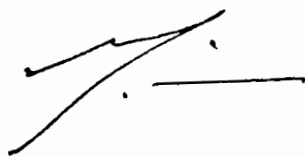
PRINTED IN INDIA



Each lie uttered
is a step taken towards
Disintegration



Falsehood is the
great ally of
Death.



DECEMBER 5, 1950 :

THE PASSING OF SRI AUROBINDO

His love has paved the mortal's road to Heaven :
He has given his life and light to balance here
The dark account of mortal ignorance.
It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice...
He must enter the eternity of Night
And know God's darkness as he knows his Sun.
For this he must go down into the pit,
For this he must invade the dolorous Vasts.
Imperishable and wise and infinite,
He still must travel Hell the world to save.
Into the eternal Light he shall emerge
On the borders of the meeting of all worlds...

Savitri, Book VI, Canto II

*
**

Oh, surely one day he shall come to our cry,
One day he shall create our life anew
And utter the magic formula of peace
And bring perfection to the scheme of things.
One day he shall descend to life and earth,
Leaving the secrecy of the eternal doors,
Into a world that cries to him for help,
And bring the truth that sets the spirit free,
The joy that is the baptism of the soul,
The strength that is the outstretched arm of Love.
One day he shall lift his beauty's dreadful veil,
Impose delight on the world's beating heart
And bare his secret body of light and bliss.

Savitri, Book II, Canto VI

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(We are publishing from the Notebook of Nirodbaran the earliest talks that took place after the accident to Sri Aurobindo's right leg in 1938. After them, we shall resume our usual series.

THE eve of the November Darshan, 1938. The Ashram humming with the arrival of visitors. On every face signs of joy, in every look calm expectation and happiness. Everybody has retired early; all lights have gone out: great occasion demands greater preparation. The Ashram is bathed in an atmosphere of serene repose. Only one light keeps on burning in the corner room like a midnight vigil. Sri Aurobindo at work as usual....

A sudden noise ! A rush and hurry of feet breaking the sweet sleep. 2. a.m. . . Then an urgent call to Sri Aurobindo's room.... There, lying on the floor with the right knee flexed is He, clad in white dhoti, upper body bare, the Golden Purusha. The Mother, dressed in sari, is sitting beside him. Purani was the first to be summoned by her. Then Dr. Manilal who had fortunately arrived for the Darshan was called. Presently some of us came. Dr. Manilal has examined Sri Aurobindo. Yes, a fracture and of a serious type. All necessary first aid given, a specialist from Madras is sent for.

Meanwhile a deep gloom has overshadowed the Ashram. The Darshan has to be abandoned. The visitors leave, one by one, with a heavy heart and with an ardent prayer for the speedy recovery of their beloved Master and Friend.

There on the bed he was laid for an indefinite period by the rigorous command of the doctors, attended on by a few disciples. The conversations that followed were with those disciples who were given the privilege of serving him from then onwards for twelve years. There was not a subject that was not touched, not a mystery that he did not illumine, not a phenomenon that passed unnoticed, humorous or serious, superficial or profound, mundane or mystic. Reminiscences, stories, talks on art and culture, on world-problems poured down in abundant streams from an otherwise silent and reticent vastitude of knowledge and love and bliss. It was an unforgettable reward he accorded to us for our service. "The Divine gives himself to those who give themselves." Those anxious days called out for our best and noblest and he gave in return his fathomless compassion, freely and divinely. All the talks could not be recorded, some have to be kept back, but the rest are as far as possible authentic, though the words and expressions cannot be his own in all places.

Sometimes one question following another bore no relation to the latter. That was often the general trend of the talks. Among a group like ours and in the milieu in which we worked a methodical discussion of a subject was not always possible nor very much worth-while. But certain pronouncements of one day were expanded or completed on another when new aspects were brought up or new facts presented.

Some opinions, therefore, need to be taken in conjunction with those expressed later.

In the early period, the conversations took place in the evenings. Some five or six of us used to sit by Sri Aurobindo's bed and wait for his signal. The Mother's presence was an occasional feature that added a lively interest to our talks. Latterly, however, her own work kept her away.

DECEMBER 10, 1938

Q : Why did you choose Pondicherry as the place for your sadhana ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Because of an Adesh, a Command. I was ordered by a Voice to come here. When I was leaving Bombay for Calcutta I asked Lele what I should do about my sadhana. He kept silent for a while, probably waiting to hear a voice from within, and then replied, "Meditate at a fixed time and hear the voice in the heart."

I didn't hear any voice from the heart but a quite different one from above, and dropped meditation at a fixed hour because meditation was going on all the time. When Lele came to Calcutta and heard about all this he said to me, "The Devil has caught hold of you." I replied, "If it is the Devil, I will then follow him." The same Voice from above brought me to Pondicherry.

Q : We have heard that spirits used to come to you. The book *Yogic Sadhan* is said to have been written by the spirit of Keshav Sen.

SRI AUROBINDO : Keshav Sen ? When I was writing it, always at the beginning and at the end the image of Ram Mohan Roy came before me. Somebody has evolved Keshav Sen out of Ram Mohan Roy. Do you know the origin of the name "Uttara Yogi" which is put as that of the author of the book ?

Q : No, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : There was a famous Yogi in the South who, while dying, said to his disciples that a Purna (Integral) Yogi from the North (Uttara) would come down to the South and he would be known by three sayings. Those three sayings were those I had written to my wife. They are published in *Mṛṇalīnīr Patra*. A Zemindar disciple of that Yogi found me out, took the book *Yogic Sadhan*, gave the author's name as Uttara Yogi and bore the cost of publication.

Q : Did Tagore have any spiritual experiences ?

SRI AUROBINDO : As far as I know, nothing of an outstanding order. Neither did he claim to have any.

Q : What is your opinion of the Brahmo Samaj ? Was there anyone in it with high spiritual realisation ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know: Dwijendranath Tagore had something. Shivanath too and perhaps Keshav Sen. Bejoy Goswami, who had more, soon ceased to be a Brahmo.

Q : Did Lele have any realisation ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course he had.

Q : It is said that Christ used to heal simply by a touch. Is such healing possible ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ? There are many instances of such cures. No doubt, faith is necessary. Christ himself said, "Thy faith has made thee whole."

Q : Is faith always necessary?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, not always. Cures can be effected without faith, especially when one doesn't know what is being done. Faith is above mind, so any discussion or dispute spoils its action.

Q : Yes, I know of instances of cure or help by faith. When I first came to see you, you told me to remember you in any difficulty. I followed your advice and passed unscathed through many troubles. But when I came here again I heard many conflicting things from people and didn't get the same result. I thought perhaps I couldn't open myself to you.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yours was what is known as simple faith. Some call it blind faith. When Ramakrishna was asked about the nature of faith, he replied, "All faith is blind; otherwise it is no faith." And he was quite right.

Q : Is it because there is something in our nature or in the surrounding atmosphere that doubts come and the results are not as before ?

SRI AUROBINDO : For both reasons. The physical mind has doubts inherent in it and they come up at one time or another. By contact with other people also the faith gets obscured. I know one or two shocking instances in the Ashram itself. Once a truthful man came to pay a visit. Someone told him that the habit of speaking always the truth was nothing but a superstition and that one must be free to say whatever one likes. There is another instance of someone advocating sex-indulgence. He said that it was not a hindrance to Yoga and that everybody must have his Shakti! When such ideas are spread, it is no wonder they cast a bad influence on people.

Q : Shouldn't those who broadcast these ideas be quarantined ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I thought of that. But it is not possible. The Mother tried at one time to impose some restrictions and regulations; it didn't work. One has to change from within. There are, of course, other Yogic systems which enforce strict disciplines. Buddhism is unique in that respect. In France also there is a school (Labratte?) which enjoins rigorous silence.

Q : Is exterior imposition good?

SRI AUROBINDO : It can be good, provided one sincerely keeps to it. In that school in France, for example, people who enter know what they want and so keep to the regulations meant to help their object. Here the object is different. Ours is a problem of world-change. People here are an epitome of the world. Each one represents a type of humanity. If he is changed, it means a victory for all who belong to his type and thus a great achievement for our work. But for this change a constant will is required. If that will is there, lots of things can be done for the man.

Q : We gather that sadhana was going on very well in the Ashram at the beginning and things became sluggish only afterwards.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is when the sadhana came down into the physical and subconscious that things became very difficult. I myself had to struggle for two years. For, the subconscious is absolutely inert, like stone. Though my mind was quite awake above, it could not exert any influence down below. It is a Herculean labour. If I had been made to see it before, probably I would have been less enthusiastic about it. There is the virtue of blind faith! When one enters into the subconscious, it is like stepping on an unexplored continent. Previous Yogis came down to the vital level, they did not descend farther, And they were quite sensible in not

doing so! But if I too had left it there, the real work would have remained undone. Once the subconscious is conquered, things will become easy for those who come after. That is what is meant by "realisation of one in all".

Q : Then why should we take so much trouble? We can wait for that victory.

SRI AUROBINDO : You want an easy path ?

Q : More than an easy path; we want to be carried about like a baby. Not possible, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ? But you have to be a genuine baby !

Q : Ramakrishna has said that one need not be like a drawn bow.

SRI AUROBINDO : Where has he said that ? A Yogi has to be always vigilant, especially in the early part of his sadhana. Otherwise all one has gained can come down with a thud. People usually don't make sadhana the one thing of their lives. They have two parts, one internal and the other external which goes on with its ordinary movements, social contacts, etc. Sadhana must be made the one central thing.

Q : You once spoke of the brilliant period of the Ashram.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it was when sadhana was going on in the vital level. Then everything was joy, peace, ananda. And if we had stopped there we could have started a big religion or a vast organisation. But the real work would have been left unattempted and unachieved.

Q : Why did you retire ? Was it to concentrate more on your work ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. It was in order to withdraw from the general physical atmosphere. If I had to do what the Mother is doing, I would hardly have found time to do my own work; besides, it would have entailed a tremendous labour.

Q : The Mother's coming must have greatly helped you in your work and in your sadhana.

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course, of course. All my realisations—Nirvana and others—would have remained theoretical, as it were, so far as the outer world was concerned. It is the Mother who showed the way to a practical form. Without her, no organised manifestation would have been possible. She has been doing this kind of sadhana and work from her very childhood.

Q : Yes. We also find in the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* a striking resemblance between your ideas and hers.

DECEMBER 11, 1938

Reports were reaching us that some people who had stayed in the Ashram for a number of years but had at last to leave it for committing acts of treachery were now spreading calumnies against us and were even going to the length of saying that they would destroy the whole Ashram. One of these unbalanced vilifiers had been given refuge in the Ashram, not because of his Yogic capacity but on the intercession of a sincere sadhak who happened to be his relative. This man was now trying to bite the hand that had fed him. We were very indignant at such brazen

manifestation of ingratitude and at the same time amused by his presumptuous utterances. His instance brought in the general subject of our talk.

Q : Is there no justice ? Surely such people will have to pay the penalty of their actions ? But how is it they are the ones who succeed in life ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Justice in this life ? May not be, most probably not. But what is justice ? It is not what most people believe it to be. The common idea is that the virtuous will be rewarded with happiness and prosperity in the next life while the wicked will have the opposite results. In that case the people you speak of must have been virtuous in their previous birth. Well, that's not my idea of justice. True justice there is in the sense that the good people advance towards a sattwic nature while those with the contrary disposition go down the scale of humanity : they become more and more Asuric. That is what I have said in the *Arya*.

At this moment the Mother came in. It was the time for her to go downstairs to the Meditation Hall and give a general meditation. Every evening before going down, she used to come and sit for a while in Sri Aurobindo's room, sometimes taking part in the conversation, sometimes meditating. Naturally during her meditation we used to keep quiet. As soon as she entered she asked Sri Aurobindo with a smile, "Are they again making you talk ?" Dr. Manilal put in promptly, "No, Mother, no. We want him to take rest." Everyone, including Sri Aurobindo, burst into laughter. When the noise had subsided, the Mother, seated as usual on the sofa, inquired, "What is the talk about ?" Sri Aurobindo replied on our behalf, "They are asking if justice exists." The Mother opened her eyes very wide, and we again laughed. Sri Aurobindo then narrated in brief the incidents which had prompted our talk and the turn the talk had taken.

THE MOTHER : Of course, there is justice. Do you think these people can have an easy and comfortable life ? They can't; they suffer, they are tormented, they are not happy within.

Q : But that unhappiness does not seem to change them. They go from bad to worse.

THE MOTHER : Probably, but in some cases as the Divine pressure goes on acting on them, at one time or another, especially during some impending catastrophe, a sudden change takes place in them. We have seen numbers of cases like that. For example, those who were trying to persecute Sri Aurobindo when he first came here...

But by justice you mustn't mean that certain qualities will not get results favourable to them. Among those people whom you mention, one may be a scoundrel, but if he has capacity and cleverness he will surely succeed in life, for it is these qualities that meet with success, not always virtue or piety.

Q : To know how to cheat people and get their money—is it cleverness ?

THE MOTHER : Of course it is; or you may say it is a misuse of cleverness. I don't say that this kind of cleverness will not have its consequences, but it can't be denied at the same time that people with such qualities succeed in life.

Q : You have said in your *Prayers and Meditations* that justice exists and one

can't avoid the law of Karma except by the Divine Grace. Why doesn't one believe in this Grace ?

THE MOTHER (*after looking far away for sometime with meditative eyes*) : Because the human mind arranges and combines things, accepts or eliminates them according to its own notion and judgment. It does not leave any room for the Grace. For instance, one is cured of a disease or passes an examination; one thinks it is due to medicine or one's effort. One doesn't see that in between these factors or behind them there may be the Grace acting on one. (*Turning to Sri Aurobindo*) Isn't that so ?

SRI AUROBINDO : People would call it luck, I suppose. (*Laughter*)

THE MOTHER : If one does not recognise the Grace, how can it work ? It is as if one had shut one's door against it. Of course, it can work from below, underneath, so to speak.

Q : Doesn't the Grace act unconditionally ?

THE MOTHER : It does; especially on those who have been predestined for some definite work in life. Yes, the Grace is unconditional; but at the same time how will it work if a man is throwing it away or doesn't recognise it ? It would be like constantly spilling from a cup in which something is being poured. If one recognises the Grace and expresses gratitude, it acts more quickly and more powerfully.

Q : Isn't it because we are ignorant that we don't recognise it ?

THE MOTHER : No; I know many ignorant people who having received the Grace have expressed a deep gratitude welling up from the heart.

Q : We should like the Grace to act like a mother feeding her infant when it is hungry and supplying things when needed.

SRI AUROBINDO : And who is this infant here ? (*Loud laughter*)

THE MOTHER : But the Grace does not work according to human standards or demands. It has its own law and its own way. How can it act otherwise ? Very often what seems to be a great blow or calamity at the present moment may turn out to be a great blessing after ten years or so, and people say that their real life began only after that misshap.

(*After a short pause in a half-withdrawn mood, then taking up the thread of the original topic*) I am interested to see what will be the reactions of those people. The results may be different in each, but I can't say just now in what way.

Q : Will it be only a difference of degree ?

THE MOTHER : No, difference of quality also; for one may be more stupid and blind than another who may be conscious of what he is aiming at. So the former has less power to harm.

Q : Perhaps one of them may change for the better.

THE MOTHER : In what sense ?

Q : He may turn to the divine life again.

THE MOTHER : That is romance !

Q : But S may come to the Ashram once more—since he was here a good number of years.

THE MOTHER (*amused*) : Do you think so ? When a man who has been given a chance turns deliberately his back on the Divine, he spoils his possibility. That he had a possibility is, on the other hand, shown by the fact that he was given a chance.

With these words the Mother left for the meditation and we formed our usual ring around Sri Aurobindo. Dr. Manilal started the talk. He began by describing at length the Jain Law of Karma most of which was too deep for some of us. He was, by the way, very fond of quoting Jain Shastras whenever an opportunity presented itself and seemed to be quite an adept. Terms like *jīva*, *tīrthaṅkara*, *utkāṭa karma*, etc., used to flow frequently from him and Sri Aurobindo also used to show interest in his declamations, sometimes joking at his theories and putting him into tight corners from which he tried to wriggle out somehow. At times he used to take Sri Aurobindo's railleries and cross-questionings very seriously. Looking far towards some horizon, with eyes slightly narrowed as if he had gone into the times of Mahāvira and surveyed the past history of Jainism, he would begin, in one of his characteristic manners, "Jainism says, Sir..." But before he had time to indulge his eloquent fervour, we would sometimes shout, "There, there, the Doctor with his Jainism again," and there would be chuckles all over the room. As it is difficult to report abstruse technical things correctly, it is best to touch only on some relevant portions of the talk, with an apology if justice is not wholly done to the theories expounded.

Dr. Manilal began to expound the Jain law of Karma and ended by saying how even the Tirthankaras could not escape this rigorous law : they also had to pay in exact mathematical measures.

SRI AUROBINDO : It seems to be a great thing—but too wonderful and mathematical to be true ! There was an illustration of this mathematical theory in the example of a son who, although he lived for a short time, cost his father a great deal of money because of his ill-health. It was explained that the father had been the debtor of the son in his previous life and the son had realised by these expenses the exact amount of money he had lent to the father. Well, what do you say ?

Q : No, Sir. That can't be the real explanation. Somebody must have cut a joke or exaggerated. There is what is called *nikacit karma* or *utkāṭa karma* which can't be avoided. It is like a knot which can't be untied.

SRI AUROBINDO : It may be then this *utkāṭa karma* that caused my accident !

Q : Why this unmerited suffering in your case ?

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you know it is unmerited ? Perhaps it was to give me knowledge of intense pain. The pains I had experienced so far were of an ordinary nature which I could transform into ananda. But this was intense. And since it came swiftly and suddenly I could not change it into ananda. But when it settled down into a steady sensation I could. Besides, we shall see afterwards its full significance. . . . Of course, I accept it as a part of the battle.

Q : When will you be cured ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I can't say and, even if I could, the hostile forces would at once rush up to prevent the cure. That is why I don't want to prophesy about anything. Not that things are not known beforehand or possibilities not seen. There are things about which I have definitely pronounced in advance. But where it is a question of possibilities, I don't tie myself down to any; for, if I do that, I commit myself in advance to certain lines of movement and the result of them may not be what I wanted. Consequently I would not be able to bring down what I was striving for.

But plenty of people can prophesy and among Yogis that capacity is very com-

mon. When I was arrested, my maternal grand-aunt asked Vishuddhananda, "What will happen to our Auro?" He replied, "The Divine Mother has taken him in her arms: nothing will happen to him. But he is not *your* Aurobindo, he is the world's Aurobindo and the world will be filled with his perfume." Narayan Jyotishu also, who did not know me, foretold about my three trials, my white enemies and my release. When my horoscope was shown to him, he said there was some mistake about the time of my birth. When it was corrected, he remarked, "Ah, the lead is turned into gold now."

(Turning to Dr. Manilal) Have you had any prophetic dream?

Q : Not as far as I remember, but Ambegaukar's daughter-in-law once told that she had seen him being carried to the burning ghat and exactly two hours later he died.

SRI AUROBINDO : That's a good instance.

Q : But, as in the case of you and Vishuddhananda, can one prophesy about a person without even knowing him?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not? Prophesying is an intuitive power. I once tried to see a man whom we wanted to get appointed as Governor here, I saw a figure seated in the Office, but a person totally unknown and quite different from the one we wanted. After some time, there broke out a quarrel between my brother-in-law Bose and a Government official. He was summoned to the Office, but the letter addressed to him bore by mistake the name "Ghose" instead of "Bose". So I had to go and I found to my surprise the very man of my vision sitting as the Governor.

On another occasion, a friend of C.R. was coming to see me. I wanted to have a vision of the man. I saw a man with a clean-shaven head and a bull-dog face, but when he turned up it was a man with quite a different appearance—regular South Indian Brahmin features. But curiously enough, after about two years when I met him again I found that he had completely changed to what I had seen in my vision! These things are thrown out in this way from the subtle world to the surface consciousness....

Take another instance. I was in the past a great tea-addict; I could not do any work without my cup of tea. Now, the management of the tea was in the hands of my brother-in-law. He used to bring it any time he woke up from his sleep. One day I had a lot of work to do but couldn't get into it without the tea. I began to think, "When will he bring it, why doesn't he come?" So far I had never asked anybody for anything for myself. Suddenly I found that a particular hour was written on the wall before me, and exactly at that hour the tea was brought in....

Q : Is the consciousness of the Divine possible in even the physical cells?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, the cells can have peace and joy and other things. When they are quite conscious, they can throw opposing forces out. When peace descends into the physical being, it is a great force for cure.

Q : Can one have peace without knowing it?

SRI AUROBINDO : That would be neutral peace, though it would be more than quietude. But there is a positive peace which one knows and feels. Truth also can descend into the physical—and power as well, but very few can bear power. There is a descent of light too.

There is an infinite sea of peace, power, ananda just above the head—what we

call "overhead". (*Looking at N*) And if one is in contact with it, one can get these things always.

Q : Do any thoughts or suggestions come to you?

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you mean? Thoughts and suggestions come to me from every side and I don't refuse them. I accept them and see what they are like. But if you mean thinking, I never do that. Thinking ceased a long time ago—it has stopped ever since that experience of mine with Lele, the Silence and Nirvana at Baroda. Thoughts, as I said, come to me from all sides and from above and the transmitting mind remains quiet or it enlarges to receive them. True thoughts always come in this way. You can't think out such thoughts. If you try to do so, you only make what the Mother calls mental constructions.

Q : Was the *Arya* with its thousands of pages written in this way?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, it was transmitted directly into the pen. It is a great relief to get out of the responsibility.

Q : Oh yes, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't mean responsibility in general, but of thinking about everything. Some thoughts are given, some are reflected from above. It is not that I don't look for knowledge. When I want knowledge I call for it. The higher faculty sees thoughts as if they were written on a wall.

Q : Vishuddhananda is said to be able to produce all sorts of smells, for which he has been known as *gandhībābā*. Do you think it possible to do such things?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is difficult to know if the smells are all materialisations or subtle smells projected into the physical or on the senses.

Many people have experiences of subtle realities. Paul Brunton told us he was always aware of some Presence accompanying him but could not identify it. When he saw my photo it did not at all resemble his vision, but when he saw me at Darshan time he at once recognised me as that Presence.

Q : Why didn't he remain here if he had an opening to you and also admiration for you?

SRI AUROBINDO : We did not advise him to remain. The Mother, after a meditation with him, told him about it and he admitted she was right....

At one time I thought that physical siddhi, spiritual power over matter, was impossible. But in the Alipore Jail I found once after my meditation that my body had occupied a position which was physically impossible: it was actually raised some inches above the ground; there was what is known as levitation. Then, again, I was practising for a time to raise my hands and keep them suspended in the air without any muscular control. Once in that condition I fell asleep. The warder saw me in that posture and reported that I was dead. The authorities came and found me quite alive. I told them the warder was a fool.

There is a French author, Jules Romans, who is a mystic as well as a medical man. He can see with other parts of the body than the eyes. He says the eyes are only a specialised part; other parts can also be trained to see while the eyes remain closed. He even gave a demonstration to scientists; but they refused to admit its validity.

THE UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

I AM writing to-day about your son X and his illness if it can be called by that name. I shall state first in general terms the nature of the malady and its usual developments, that is to say, the normal course it takes when no psychic or spiritual force is brought in to remove it. Afterwards I shall indicate the two possible means of cure.

I think it is best for me to state the case in its worst possible terms because it is necessary that you should know the full truth and have the courage to face it. These cases are not those of a truly physical malady, but of an attempt at possession from the vital world; and the fits and other physical symptoms are signs, not of the malady itself, but of the struggle of the natural being against the pressure of the hostile influence. Such a case in a child of this age indicates some kind of accumulation in the physical heredity creating an opportunity or a predisposition of which the vital invasion takes advantage. It is especially the physical consciousness and physico-vital which contain the germs or materials of this predisposition. The physical being is always changing its constituents and in each period of seven years a complete change is effected. If the symptoms of this predisposition in the nature are detected and a wise influence and training used by the parents to eradicate them and this is done so effectively that in the first seven years no seeds of malady appear, then usually there is no further danger. If on the contrary, they manifest by the seventh year, then the next period of seven years is the critical period and, ordinarily, the case will be decided one way or the other by or before the fourteenth year.

There are normally three possible eventualities. The difficulty in dealing with the case of so young a child is that the mind is not developed and can give no help towards the cure. But as the mind develops in the second seven years it will, if it is not abnormally weak which I think is not the case here, react more and more against the influence. Aided by a good control and influence it may very well succeed in casting out the hostile intrusion and its pressure altogether. In that case the fits and other signs of the physical struggle pass away, the strange moral and vital tendencies fade out of the habits and the child becomes mentally, morally and physically a healthy normal being.

The second possibility is that the struggle between the natural being and the intruding being may not be decisive in the psychic sense, that is to say, the intruder cannot take full possession but also he cannot be thrown out entirely. In that case anything may happen, a shattered mind and health, the death of the body or a disturbed divided and permanently abnormal nature.

The third and the worst possibility is that the intruding being may succeed and take entire possession. In that case the fits and other violent symptoms will disappear, the child may seem to be physically cured and healthy, but he will be an abnormal and most dangerous being incarnating an evil vital force with all its terrible propensities and gifted with abnormal powers to satisfy them.

In X's case there is not as yet possession in the full sense of the word, but a strong pressure and influence indicated by the strange habits of which you have written. These are suggested and dictated by the intruding being and not proper to the boy himself. The fearlessness and security with which he does these things is inspired from the same source.

But the fits prove that there is as yet no possession. There is a struggle indicated by them and a temporary hold which passes out again. He is evidently in the earlier part of the critical period. I have indicated the course normally taken by the illness, but it is not necessary to pass through it and take its risks. There are other means which can come to his help and effect a complete cure.

The first and easiest is to cure by hypnotic suggestion. This if properly applied is an absolutely sure remedy. But in the first place it must be applied by someone who is not himself under the influence of evil powers, as some hypnotists are. For obviously that will make matters worse. Moreover, it must be done by someone who has the proper training and knows thoroughly what he is about, for a mistake might be disastrous. The best conditions would be if someone like yourself who has a natural relation and already an influence over the child could do it with the necessary training and knowledge.

The other means of cure is the use of spiritual power and influence. If certain psycho-spiritual means could be used that would be as sure and effective as the other. But this is not possible because there is no one there who has the right knowledge. The spiritual influence by itself can do it but the working is likely to be slow. It must ordinarily be conveyed through someone on the spot and you yourself are obviously the right instrument. What you have to do is to keep the idea that I am sending to you power for this object, to make yourself receptive to it and at the same time make your own will and natural influence on the child a direct channel for it. The will must be a quiet will, calm and confident and intent on its object, but without attachment and unshaken by any amount of resistance and unalarmed and undiscouraged by the manifestations of the illness. Your attitude to the child must be that of a calm and firm protecting affection free from emotional weakness and disturbance. The first thing is to acquire such an influence as to be able to repel the attack when it comes and if it takes any hold to diminish steadily its force and the violence of its manifestation. I understand from your letter that you have already been able to establish the beginning of such an influence. But it must be able to work at a distance as well as in his presence. Further you must acquire the power of leaving a protection around him when you are absent. Secondly, you must be able to convey to him a constant suggestion which will gradually inhibit the strange undesirable habits of which you speak in your letter. This, I may say, cannot be effectively done by any kind of external coercion. For that is likely to make these impulses more violent. It must be a will and suggestion and silent influence. If you find the control increasing and these habits diminishing, you can understand that the work of cure has begun. Its completion may take some time because these vital beings are very sticky and persistent and are always returning to the attack. The one thing which will make the cure rapid is if the boy himself develops a will in his mind to change for that will take away the ground of the hostile influence. It is because something in him is amused and takes pleasure in the force which comes with the influence that these things are able to recur and continue. This element in him calls the invading presence back even when it has been centrally rejected. I shall of course try to act directly on him as well as through you, but the instrumentality of one on the spot greatly enforces and is sometimes indispensable to the action.

6th April, 1923

EMPTINESS AND BLANKNESS

SOME LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO : I cannot have written that it is only you who feel the silence as empty, as there are plenty who do so feel it at first. One feels it empty because one is accustomed to associate existence with thought, feeling and movement or with forms and objects, and there are none of these there. But it is not really empty. 4-1-1936

Blankness is only a condition in which realisation has to come. If aspiration is needed for that, it has to be used; if the realisation comes of itself, then of course aspiration is not necessary. 15-1-1936

Q: You once wrote of the state of blankness as if aspiration were not needed in it at all. Please see the words I am quoting.

SRI AUROBINDO : The "state" I was speaking of was not blankness but something else—I see by reference to the passage in your letter that it was a "state in which aspiration is not needed." Such a state is not blankness but a condition in which the Mother's force is present to the consciousness and doing everything. 15-1-1936

Q: What exactly is meant by "realisation" when you write: "if the realisation comes of itself"?

Every kind of realisation—infinite self, cosmic consciousness, the Mother's Presence, Light, Force, Ananda, Knowledge, Sachchidananda realisation, the different layers of consciousness up to the Supermind. All these can come in the silence which remains but ceases to be blank. 16-1-1936

The silence can remain when the blankness has gone. All sorts of things can pour in and yet the silence still remains, but if you become full of force, light, Ananda, knowledge etc. you cannot call yourself blank any longer. 16-1-1936

If it is the spiritual emptiness then it will not be felt as interfering with the sadhana. 17-2-1936

If it is only emptiness, there is nothing wrong. Alternations of emptiness and fullness are a quite normal feature of experience in sadhana. 26-2-1936

Voidness can come from anywhere, mind, vital or from above. 24-3-1936

Emptiness usually comes as a clearance of the consciousness or some part of it. The consciousness or part becomes like an empty cup into which something

new can be poured. The highest emptiness is the pure existence of the self in which all manifestation can take place. 2-5-1936

Q: Sometimes the emptiness in the vital becomes unbearable in its influence. If it comes only to clean the vital, why such a forceful action?

SRI AUROBINDO : I suppose because the vital is very forceful in its clinging to old movements. 7-5-1936

Emptiness as such is not a character of the higher consciousness, though it often looks like that to the human vital when one has the pure realisation of the Self, because all is immobile, and for the vital all that is not full of action appears empty. But the emptiness that comes to the mind, vital or physical is a special thing intended to clear the room for the things from above. 9-5-1936

An emptiness in the mind or vital may be spiritual without emptiness being an essential characteristic of the higher consciousness. If it were, there could be no Force, Light or Ananda in the higher Consciousness. Emptiness is only a result produced by a certain action of the higher Force on the system in order that the higher consciousness may be able to come into it. It is a spiritual emptiness as opposed to the dull and inert emptiness of complete tamas which is not spiritual. 11-5-1936

I don't see how emptiness can be like a bellows. Do you mean that there is a force that acts in the emptiness like bellows or that there is a strong breathing ? The latter often happens when the Force is being brought down and there is some difficulty. 12-5-1936

Q: I feel the voidness of the being but why do I never experience the fullness which ought usually to follow the voidness?

SRI AUROBINDO : You have written about the Force coming down—even sometimes of its filling all parts—so what is this “never” ? I did not at all mean that there is a mechanical process by which every time there is emptiness afterwards there comes an entire filling up. It depends on the stage of the sadhana. The emptiness may come often or stay long before there is any descent—what fills may be silence and peace or Force or Knowledge and they may fill only the mind or mind and heart or mind and heart and vital or all. But there is nothing fixed and mechanically regular about these two processes. 3-6-1936

There is no reason why the void should be a dull or unhappy condition. It is usually the habit of the mind and vital to associate happiness or interest only with activity, but the spiritual consciousness has no such limitations. 10-6-1936

From NAGIN DOSHI

SOME REMINISCENCES OF SRI AUROBINDO

(A Message from Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji—one of our greatest historians, who passed away last October—to the public meeting held on August 18 at Calcutta under the auspices of Sri Aurobindo Parishad and presided over by Dr. Kaldas Nag, to discuss Sri Aurobindo's life and sadhana.)

I DEEM it a privilege to be called upon to associate myself with the function of this evening. We are assembled here today for a most memorable occasion—August 15—which witnessed the advent into this world of one of its Supermen to whom humanity owes some of its highest thought.

Sri Aurobindo made original contribution to Indian thought, philosophy and spirituality. Indeed he is the founder of a new school of spiritual discipline which opens up the way by which man will grow into God. The system of philosophy for which Sri Aurobindo is noted is known as the Descent of the Divine into the Human, the Life Divine, the Infiltration of the Infinite into the Finite.

God is to be seen as operating in every thought and action of Man. Thus there can be no separateness between God and Man in any sphere of life and thought because these are shaped and dominated by the Divine.

I happened perhaps to be one of the very few who had the rare good fortune of coming into direct touch with Sri Aurobindo as a youth in the full bloom of his life and power when he was pleased to take over the appointment of the Principalship of the Bengal National College at which I was appointed Professor of History directly working under him. I recall many personal anecdotes about his life and work in those stirring times when the country, especially Bengal, was thrown into a whirlwind agitation over the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon.

At that time Sri Aurobindo took up the personal leadership of the Revolution which ushered in the nation's battle for freedom. Every day he would go from the Bengal National College to the evening gathering at the house of one of India's patriotic martyrs Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick in Wellington Square. The gathering, by its thought and inspiration, resembled that of the French encyclopaedists, the intellectuals who paved the way of the French Revolution. That was before Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted in the Alipore Bomb Case and before his historic "flight" to Pondicherry.

At home, in the domestic sphere, at the College, I had rare glimpses of his innate spirituality which made him always keep calm and reticent. I used to sit by him and had the natural advantage of studying some of the remarkable traits of his spiritual life at close quarters. One day he asked me whether he should accede to the request of the people of Uttarpara to address there a meeting. I ventured to suggest to him that it was better that sometime he should appear before the public and deliver his message. He said he would agree if I would report his speech. That was the origin of Sri Aurobindo's famous speech at Uttarpara.

Indeed I found him always absorbed in meditation and it was in that supreme state that Sri Aurobindo felt that he was seeing Lord Vasudeva all around him in the Alipore jail. I feel it is not proper for me to reveal the secrets of Sri Aurobindo's Divine Life at its beginnings when I had the privilege of working with him at the Bengal National College. I should like to conclude by referring to an incident which happened at this time.

One evening his elder brother Poet Manomohan Ghosh came rushing to the evening club at Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick's in great excitement to warn Sri Aurobindo : "Aurobindo, you forget that you are a born poet and must not drift into politics. Politics is not your mission in life. Your mission is poetry." Sri Aurobindo smiled at the anxiety of his brother for his future.

I feel tempted to refer to another very singular event which happened before my very eyes.

One day Sri Aurobindo told me that he felt somewhat possessed by a spirit which revealed his name to Sri Aurobindo as Manick. The spirit was very anxious to seize the pen of Sri Aurobindo so that he might write and give vent to his feelings in the other world. I told Sri Aurobindo that he might indulge him for a few minutes to see what he was anxious to write about. Then the spirit used Sri Aurobindo's hand to write a highly inflammatory article condemning British rule in a most intolerant manner. We agreed that we might use Manick's outburst as an editorial in the *Bande Mataram* by toning down some of its extremism so as to keep it within the bounds of law. The spirit's article appeared next morning in the *Bande Mataram*.

15-8-1963

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE U.S.*

SRI AUROBINDO and the U.S. But before we turn to that, may I briefly touch upon a few closely allied subjects, which will help to set our topic in its proper context ? For Sri Aurobindo's thoughts are no isolated phenomena, and they operate within a context. These allied subjects are : i) the (to us little known) mystical and spiritual traditions in western culture itself ; ii) Indological studies in the United States ; and iii) the predecessors, or the work done by men like Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and others.

Let us take these one by one.

1. First, a few words about the religious and spiritual traditions in the West and the United States. Because of our unhappy and unnatural relations with the modern West we are, for the most part, little aware of Western humanism, and still less of Western mysticism. The lives of Christian mystics and saints are not very familiar to us. This is unfortunate, for theirs is a way of life that goes far back into the first centuries A.D. and, what is more, continues to this very day. It is a way of life with which we would, I think, find ourselves in immediate sympathy. St. Paul, St. Gregory, Plotinus, St. Bernard, St. Francis, Meister Eckhart, Thomas à Kempis, Pascal, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Sienna, Swedenborg, William Law, George Fox, or the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* were not strangers to spiritual knowledge and experience. The tradition of contemplative life and union with God has never totally died out in the west, not even in the United States.

People know the United States as a *nouveau riche* industrial state or machine civilization. But the United States began, primarily, as a religious experiment. Its democracy itself was a great act of faith, of hope and liberty. For those that have eyes to see there has always been a mystical motif or substratum in American life and thought, though most Americans would no doubt shy at the idea of being described as mystics. Maybe, the spiritual strain is not so prominent as in some of the older cultures, but it is there.

A modern American city is not the best of places in which to try to love God, says an American religious thinker who has himself withdrawn behind the walls of a Trappist monastery. But listen to Thoreau, the "forest seer" who had retired, far from the madding crowd, to the woods near Walden. "I went to the woods," writes Thoreau, "because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." Perhaps no definite mystical doctrine or practice emerges from this self-conscious non-conformist manifesto, but it has the right tang. Or take another, Walt Whitman : "Yet again—and lo ! the soul above all science." "There is apart from mere intellect, in the make-up of every superior

* A Talk delivered at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

person, a wondrous something that realizes without argument...a soul-sight of that divine clue and unseen thread which holds all things, all history and time, and all events." Or this, from his *Democratic Vistas*: "Only, only a perfect uncontamination and solitariness, only in meditation, devout ecstasy, and soaring flight, does the soul solve its eternal problems. It is when the individual is alone that identity is felt—and the soul emerges, to enter into the pure ether of veneration, reach divine levels and commune with the unutterable."

Much of this kind of mysticism or mystical mood will perhaps come under the category of Nature mysticism. To quote Whitman again: "A morning glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books." Here is another, a contemporary if not a modern poet, John Neihardt, speaking:

How can I know that I know anything ?
 The coming of the grasses in the spring—
 Is it not strange so wonderful a tale
 Is really true ? Did mornings ever fail
 Or sleeping Earth forget the time to grow ?
 How do the generations come and go ?
 They are and are not. I am half afraid
 To think of what wonders all is made!
 And shall I doubt another if I see?

If I see....Well, some at least have seen. Take, for example, the writings of the Trappist author, Thomas Merton: *The Seeds of Contemplation*, *No Man Is an Island*, and *The Ascent to Truth*. Apart from these records of the "interior life" there is a large number and variety of scholarly writings on or about mysticism, spirituality and religious psychology. The sociological writings, some of the most profound in twentieth-century writing, of Lewis Mumford and Pitirim Sorokin are done from a spiritual point of view. And how can one forget the superscholarly bridge-building attempted by Professor Northrop in *The Meeting of the East and the West*? From a different angle and a higher level there are such classics as Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite*, Alexis Carrel's *Man the Unknown* and Lecomte du Noüy's *Human Destiny*. These books have sold in thousands and still do. The theologians I am for the moment leaving out, though the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich are too important to be treated like that, especially Tillich, whose idea of a New Being shows marked family likeness with Sri Aurobindo's idea of the gnostic being.

But perhaps more significant than all these is the attitude of three *avant-garde* groups or disciplines: the space scientists, the doctors and the depth psychologists. Here is Derek Lawden speaking on the probable effect of space travel on our religious-philosophic beliefs: "I think man will see himself as one agent by which the whole universe of matter is slowly becoming conscious of itself. He will cease to feel an alien creature in an indifferent world, but will sense within himself the pulse of the cosmos. He'll become familiar with the marvellous and varied forms which can be assumed by matter, and he is certain to develop a feeling of reverence for the awe-inspiring whole of which he is a very small part.... I ask anyone who denies this possibility to turn his eye skyward on a clear night." Now listen to the doctor. In *Man: Divine or Social*? Dr. Guirdham, an Oxford-trained physician, writes: "I have referred to the You which is not You as a concept of being....My ultimate

theme is that achievement of the higher planes of existence is a function of the You which is not You.... There is a spiritual basis in life itself." This agrees well with the conclusion of the biologist, Edmund Sinnott, who has written brilliantly about what he calls "the biology of the Spirit". As for depth psychology, in *Death and Re-birth of Psychology* Dr. Ira Progoff has this to say : "Although it began as a part of the protest against religion, the net result of modern psychology has been to reaffirm man's experience of himself as a spiritual being." It will not do to dismiss such thinking as mere intellectual speculation. There is a hard core of experience behind these statements, or beginning of experience.

I wish I had time to quote more evidence. But I think I have said enough to show that the West and the United States are not without their mystical men and moods. In the bosom of the West there exists, and always has existed, a "hidden remnant". More than that, it is gaining strength.

2. It is probable that some of the interest in the inner life was stimulated by Indian or Indological studies. True, America came on the scene much later than England, France or Germany. But American interest and output are not negligible. The Harvard Oriental Series is too well-known to need anything more than a mention. Whitney's Sanskrit grammar and the works of Lanman are standard texts even in India, while Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* or the later works of Conze and Burt have opened up a new world of Buddhistic thought. A few years back Pennsylvania came out with an authoritative edition of a rare Nyaya text. Another recent work is *Pancaratra-Prasad-Prasadhanam*, a critical edition of Chapters 1-x of *Padma Samhita*, or the Canons of Temple Building, edited by Daniel Smith, of the Syracuse University. Some American universities have had chairs in Asian and Indian studies for long years, while others are thinking on similar lines. Apart from these specialised courses there are courses in fine arts, comparative religion, philology and anthropology through which interest in India is being stimulated. Americans are willing to listen, I should say more than willing, provided we know how to talk to them.

Thus, apart from a small group of professional vilifiers of India and the spiritual wisdom, we have this happier tradition of scholarly interest in the Orient and what is best in Indian life and thought. In fact, some of the western scholars seem to have studied their subjects with greater thoroughness than the Indian counterparts. I am here particularly reminded of the work done by the late Heinrich Zimmer at the university of Columbia. His studies have been published in book form and what books ! *The Philosophies of India*, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Civilization*, *The King and the Corpse* and *The Art of Indian Asia*. Each of these is an amazing record of accurate scholarship and rare insight. I shall not press comparisons unduly, but it has seemed to me that if and when the west takes to spirituality seriously and on a larger scale than now, it may well beat us at the game. Did not the Mother say that the scientists are likely to come this way earlier than any other single group? Western science or scholarship is more than bagatelle or logic-chopping, it is a scrupulous search after the truth, whatever the truth might be. It may be limited in aim but is thorough in its method, and more dynamic.

• III. A few words about the predecessors before we pass on to our main topic. The first Counterattack from the East came, as you all know, from the dramatic appearance of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893.

This was the first sign, as Sri Aurobindo has written, that India was awake not merely to survive but to conquer. The good work done by the Ramakrishna Order, which Vivekananda left behind him, must be acknowledged by all who care for the Indian values of life, especially on their conservative side. Since then other evangels have appeared. The next great name is that of Rabindranath Tagore, the poet and idealist. It was Tagore who first coined the phrase "The Meeting of the East and the West" for he had felt its need keenly. Since then others have followed, a vast variety. We can mention only two or three of these : Swami Sivananda's order, Swami Ramtirtha, the Self-Realization Fellowship of Swami Yogananda. Sometime back Jagadguru Sankaracharya had also been persuaded to go out on a lecture tour. Apart from these genuine representatives of the life of the spirit, the United States, as you know, is the happy hunting ground of all kinds of yogis and pseudo-yogis, spoofs like "Swami Sulaiman, the Einstein of Spirituality", a rare specimen of Indo-Pakistan *entente* on the highest level. There is also one Yogi Tinkanwallah, whom I failed to contact. Joking apart, there are genuine seekers and even adepts, among Americans. And books, by American authors, on yoga are easily available. Some of these are reasonably well written while others are remarkably so. The main interest, it is true, seems to be in Hatha Yoga, but there are others who know better.

IV. Now after this somewhat long prelude we come to our main topic : Sri Aurobindo and the United States. With your permission I shall speak in the first person. I know there are other ways of doing it, other versions of the same thing, by others more qualified than I am. Still I prefer to do it my own way, partly because it will be easier for me to do it like that, partly because it will be more interesting than a recital of bare facts. I shall not, then, talk of the Sri Aurobindo Movement or the different centres. Did not the Mother once say : "I am working in *all* movements ?"

I was in America for less than two years. During this period, apart from odd lectures, here and there, and a little research, I taught three courses, most of it at Columbia, the University of Missouri. The course on Sri Aurobindo was the last of the series of three, the two others being : Aspects of Indian Culture and Rabindranath Tagore. I shall say nothing of these courses here, except to give you only one question from Indian Culture and two answers to the same. This will give you an idea of the kind of course it was and the stuff my students were made of, for many of them later came over to the Sri Aurobindo course.

Q. What is India's major contribution to world culture ?

Answer from Robert McLaughlin: "India contributes first her maturity and experience, her amazing tolerance (which the western world would do well to learn). Then her philosophy of life and concept of spiritual freedom, and the ability to discriminate between the pleasant or transitory and the good or permanent."

Another, Miss Kay Lanto, wrote more fully and philosophically :

"India's major contribution to world culture has been her highest possession, her ideal image of Self. The motivating concept of her millenniums of development has been to discover the Atman, the transcendent adamant Self, and make this knowledge effective in human life. She has broached this task with stupendous vitality of a three-fold nature :

- a) an ingrained spirituality;
- b) an inexhaustible creativeness; and
- c) a powerful, penetrating, scrupulous intelligence mediating between the two, between life and spirit.

"The future of the world, of culture, depends on spiritualized civilizations striving through the perfection of mind, life and body (and the exceeding of it) toward higher soul-culture....Progress in this sense means increasing the manifestation of the spiritual portion in the mind, enabling man to identify his self with the spiritual consciousness beyond mind. Here is the great value of the Indian undertaking : human life, when lived according to spiritual ideals, is equated with the divine. India has led the undertaking by setting universal precepts whose spirit is more important than their form because they provide the impetus and direction for the evolution of divine humanism. This is India's major contribution to world culture."

That will be enough for the present.

5. As regards the Sri Aurobindo course I was totally free to plan it just as I wished. There was no fixed syllabus to tie me down. But there were, of course, other restraining factors : the age and background of the students, mostly young boys and girls, unfamiliar with Indian thought and with Sri Aurobindo. There was also the time factor, a severe handicap. In all I had sixteen classes, one class a week, even if it was a two-period class. Sri Aurobindo in sixteen lectures. In the United States do as the United States does. This meant rather careful planning and I shall tell you what I did. First lecture : biography and bibliography. Second : a talk on the Ashram, with slides of course. The third to eighth lectures were based on *The Human Cycle* and two substantial chapters from *The Life Divine*, the chapters on "The Evolution of the Spiritual Man" and "The Divine Life". The second half of the course, lectures nine to sixteen, was on his poetry and literary criticism. Each lecture included a hand-out, or cyclostyled outline of the lecture. I also gave my students, for reasons of my own, a photograph of Sri Aurobindo. This proved to be half the battle, for they were, one and all, deeply impressed, as who indeed would not ? At the end of the course came the examinations. Here are some of the questions :

1. Write a brief essay on Sri Aurobindo and the Human Situation.
2. Explain briefly Sri Aurobindo's ideal of a spiritual society and the conditions needed to bring it about.
3. State clearly Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry as *mantra*. Illustrate your answer from Sri Aurobindo's own writings and other poems that you may have read.
4. In what way do you think you have profited by reading his works ?

I shall not bother you with all their answers, except one batch, the answers to the last question. I think you would like them.

"My impression," wrote Phil Harrison, "of Sri Aurobindo is that he is undoubtedly the greatest representative of the spiritual life."

" 'Remarkable' seems an understatement," wrote Sam Goldman. "What have I profited by reading his works ?...I have been shown that I have been wearing chains. The future alone can tell if I will be ever able to break these."

Said Lawrence Garoutte : "It would be unlikely that anyone could read such a man without a strong stimulus to one's thought and realization. His philosophy of

What Life Really Is will undoubtedly be a guide to my thought and actions in the future."

James Dean, a senior student, preferred to be brief. "Prophet of hope," he wrote, simply.

Another, James Ceithemal, on the beatnik side, said, "I cannot help thinking that this man" (what a Yankee touch, that !) "must have been an expert at some of the parapsychological techniques that I hope to master one of these days."

Miss May McCandish thought : "Sri Aurobindo is providing a stimulus to the yet unawakened people.... There are too many intelligent, ignorant people in the world today."

"A real asset," wrote Bill McClerkin, "to my humanistic studies.... More courses of this type should be offered."

"I will read him again years from now," said modest Ira Pace. "Maybe h'll mean more to me then."

These were my students. People talk of the wayward American youth. But with these boys and girls I never had a day's difficulty, never. I am proud of them and I give them a distant salute and a teacher's blessings.

6. Apart from my teaching at the University—or Universities—I also spoke before different groups, went to conferences and met people. Let me say a few words about these encounters.

Apparently no civilization is less friendly to mysticism or spirituality than the modern. Yet, there are stirrings everywhere. As Rufus Jones has noted, we are passing through a period of very striking mystical awakening. And though my own contacts were limited I come across, at every level, men and women who are deeply tinged with mystical thought. This I found more easily among the women than men. After a time women react against the emptiness of a life without ideals. Then they turn to religion and the higher life and they stay loyal. Vivekananda's tribute to American women has its basis in fact. A new type of aspirants is taking shape before our very eyes, both here and abroad.

If I never felt a stranger while out there the reason is not far to seek. Where the soul is an item of exchange there are no customs barriers. One of my earliest and happiest recollections concerns Dr. John Neihardt, eighty-year-old poet-in-residence at the University of Missouri. After we had been introduced Dr. Neihardt asked me the inevitable question : How do you find the United States ? As I hesitated for a second he came closer to me and whispered : "Man without mysticism is a monster. Don't you think so ?" A strange introduction to the United States, don't you think so ? Dr. Neihardt is not unfamiliar with the works of Sri Aurobindo, in whom he feels the presence of a kindred spirit. By the way, he is expected to come to India and the Ashram early in 1964.

At San Francisco where our good friend, Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, runs a Cultural Integration Fellowship, it was a pleasure to meet American friends who spoke freely and knowledgeably about spiritual matters. Most of them seemed to be familiar with Aurobindean literature. While there I heard two American professors speak on the 15th of August. I have rarely heard more competent or balanced speeches. Again at the American Academy or Asian Studies a young Swami, made

in USA, spoke on Yoga. It will be a long time before I hear another such exposition. It was not merely accurate in detail, but inspiring in tone.

Apart from speakers, students and commentators what shall I say of those who are trying to live this life ? What about the Duncans who are running an Ashram, in the very heart of America, where I spent some of my happiest days ? They are one of us. So are many others. Time will not permit me to talk about all of them. But how can I forget old Miss K (old in age, in nothing else) and how she silenced us with her startling remark : *Leave no tenderness unexpressed* ? Few of us have a chance to speak like that or convince when they do. I have not forgotten the phrase or the person that spoke it. And Mrs Eleanor Montgomery, known to many in India ? What an exciting, enthusiastic person ! What devotion to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo ! To pursue the spiritual life in the poshest area of New York, Fifth Avenue, is not an easy thing. But Mrs. Montgomery seems to have done it. And what about that dedicated daughter of God, Anne Harrison, to know whom is a liberal education and who is trying to found a centre at Woodstock off New York ? If these people are not spiritual, I do not know who is.

And Sam Spanier, and how he rescued me ? Arriving all alone at New York airport on my way back home I did not feel particularly brave. So I rang Sam up. "Welcome to New York," boomed his gentle voice. "What a relief ! What a balm to one's vanity ! Then, after giving me detailed instructions as to how to reach my hotel, he added, can you guess what he said ? "Don't worry. The Mother is protecting you." Thereafter I really did not worry. But it was an American that told me that. Strange, isn't it ? But why should it be strange ? The Mother, the Divine, speaks through many voices, not merely Indian. This was my discovery of America, the Other America. The U.S. has taught me a few things, including, I hope, humility and understanding.

Later, in New York again, in an interview with the psychologist Ira Progoff the conversation turned round to Sri Aurobindo. Dr. Progoff said with a smile : "I haven't read Sri Aurobindo carefully for fear that I might lose all my originality." A very handsome confession.

VII. A few general observations and I have done. In his writing Sri Aurobindo has shown clearly how each phase of human history, including the present materialistic, intellectual phase had to come and has its own purpose and significance, none has read so well from within the text of without. The very momentum and restlessness of modern life is driving people to or towards spirituality. As the seventeenth-century poet George Herbert had known :

Let him be rich and weary, that at least
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss to my breast.

Today this is true of all of us, not of the United States alone. In the simple, sober words of Sri Aurobindo : "East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move....The West has had no less than the East its spiritual seek-

ings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics....East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely...and at the present day are under an increasing compulsion to do so more than ever before."

To sum up : It is against such a reconciling idea and experience, what Sri Aurobindo has called "an increasing compulsion", that we should view Sri Aurobindo's message to the age and to America. It is meant for us and we have been waiting for it. As my students pointed out, one of the special appeals and advantages of the Aurobindean vision is its bold emphasis that *All life is Yoga*. Such a positive, inclusive approach is what we have been waiting for. It makes sense to us. Also there is his continued suggestion of a synthesis between the East and the West, of which he himself is the best example and the most eminent symbol. Equally outstanding is his affirmation of a better and nobler future for Man and not merely for this or that country or group. It is optimism, but optimism based on knowledge, the kind of knowledge needed to redeem the times, this our cycle of civilization, or de-civilization, if you wish. Above all, spirituality, as Sri Aurobindo spells it, is an adventure and not merely a treading of old bygone ways.

Americans like to think of themselves as for-ever-pioneers. Here is a challenge. I have no doubt that America will give the right response at the right hour, when "Matter shall be the spirit's willing bride". Exactly how and in what precise form it is as idle to speculate as it will be dangerous to manipulate. The forms of the Spirit are not one but many, and Americans have as much right to a form of their own as we have to ours. As fellow pilgrims, let us wish them well.

The world's great age begins anew. That is indeed so, the task of renewal is under way, and it will surely grow. We on our part must co-operate with the emerging truth and not be impatient, or try to force the pace. And of course in all this there can be no question of propaganda, none. "All things shall change in God's transfiguring hour". Such must be our faith, even if the skies fall. Before Dawn comes the darkest hour. At this Hour of God the best help that we can give is not to change 'others' but to change oneself. "A reasonable service," St Paul called this. By changing ourselves we shall change the world—and fulfil the Master's wishes. Sri Aurobindo is at work not only in the United States, as a land area on a shrinking globe, but he is at work in the united states of our being and of all beings that have the upward look. By whatever path men may come they all come to Him—and to Her.

At the head She stands of birth and toil and fate,
In their slow round the cycles turn to her call;
Alone her hands can change Time's dragon base.
Hers is the mystery the Night conceals,
The spirit's alchemist energy is hers;
She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire....
Our self shall be one self with all through her,
In her confirmed because transformed in her.

Friends, that is all I have to say.

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

SOVIET GYMNASTS

I

As you know, sometime back—quite a few years now—we had a group of Soviet Gymnasts in our midst. And what a pleasant, perfect performance they gave ! Their hammer-and-sickle floating against the wind, the first time they stepped in unison on our sports ground, marching to the tune of the Russian national anthem, surely you must be still remembering that beautiful spectacle. Some of their tricks and techniques we have bodily taken over. A good many of you received training at the hands of these experts. They have been heavily filmed and photographed in action and these pictures you must have seen more than once.

I draw your attention to the date on which the group went to the Mother and received Her blessings. Numerically, it is significant—three-four-five-six, that is April 3, 1956 (a day before Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry in 1910). We have heard a lot about these numbers—one-two-three-four (February 1, 1934), two-three-four-five (March 2, 1945) and now this three-four-five-six, while ahead of us lies four-five-six-seven (May 4, 1967). Last in this series we have five-six-seven-eight, the Mother's centenary, to go no further. These dates in their sequence are significant in that they indicate or represent some occult phenomena, some happenings in the inner world, each marking a step forward in the manifestation of the New World of the Supramental.

To come back. Among the characteristics of the Soviet Gymnasts, also the major lessons that one can learn from them, are : first, difficult and complicated body movements. Such control of the body is indeed hard to acquire. It calls for physical strength and stamina, also a considerable capacity and plasticity of the limbs—the nerves and muscles. Secondly, difficult exercises are done in an extremely easy and simple manner. In fact, these are performed so effortlessly that it might seem there is nothing much in these and that any one could do the same—till one tries. Then one knows what stiff and rigorous discipline lies behind this apparent effortless. Thirdly, these difficult exercises are done not only effortlessly but gracefully—the movements are rhythmic and harmonious, pleasing to the eye. Team-work, group-efficiency, is yet another of their characteristics. Not only solo performances, but combined movements of many persons in perfect balance, a unified cadence and orchestral pattern. Fifthly, and the point deserves particular mention, in the sphere of physical culture (as in other spheres too) the Russians make no difference between men and women. They believe that men and women can and ought to do the same exercises together, that it is pure superstition, nothing but outmoded convention to think otherwise—that women are unfit for and unworthy of such activity. Well, we have seen how expert and capable these Soviet girls can be. Today the whole world has heard with wonder and admiration about not only astronaut Gagarin but about Valentina too.

A commonplace argument often put up against women doing physical exercises is that as a result they are likely to lose their grace and their femininity. Is that really so ? To me it has always seemed that, thanks to these exercises, our body—women's body included—acquires a new poise and proportion. Or do tenderness and charm disappear, as some fear ? Or course those who admire the beauty of a willowy, weeping kind, the faery frailty of the sickly maid, well, they are a class apart. You have seen Valentina's photograph. To me she did not seem to lack charm and grace. Far from it. The fact is, we very often try, in vain, to hide our bodily defects and debilities under an elaborate toilet and stylish wear. But it is only a strict physical regimen or regular exercise that can cure these defects and bring out the true grace and light of the body beautiful. In reality, charm, grace or delightfulness, name how you will, these do not depend so much on physical factors and formation. The source is elsewhere, it is really a reflection or shadow that is derived from the ease and clarity of the vital Force in us and if, somehow, we can add to that the soul's ease and clarity, then only do we have genuine beauty, beauty from within.

It is as if the Russians have discovered a new dimension of the body. Psychologists today speak of 'depth' psychology. According to them, at the back of our mind, there lies another hidden and profounder mental world—the unconscious or subconscious. Spiritualists and yogis speak of still another unknown and invisible world, above and beyond the mind. Somewhat in the same way the Soviet gymnasts are telling us and, more than that, showing us, that there is no limit, or almost none, to the capacities of our body. At any rate, we can go a good deal further than the limits usually set for it. We think that just as plant life is conditioned by the earth, by its surface and atmosphere, it is the same with the life of men and animals too. We live and move within the temperature and the pressure of the air around us; when we go beyond these (either above or below), our ability to bear the altered conditions are extremely limited—or so we think.

But in one sense, even in the ordinary way of living, men can and do put up with a lot of inconvenience and suffering. Of course it might be said that this is entirely due to compulsion, that there is nothing else one could do, except endure. Even in the midst of intense pain and torture people have been known to live. On battlefields men have survived the worst calamities, even the loss of limbs. According to popular wisdom life is uncertain and quickly over, *nalimdalagata jalabat taralam, jibanam atisaya capalam*, but this is not a literal truth. Just as life can end all of a sudden so also it can stay on and withstand apparently impossible conditions. But this, it may be said again, is due to compulsion, it is not a healthy or a natural condition of our being. It is indeed painful, and what men really wish for is to come out of it—into a world of natural freedom. The new physical culture that the Russians are now following is meant to open up the hidden resources of the body. This they are doing with the help of knowledge, practice and endless, eager experiment. Rooted in the earth, one with the physical universe, the capacities of our body are daily and fast increasing. Even leaving the earth surface for the wide open spaces one day men may (in a light, weightless condition) find a new normalcy. Where shall we draw the limit of achievement ?

II

The round of sports and athletics over, the Soviet gymnasts expressed a desire to know more about us. That is, about the aims and ideals of the Ashram, the spiritual disciplines we follow and their rationale. You know, officially and in the world's eye the Soviet Union is atheistic and follows a materialist philosophy of life. God, soul, the beyond or the higher worlds, in these things the new Russians of today have no faith, none. Their entire stress or *śraddhā* is on this world, this life, on the physical-vital-mental being whom they call Man.

It was arranged that I should talk to the gymnasts. Following civilised traditions, this was to be a post-prandial session; that is, the conversation was to follow a rather sumptuous dinner. Food before philosophy, as they say. But, no. The Soviet gymnasts were strict dietitians, extremely cautious and restrained in their food habit. When finally we met there were ten or twelve of them, three or four girls and the rest young men. Only the leader seemed slightly elderly. Their knowledge of English was almost nil. Russian was all they knew. When they used to train the Ashram children funny situations would arise—for they had to express themselves mainly, sometimes vainly, through wordless hints and gestures. Anyway, one of the girls knew English fairly well and she acted as interpreter. Of her more later.

We met at a conference as it were in the Golconde. I started by reading out a brief passage from the *Words of the Mother*. It contained a statement of our ideal or objective—the goal of transformation, the coming race, a new consciousness and realisation. But the Soviet leader was a bit of a blunt atheist, or at least that was the role he had chosen to play. And in due course he raised the usual objection. "In times like ours," he said, "what we need is health and wealth. All our activities and education must be conducive to these normal aims. After all, men have to live. First, therefore, the care of the body, time enough for the soul afterwards. First this world, then the rest."

"Why not a little division of labour?" I told the group. "You keep to your social reform or revolution, if you please. Your physical culture and your secular pursuits. Spare us from these. Why not leave us to go ahead with another kind of aim and work? After all, we do not mind your doing what you like to do. It is only fair that you should allow us to go our own way. Isn't this the ideal of co-existence?"

But then, the ideal of co-existence finds little favour with the radical communists. Their one aim is to destroy or convert—that is, brainwash—the opposition. Somewhat in that spirit the Soviet leader continued his criticism. "But if you tempt people away from their normal social duties," he said, "and if by degrees people are drawn towards the soul and the beyond and all that, wouldn't that prove to be ruinous for the race and did not something like this actually take place in the history of the Indian people?" "*Mā bhairh*, fear not," I assured him. "Only a few turn to this Path. After all, out of millions and millions how many—or how few—come this way?"

But they counteracted my remark by saying that though we might be few in number our influence might spread, quite out of proportion to our number—which, by the way, is true. They now raised another doubt or objection—that the kind of education given to the children in the Ashram, forcing a doctrine on their young, unsuspecting minds, what was it but a kind of indoctrination?

"No, sir," I replied. "For one thing, we never ask, much less force anyone to come here, we offer no rewards or temptations. On the contrary, we make it quite clear that the Path chosen here, the training and the education are indeed hard. Sharp as the razor's edge, our sages have called it. So, one should choose carefully. And out of those who still insist on joining us, only a few are permitted. Of course the children know little or nothing, but the parents who bring them here do. At least they have been told. It is, however, true that there are some children who are conscious and know fairly well what they are doing and why they are here. After staying here and seeing things for themselves many of them make up their minds to stay on, they refuse to go elsewhere. Also, ours is not a mediaeval monastery, a life-long entombment, so that once you get in you can never get out. Here anyone can leave any time. One has full freedom in the matter. In other words, the very first principle of foundation of our life and teaching in the Ashram is freedom and individuality. No one is cajoled or persuaded to follow the spiritual aim or spiritual path. If one wants to know anything, one knows it freely, of oneself; if one wants to understand anything, one does it in freedom. Every moment you are free, you can step in any direction you like, provided you are prepared for the consequence. In fact, we have few or no compulsory codes or taboos here, except such as are absolutely necessary to keep group-life together for any length of time. 'Discover your own rule or law of being for yourself,' that is our primary instruction. Where is compulsion in all this? As for the atmosphere, the 'climate of opinion', wherever men live, in whatever age, society or country—even in your Soviet state—one has to 'belong'. The common man, or citizen, cannot help breathing in the atmosphere of his age or milieu. But here, and only here, we warn everyone, we tell them, well ahead, to be conscious of all that's happening around and within, we tell them to watch, understand and scrutinise what it is that they are taking in. This is not indoctrination but its exact opposite.

"In all this where does spiritual discipline come in? What is at all its necessity? First and foremost comes the care of the body, then only other considerations. That is what one may naturally think. But it is wrong to think that for spirituality outward comfort and affluence are a *sine qua non*. Those who want bodily comfort are apt to remain content with that, all their efforts are confined to finding the means of such enjoyment or euphoria. But the spiritual seeker even in the midst of suffering and discomfort will move towards the spirit. In fact, he uses his very adversity for spiritual ends. The true seeker longs for the spirit in the midst of comfort and discomfort alike, while those who do not want the higher life, do not want that, quite apart from being comfortable or otherwise. In spite of what many think, material factors do not determine these things. The Mother once said something to this effect. In order to relieve the disciples from all thoughts of earning their livelihood she had planned an external order of untroubled living, so that the aspirants might find the time and the opportunity to dedicate themselves completely to spiritual living and realisation. In practice she, however, found that this does not always work."

"All right," said the Soviet guests. "But supposing while you are engaged in your own spiritual growth and culture, for want of the good life, the rest of the human race goes to the dogs—what then?"

To this the answer is, and was: "The majority of men are obviously busy with the pursuit of worldly ends and creature comforts. This has been so always and the

indifference or withdrawal of a few aspirants will not matter much. As to the human race ending up in smoke, we would say that the race is not going to be snuffed out so easily. It has never been like that. What wars and devastations down the ages, upheavals and revolutions ! Millions dead and dying and yet the race is still going strong. Not only that, it is evolving, progressing. In spite of everything the standards of civilization are going up. Even you admit progress—of some kind. Perhaps you will say, but all this is a gift of the reason or the intellect. We will say it is a gift of the soul, or the soul and its bearer, the intellect, together. If this soul were not, man could not, would not survive. It is because of this active, immortal spark within him that he lives and shall continue to live, and progress towards perfection. Don't worry. No amount of outward loss or danger can wipe him out. Man will disappear only when the soul in him withdraws or is extinguished."

Of course to present-day Russians ideas like these are illusions or delusions, which they treat with a sceptic smile

In the end they raised a rather funny question. "Here we find a very pleasing sight," they began. "We mean the groups of little children and your love and affection and solicitude for them. It's very rare and very touching. You like children so much and yet we are told you do not like to be parents of children. We don't understand this."

"Do you understand self-restraint ?" I asked them. "We are told that you don't drink, don't even smoke. Why ?"

"Because the effect of drinking and smoking on the body, especially the body of an athlete, is harmful. That's why," they replied.

"Exactly so," said I. "When you've progressed a little further, you too will arrive at our conclusion."

At this they all laughed, perhaps somewhat incredulously.

But it is indeed so : all those who wish to acquire a special power, benefit or perfection, who set out to acquire a new capacity—in our case nothing short of a transformation of the body, life and mind—for them such self-imposed restraint is a "must". And so I say again : *mā bhaiḥ*, fear not. The world will not come this way all at once or immediately, and the world will not collapse because of our unwillingness to add to its population. As for the future, who can tell ? Who can say that the time-worn biological process shall remain, for all time, the only means of birth and manifestation ? Today, ignoring the weight and other limitations of the body, ignoring the laws of Newtonian physics, we travel, with what ease, across distances and the silence of infinite spaces. As in the physical field so in the field of life who can say that new rules will not emerge ? Sri Aurobindo has openly hinted at such a possibility.

Our society is based on blood or parental relations. But the Russians themselves have tried to set up another set of relationship—social instead of parental. Taking the children away from their parents they are rearing them in socialized crèches, schools or kindergartens. To them the parents are but secondary instruments. The child belongs to the State, to the service of the almighty State. The average parents have neither the ability nor the resources such as the State possesses. Now, if instead of the secular State we think of a spiritual group, or use the word 'God', a new and altogether different possibility opens up. Not the link of biology but the closeness

of the spirit within is all, the same in all, a relationship in terms of Reality or the Divine. How deep and intimately satisfying such a relationship, based on Truth, can be—I think our Soviet gymnasts had a glimpse of that truth here in the Ashram. And they naturally wondered.

III

Earlier I spoke of the lady interpreter in the Soviet group. Impersonal and neutral, she would translate, as clearly as possible, their words or the official view. In all this she never expressed any personal opinion. Yet I had a feeling that she did not fully share the official views or conclusions. Now and then she seemed to hesitate. Somewhere, she seemed to feel, life held other values, another dimension. In her conduct and conversation we found her extremely amiable. As she was leaving she told us that this time she had come as part of an official delegation. But one day she hoped to come on her own and alone. I have a feeling that she did come again, with another member of the group.

I believe that those who come to the Ashram and receive the direct touch of the Mother, they do not come suddenly or by accident. It is not just a has-been, a fact that might as well not have been. Some deep inner necessity brings them here, to the Mother. It is, you might say, the push of the deity within, though they might not know anything about it and it does not matter if outwardly they are sceptical or atheistic. Unknown to themselves, they surely have some opening somewhere—it is that which brings them here.

Either individually or as representatives of the Russian people it was such a Call, some future fulfilment that had prompted the group to come here—such an idea may be more than idle imagination. Or is it the coming truth, the coming event that has cast its shadow before ?

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Sisirkumar Ghose from the original Bengali)

SPIRITUAL CAUSERIE

A NEAR relation had appeared for a competitive examination. He was a brilliant student and had been called for the *viva voce*. But he had a severe handicap of stammer and so while conveying his prayers for Blessings to the Mother I had drawn Her attention to this disability of his. The *viva voce* was smoothly got through. He wrote to say that not once had he stammered throughout the interview—an amazing phenomenon. But what followed is very interesting. For two hours afterwards he stammered uncontrollably, in a way he had never known before.

This recalled to us the many occasions when the Mother's stopping of rain for a period of time was followed by an unusually heavy downpour immediately afterwards. Is it possible to stop rain? it will be asked. Most certainly yes. It is not only a possibility but an actuality as we have seen it here several times. So many times, whether on the eve of an important collective function or of a work like harvesting in the fields, when it threatened to rain and the Mother was appealed to, the rain was stopped till things were completed. No doubt, like the stammer, the suspended forces rushed with double impetus once the check was removed, but that was only to be expected.

The truth is that phenomena like rain, wind, tide, are governed by certain elements or beings at the head of forces that actuate the phenomena. If one knows how to contact them, influence them, exercise power over them, it is possible to regulate the activities in question. These elements or beings are not always as fierce and demoniac as made out in some of the legends. They have an interesting side too, even a human one. There are amongst them some who are impish and delight in small inconveniences but are generally amenable to persuasion. Many will remember how once on the Sports Ground of the Ashram when the athletics were in progress and the Mother was present noting down the results—as She used to do during those days—it darkened in the skies and threatened to rain. The Mother spoke to the beings concerned that they had better not rain. When they demurred, She told them that in any case She would not use the umbrella but would continue to sit in the open even if it poured. It drizzled a little, the Mother did not move nor did She allow the use of the umbrella. The drizzling stopped and the skies cleared.

But there are rules of the game. We have seen the Mother at times sitting in the open watching the children's functions when it was pouring in torrents. Why did She not stop the rains? Could She not compel the elements to stop? It is not a question of what is possible or not possible but what is advisable or what is not advisable in the given set of circumstances. On the particular occasion I am speaking of, as I learnt later, the Mother deliberately did not intervene. There are occasions when it is best to let things work out in their own way; any interruption or contradiction simply worsens matters. It was the time when all kinds of huge explosions—atom bombs, hydrogen bombs and other nuclear blasts—were being carried out with gusto. As a result of them, it appears, the hitherto established and existing

harmony in the organisation of Nature had been severely disturbed and the various elements, beings and other subtle-physical participants in the cosmos had been thrown into a vortex of confusion. They were like mad and rushing about doing what they liked. The floods, quakes and other disasters that were happening at that time were largely due to this factor. They were thus best left to themselves as otherwise their pent-up fury would precipitate yet greater havoc once the holds were removed.

Our ancients had a deep knowledge of the organisation of the universe. All creation is to them of one piece. There is one Truth, one Principle that is severally formulated. Whether it is in the individual or in the universal, the Truth that finds expression is the same. The organisation follows the same lines. In fact there is a close interrelation of correspondence between the two. That is why it is possible for the individual, by a particular system of stresses in his consciousness, to produce certain results in the universal consciousness. Patanjali describes the different kinds of concentration of consciousness, *samyama*, which yield knowledge of corresponding fields of activity in Physical Nature and promote a simultaneous power of control over them. The Tantras have developed a system in which it is possible by yoga to become conscious in oneself of the fundamental Principles, *tattwas*, in creation and, by a prescribed process, possible too to *dissolve* each *tattwa*¹, i.e. to emerge out of the hold of that *tattwa*, and so acquire a control over it which can be exercised in that poise of consciousness, both within the body and outside.

The mystics of the Veda had an intimate experience of this relation as also of the truth of higher beings and cosmic Force-heads presiding over all phenomena in Nature—outer as well as inner. They called them deities, *devatās*, and gave them Names like Indra, Agni, Maruts, etc. They had their own words of Call, hymns of appeal to the Deities who were in control of their respective spheres of activity both in the objective and the subjective universe. With the aid of these Words of Power they succeeded in getting the gods to participate in the life-journey of the humans. These hymns of spiritual origin are potent even today in spite of the long lapse of time since they were first formulated in human language. I may cite an instance or two within personal knowledge.

Sri Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, the well-known Poet-Yogin who had achieved a unique synthesis of the Veda and the Tantra in his inner life, was camping in a village in the country-side near our place. The annual harvesting had been just over and all over the village grounds were lying scores of haystacks. He was there in a small house with a few of his devotees. Suddenly, one day, someone noticed that a big fire had started in one of the stacks and fanned by a strong wind it was rapidly spreading. In great consternation he cried out : “Sire, sire, save us. Borne by the wind this fire will soon burn us all to ashes. There is no way of escape ; save, save!” The sage heard the call of distress with composure, grasped the situation and proceeded to invoke the Grace of God Agni. In his thrilling voice, he chanted aloud the Rik of Parashara :

Vanema pūrṇīrāryo manīṣā agniḥ suśoko viśvānyaśyāḥ.

¹ Earth, Fire, Water, etc

(May we win the many Riches, may the Fire, flaming high with his light, master by the thinking mind, take possession of all things that are)¹.

Instantaneously, both the fire and the wind turned in another direction and all was saved. That very night the Muni composed a fresh hymn to Agni, to express his gratitude to the Deity.

Speaking of the effectivity of the Mantra, I am tempted to recall yet another incident in which the same personage is concerned. It was during this same period that his son, who had come from the South to meet him, was involved in a motor accident and got a fracture of the arm. Medical facilities were not immediately available in that dense forest where the party had camped. The Muni thereupon had recourse to a Vedic mantra which is celebrated as an *astra*, an unfailing supernatural weapon, for the healing of joints. The Mantra summoned was a Rik of Kanva Medatithi addressed to Indra :

*Ya rte cidabhiśriṣaḥ purā jatrubhya ātrdaḥ
sandhātā sandhm̐ maghavā purūvasuriṣkartā vihrutaṁ punaḥ.*

(He without even ligature, before the spurt of blood from the broken part, closes up the wound, most opulent Maghavan, who maketh whole what is sundered².)

With the force of his own tapasya he enlivened the power stored in the Mantra and delivered the situation into its hands. Very soon the results were patent ; the speed and the perfection of the healing that followed amazed every one, the medicos included.³

Thus whether by superior power or by persuasion or by appeal to the presiding deities or beings, it is possible to influence the course of events, particularly natural phenomena. But it is not enough to have the power. One needs to have an adequate spiritual consciousness for its proper use.

4-9-1963

PRABUDDHA

¹ Rig Veda I 70.1

² Rig Veda VIII 1 12

³ These and other interesting incidents are recorded in the biography of the sage, *Vāsistha Vratbhavam*, by Sri Kapali Sastriar.

SURFACE LIVING

MAN lives on the surface of Life.

The problem of surface-living for man is a problem of centralisation.

Every surface-centralisation is unstable.

The surface is perpetually in motion, creating and dissolving innumerable centres in a single moment.

The attempt of Life in man is to create and to sustain individual centres of surface-living, dynamos for the transmutation and centralisation of universal energy.

These centres are termed egos.

To strengthen these egos it gives them the appearance of separate entities, independent or merely partially dependent on the current of universal energy.

The more Life has succeeded in thus centralising its superficial energies the stronger is the sense of personal independence in the consciousness of these centres.

This process of centralisation is termed individualisation.

Thus individualisation—a conscious process in man—is an attempt to break away from the continuous flux of existential becoming and to create a stable centre of surface-living in the midst of the stream of Life.

This attempt expresses itself in the desire for personal liberty, independence, privacy, freedom of living and thinking.

The one thing most fearful to the egoic consciousness of these centres of human personality is their disintegration or de-individualisation as it continuously threatens their unstable condition.

Modern Psychology tries to face this problem by an effort to include in the consciousness of the egoic centres more and more elements of the “personal unconscious”, parts of the subconscious and subliminal nature of the personality, an attempt doomed from the very beginning as the subconscious and subliminal are constantly invaded by innumerable elements of the universal, the “collective unconscious”, which supports the inner and outer nature of man so that in order to include the subliminal in or to raise the “personal unconscious” to the level of the egoic consciousness the universal, the inexhaustible depth of the “collective unconscious,” would as well have to be included or raised.

The solution of the problem of surface-living lies not in an enlargement or intensification of the superficial centres as these centres live only by the condition of separatedness.

With a progressive universalisation as vaguely attempted by psychology this separatedness would be endangered more and more.

Even if an ordered integration of many “unconscious” elements into the egoic consciousness could be achieved, resulting in a powerful but nevertheless unstable personality-centre, the sense of an independent separate entity could survive only up to a certain point of superficial development.

The universal Movement—and to recognise this the egoic consciousness is by its very constitution not able—includes the centres of surface-living.

Thus any attempt to stabilise the human personality is futile.

To solve the problem the very thing most fearful has to be done—to abandon the egoic centre. In the Integral Yoga this abandoning is termed surrender.

Surrender results in a disintegration of human personality for the sake of universality.

Surrender results in a de-individualisation for the sake of self-becoming.

Surrender results in a rejection of surface-living for the sake of the inmost life of the soul. With the recognition of the egoic centre as part of one single universal Movement, inseparable and entirely dependent on the perpetual flux of Life all struggle for personal liberty, for egoic individuality becomes illusory and finally ceases.

The demand for an outer life of one's own becomes insupportable, privacy a meaningless folly. To live again in the "Open", like the primitive men, like animals and plants, to be one with universal Nature, to breathe the great cosmic Breath, to be not somebody or something but simply to be, with a growing certainty of a deeper, a really stable, a true centre of individuality behind all movements of Life is the liberation from the bonds of surface-living.

JOBST MUHLING

SRI AUROBINDO—THE POET

This article was first printed in 1929 in the cultural monthly, 'Orient,' of Bombay. It is also the first lengthy and comprehensive study written of Sri Aurobindo's published poetry up to that year—except for translated work and his earliest blank-verse narrative, 'Urvashi', which was out of print and not even in his own possession. Previous to this article, only two short notices attempting critical evaluation had come out : James Cousins' 'The Philosopher as Poet' and a review of Sri Aurobindo's 'Songs to Myrtilla' in the Madras journal 'Sh'ama'. The present article was read by Sri Aurobindo before publication and it had the good fortune to obtain from him a comment : "It is admirably written both as to style and force of presentation of the thought."

To see a star of the first literary magnitude swim into our ken makes one of the rarest and richest moments of life. But there are thrills and thrills; and while it may strike us dumb to discover all of a sudden "deep-brow'd" Homer's "demesne," it may prove difficult to stand

Silent upon a peak in Darien,

if we find that a *mare magnum* already familiar to us had all along a shade of glory we had never distinguished—that, for instance, it was Homer who also wrote Plato or that the author of the *Republic* was the true wizard who even here in the world of Impermanence had made the phenomenal ill-fate of Ilium almost a divine Idea. Such indeed is the blessing of surprise in store for those of us Indians by birth or by affinity, who have heard of Sri Aurobindo, the great nationalist prophet of two and a half decades ago and Sri Aurobindo, the illumined philosopher and Yogi of Pondicherry to-day, but scarcely realise that his poetic inspiration has been as unsurpassed as his political idealism, his intellectual power and his towering spiritual attainment.

Born in India in 1872 but educated from his early boyhood in England and speaking the English language as his mother-tongue, he was already at nineteen an unmistakable poet, writing in a vein which is little short of remarkable, considering that only a few even among English singers have distilled such pure nectar at so early an age. No one with a ear for sound-values, an eye for apt images and a little ability to look below the surface can fail to observe that his juvenilia hold just the right sort of promise. For, provided there is always an aspiration towards something "translunary", however vaguely perceived, an abundant felicity of phrase and fancy is altogether the best starting-point for a poet. The ecstasy of insight which is the acme of metrical utterance and lays bare the very heart and meaning of Nature can hardly be attained if a poet has not in his early life brooded with intent joy and devotion on rhythms and figures. He must be a true artist in those formative years which precede his ultimate message to mankind; unless his medium has already been made

sufficiently musical and imaginative he can never in his hour of maturity reveal in an authentic poetic accent an aspect of "divine philosophy." And who can deny either music or imaginative subtlety to Sri Aurobindo when in his *Songs to Myrtilla*, written largely in his late teens under the influence of a close contact with the Greek Muse, he gives us piece after finely-wrought piece of natural magic? Whether we listen to his telling us how the earth is full of whispers

And higher audience brings
The footsteps of invisible things,
When o'er the glimmering tree-tops bowed
The night is leaning on a luminous cloud,

or expressing the delicate exhilaration imparted by the grace of Eros and constantly enjoyed as an ever-new surprise

Since in the silver mist
Bright Cymothea's lips I kissed,
Whose laughter dances like a gleam
Of sunlight on a hidden stream
That through a wooded way
Runs suddenly into the perfect day,

or giving tongue to the unexpected fear and sadness breathed into the heart of youth by the cheerless suggestions of a night by the sea,

Love, a moment drop thy hands;
Night within my soul expands.
Veil thy beauties milk-rose fair
In that dark and showering hair.
Coral kisses ravish not
When the soul is tinged with thought;
Burning looks are then forbid.
Let each shyly parted lid
Hover like a settling dove
O'er those deep blue wells of Love...
To the wind that with him dwells
Ocean, old historian, tells
All the dreadful heart of tears
Hidden in the pleasant years.
"We shall lose, ah me ! too soon
Lose the clear and silent moon,
The serenities of night
And the deeper evening light.
We shall know not when the morn
In the widening East is born,
Never feel the west-wind stir,

Spring's delightful messenger,
 Never under branches lain
 Dally with the sweet-lipped rain,
 Watch the moments of the tree,
 Nor know the sounds that tread the sea;—

whether, in short, we find him moved to joy or touched to melancholy by the hues and harmonies of life, there is, without the least doubt, that unanalysable quality in him which proves that here is the first utterance of an exceptionally gifted mind. Now and then we even come across a passage which makes us feel the glow and vibration of some immeasurable *mantra* lodged in the writer's inmost being, though he himself might not be fully aware of it, and waiting there for ripening experience to deliver it in its native speech of spirit instead of in the accent of ordinary psychological motives. Such, for instance, is the following, based ostensibly on Greek elegiac style, where the pan-piping lover, in the midst of his lament by the banks of the Arethuse for the cruel manner in which Nisa had forsaken him for Mopsus, longs for death :

O plaintive murmuring reed, breathe yet thy strain.
 Ye glades, your bliss I grudge you not,
 Nor would I that my grief profane
 Your sacred summer with intruding thought.
 Yet since I will no more behold,
 Your glorious beauty stained with gold,
 From shadows of her hair, nor by some well
 Made naked of their sylvan dress
 The breasts, the limbs I never shall possess,
 Therefore, O Mother Arethuse, farewell.

Mark how the consonances, assonances, long vowels, and slow spondees interspersing the iambic beat hum and sing and with the help of the grammatical suspense of the last sentence, indefinitely draw out the sense as if into strange remote spaces beyond or behind the earth's horizon. No less magical and suggestive is the intonation which charges the atmosphere with full yet restrained emotion at the beginning of "The Island Grave."

Ocean is there and evening; the slow moan
 Of the blue waves that like a shaken robe
 Two heard together once, one hears alone.
 Now gliding white and hushed towards our globe
 Keen January with cold eyes and clear
 And snowdrops pendent in each frosty lobe
 Ushers the first born of the radiant year.
 Haply his feet that grind the breaking mould
 May brush the dead grass on thy secret bier,
 Haply his joyless fingers wan and cold

Caress the ruined masses of thy hair,
Pale child of winter, dead ere youth was old

There is here, apart from verbal artistry, a trembling of the heart's rhythm on the verge of a sort of incantation which gives us vague mystic hints, persuading us to look for some poem or other by this boy not yet twenty, where we would find a sign of some wide intensity of idealism. We are not disappointed; for a little piece in the same collection embodies, despite its apparent call to the near and the tangible rather than to "solitary thinkings," an extremely fine feeling of the greatness and divine lustre of the human soul—especially the human soul in its moments of utter self-giving :

Why do thy lucid eyes survey,
Estelle, their sisters in the Milky Way?
The blue heavens cannot see
Thy beauty nor the planets praise.
Blindly they walk their old accustomed ways.
Turn hither for felicity.
My body's earth thy vernal power declares.
My Spirit is a heaven of thousand stars,
And all these lights are thine and open doors on thee.

It is, however, in the touching *Envoi* which Sri Aurobindo appended in 1895 to his juvenilia that we are given distinctly to know that a spiritual hunger was always present in him. On the surface, this hunger was an artistic desire to endow his poetic expression with a certain potent ease—not by any means facility, but inspired fluency, subtle, limpid or sweetly solemn as the occasion required. This he achieved very well, spontaneity and finish being stamped almost everywhere in *Songs to Myrulla*. But he was not satisfied; since it was not only Art but also life that he wanted to make glorious in a supreme unflickering fire of beauty. His Muse was no mere goddess of poetry, but a secret cosmic Spontaneity of beautiful creation, a Plenitude of Power whose words are worlds. He aspired to live poetry as well as to write it; and his failure to discover in the hopes and loves and labours of ordinary life anything final to rest upon, cast a painful shadow over his art, gave his sweetest songs a lingering note of sad hopelessness, making him feel that the highest in him stood unliberated and inarticulate. That indeed seems to be the true significance of the magnificent stanzas with which the *Envoi* opens :

Pale poems, weak and few, who vainly use,
Your wings towards the unattainable spheres,
Offspring of the divine Hellenic Muse,
Poor maimed children born of six disastrous years!
Not as your mother's is your wounded grace,
Since not to me with equal love returned
The hope which drew me to that serene face
Wherein no unrepentful light of effort burned.

And the reason of his discontent and sense of frustration was that he missed a practical method to realise, to incarnate, the high serenity which the mind of Greece had in its theoretic flights conceived. Greek Art and Philosophy, in spite of the transcendental ideal they envisaged, were directed more towards moral and aesthetic ends than towards strictly spiritual fulfilment : a certain indispensable inwardness was lacking, which only India could give to the Indian in Sri Aurobindo, with her agelong yogas, sadhanas and soaring tapasyas, her incessant cry to what the Vedas had called the Dawn of God, the everlasting flush of divine self-revelation to all who look up in appeal from the strife and trouble of the mortal world :

Vision delightful who standest crowned on the hills far above me,
 Vision of bliss, stoop down to mortality. Lean down and love me!
 Dawn on me over the edge of the world, across twilight's margin,
 Heal my unease with thyself, O heaven-born delicate virgin!
 Thou hast the stars to sport with, the winds are the friends of thy sweetness;
 Marred am I, earth-bound, troubled with longing,—thrust down from completeness.

Unlike, however, the conventional mystic, Sri Aurobindo did not yearn to escape into some ineffable Nirvana, leaving the earth to its bitter failures and privations. He had the unshakable conviction that mere tranquillity of trance-absorption is not our end and what the inner heart seeks is fulfilment, in the universe, of all that makes the universe so passionate and full of colour. To call down into this very life whatever Transcendent there might be was the guiding principle of his mysticism : it was soon to become his master-passion and lead him away from the political field into which he had launched some years after his return from England. Thus, in 1910, induced by five years of growing inner illumination through the practice of Yoga side by side with public activity, he withdrew to Pondicherry to perfect an integral method of spiritual askesis by which those supra-mental ranges of consciousness of which the seers of the Upanishads had spoken would be rendered accessible to the waking state and brought down to transfigure earth-existence. But before he retired from public life, he had already written, besides a large number of shorter poems and some translations from Kalidasa and Bhartrihari, at least two perfectly admirable narratives in blank verse which were published several years later in book-form.

Both of these are Indian in matter and spirit, and the shorter pieces too show in various lights the facets of Indian thought; but there is one inimitable fragment which suggests that, though Greek traditions were no longer his main preoccupation, he had not quite forsaken his early love. Suddenly in the midst of the heat and challenge of the political controversy which he was conducting in an English weekly edited by himself, he came forward with this pearl beyond price, throwing it at random among fiery nationalistic articles concerned with the standing grievances of the hour. Fragmentary as it is, it is yet one of his utterly unimpeachable creations from the purely aesthetic point of view, with its high Homeric beginning and the lyrical surprise which follows it, drawing by their play of contrasting imagery the most charming character-sketch possible of Priam's son :

Rushing from Troy like a cloud on the plains the Trojans thundered,
 Just as a storm comes thundering thick with the dust of kingdoms,
 Edged with the devious dance of the lightning, so all Troas
 Loud with the roar of the chariot, loud with the vaunt and the war-cry,
 Rushed from Troywards gleaming with spears and rolled on enormous.
 Joyous as ever Paris led them glancing in armour,
 Brilliant with gold like a bridegroom, playing with death and battle
 Even as glad in his chamber he played with beautiful Helen,
 Touching her body, rejoicing with low and lyrical laughter,
 So he laughed as he smote his foemen. Round him the arrows,
 Round him the spears of the Argives sang like voices of maidens
 Trilling the song of bridal bliss, the choir hymeneal;
 Round him the warriors fell like flowers strewn at a bridal
 Red with the beauty of blood.

Even if Sri Aurobindo had given us nothing else save just this passage, we would have known at once that the hand of a true artist had been at work. But that would have been, in one sense, a rather sad knowledge, for our regret at having no more would have been unlimited. Fortunately, he has left us little room for mere guess-work as to his superabundant genius. For he has made it difficult for us to attempt restraint in speaking of the marvellous imaginative alchemy of *Love and Death* or the pure epic strength and sweep of *Baji Prabhou*, his two hitherto published poems of long breath.¹ In the former he touched in one magnificent flight heights which can only be called classical. This is high praise indeed, but is it after all inapt to ask if anything could be more Shakespearean than, for example, this little soliloquy of Ruru on returning to Priyumvada after having stolen from her side in the early morning to go "seeking comparisons for her bloom" among the best that he could pluck from woods of the earth's prime ?

"And she will turn from me with angry tears
 Her delicate face more beautiful than storm
 Or rainy moonlight. I will follow her,
 And soothe her heart with sovereign flatteries ;
 Or rather all tyranny exhaust and taste
 The beauty of her anger like a fruit,
 Vexing her soul with helplessness ; then soften
 Easily with quiet undenied demand
 Of heart insisting upon heart."

Or take this burst of sublime language, like fierce rain :

"For what is mere sunlight ?
 Who would live on into extreme old age,
 Burden the impatient world, a weary old man,

¹ At the time of writing this I was not acquainted with Sri Aurobindo's first essay in blank verse—*Urvasee*, written in his early twenties, a poem of astonishing richness and impetuosity, suffering only by comparison to the absolute poetic mastery shown by *Love and Death*.—K.D.S., 1963.

And look back on a selfish time ill-spent
 Exacting out of prodigal great life
 Small separate pleasures like a usurer,
 And no rich sacrifice and no large act
 Finding oneself in others, nor the sweet
 Expense of nature in her passionate gusts
 Of love and giving, first of the soul's needs?"

Or hear Yama the God of Death address Ruru when that impetuous boy offers half his life as a sacrifice to recover the snake-bitten, prematurely lost Priyumvada :

"Not as a tedious evil nor to be
 Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,
 But tranquil, but august, but making easy
 The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time
 Still batter down the glory and form of youth
 And animal magnificent strong ease,
 To warn the earthward man that he is spirit
 Dallying with transience nor by death he ends,
 Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,
 But called unborn into the unborn skies."

Or again, relish the psychological subtlety of word and rhythm, where to the essentially Shakespearean note is added a sensuous felicity peculiar to Kalidasa :

"Priyumvada!"

He cried, and at that well-loved sound there dawned
 With overwhelming sweetness miserable
 Upon his mind the old delightful times
 When he had called her by her liquid name,
 Where the voice loved to linger. He remembered
 The champuc bushes where she turned away
 Half-angered, and his speaking of her name
 Masterfully as to a lovely slave
 Rebellious who has erred; at that the slow
 Yielding of her small head, and after a little
 Her sliding towards him and beautiful
 Propitiating body as she sank down
 With timid graspings deprecatingly
 In prostrate warm surrender, her flushed cheeks
 Upon his feet and little touches soft;
 Or her long name uttered beseechingly,
 And the swift leap of all her body to him,
 And eyes of large repentance, and the weight
 Of her wild bosom and lips unsatisfied;
 Or hourly call for little trivial needs,

Or sweet unneeded wanton summoning,
 Daily appeal that never staled nor lost
 Its sudden music, and her lovely speed,
 Sedulous occupation left, quick-breathing,
 With great glad eyes and eager parted lips;
 Or in deep quiet moments murmuring
 That name like a religion in her ear,
 And her calm look compelled to ecstasy;
 Or to the river luring her, or breathed
 Over her dainty slumber, or secret sweet
 Bridal outpantings of her broken name.
 All these as rush unintermitting waves
 Upon a swimmer overborne, broke on him
 Relentless, things too happy to be endured....

Then observe those passages and lines which achieve by grace, balance, poignancy or strength of diction a many-shaded aesthetic quality which puts us at a most pleasurable loss to decide whether they are more Virgilian or Dantesque. Begin with this glimpse of morning in a wood—

(He) felt slow beauty
 And leafy secret change ; for the damp leaves
 Grey-green at first, grew pallid with the light
 And warmed with consciousness of sunshine near;
 Then the whole daylight wandered in, and made
 Hard tracts of splendour and enriched all hues—

dwell a little on the exquisite pathos of the picture—

She for a moment stood
 Beautiful with her love before she died ;
 And he laughed towards her—

proceed to the quiet but terrible lines—

So still he was,
 The birds flashed by him with their swift small wings,
 Fanning him. Then he moved, then rigorous
 Memory through all his body shuddering
 Awoke, and he looked up and knew the place,
 And recognised greenness immutable,
 And saw old trees and the same flowers still bloom.
 He felt the bright indifference of earth
 And all the lonely uselessness of pain—

follow up with a brief contrast of the grand style in simplicity—

“Then in the joys of heaven we shall consort,
Amid the gladness often touching hands
To make bliss sure”—

to the same manner handled with tremendous severity when Ruru, in his search through Hades, chilled at “the cry not meant for living ears,” pervading that region—

But terrible strong love
Was like a fiery finger in his breast
Pointing him on—

and reach a climax in the combination of both in his moan at the sight of anguished ghosts drifting on “the penal waters,” a moan of profound pity, with one line in it—the twelfth—of complex alliteration, which is a miracle of inexhaustible vowel-music :

“O miserable race of men,
With violent and passionate souls you come
Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days
In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams
Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers ;
Then from your spacious earth in a great horror
Descend into this night, and here too soon
Must expiate your few inadequate joys.
O bargain hard ! Death helps us not. He leads
Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,
The naked spirit here. O my sweet flower,
Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?
Ah me! But I will haste and deeply plunge
Into its hopeless pools and either bring
Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars,
Or find thee out and clasp thy tortured bosom
And kiss thy sweet wrung lips and hush thy cries.
Love shall draw half thy pain into my limbs;
Then we shall triumph glad of agony.”

Surely it is not difficult with even these few instances before us to understand what the classical touch is—unmistakable in the midst of all diversity of subject or treatment. For here is no slavish imitation or echo ; rather, a versatile originality winning rapid access to the worlds of visions and voices to which only the masters have the key. This is brought out even more convincingly in another passage which challenges comparison with those lines by Milton which have often been considered some of the most majestic in the language—the description of Satan’s army of rebels :

Cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather

(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemned
 For ever now to have their lot in pain ;
 Millions of spirits for his fault amerced
 Of heaven and from eternal splendours flung
 For his revolt ; yet faithful how they stood,
 Their glory withered : as when heaven's fire
 Hath scathed the forest oaks, or mountain pines,
 With singèd top, their stately growth, though bare,
 Stands on the blasted heath.

Side by side read now the words in which the sorrow of Ruru at the loss of his young mate is made vivid :

Long months he travelled between grief and grief,
 Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,
 Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.
 And his heart cried in him as when a fire
 Roars through wide forests and the branches cry
 Burning towards heaven in torture glorious.
 So burned, immense, his grief within him; he raised
 His young pure face, all solemnised with pain,
 Voiceless. Then Fate was shaken, and the Gods
 Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid.

It is impossible to decide which passage is more nobly conceived and executed, and which of the two analogous similes more stupendously beautiful in originality of application. But one thing is certain; the moment Sri Aurobindo was capable of writing these lines he stood among the elect. That was in 1899, the last year of the century which had produced *Hyperion*, perhaps the only other poem in English which could compass so well the packed magnificence of a Miltonic moment. But Sri Aurobindo is not only able to command the grand style at will; he can also bring to his work a quality which the great Puritan in the days of his *Paradise Lost* as good as allowed to atrophy, a subtle yet puissant interfusion of fantasy with strength and grandeur, a touch half-Coleridgean, half-Shelleyan in the midst of Miltonic energy. Milton himself would have been full of it, had he followed up and perfected his early manner and written his *magnum opus* after a life of continuous poetic development instead of turning to do so after a long period of religio-political controversy. As it is, the account of Ruru's voyage to the underworld, armed with the magic flower given him by the God of Love, "a quivering magnificence...whose petals changed like flame," stands almost a solitary wonder of its kind. He is bidden to sail

"To that high meeting of the Ganges pure
 With vague and violent Ocean. There arise
 And loudly appeal my brother the wild sea."

And, after passing through many lands, he arrives at last where

In a thin soft eve,
 Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,
 A glimmering restlessness with voices large,
 And from the forests of that half-seen bank
 A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,
 With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale.
 Then Ruru by his side stepped in; they went
 Down the mysterious river and beheld
 The great banks widen out of sight. The world
 Was water and the skies to water plunged.
 All night with a dim motion gliding down
 He felt the dark against his eyelids; felt,
 As in a dream more real than daylight,
 The helmsman with his dumb and marble face
 Near him and moving wideness all around,
 And that continual gliding dimly on,
 As one who on a shoreless water sails
 For ever to a port he shall not win.
 But when the darkness paled, he heard a moan
 Of mightier waves and had the wide great sense
 Of ocean and the depths below our feet.
 But the boat stopped; the pilot lifted on him
 His marble gaze coeval with the stars.
 Then in the white-winged boat the boy arose
 And saw around him the vast sea all grey
 And heaving in the pallid dawning light.
 Loud Ruru cried across the murmur: "Hear me,
 O inarticulate grey Ocean, hear.
 If any cadence in thy infinite
 Rumour was caught from lover's moan, O Sea,
 Open thy abysses to my mortal tread.
 For I would travel to the despairing shades,
 The spheres of suffering where entangled dwell
 Souls unreleased and the untimely dead
 Who weep remembering..."

Lo, this petalled fire,
 How freshly it blooms and lasts with my great pain!"
 He held the flower out subtly glimmering.
 And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,
 Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with waves,
 Converging all its giant crests ; towards him
 Innumerable waters loomed and heaven
 Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved
 Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound

All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,
 Curving with monstrous menace over him.
 He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed
 Descending, saw with floating hair arise
 The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
 A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,
 And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld
 A mute stupendous march of waters race
 To reach some viewless pit beneath the world...

But enough! We have drawn quite sufficiently on this extraordinary poem; and yet there are other passages in it almost as wonderfully imaginative, describing the "dead grace" of the nether regions and the psychological phantasmagoria of their life—a veritable *embarras de richesse* for the quotation lover.

The same can be said of *Baji Prabhou*, written indeed in a different vein but no less splendid an achievement—granite in its suggestion of strength and at the same time as brightly flexible and resonant as a Damascus blade. It is founded on the historical incident of the tremendous self-sacrifice of Baji Prabhou Deshpande, who to cover Shivaji's retreat held the fort of Rangana for over two hours with a small company of men against twelve thousand Moguls. The metre is, in the truest sense of the epithet, the heroic blank verse, breathing in every line the dauntless ardour of the protagonists—the angry impatience of Agra to put an opportune end to Shivaji's intolerable career and the grim resolution of the Mahrattas to thwart and foil the Moguls to the last. The language is full-winded and noble, with a staccato rapidity at times to heighten the impression of the deadly combat up and down the rugged slope of a "tiger-throated gorge." There is constantly present the sense of a fight against implacable fate: hence the occasional pressing of many shades of meaning into a few powerful phrases, as though to remind constantly of the immediate peril and the shortness of precious time in hand. And yet nowhere is the terseness obscure, depriving the action of its essentially direct martial character; nor, on the other hand, is there any lack of that lyrical feeling which alone makes war an arena of the soul as much as of brute flesh. But even this rapture is deepened beyond any danger of false glamour by being intensified into a high religious experience. In fact, the principle merit of the poem is the completely satisfying manner in which the author has revealed the spiritual heart of the Mahratta insurgece under Shivaji, the flaming inspiration of the patriot saint Ramdas which made the former a leader of men who thought and felt and acted as if they were instruments of a divine Power—Bhavanî, the Goddess believed to preside over the destiny of India. The whole movement is worked out from this central motive with one master stroke after another: each word and phrase seem to be poised and weighed in the balance before being welded with those preceding and, though less delightfully bold than in *Love and Death*, the skilful enjambement or overlapping of the sense in different lines renders vivid and colourful with a large variety of internal cadence what would otherwise have been, in dealing with such a theme, an exercise in blank verse either stiffly monotonous or prosaically blatant. The very opening scene may well serve as a first instance of the inspiration and art of the entire piece:

A noon of Deccan with its tyrant glare
 Oppressed the earth; the hills stood deep in haze,
 And sweltering athirst the fields glared up
 Longing for water in the courses parched
 Of streams long dead. Nature and man alike,
 Imprisoned by a bronze and brilliant sky,
 Sought an escape from that wide trance of heat.
 Nor on rare herdsman only or patient hind
 Tilling the earth or tending sleeplessly
 The well-earned grain that burden fell. It hung
 Upon the Mogul horsemen as they rode
 With lances at the charge, the surf of steel
 About them and behind, as they recoiled
 Or circled, where the footmen ran and fired,
 And fired again and ran.

Then follows an account of how Shivaji had hoped the same morning to take by storm a favourable mountain fortress and command the whole stretch of the adjacent territory but had been driven back by an overwhelming number of Moguls to his own hills, till by noon his forces had been lamentably thinned and not all their guerilla tactics availed against the pursuers.

At last they reached a tiger-throated gorge
 Upon the way to Raigurh. Narrowing there
 The hills draw close, and their forbidding cliffs
 Threaten the prone incline. The Bhonsle paused,
 His fiery glance travelled in one swift gyre
 Hill, gorge and valley and with speed returned
 Mightily like an eagle on the wing
 To a dark youth beside him, Malsure
 The younger with his bright and burning eyes,
 Who wordless rode quivering, as on the leash;
 His fierce heart hungered for the rear, where Death
 Was singing mid the laughter of the swords;
 "Ride, Suryaji," the Chieftain cried, his look
 Inward, intent, "And swiftly from the rear
 Summon the Prabhou." Turning at the word
 Suryaji's hooves sped down the rock-strewn slope,
 Into the trenchant valley's depth.

In answer to the summons Baji gallops to the Chief, who shows him the strategic position of the gorge and asks him to crown his career of heroism by posting himself there with a picked company in order to hold the enemy at bay till Shivaji should return with reinforcements from Raigurh:

"Say with what force thy iron heart can hold
 The passage till I come. Thou seest our strength,
 How it has melted like the Afghan's ice
 Into a pool of blood." And while he paused
 Who had been chosen, spoke an iron man
 With iron brows who rode behind the Chief,
 Tanaji Malsure, that living sword:
 "Not for this little purpose was there need
 To call the Prabhou from his toil. Enough,
 Give me five hundred men ; I hold the pass
 Till thy return." But Shivaji kept still
 His great and tranquil look upon the face
 Of Baji Prabhou. Then all black with wrath,
 Wrinkling his fierce hard eyes, the Malsure:
 "What ponders then the hero ? Such a man
 Of men, he needs not like us petty swords
 A force behind him, but alone will hold
 All Rajasthan and Agra and Cabool
 From rise to set."

To this taunt Baji replies in one of the most nobly thrilling passages in epic literature :

"Tanaji Malsure, not in this living net
 Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind
 Is a man's manhood seated. God within
 Rules us, who in the Brahmin and the dog
 Can, if He will, show equal godhead. Not
 By men is mightiness achieved; Baji
 Or Malsure is but a name, a robe,
 And covers One alone. We but employ
 Bhavani's strength, who in an arm of flesh
 Is mighty as in the thunder and the storm.
 I ask for fifty swords." And Malsure:
 "Well Baji; I will build thee such a pyre
 As man had never yet, when we return;
 For all the Deccan brightening shall cry out
 'Baji the Prabhou burns!' " And with a smile
 The Prabhou answered: "Me thou shalt not burn
 For this five feet or more of bone and flesh,
 Whether pure flame or jackals of the hills
 Be fattened with its rags, may well concern
 Others, not Baji Prabhou."

Then Shivaji rides off, leaving the slender band of heroes in the gorge. The Moguls immediately begin their assault, and though often hurled back force on,

a mingled mass,
 Pathan and Mogul and the Rajput clans,
 All clamorous with the brazen throats of war
 And spitting smoke and fire. The bullets rang
 Upon the rocks, but in their place unhurt,
 Sheltered by tree and rock, the silent grim
 Defenders waited, till on root and stone
 The confident high-voiced triumphant surge
 Began to break, to stumble, then to pause,
 Confusion in its narrowed front. At once
 The muskets clamoured out, the bullets sped,
 Deadly though few; again and yet again,
 And some of the impetuous faltered back
 And some in wrath pressed on; and while they swayed
 Poised between flight and onset, blast on blast
 The volleyed death invisible hailed in
 Upon uncertain ranks. The leaders fell,
 The forward by the bullets chosen out,
 Prone or supine or leaning like sick men
 O'er trees and rocks, distressed the whole advance
 With prohibition by the silent slam.
 So the great onset failed.

But the Mogul army was not to be disheartened; nor, on the other hand, would the Mahrattas yield an inch. Then

The heads that planned pushed swiftly to the front
 The centre yet unhurt, where Rajasthan,
 Playmate of death, had sent her hero sons.
 They with a rapid royal reckless pace
 Came striding to the intervening ground,
 Nor answered uselessly the bullets thick
 Nor paused to judge, but o'er the increasing dead
 Leaping and striding, shouting, sword in hand,
 Rushed onward with immortal courage high
 In mortal forms, and held the lower slope.

Never has the inmost essence of the Rajput spirit on the battle-field been so monumentally described in a few phrases. "Playmate of death" is absolutely unexcelled, and approached only by the fine alliteration which follows it in the next line.. But even the Rajputs could not reach the higher incline; for, like "the rapid breath of Agra's hot simoon" the Mahratta musketry bore them down, till to retrieve the disgrace

A lord
 High-crested of the Rathore clan stood out
 From the perplexed assailants with his sword
 Beckoning the thousands on against the few.

With a violent desperate urge they clambered up and stood almost face to face with the defenders who leaped out at them, hacking with all their might, three times prevailing against the repeated onslaught. At last the Rathore lord hurled himself forward in a last attempt to reach the heart of the fort, and the close-locked hand-to-hand tussle gave great hopes to the watchers in the valley, for now numbers seemed sure to tell. But their expectations were not fulfilled:

For, as in the front
The Rathore stood on the disputed verge
And ever threw fresh strength into the scale
With that inspiring gesture, Baji came
Towards him singling out the lofty crest,
The princely form; and, as the waves divide
Before a driving keel, the battle so
Before him parted, till he neared, he slew.
Avoiding sword, avoiding lifted arm
The blade surprised the Rajput's throat, and down
As falls an upright poplar, with his hands
Outspread, dying, he clutched Mahratta ground.

The Rajput battle reeled back, and in their place the Pathan infantry advanced, trying to exhaust the mountaineers; and though even they could not make much headway, Baji's men felt themselves hard put to it because of their ever diminishing ammunition. But a brief pause ensued upon the recoil of the Pathans, the Mogul generals having grown doubtful whether to persist or to withdraw with whatever men had survived the dreadful carnage. They, however, resolved to make a final dash. This time it was not Pathans or Rajputs who came forward,

But Agra's chivalry glancing with gold
And scimitars inlaid and coloured robes.
Swiftly they came expecting the assault
Fire-winged of bullets and the lethal rain,
But silence met them and to their intent
So ominous it seemed, a while they paused,
Fearing some ruse, though for much death prepared,
Yet careful of prevention.

Reassured, they climbed up, crossing unhurt the open space till they reached almost the top; but they were surprised by merciless swords and lances from behind bushes where the Southron few had concealed themselves. The battle grew apace, the latter holding their own by dint of breathless skill; then suddenly Baji found himself in the grip of one of those abnormal religious exaltations which used to be the mysterious fount of Shivaji's most brilliant military adventures.

Upon the Prabhou all the Goddess came.
Loud like a lion hungry on the hills

He shouted, and his stature seemed to increase
 Striding upon the foe. Rapid his sword
 Like lightning playing with a cloud made void
 The crest before him, on his either side
 The swordsmen of the South with swift assault
 Preventing the reply, till like a bank
 Of some wild river the assault collapsed
 Over the stumbling edge and down the rise,
 And once again the desperate moment passed.
 The relics of the murderous strife remained,
 Corpses and jewels, broidery and gold,
 But not for this would they accept defeat.
 Once more they came and almost held. Then wrath
 Rose in the Prabhou and he raised himself
 In soul to make an end; but even then
 A stillness fell upon his mood and all
 That godlike impulse faded from his heart,
 And passing out of him a mighty form
 Stood visible, Titanic, scarlet-clad,
 Dark as a thundercloud with streaming hair
 Obscuring heaven, and in her sovran grasp
 The sword, the flower, the boon, the bleeding head,
 Bhavani. Then she vanished; the daylight
 Was ordinary in a common world.
 And Baji knew the goddess formidable
 Who watches over India till the end.
 Even then a sword found out his shoulder, sharp
 A Mogul lance ran griding through his arm . . .

But the day was saved; for as he still fought, surrounded by the last few of his comrades, he saw a stream of cavalry plunge forth from the direction of Raigurh. And before he fell dead in a culminating grapple with the odds against him in the unconquered gorge, he heard friendly horsehooves ring upon the rocks behind,

And in a quick disordered stream, appalled,
 The Mogul rout began. Sure-footed, swift
 The hostile strength pursued, Suryaji first
 Shouting aloud and singing to the hills
 A song of Ramdas as he smote and slew.
 But Shivaji by Baji's empty frame
 Stood silent and his gaze was motionless
 Upon the dead. Tanaji Malsure
 Stood by him and observed the breathless corpse,
 Then slowly said, "Thirty and three the gates
 By which thou enterest heaven, thou fortunate soul,

Thou valiant heart. So when my hour arrives
 May I too clasp my death, saving the land
 Or winning some great fortress for my lord."

About a dozen lines more complete this poem, Sri Aurobindo's greatest contribution to the patriotic literature of his country. A true epic in every syllable, it shows one more side of its creator's powerful versatility, and together with *Love and Death* makes us anxious to have more of his blank verse, especially as it is an open secret that he keeps guarded with him treasures more royal than any he has hitherto shared with the public. For what the public has been privileged to have is mostly work done about thirty years ago, the first few fruits of his genius, all the maturest abundance of its spontaneity and skill lying still unpublished in the desk of the Yogi indifferent to fame.

Even that little, however, is enough to make us repeat Dryden's famous eulogium of Chaucer: "Here is God's plenty." And the expression takes on a special hue of meaning when we turn to another class of poems from his pen, which are devoted to embodying a more explicitly spiritual outlook and inlook. The first portents of his subsequent self-consecration to Yoga, they are illustrative in part of the ideal he later enunciated in the pages of his philosophical monthly, the *Arya*, that Art can never really find what it seeks or succeed in liberating its soul in the highest perfection of speech unless it transfuses the rhythms of its exquisite moods into a sustained spiritual experience. English literature has not been utterly barren in this kind of direct revelatory speech; here and there the veil has been lustrously rent, but there has been no secure possession of the *mantra*, the innermost utterance of the divine in humanity. For, a dangerous pitfall always lies in wait for the poet who aspires to discover a higher significance and purpose in the universe than the outward phenomenal suggestions which lie all around—intellectualisation of the artistic motive. Wordsworth is the classical example of the slow stiffening of the impulse of song towards the supra-sensuous; for unless a centre of vision is reached and possessed beyond the mere ideative mind poetry is likely, in its endeavour to express the first principles of things, to get hardened into metrical metaphysics, so that instead of the great moving rhythms and transparencies of the inner heart we get only the dry light of reason, indeed shedding occasionally some profitable radiance when it falls upon too stormy a wave of feeling, but by itself quite unfruitful because it attempts to interpret as a universe of logical discourse what is really a manifold strain of eternal music. The only way of escape is either to remain secure in the mid-regions of aesthetic thought and passion if the wings of inspiration are too Icarian to bear the luminous pressure of supernatural motives, or to make a bold dash towards the golden gates and invoke their guardians not with the ordinary categorising brain-mind or the troubled desire-ridden emotional nature but with the true soul, the true psyche which has an ever-present contact with the spiritual meaning of the world. There is room, no doubt, for stately philosophic verse, a rising to the height of spiritual argument on the steps of apparently intellectual language, provided a strong impassioned soul-significance is supporting the mental process. In some of his poems Sri Aurobindo gives us such utterance, but they are not his most insistent revelations. When he wants to bring home to us some eternal verity from its mysterious abode of light, he speaks in a tone

which has in it either a sublime simplicity which renders clear a profound truth by a few striking images, or a direct imaginative force which without needing to bring in abundant colour can create for us a self-sufficient mystical symbol or atmosphere, or else a puissant intuitive luminosity which wears form and name only as a concession to the weakness of human mentality but imparts in a subtle unanalysable manner a sense of some beatific vastitude of ultimate creative Idea. Here, for example, is a piece of supreme wisdom irresistible in its childlike appeal to the soul:

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
 Yet sitst above,
 Master of all who work and rule and know,
 Servant of Love!
 Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
 Nor even the clod,
 Therefore we know by that humility
 That Thou art God.

In the same simple strain but with a greater breath of melody are these stanzas of spiritual intoxication :

We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:
 He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
 He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
 Then lures with His joy and His rapture again.
 All music is only the sound of His laughter,
 All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;
 Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
 Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.
 He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,
 And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
 He slays without stint and is full of compassion;
 He wars for the world and its ultimate years . . .

A mixture of unaffected sublimity and tense Vedantic atmosphere is achieved in the opening verses of *In the Moonlight* :

If now must pause the bullock's jingling tune,
 Here let it be beneath the dreaming trees
 Supine and huge that hang upon the breeze,
 Here in the wide eye of the silent moon.
 How living a stillness reigns! The night's hushed rule
 All things obey but three, the slow wind's sigh
 Among the leaves, the cricket's ceaseless cry,
 The frog's harsh discord in the ringing pool.
 Yet they but seem the silence to increase

And dreadful wideness of the inhuman night.
 The whole hushed world immeasurable might
 Be watching round this single spot of peace.
 So boundless is the darkness and so rife
 With thoughts of infinite reach that it creates
 A dangerous sense of space and abrogates
 The wholesome littleness of human life.

As an instance of direct imaginative symbolisation of a suprasensuous experience, there can be scarcely anything more magical than the little gem called *Revelation*:

Someone leaping from the rocks
 Past me ran with wind-blown locks
 Like a startled bright surmise
 Visible to mortal eyes—
 Just a cheek of frightened rose
 That with sudden beauty glows,
 Just a footstep like the wind
 And a hurried glance behind,
 And then nothing,—as a thought
 Escapes the mind ere it is caught.
 Someone of the heavenly rout
 From behind the veil ran out.

This language of pure sight is carried up into what we have called intuitive luminosity and power when Sri Aurobindo confronts, as many a poet has done before, the rush and tumult of the sea: there is, therefore, something in it which leaves the most exalted rhetoric of Byron far behind as pallid and superficial just as much as it makes the most grandiose and colourful of Swinburne's alliterative chants mere sound and fury, incomplete in genuine vision and unsatisfying to the divine deeps of the soul. It is the physical natural sea that is apostrophised at the start but the voice which thus hails it comes from some profundity within and instantly the physical melts into a symbol, the merciless assault of the boundless waters becoming the great challenge of pain and peril to the advancing spirit in the world, and the whole poem ends on a note of heroic self-assertion of the hidden infinite in man against the infinite of circumstance which he has to fight and conquer, fathoming all its dangerous possibilities before he can come into his own as an incarnate godhead.

O grey wild sea,
 Thou hast a message, thunderer, for me.
 Their huge wide backs
 Thy monstrous billows raise, abysmal cracks
 Dug deep between.
 One pale boat flutters over them, hardly seen.
 I hear thy roar

Call me, "Why dost thou linger on the shore
 With fearful eyes
 Watching my tops visit their foam-washed skies?
 This trivial boat
 Dares my vast battering billows and can float.
 Death if it find,
 Are there not many thousands left behind?
 Dare my wide roar,
 Nor cling like cowards to the easy shore.
 Come down and know
 What rapture lives in danger and o'erthrow."
 Yes, thou great sea,
 I am more mighty and outbillow thee.
 On thy tops I rise;
 'Tis an excuse to dally with the skies.
 I sink below
 The bottom of the clamorous world to know.
 On the safe land
 To linger is to lose what God has planned
 For man's wide soul,
 Who set eternal godhead for its goal.
 Therefore He arrayed
 Danger and difficulty like seas and made
 Pain and defeat,
 And put His giant snares around our feet.
 The cloud He informs
 With thunder and assails us with His storms,
 That man may grow
 King over pain and victor of o'erthrow
 Matching his great
 Unconquerable soul with adverse Fate.
 Take me, be
 My way to climb the heavens, thou rude great sea.
 I will seize thy mane,
 O lion, I will tame thee and disdain;
 Or else below
 Into thy salt abysmal caverns go,
 Receive thy weight
 Upon me and be stubborn as my Fate.
 I come, O Sea,
 To measure my enormous self with thee.

It is evident that something of the amplitude and energy of the ancient Upanishads is here caught and it is this style which gives us perhaps the clearest prevision of what the hitherto unpublished works of Sri Aurobindo must be having of quintessential royalty of pace. Majestic beyond conception must indeed be the full utterance

of which we have once again a portent in the scriptural magnificence of *The Rishi*, the longest among his shorter poems. It is no piece of hyperbole to affirm that at least in the first hundred and nineteen lines of it we have a poetic phenomenon to which there is in certain respects no parallel. The famous close of Crashaw's *Flaming Heart* may have greater colour in its rocket-like leap into the heaven of heavens, Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode* may be richer and more varied in the roll of its harmony towards the vision splendid, *The Hound of Heaven* may carry itself on a more passionate torrent of religious imagery, but to see language stride like an imperturbable Colossus from pinnacle to pinnacle of thought stark, as it were, against Eternity we must listen to the colloquy which took place when King Manu in the former ages of the world, during which the Arctic continent still subsisted, sought knowledge from the Rishi of the Pole :

MANU

Rishi who trance-held on the mountains old
 Art slumbering, void
 Of sense or motion, for in the spirit's hold
 Of unalloyed
 Immortal bliss thou dream'st protected! Deep
 Let my voice glide
 Into thy dumb retreat and break that sleep
 Abysmal. Hear!
 The frozen snows that heap thy giant bed
 Ice-cold and clear,
 The chill and desert heavens above thee spread
 Vast, austere,
 Are not so sharp but that thy warm limbs brook
 Their bitter breath,
 Are not so wide as thy immense outlook
 On life and death:
 Their vacancy thy silent mind and bright
 Outmeasureth.
 But ours are blindly active and thy light
 We have foregone.

RISHI

Who art thou, warrior armèd gloriously
 Like the sun?
 Thy gait is as an empire and thine eye
 Dominion.

MANU

King Manu, of the Aryan peoples lord,
 Greet thee, Sage.

RISHI

I know thee, King, earth to whose sleepless sword
Was heritage.
The high Sun's distant glories gave thee forth
On being's edge:
Where the slow skies of the auroral North
Lead in the morn
And flaming dawns for ever on heaven's verge
Wheel and turn,
Thundering remote the clamorous Arctic surge
Saw thee born.
There 'twas thy lot these later Fates to build,
This race of man
New-fashion. O watcher with the mountains wild,
The icy plain,
Thee I too, asleep, have watched, both when the Pole
Was brightening wan
And when like a wild beast the darkness stole
Prowling and slow
Alarming with its silent march the soul.
O King, I know
Thy purpose; for the vacant ages roll
Since man below
Conversed with God in friendship. Thou, reborn
For men perplexed,
Seekest in this dim aeon and forlorn
With evils vexed
The vanished light. For like this Arctic land
Death has annexed
To sleep, our being's summits cold and grand
Where God abides,
Repel the tread of thought. I too, O King,
In winds and tides
Have sought Him, and in armies thundering,
And where Death strides
Over whole nations. Action, thought and peace
Were questioned, sleep
And waking, but I had no joy of these,
Nor ponderings deep,
And pity was not sweet enough, nor good
My will could keep.
Often I found Him for a moment, stood
Astonished, then
It fell from me. I could not hold the bliss,
The force for men,

My brothers. Beauty ceased my heart to please,
 Brightness in vain
 Recalled the vision of the light that glows
 Suns behind:
 I hated the rich fragrance of the rose;
 Weary and blind,
 I tired of the suns and stars; then came
 With broken mind
 To heal me of the rash devouring flame,
 The dull disease,
 And sojourned with this mountain's summits bleak,
 These frozen seas.
 King, the blind dazzling snows have made me meek,
 Cooled my unease,
 Pride could not follow, nor the restless will
 Come and go;
 My mind within grew holy, calm and still
 Like the snow.

MANU

O thou who wast with chariots formidable
 And with the bow!
 Voiceless and white the cold unchanging hill,
 Has it then
 A mightier presence, deeper mysteries
 Than human men?
 The warm low hum of crowds, towns, villages,
 The sun and rain,
 The village maidens to the water bound,
 The happy herds,
 The fluting of the shepherd lads, the sound
 Myriad of birds,
 Speak these not clearer to the heart, convey
 More subtle words?
 Here is but great dumb night, an awful day
 Inert and dead.

RISHI

The many's voices fill the listening ear,
 Distract the head:
 The One is silence; on the snows we hear
 Silence tread.

And so onward the mighty argument proceeds. The rest of the poem is not exactly on the same level, but it suffers only in comparison with its own commence-

ment; for the whole makes one of the very rare pieces for which, if at all so unpleasant a bargain were to be struck, one might even exchange the twelve Upanishads. All their revelatory force is here focussed to inspire the word of the highest wisdom. For indeed the Rishi's final message is not bare asceticism and Nirvana, but Sri Aurobindo's own insistence on manifesting both in life and art a world of values "beyond the mind's imagining," a transcendent status to which Yoga alone possesses the key. After puzzling King Manu with conflicting sides of Yogic knowledge, he reassures him in fine of the utility of all human work and aspiration; for, the great Unknown is no immutable void but an utter fullness—only, its ineffable secrecies of a more abundant life are lodged in the bosom of a peace which passes the ordinary understanding. It is by rising to it that man, spiritualised, can achieve completeness; it is also by entering into sustained communion with that highest Consciousness that, in Sri Aurobindo's view, a poet can taste most satisfyingly of the fountains of true creative art and help to raise up humanity to the Divine. For, in poetry, according to Sri Aurobindo, there is an upward evolution of its powers and at its summit the highest function of sound is to instil in the listener the poet's experience of a Truth that is behind all things, its significances in themselves beyond word and thought finding expression through an inner silence, and to lift him rapt, spellbound, dazzled into sudden awareness of that wondrous supreme Beauty and Delight which elude normal perception, a high-uplifted Beauty and Delight sustaining magically the cosmic process. In the cosmic process, Matter, Life, Mind and Soul are intended to arrive at a progressive expression of this Truth of themselves, this all-sustaining Beauty, which are already existent in the supramental as a perfect harmony of ideal realities, and poetry thus raised to a supreme Light and Force can powerfully assist towards that consummation. If, therefore, the possibilities of the poet of the future are to come to their utmost fruition, his art, whether it flowers forth in the lyric cry or the narrative, in the drama or the epic, should not merely be an instrument of forces which work through him by passing inspirations. It must represent the continuous rhythm of an inner life in which the meaning of the universe shall be unfolded in the individual and the Spirit manifested, with constant integrality, even through the prose of daily intercourse with the world.

K. D. SETHNA

NEW ROADS

BOOK XII

(vi)

THE DAY

I CAME from Night,
 an unlighted candle in my hand—
Into the brilliant Day
 holding a garland of flowers :
My body glowing with the light of the Sun—
 I and my body are one.

I do not fear the pride and passion of my body,
This body, so dear to all imaginable delights :
It has drawn pain and pleasure into itself entire
And out of this Alchemy has been born a world,
A very universe of body, sense, emotion and of mind;
And then beyond the overarching Blue—
Beyond the earth, the sea and the sky, the wind and the rain,
The sun and the moon and the stars, the blood in the vein,
The cosmic worlds beyond—the light in the brain
Where Time and Space came together, defeated and were slain.

This body is a sacred temple in which I worship :
Where I sit down in my heart and watch the white Swans
Fly across the orange skies of trance.

This body is a part of Nature and the 'cry' of Nature
And the sap of Nature rises up strong within me—
Yet I will not spill it into the furrow of the earth
Nor allow it to outflow in waste upon the leaves of grass
Nor impregnate the atavistic movements of the Past.
It is a manna for the centres and a pabulum for the Mind,
The sacrificial host of the eucharist in Matter;
The 'essence' that ever seeks the Source of its own becoming.
It is of this, that the body is conscious—
It would be mere madness to waste it on a minor delight.

There is a New urge in man,
A hand has come down from Above to grope in the mire

To clasp the Jewel that breaks the bounds of sense,
That outgrows the limitations of mere birth,
Beyond the guardian beauty of mere form,
Beyond the perfume of desire and the stench of disease.
It is a new urge in the cells and the centres of force
That demands an all-embracing conscious poise
Where Joy of the soul and the mind and the emotions meet
In that unimaginable sea of undying Bliss
Which does not betray earth's humble originals
But fulfils the Promise of evolving Day :

Green pastures of permanence are there—
And dawn-struck hills of feeling and desire
Look up to towering Peaks of Sun-lit Mind—
Bright rivers of Ananda flood the world
As streams of cause and effect flow into the Sea
Of thought and sound and sight, touch, taste and smell
To fix, deep down, the inner state of man,
The cosmic images of Truth and Love
That strive for Birth beyond the Twilight Hour.

NORMAN DOWSETT

NEW CONSTELLATIONS

(A Vision in Gold and Blue)

I CRIED for heaven's distant home
And longed for Eyes of starry calm
That guard in vasts of the far dome
The heartless urn, the cool white balm.

But God flung heaven on my cry
And my hot head went flaming through !
Now down I smile on my crinoline-sky
Swaying in bliss of velvet blue.

The scattered stars in warm tears glow,
Confused they weep, forlorn they pray,
And in my starry eyes seek from below
Their easy tracks of Milky Way.

But on my robe of hue I trace
With star-gold dots and pen of light
Sweet lines of Heart, new paths in bright space
And Earth's hands in God's for ever held tight.

JANINA

A PRAYER

INSCRUTABLE Thy workings are,
O Mother of the Gods !
On me Thy smile be like a star
Against the unseen odds.

Omnipotent is Thy wisdom's gaze
To change the heart of things :
O Mother, with Thy puissant rays
Transform the Inconscient's springs.

Creation is Thy ecstasy's dance
Upheld by an absolute Grace :
Protect my life with a single glance
Of Rudra's smiling face.

Thy love is Mahakali's force
Of purity absolute :
O turn within the senses' doors
For the play of Krishna's Flute.

Thy will is evolution's leap
On spirit's mounting stair :
Annul the line of mind's slow creep,
Bathe earth in Heaven's bright air.

PRITHWI SINGH

THE GOLDEN DAY

THE stony heart rebelled in me,
For love was not its food,
No humour or humility
It cherished in its mood.
So I left it lonely there to stay
Amidst the storms of a rainy day.

The southern breeze with a mellow call
Woke up the blithesome birds;
And flowers blossomed one and all;
To the pasture went the herds.
No gentle face came here to peep—
My heart was lain in a slothful sleep.

By what occultest alchemy,
And by what dextrous art,
Will this heart quicken joyously
And a life of love take start ?
I lift my arms and humbly pray :
“O, bring me now that golden day !”

SAILEN

DIVINE ECSTASY

A DIVINE Ecstasy burns the stars in their ceaseless hurrying.
She flows in the sap of the flowering grape-vines radiant in expectancy
And spurts out moaning from the gashes of an old giant mango tree.
She marks the beat in a hymn sung by the white-robed children aspiring,
Weeps in the helpless hind and devours exultingly before the victim is cold.
She joins the power-drunk lords in their sessions of garish revelry
And is trodden underfoot in a faded lotus offered with devotion to gods.
Silent, immanent, she creates her gamut of gay and sombre hues ever-new.
She is the ferment in a revolution, the vision of the architects and sculptors
Who carve out rock-temples over generations, shape the future in stone-structures.
The majesty of her gait can be seen behind the bier of a proud queen.
Undercurrent of all laughter and tears, nourishment of dreams and nightmares,
Holding her head high in a coquette rose, keeping everyone suspended in hope,
She ruins the harmony of wedded souls by slipping away through a loophole.
Haunting the deserts with the eerie disembodied glories of the past,
She mows down with nonchalance the strong cheerful stalks in their prime.
Scattering to the four winds the gains of millenniums treasured by ages,
She makes the forest flow with a sudden outburst of flamboyant rapture.
Immobile on the face of a sage unconscious in her embrace,
She gambols among the golden curls of a little girl out in the fields.
Dancing with the foaming angry waves threatening the ship of Fate,
With a mad abandon she rushes into the welcome wide-open jaws of Death.
Without Thy sustaining Presence incognito, life could not prevail over Pain
Nor man be admitted to the secret councils where Thou presidest unveiled.

NIRANJAN

HOW LONG ?

How long, O Mother, wilt Thou spurn
and burn me in this separation?
Unbearable becomes Thy mute-
ness Lute-resounder of Compassion!
Open Thy lips of rose and shower
word-flower sweet and nectarine!
Wilt not, O Grace, Thy heart of light,
ignite in me the fire and sheen
Of Love divine? Will not Thy brow,
give now Thy signal of assent
That ever glory-full Thy Hand
shall stand in gracious blessings bent
Upon my body frail and weak?
O speak, Thy assuring word; I crave
Thy Love alone. Pour down Thy milk-
mild, silk-soft kindness on this slave!
Own now this mortal frame of mine
as Thine, so that in core and crust
Of brittle Nature utterly
I be Thy humble servant dust.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

MY LIFE'S AIM

My heart's deep things
And secret tale,
Mute sufferings,
Hid tears and wail,
In my cupped hands
And channelled fingers held,
Devotion-spelled,
To Thee I all surrender,
Without demands,
And with heart's worship-water wash
And silent fervours splash
Sole-petals of Thy Feet of Wonder.

Towards Thee my heart's raptures gyre,
Forgive my wrongs and faults, O Lord,
To Thee I trust my secret word,
My life's most white desire:
'From now on keep me held to Thee,
From life to life, forever nigh
From world's delusions gather me
Unto Thy utter Ecstasy.'

Quick years and months, day after day,
Into oblivion pass away,
'Wherefore our life?' of this we stay
Fools ignorant in an utter way.
Now end, O Lord, this blind life's game,
Win for me, by Thy Grace, the Aim.

DULALI

(Translated by Har Krishan Singh from the Bengali)

HOW THE MOTHER'S GRACE CAME TO US*

A Pilot's Experience

ANOTHER aeroplane crash in the Kashmir valley and that is the last we see of a few friends! An accident of this type occurs every now and then due to the nature of the terrain. In good weather our passengers are full of epithets like "glorious", "marvellous", "wonderful", "enchanted" for this region where one sees emerald terraces creeping up to snowy peaks. At the bottom, we clearly see the foaming hill torrents and rivers rushing down towards the plains of India and Pakistan; the greenery of the whole countryside is interspersed with small townships here and there and a number of villages all over. We generally take the route from Udhampur to Banihal: with high hill peaks on both sides we enter Srinagar valley through a V-shaped col where the ridge seems to bow down in order to provide a passage for the aeroplanes.

But all this can change instantaneously, almost kaleidoscopically. In very bad weather the pilots are prohibited even from making an attempt to cross the Banihal pass; in cloudy weather one is expected to find one's way through clear patches, with a clear recognition of every feature of hill and ground, till one has reached the region of safety. It is a game of vast experience, perfect knowledge both of navigation and meteorology and of good team work. While the captain steers his way, the co-pilot gives meticulous attention to performance of engines, the various temperatures and pressures, and goes on watching for clear patches in the walls of clouds around and also recognises ground features that are visible.

The vision is limited: if there are unexpected changes in cloud patterns and if thunderstorms develop suddenly, the risk is enhanced.

This was the region where I had the unmistakable indication of the Mother's Grace coming to me about six years ago.

We flew through isolated thunderstorms and remained in clear weather. We avoided one thunderstorm near Udhampur and saw another over Banihal Pass. An experienced pilot could either go below this thunderstorm leaving about 2000 feet of clear air-space over Banihal pass or fly above this cloud, maintaining an altitude of 14,000 or 15,000 feet. Asking the co-pilot to keep the map in his hand and to watch the performance of the engine carefully, I proceeded to survey this nasty cloud from two or three directions before negotiating the pass.

But there came the attack of the hostile force from the most unexpected quarter. The co-pilot suddenly became nervous. Even while approaching the Banihal Pass, he started suggesting directions which looked clear but it would have been necessary for us to climb to about 20,000 feet—an impossible task in itself in our Dakota! I saw that the map in his hand was held upside down and he could not spot the region

* Readers are invited to send their experiences to the Editor or the Compiler—or directly to the Mother.

over which we were flying. That is where my personal experience over that terrain proved useful because most of the features of the terrain were on my memory-plate. When I asked him to increase oil temperature of one engine, he increased carburettor air-temperature instead, so that the engine was momentarily starved of air and there was a chance of its failure. On top of it he started shouting over everything.

We had to abandon the effort under the circumstances even though I wistfully heard another colleague of mine in a different aircraft successfully crossing over the pass.

But all this delay closed our escape route. The pattern of clouds had made its kaleidoscopic change. Thunderstorms were all over in the rear. A gap was not to be seen there. In the front the gaps were still perceptible but with the poor team-assistance I was getting, one could not dream of launching on a fresh effort.

And the clouds from the rear were fast closing in. To strike a hill in poorer visibility appeared to be imminent. I looked below : the beautiful emerald fields had already put on a thin wispy veil of translucent clouds. Blacker clouds would be there any moment. But I had never found the view so beautiful in all my life : one seemed to be floating in a dream. Perhaps I was to see the same spot in a bodiless state after a while and then depart for regions unknown !—thanks to the companion at my side who had fortunately become too dazed by this time even to speak. Ready for the impending catastrophe, I was quietly determined to fight my way through !

That was the Mother's Grace. She was not only on the memory-plate but now all of a sudden I could feel her presence behind me. It was making me act like a child under her refined and delicate tutelage. Fortunately, the *ādhāra* had acquired some knowledge : with a combination of intuition, knowledge of the lie of the land, and direct impulsion from the Mother I steered a course towards south-west and plunged through the cloud. Within a couple of minutes, we were flying safely over the plain of Jammu. The weather beyond was smooth. I thanked the Mother mentally, flew around comfortably for a few minutes and landed safely at Pathankot nearby.

The nervousness of the co-pilot continued in a residual form—just traces of it—but now his brain worked very fast. He started canvassing people in his favour. He gathered passengers around him and gave them a long lecture on my dangerous flying : "This pilot never listened to me and never went in the direction that I showed him," i.e. to a height of 20,000 feet over Ladakh territory. Most of the passengers got their reservations cancelled and changed their programme of leave in Kashmir. He himself refused to work with me. Another co-pilot was sent to me by train overnight. We left for Srinagar on the following morning. My old friend came as a passenger : perhaps just as well because he could review his past actions in clear weather. I let him travel. I showed the various features of the terrain over which we had flown to the passengers who came along. As they recognised them they felt happy and were satisfied with my knowledge of the countryside. Back at Delhi, the co-pilot was advised by his friends to report that I had completely lost my way and was flying over the prohibited Pakistan territory.

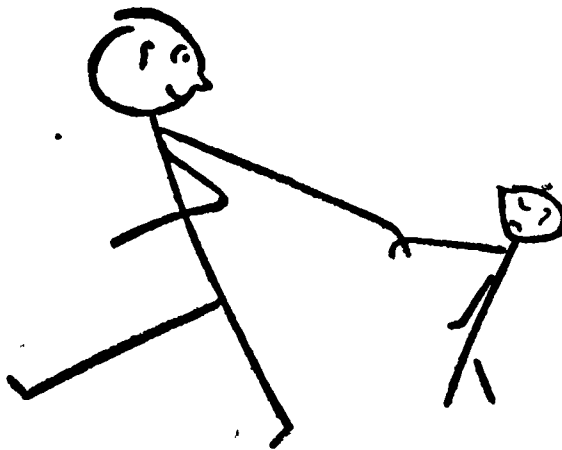
With the Mother's Grace, the management had no difficulty in discerning the truth. The co-pilot was given a warning against nervousness and lack of co-operation.

He is a friend of mine once again : there never was a breach in fact !

Whenever I fly over that beautiful spot in Kashmir where I broke through the clouds—it is near Vaishno Devi Hill Temple—I find a smile coming over my lips on account of the series of accidents and feel all the more gratitude to the Mother. Could she be so close to us in all our thoughts and actions ?

KRITIN

Compiled by Har Krishan Singh



"Please !
You're hurting my wrist."

"If you would come along nicely
and not pull back,
it wouldn't hurt."

MYSTICS AND SOCIETY

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINE OF THE MYSTICS

Who are these men and what are these words they speak ?

OBVIOUSLY the doctrine of the mystics is not the most important thing about them. Hocking says, rightly, "Mysticism, then, we shall not define by its doctrines." Yet the mistake, or confusion, has been frequently made. Bertrand Russell revealed a characteristic turn of mind and, on this matter, a common mistake when he said : "The mystic insight begins with the sense of mystery unveiled, of a hidden wisdom now suddenly become certain beyond the possibility of a doubt. The sense of certainty and revelation comes earlier than any definite belief. The definite beliefs at which mystics arrive are a result of reflection upon the inarticulate experience gained in moments of insight." But all who know know that "the moments of insight" are more veridical than the "reflections" that follow, that the mystical way of living is more central than speculative mysticism. Pascal's experience was that of

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob.
Not of the philosophers and the learned.

But the error, or distinction, has the imprimatur of "the learned", the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. It restricts the word 'mysticism' "as designating the historic doctrine of the relationship and potential union of the human soul with the Ultimate Reality and to use the word 'mystical experience' for direct intercourse with God." The general view has been stated by Butler : "Of course there may be a philosophy of mysticism...but mysticism as such has nothing to say to philosophy...[it] is not a philosophy, it is an experience."¹ The doctrine, mostly derivative and secondary, is in the nature of deductions and inferences, rationalizations or mental translations, it points to as it is based upon the mystic experience. But these "reflections" are not the heart of the mystery.

In itself, the experience is held to be a fact. This the mystics have always held. It is also "ineffable", "beyond all expression". "Not by speech, not by thought, not by sight does one grasp Him. *He is* : by that word and not otherwise is he comprehended." Such is the classic Indian formula, echoed everywhere. By the Zen Masters for instance. According to Bodhidharma *satori* is "knowledge of the most adequate kind; only it cannot be expressed in words." According to Tai-hui, "To talk about the unfathomable or mysterious is defiling." Such has been the general theory or attitude towards the mystery of the mystic experience or knowledge among the masters of those that know. The semantic difficulty, if not impossibility, is not

unknown to such among the moderns who have had occasional, if not unexpected brushes with the beyond. "Impossible to describe," wrote Bucke; "utterly beyond words," were the words Tennyson used; Symonds "could not find words to render it intelligible"; Koestler found "the experience meaningful though not in verbal terms". Our human vocabulary loses all its meanings, said Rufus Jones.

And yet doctrines form a familiar, if not an essential feature of the mystic landscape. A complete blank between the empirical and transcendental consciousness is not desirable. Some sort of relation or linkage there must be. There is a paradox here and throughout. As Stace puts it, "Some are content to call it inexpressible. Much nevertheless has been written about it."² Mystical theology in the west and spiritual philosophies in the east are part of the proof. Often 'dogmatic' and nearly always paradoxical, the mystical statements carry a kind of *ipse dixit* and make dialogue difficult. The assumption of superior wisdom by uncommon, mysterious or dubious devices is apt to be resented. But the compelling force of its appeal and argument is among the best that the world has known. From Plotinus to Sri Aurobindo, it is true, "mystics themselves philosophize", with breath-taking subtlety. Though the severely practical Buddha forbade metaphysical debates or speculations, there is, as Dean Inge has said, "and must be a philosophy of mysticism...[it] has indeed been worked out by several thinkers of genius."³ In Shankara and Eckhart, for instance, we have the "almost unbelievable spectacle" of two of the strictest scholastics labouring hard and with unwonted brilliance over a non-rational, inconceivable Godhead. As Rudolf Otto pointed out, "Nowhere does doctrine play a greater part than with these two mystics."⁴ And yet both of them knew "*Atman* is not capable of proof nor does it need any", and believed: "The most beautiful thing which man can say of God is that, knowing His inner riches he becomes silent. Therefore prate not of God." "He, or It, is *svasiddha*, self-proven, that is axiomatic, the knowledge is an incommunicable science."⁵

Then why do they themselves "prate", or attempt the impossible and the unnecessary? Because it is not without its use and the difficulty surrounding the statement of doctrine is not deliberate. Apparently the doctrine, or statement of doctrine, is trying to do something that has little chance of success, and yet they do it. The statements and generalisations refer to a level of cognition or experience, where, to believe them, opposites are reconciled and logic as we know it ceases to function, at least ceases to dominate discourse. And since the experience carries with it its own authority the logical difficulty must be faced, in any case it cannot be used against the original experience superseding normal logic. In other words, the experience of the mystic is not discursive but intuitive, to use a word highly charged with emotional overtones and the sight of which throws most scientists into dismay and disagreement. But in many cases the doctrine, whatever it is, does attempt a kind of discourse, for the need to relate the trans-logical—"Before Whom, or Which, words recoil"—with our normal awareness of the world and its processes remains. To our ordinary ways of thinking and being every such attempt smacks of challenge and a kind of violence, it is full of contradictions which the intellect is unable to either accept or endorse. About the paradoxical nature of these statements, which we have already mentioned, it is, by the way, taken for granted that they *are* like that. All who have been through the mystic woods and know the rules of the game know that paradox—"Vacuum-

plenum," as someone describes this—is the foundation and structure of all mysticism. One might even say that it is paradoxical because it is true. In this matter modern aesthetics could easily take a lesson or two from the old wisdom. Take this from the well-known statement in the *Isha Upanishad* : "That One, the Self, though never stirring, is swifter than thought....Though standing still, it overtakes those who are running....It stirs and it stirs not." Or Lao Tse, the master of the masters of paradox :

The Way is like an empty vessel
That may yet be drawn from
Without ever needing to be filled.
It is bottomless : the very progenitor of all things in the world...
It is like a deep pool that never dries.
I do not know whose child it could be.
It looks as if it were prior to God.

Or this, which closes most invocations in India : "Full is That. Full is This. Fullness is drawn from the Full. Take Fullness from the Full; it remains always Full." It is plain that such "Fullness" is fully beyond most of us most of the time. To the strict logical mind it is another name for foolishness. No wonder Bertrand Russell could not swallow the bait, "the peculiar logic of mysticism which discounts the two fundamental laws of natural logic, the law of contradiction and excluded middle."

Obviously the doctrine, and the experience supporting it, ante-date philosophy and mathematics, and may one day outdate these too. It is metaphysical and based on a knowledge by identity. In some ways, it is simplicity itself. "The Ground of God and the Ground of the Soul are one and the same," says Eckhart. Again, from the same authority, "The intuitive, higher knowledge is timeless and spaceless, without any here and now."⁶ These are not merely an ancient mystery and possession. Many modern voices echo it. It may come of itself or through effort, that is not so important at the moment. To quote a familiar passage from Tennyson's *Memors* : "A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from my boyhood, when I have been alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being ; and this is not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life." This is a persistent note. Its justification is based on what has been described as a "supreme identity".⁷ Brevity is the soul of this identity and wisdom, and Poincaré who insisted on the elegance of theories ought to have been delighted with this, same and simple, always. *Thou art That*, is a famous Indian formulation. Or, in Christianity, *I and my Father are one*. All is in that, all follows from that.

Or if we prefer modern, that is abstract, terminology, the doctrine or experience in question is "an ultimate non-sensuous unity in all things". Or, to use Northrop's equally polysyllabic phrase, it is "an undifferentiated aesthetic continuum."

The only way to get out of the "undifferentiated" difficulty of such formulations

would be, as we have already suggested, to admit degrees of knowledge, a higher and a lower knowledge, known to all ancient systems and mystics the world over, the higher shading off into grace, while the lower is confined to the world of naturalistic operations. "The soul has something within it," writes Eckhart, "a spark of supersensual knowledge that is never quenched. But then there is also another knowledge in our souls, which is turned towards outward object : namely, knowledge of the senses and understanding : this hides that other knowledge from us." Obviously both kinds are needed, as the *Isha Upanishad* tells us, both the knowledge of world and knowledge of self. Even Bertrand Russell, whose views on mysticism are often partisan and superficial, had noted : "The greatest men who have been philosophers have felt the need both of science and of mysticism...and (the union of the two) the highest eminence...possible to achieve in the world of thought." That would involve, as Plotinus might say, "another way of seeing which everyone has but few use". The mystics are among the few that do, and "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" and the mystics. The objection that mysticism is a religion for the few has perhaps to be faced. But, it must also be admitted, as some of the examples have shown, that "the minor forms of mysticism are shared by a large number of people and are quite possible, though latent, for a great many more."⁸

Another distinction of the doctrine, which sets it apart from philosophy of the academic and scientific variety, is that it is a science of the soul and salvation, *muktir upāya*, *mokṣaśāstra*. What must I do to be saved ? Above all you must know. You are saved through knowledge. It is a typical error to say, as one of its eminent exponents has done, that "Mysticism is in essence little more than a certain intensity and depth of feeling in regard to what is believed about the universe". Not a "little more" but a lot more and lot different. It is indeed a form of pure perception, through doors that have been first cleansed through discipline, devotion and detachment. "Seeing Him alone, one transcends death ; there is no other way," says the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, of things not merely felt but known. Similarly the *Book of Common Prayer* says : "God, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life." The seer of the *Mundaka Upanishad* was not expressing a mere feeling but a knowledge, the knowledge by identity, as we have called it before. "He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. He passes beyond all sorrow... Freed from the fetters of Ignorance he becomes Immortal."

Even the Buddha, who scrupulously avoided the *O Altitudo* ! speaks in the same vein. What is the greatest sin ? he asks. The answer is, Stupidity. And the way out is through knowledge, not feeling. Whether the Buddha was a mystic or not, his teaching had but one savour, salvation. Desire, *tanhā*, Ignorance (*avidyā*) or Original Sin, it comes to the same thing. "That which will not make me (free and) immortal, what shall I do with that ?" That ancient cry, wrung out of a woman's heart (the soul is feminine), first heard in the forest retreats of India, still rings, and will continue to do so as long as men suffer from homesickness for the country of the soul. The doctrine of the mystics may be compared to a road map, of the Way of Return, *ultā path*. As Bergson said, it is a remounting of the natural slope of our minds. But it is no part of a conducted tour. Each must explore the way all alone. It is the flight of the alone to the Alone, the plunge into naked Nothingness. This loneliness is part of the very process of learning. According to Madame Montessori :

"The child who has never learned to act alone, to direct his own actions, to govern his own will, grows into an adult who is easily led and must always lean upon other." Such adults, are easy victims of the monstrous creed of mass culture and the not-so-hidden persuaders of the advertisement agencies.

Mystical philosophy, which tries to describe the different stations of this journey or union, is not always or altogether a scholastic hairsplitting, the product of overheated, lazy brains. It is true it has a tendency to degenerate into a game, of futile subtleties and dogmatics, *odium theologicum*, into attempts to find out how many angels could be balanced on a pinpoint, which, by the way, is a less dangerous way of passing one's time than releasing all the chained devils of destruction from a single invisible atom out of a uranium pile. But the same divine doctor, who had been looking for angels on pinpoints, after he had been smitten by a genuine mystical experience, preferred silence and gave up theology. "I have seen that which makes all that I have written and taught look small to me. My writing days are over," said St. Thomas Aquinas. This is an excellent illustration of both the need of theology and its limitation. Doctrine, theology, metaphysics are like a ladder or a system of scaffolding. They are a help and we do not have to kick them after we have reached the heights, for we might need them again on our way back. Never is the ladder or scaffolding an end, it is always a means, which many need. And while all men may not need it in the same measure, as a matter of convenience most do.

The doctrine of the mystics implies, as we have said before, levels of reality, mind and consciousness, "through many linking stages". Man, said Eucken, is the meeting-ground of various stages of Reality. Or, as the French psychologist, Binet, once put it : "There would be some naivety in holding that this consciousness which is personal to us and in which we usually remain is the only one existing in us."⁹ What Bucke tried to popularise as "cosmic consciousness" has been always known and accepted by mystics in some form or other. Here is a somewhat modern statement of the ancient reality—as seen by a mystic of our own times, Sri Aurobindo :

"Matter expresses itself eventually as a formulation of some unknown Force. Life, too, that yet unfathomed mystery, begins to reveal itself as an obscure energy of sensibility imprisoned in its material formulation ; and when the dividing ignorance is cured which gives us the sense of a gulf between Life and Matter, it is difficult to suppose that Mind, Life and Matter will be found to be anything else than one Energy triply formulated, the triple world of the Vedic seers. Nor will the conception then be able to endure of a brute material Force as the mother of Mind. The Energy that creates the world can be nothing else than a Will, and Will is only consciousness applying itself to a work and a result.

"What is that work and result, if not a self-involution of Consciousness in form and a self-evolution out of form so as to actualise some mighty possibility in the universe which it has created ? And what is its will in Man if not a will to unending Life, to unbounded Knowledge, to unfettered Power ? Science itself begins to dream of the physical conquest of death, expresses an insatiable thirst for knowledge, is working out something like a terrestrial omnipotence for humanity. Space and Time are contracting to the vanishing-point in its works, and it strives in a hundred ways to make man the master of circumstance and so lighten the fetters of causality. The idea of limit, of the impossible begins to grow a little shadowy and it appears instead that

whatever man constantly wills, he must in the end be able to do ; for the consciousness in the race eventually finds the means.... It is this vast cosmic impulse which the modern world, without quite knowing its own aim, yet serves in all its activities and labours subconsciously to fulfil."¹⁰

Such a liberal understanding, or inner view, of cosmic processes and purposes, shows mysticism itself to be a science as well as a way of life. Josiah Royce always insisted that the mystics were "the only thoroughgoing empiricists in the history of philosophy". After examining the evidence impartially Marquette reached the conclusion : "In the very name of experimental science, this collective testimony (of the mystics all over the world and in every age) cannot be brushed aside, and must be reckoned with in any serious attempt to understand human nature and its possibilities."¹¹ As an experimental science it has a technique or discipline of its own, *methodus mystica*, yoga, *dhyāna*, orison, contemplation, call it what you will. In *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* Hocking has described mysticism as an "experimental wisdom", having its own methods and its own audacious intention of meeting deity face to face. "The experimental perception of God's Presence and Being" has always been part of the mystic claim and rationale. It is true, however, that where the scholastics have triumphed, "mystical theology tended more and more to become a science of contemplation rather than contemplation itself, an intellectual system rather than a religious experience".

Spontaneous or uncontrollable or part of a schedule, techniques for inducing mystical states—including the use of drugs, now once again alarmingly on the increase—have been known from the earliest times. Among genuine mystics there is an agreement that the path is austere and should avoid, as far as possible, any dependence on external aids. Truths occult exist not for ignorant and drugged minds. Only the pure in heart shall see God or the Truth that makes one free. Hence the insistence, in nearly all schools of mysticism, on detachment and devotion, choice and contemplation. These have been among well-tested psychological disciplines, which our present-day secularised, advertisement-boozed minds have a hard time in accepting.

Another fact about the mystic discipline and doctrine which the modern mind shies at is the mystery in which the whole thing seems to be shrouded. There is a feeling that this knowledge is for the few, the initiates. It sounds rather undemocratic. Why secrecy ? they ask. The simplest answer is 'Try and you will know'. The knowledge is the result of a special kind of concentrating of all one's energies. It calls for laboratory conditions necessary for any prolonged research. It is not secret in the sense that it has never been told. It would not be understood even if told—unless one first verified it within the silence of the spirit, alone. The secrecy is due to the nature of the truth and out of respect for the personality of the seeker. It would cease to be a truth if it could be mass-produced and consumed by a crowd. There is no short cut to it nor can fools be trusted with it. The Masters are not inhuman but wise.

But in spite of its universal core the mystical experience as well as the mystical doctrine has shown the greatest diversity. It is not monolithic or monotonous. As Rudolf Otto has said, in spite of much formal agreement, mystic experience is capable of great diversity. Theistic, atheistic, ethical, supra-ethical, pantheistic,

transcendental, there are many variations, understandably. Because the truth that we are dealing with is a truth of the Infinite, at once one and many. This is a simple fact of experience and not a deliberate mystification.

But if mystical experience and doctrines have assumed many shapes, spoken with many voices, "the resemblances are far more striking—the differences are superficial"¹². Basically, the Way is one. As Dorothy Philipps has pointed out : "Whatever the approach, and however complicated the philosophical or theological superstructures erected upon it, the essentials of the Way whereby Reality becomes transformingly effective in the individual life were found to be identical and universal."¹³ Rudolf Otto somewhere calls this a "polar identity". As Aldous Huxley has repeatedly said, "At all times and in all places, the free have spoken with only one voice." This does not mean that dissident voices are not there, they are, both noisy and frequent, but the very fact proves that they do not belong, among the knowers of truth, but among those that know little or nothing.

(To be continued)

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

References :

1. Dom Cuthbert Butler, *Western Mysticism*, 129.
2. Walter T. Stace, *Mysticism and Human Reason*, 25.
3. W.R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, 152.
4. Rudolf Otto, *Mysticism, East and West*.
5. As regards "proof" of the existence of God : "To find or know God by any outward proofs, or by anything but God Himself, made manifest and self-evident in you will never be your case here or hereafter.... And all pretended knowledge of any of these things, beyond and without this self-evident sensibility of their birth within you, is only such knowledge of them as the blind man hath of the light that hath never entered into him." "*Jñāna* is eternal, is general, is necessary and is not a personal knowledge of this man or that man. It is there, as knowledge in the Atman itself, and lies there hidden under all *avidyā* (ignorance). . . unprovable, because self-evident, needing no proof, because itself giving to all proof the ground of possibility." *Ibid*.
6. According to Rudolf Otto, Eckhart established a "polar identity" between rest and motion, within the Godhead itself. *Mysticism, East and West*. Hume had said that it was impossible to *imagine* a self-contradictory state of affairs. But, then, the mystics don't imagine !
7. Alan W. Watts, *The Supreme Identity*.
According to Royce, "The Upanishads contain already essentially the whole story of the mystic faith." *The World and the Individual*.
8. W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, 29.
9. Pratt, *Religious Consciousness*, 366.

10. Binet, *Les Alterations de la Personnalité*. Also see Charles H. Hinton, *An Episode in Flatland*; E. A. Abbot, *Flatland*, both of which show what human life, lived without many dimensions, would be like or is becoming like.
 11. *The Life Divine*, 17-9
 12. Marquette, *Introduction to Comparative Mysticism*, 18.
 13. Stace, *Mysticism and Human Reason*, 9.
-



The Sunlit Path !

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A Study of Savitri by *Prema Nandakumar*. Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry -2. Pages 568. Price Rs. 20.00 Cloth-bound.

In 1950 when the first volume of *Savitri* appeared comprising the first three books of the epic it was greeted as caviare to the common reader. Much water has flowed down the bridges since then and in a few years a second edition appeared complete in one volume with a number of letters by Sri Aurobindo on the various aspects of the poem, its novel technique in the handling of blank verse, its still more recondite theme, the nature of the "overhead" poetry and aesthesis without an insight into which the literary reader is likely to throw up the sponge and revert to the well-explored realms and macadamized tracks to which traditional taste and criticism have acclimatized him.

On the other hand, critical appreciation and interpretation have not lagged behind. The first to pave the way was the long essay "Sri Aurobindo : A New Age of Mystical Poetry" by K. D. Sethna—now included in his book *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*. This essay, as well as the rest of the book, has had the unique fortune of having been read and appreciated by Sri Aurobindo himself. Probably even now it stands as by far the most penetrating and subtly perceptive appraisal of the epic. In this connection it is necessary to mention that all the letters of Sri Aurobindo on *Savitri* appended to the one-volume edition of the poem were addressed to Sethna who used to receive from the Master the poem as it was written and revised, so that he has closely observed how the Master, combining in himself the creator and the critic, not only fashioned his poetic world in the heat of inspiration but always saw to it that 'it was good'.

Next in time is A. B. Purani's monograph, *Savitri : A Study*, which is running in the second edition. Purani has had the privilege of a life-long and close association with the Master and is himself eminently qualified as an exponent of the various aspects of his spiritual gospel. He has also used to good effect some comparative quotations from modern poets. When the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education brought out its one-volume edition of *Savitri*, K. D. Sethna wrote again on the epic—a review of some length in *Mother India*, setting forth and illustrating further the height and range of its inspiration and the many-sidedness of its art. Lately, M. V. Seetharaman of the Annamalai University has also been contributing highly valuable articles on some parts of the epic.

Another event of cardinal importance is the bringing out of the two volumes : *Meditations on Savitri* containing illustrations of the most significant passages in the first three cantos of the poem. The pictures have been executed by Huta with the Divine Mother's personal guidance : so here we have the most authentic light on the occult significance of the poem.

An ever-increasing demand for all these shows how this new epic charged with the breath of a greater life is casting its ripples in ever-widening circles, and essays

in criticism emanating from those who have steeped themselves in its light can go a long way in loosening the soil for the new seeds to be sown and the harvest in the form of a spiritual humanity to grow. Such an essay on a grand scale is Prema Nandakumar's *A Study of Savitri* written under the supervision of the renowned scholar and critic of English literature, Dr. K. R. Srinivas Iyengar, who is well-known as the author of the standard biographical survey of Sri Aurobindo and has himself written effectively on the epic.

The fact that the book was originally written as a thesis and that eminent critics like Vivian de Sola Pinto, H. O. White and T. J. B. Spencer unanimously recommended it for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is another cheering sign that in an 'audience fit though few' the poem is winning its recognition and this also speaks eloquently for the excellence of Prema Nandakumar's book as a work of critical appreciation. It is more than that; for, it takes the uninitiated reader through the most difficult passages with short but lucid explanations and significant quotations from the text. Thus about 146 pages are devoted to an analysis of all the cantos, a task that calls for very assiduous labour and repeated readings of the original with single-pointed concentration. This justifies the publication of this book so that even the ordinary readers can dive into this wide ocean and come out with their minds full of the riches of the Spirit.

Prema Nandakumar has herself written how the book can be read profitably : "...*Savitri* cannot be read in a hurry, it is a sort of poetic source-book of the origins of the Cosmos, a dramatization of the present predicament, and a Book of Prophecy about the future; and so momentous and comprehensive a poetic relation of events and projection of future possibility demands austere attention from the reader and the strain of 'waiting and listening', so that things may be seen with the inward eye and heard by the inward ear. The revelation cannot be total at once; for, it is at first like straining one's eyes in darkness; many readings may be necessary; then there is the hint of a clue, the rays of light penetrate the darkness and the dusk, and one gradually feels the enveloping light." Yes,

It buries us with a glory, young once more
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

(Browning)

The book is written in a graceful and harmonious style, adequate to the subject all through; but, from time to time, it sparkles with the exalted glow of the epic and then it is charged with a gnomic power and intensity. Touching on the rare "overhead" sources that occasionally enter the world of poetry, and comparing Sri Aurobindo with other great poets, she writes : "If Milton in his 'mighty-mouthed' moments is inspired by the Higher Mind, if Shakespeare in his great dazzling moments of supreme utterance is the poet with the Illumined Mind, if Dante's poetry is charged again and again with the marvellous revelatory power of the Intuitive Mind, then Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* embodies the sovereignty of the Overmind and comes to us with the direct, potent and radiant force of the Upanishadic mantra, a sustained feat of poetic recordation never before attempted or achieved." Elsewhere in the book she writes, "In his own way a supreme lord of language, Sri Aurobindo summons the

rhythmic word to his aid, charges it with semantic 'electricity', and out of it builds the Reality' he has seen, experienced and realised. The great poet is thus not only the lord of language but also the lord of rhythm and the lord of architecture." All this finds corroboration in what Sir Herbert Read, in a letter to A. B. Purani, wrote about the other epic, *Ihon*, by Sri Aurobindo : "it is a remarkable achievement by any standard and I am full of amazement that someone not of English origin should have such a wonderful command not only of our language as such, but of its skilful elaboration into poetic diction of such high quality."

There are many passages in the book of remarkable felicity where the author's own imagination unfolds its wings and it must be said to her credit that she has handled with unfaltering skill such vast material as encompasses Sri Aurobindo's own massive works, all the other epics and high poetic achievements in Indian and Western poetry, works on mysticism and other related abstruse subjects such as symbols and their reality and significance. Every remark of Sri Aurobindo's on the technique employed in *Savitri* has been fully elaborated, amplified and substantiated so that the reader accustomed to enjoying recognized poetic achievements are not baulked when called upon to bring forth a new poetic sensibility which thrills responsive to the 'Voice of the spaces, call of the Light.'

The author has herself very succinctly set forth her intention in launching on this study. She writes, "*Savitri* by itself, *Savitri* in relation to Sri Aurobindo's Life and Work, and *Savitri* in relation generally to the great epics of the world and even in relation to the currents of human thought and experience of all times : such are the three ascending terms in the argument that I have tried to present in the following pages." This is a formidable, a colossal task ; for, it means first the study of *Savitri* from so many points of view, as a legend, a symbol, an epic poem which means a work of art with a massive architectural or symphonic unity, a vast realm of spiritual domains and experiences, and its philosophy and vision of the future. There is a long chapter on Sri Aurobindo's Life and Work and then a study of his philosophy of emergent evolution in relation to other modern theories, the latest and nearest being Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man*.

Thus the Veda, the Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Kalidasa on the one side and European philosophies and epics, ancient, medieval and modern, on the other, all figure in this study of *Savitri*. Even such contemporary epics as Ezra Pound's *Cantos* and the Greek writer and poet Kazantzakis's *Odyssey : A Modern Sequel*—an epic of 33,333 lines—have been dealt with and appraised. The reader will rise from a perusal of this book with his mind lavishly enriched with the greatest achievements in thought and poetry.

A word about two comparisons. The author has shown how there is a parallelism between Dante and Beatrice on the one hand and Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the other. We need not go far into the question to discover many discrepancies ; therefore we shall shift the focus from the external similarity to the intrinsic significance of the two epics. In the case of Dante's *Divine Comedy* we are led from the doleful regions of Hell, through the ordeals of Purgatory to the beatitudes of Heaven. We meet there the deceased souls some of whom are historical personalities and some Dante's own contemporaries—sinners of all kinds, politicians, heretics and saints—with the result that what we witness in these regions is a sequel to the

deeds of these people when they lived on earth. But these worlds have no direct relationship with the earth ; there is no intervention or supervision from these planes which can divert or modify the course of events on the earth except as deterrents and inducements.

But in *Savitri* it is the other way round. The earth is the last stage in the descending series of creation. Between the Supreme Consciousness and the Earth there are many steps and storeys, each a plane of consciousness, ranging from planes of 'plenary supramental illumination', to the dark planes from where the diabolic powers exert their influence on earth. Hence all that happens on earth can be viewed as a precipitation from these spiritual and occult worlds. Thus in Dante what happens in Hell, Purgatory and Heaven is accounted for by what happened on earth in the past whereas in *Savitri* what is happening on earth can be traced back to the agencies let loose from the occult worlds. This explains why at times History puts on seven-league boots and creeps tardily at other times; why cultures incandesce suddenly into world-forces and then fade away into the light of common day. And when we witness such unalloyed precipitation of diabolic forces as in Nazi Germany we are forced to ask like Lear, "Then let them anatomize Regan. See what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in Nature that makes these hard hearts ?"

The *Odyssey* of Kazantzakis is an epic of vast dimensions with Bergson's Creative Evolution and Nietzsche's Will to Power as its main strands. There is also a mystic strain heard here and there. Emergent evolution means for him 'not merely change or increased complexity, but an always upward movement towards higher, more valued forms'. And, as Julian Huxley says from the biological point of view, "Man's most sacred duty and at the same time his most glorious opportunity, is to promote the maximum fulfilment of the evolutionary process on the earth; and this includes the fullest realization of his own inherent possibilities." Odysseus also says :

I think man's greatest duty on earth is to fight his fate,
to give no quarter and blot out his written doom.
This is how mortal man can even surpass his God.

But then the old Latin proverb breaks in, *nihil ex nihilo fit*, nothing comes out of nothing. If man can surpass his God and be the master of his fate then the supra-divine power must be somewhere involved or permanent in him. Only what is latent can become patent. And Kazantzakis is forced to recognize this when he says :

God is a labyrinthine quest deep in our hearts.

But this truth finds its loftiest and most thoroughgoing expression in Sri Aurobindo. He says, "For, if evolution is the progressing manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realisation of that which she secretly is.... If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth." Further on he amplifies it in these words (it is necessary to quote him because words like "God" and "Divine" have been used in very different senses by men and Kazant-

zakis means by God the *élan vital*) : "We have the realisation of the All in the individual by the transformation of the limited ego into a conscious centre of divine unity and freedom as the term at which the fulfilment arrives. And we have the outflowing of the infinite and absolute Existence, Truth, Good and Delight of being on the Many in the world as the divine result towards which the cycles of our evolution move. This is the supreme birth which maternal Naure holds in herself; of this she strives to be delivered." It should be noted that the birth of the superman is not an incarnation of Asuric super-ego but a rising into the universal consciousness so that one feels an identity in love and light with the whole creation. The Nietzschean superman does not carry the evolution forward by an upward ascent but only outward into an uncharted magnified vitalism which can give birth to ruthless Führers and Duces. Little wonder that under his influence Nazi Germany apotheosized the beast of prey as the highest type of living being.

Sri Aurobindo sees infinite possibilities in man to rise higher and higher and bring down more and more spiritual Light and Love and Power for the transformation of this life on earth. There is no dream of a better life that cannot be reached; for, as he says :

Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,
The impossible God's sign of things to be. (*Savitri*)

Nor is Fate an inexorable wheel to which man is helplessly tied.

Here Matter seems to mould the body's life
And the soul follows where its nature drives :
Nature and Fate compel his free-will's choice.
But greater spirits this balance can reverse
And make the soul the artist of its fate.
This is the mystic truth our ignorance hides :
Doom is a passage for our inborn force,
Our ordeal is the hidden spirit's choice,
Ananke is our being's own decree. (*Savitri*)

We close the review with the hope that Prema Nandakumar's book will be widely read and appreciated and will help to create among its readers the new literary sensibility that *Savitri* demands.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

Silence Speaks by *Girdharlal*. Published by Girdharlal, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2. Printed at the Jupiter Press Private Ltd., Madras-18. Price: Rs. 2.00, Shillings 5, \$ 1.00.

Silence too speaks ! When ? In the Hour of God. To whom ? To the children of God. There are two kinds of silences : static silence and dynamic silence. If

static silence is gold, dynamic silence is diamond. The genuine aspirant in Girdharlal attempts to catch some sparkles of dynamic silence.

Here is one success in a simple style :

"Corn grows in the field. But the field is not the owner of the corn. It is the farmer who is its owner.

Even so, spiritual opulence emerges in the sadhak. But this opulence does not belong to the sadhak. It belongs to God."

Here is a success in a more complex fashion :

"It is true about Sri Aurobindo's near-immortal body that Death entered into it. But it is equally true that at that moment the Amrita entered into Death's mouth for Death's annihilation."

No doubt, personal effort and surrender to the Divine should go together. But at the same time we must know the capacity of our personal effort and that of our surrendering attitude to the Divine. We needs must be at one with Girdharlal's experience :

"When with my own effort I endeavoured to clear a mountain of difficulties I could, after a long labour, hardly put aside five stones. But now with the dynamite of surrender to the Divine I can blow off a whole mountain in less than no time."

Undoubtedly intellect is a powerful weapon in the present-day civilised world. But from the highest spiritual point of view intellect is terribly weak—too weak to make us reach our destined goal. Here is an expression of this truth :

"I tried to hold in balance a mountain on the palm of my hand. But the palm gave way and I got crushed.

The palm stands for the intellect and the mountain for Sachchidananda."

A good many people living outside the Pondicherry Ashram of Sri Aurobindo shoot this powerful question: "What has made you select the Sri Aurobindo Ashram?" Girdharlal's reply is most adequate and convincing :

"Because here lives a cultivator, an all-round expert, a man unique in experience of his vocation. Moreover he delights in turning us also into experts in all the pros and cons of cultivation. He enjoys sharing out to us all the crops we have reaped by our labours."

Perhaps we cannot better sum up the quality of these valuable 64 pages than in the words of Rishiram, a well-known worker in the religious field, from Mussoorie to the author :

"....I have read your *Silence Speaks* with great interest and benefit. They are out-pourings of a heart and mind touched by a higher truth and illumination. You have paid a great tribute of devotion to Sri Aurobindo and Mataji and it was in the fitness of things that you should acknowledge your gratitude to these great gurus. These expressions are quite rational but they transcend intellect and reason. . ."

In the light of the contents we may say the cost of Rs. 2/- is paltry.

C.K.

ILA THE WONDERFUL—A SOUL'S LOVE

(These are some glimpses from Pashupati Bhattacharya's novel "Sahaj Manush" (The Normalised Man), whose title indicates the mystic who looks like an ordinary human being. Mainly the character of Ila and partly that of the Baul Thakur (the Wanderer) are brought out in this English adaptation from the original Bengali.)

ILA's father, Haricharan Chattopadhyaya, is a professor at a college in Calcutta. He has risen to eminence by dint of his own effort and perseverance. His books have already been selected as text books. He has purchased a few acres of land in the suburbs near Belegkata and erected a double-storeyed house. The son of a poor priest, Haricharan was a meritorious student from his childhood. He stood first in the upper primary examination of his village school and joined the high school of Diamond Harbour with a scholarship. Diamond Harbour is a walk of four miles. Daily he went to and fro on foot. For want of money to purchase books he used to copy from the books of his fellow-students. He obtained a scholarship in the entrance examination also. Then he came over to Calcutta for his college education. He took shelter in the house of a businessman of his own village. In return for giving lessons to his children he got two meals there, and began to study in the college free of charge; the monthly scholarship was his only means. He stood first in M.A. in History with record marks. Still he was not satisfied; later he obtained the M.A. degree in English literature also.

In spite of his education he is tied to conventions handed down for generations. He is somewhat in a difficulty about his second daughter, Ila.

The girl is a bit extraordinary in her nature. She has the look of a woman quite all right but in her behaviour there is very little of womanly manners. She has been so from her very childhood. That she is not a man but a woman never occurs to her. She seldom mixes with girls; she does not like girlish pastimes. She never in her life played with dolls. She plays with any number of boys in the neighbourhood. She is physically as strong as a boy and is quite a match for them in running, jumping and fighting. With the advance of age womanly signs develop on her person but undaunted, amazonian courage and impulsive conduct are ever on the increase. She has sharp memory and intelligence. She does not forget what she happens to hear even once. Every year she occupies the first place in the annual examination of the local girls' school. But her chief defect is that she is very reluctant to go to school. Often she absents herself from her classes, and roams about with the neighbouring boys. In spite of various forms of chastisement this defect of hers cannot be mended.

The Headmistress herself of the school calls on her father with this complaint. He asks Ila, "Why don't you go to school? Is it good to miss the classes?" Ila

replies, "What to do? I don't like to read with the girls." "Why, what faults have the girls committed? Are you not yourself a girl too?"

"Even if it be so, I cannot pull on with them. They are as much stupid as pretentious. I don't like even to sit with them in the class. I shall not study any more in that girls' school."

Having no alternative Haricharan is compelled to take her out of the school. He himself now imparts to her some desultory lessons. Ila begins to read with her father very attentively and makes very rapid progress. But moving about with the neighbouring boys does not cease. When her father goes to the college she joins the boys of her own party. Her authority over them is extraordinary; all owe allegiance to her, all look upon her with solemn awe.

For some time things go on like this. At length her movements begin to appear unbecoming in the eyes of her father. The girl is gradually attaining to maturity, her freedom of conduct cannot be connived at any longer.

But it is useless to forbid her by word of mouth. In order to keep her engaged in her study he begins to give her heavy tasks so that the whole day might pass that way. But this does not prove of much avail. Quickly she finishes all her tasks and then goes out of the house daily as usual. Her mother does not try much to prevent her, and who would pay heed to her words even if she forbade her?

Then a novel idea strikes Haricharan. He thinks, it is not of great use to educate the girl; it would be better if he could create in her a taste for the worship of the household deity; that might sober down her nature and remove the outgoing tendency of her mind. Character-building cannot be achieved by force; it needs tactful handling. But good results would follow if he could take advantage of the natural tendency of womenfolk towards religion.

Hereafter he makes the daughter his assistant in the work of daily worship of the household deity. Plucking flowers, preparing sandal paste, cleansing, washing and wiping the vessels required for the worship, arranging the dish to be offered to the deity, lighting the lamps and burning the incense sticks, decorating the throne of the divine image with flowers—all such tasks are given to her. Ila too devotes herself to her novel work enthusiastically. This too is a new pastime, as it were. She begins to pass off portions of her newly acquired knowledge to her companions. Her father is greatly pleased to see her whole-hearted enthusiasm and goes on relegating works of greater responsibility to her.

Gradually the work of waving lights before the image falls completely to Ila. This makes her most enthusiastic. At the very approach of dusk she changes her clothes, besmeares sandal paste on her forehead, kindles the fivefold light and waves it round and round in circles before the image. The sense of a serious play brightens her face with delight. She goes on waving the lights with absorbed attention as if it were never to come to an end. Her adolescent mind becomes fascinated as if by glimpses of some inner world through the silent influence of this image-worship.

Attraction to the worship does not mean aversion to all usual pranks. She is most friendly with a few neighbouring boys. In their company she plucks tamarind or some sour fruit from the trees of the neighbours and with salt partakes of them raw, sometimes even snatching them from one or another. At times she

debates with them on different subjects and, if needed, even quarrels with them. Of all the boys she has a special intimacy with Ashok.

Ashok is comparatively good-looking among the boys. He has sharp intelligence, there is some depth in his eyes and he is very submissive to Ila. That is why she feels drawn to him. Ashok is senior to Ila at least by three or four years but does not look so owing to his short stature. He belongs to a high family, often comes to Ila's mother and addresses her as 'Mami'. So, in her own house too Ila comes in his contact daily. On holidays she spends the whole noon in his company.

There is another reason for her being attracted to Ashok, who is all along the first boy in his class and is going to appear for the coming Matric examination. Ila had always the fancy of studying in a boys' school sitting side by side with boys, but that was by no means possible. That fancy is somewhat fulfilled in the company of Ashok. Ila has by this time learnt as much as Ashok and is quite fit for the Matric examination. That is why Ashok treats her as a colleague, and tells her all that happens in the class. In discussions it is Ila who wins mostly. Things which Ashok fails to understand is often explained by her. Difficult sums she works out. In the matter of studies there is a regular competition between the two. It never occurs to them that they are not co-students and that one is a girl and the other a boy.

If they are not conscious, Ila's father is fully conscious of the fact ; he often remembers that she is going to be a girl of fourteen. Even if he wants to give her in marriage, it is not so easy to arrange for the same. Besides, Haricharan's orthodoxy stands in the way. Nor has he any leisure. He consoles himself thinking that late marriage has been the order of the day.

Once by the bye Ila's mother suggests the name of Ashok. But Haricharan raises objections; so she beats a retreat. She sees nothing wrong in the free association of the two. But the suspicious mind of Haricharan does not like it.

One Saturday he returns home earlier and sees Ila and Ashok lying side by side; Ila is reading out a portion from the History written by her own father and Ashok is listening to her reading, half reclined with his eyes fixed on the face of Ila. Both of them are so much absorbed that they do not notice his noisy arrival at the door.

Haricharan calls with a serious voice, "Ila, come here and listen to me. How can you lie down by his side like that?" "Oh, he has never read the History book written by you, so I am reading out a portion to him." "I don't like such things. Do you know your age?" "How does age count? Is he much older than I?" "If that does not matter, have you not developed a bit of sense that you are a girl and he is a boy?" "What of that?" "That too am I to explain to you? Do you not feel ashamed of arguing with me? Fie!"

Haricharan leaves the place in a serious mood. Ila notes that even the tips of his ears have become ruddy. She stands still, not knowing what to do. The smarting implication of the term 'Fie' has pierced her heart like a sharp arrow.

Ashok's mother had great intimacy with Ila's mother, who liked her for her humility and sweetness of speech. She died of a two days' fever. Since then Ashok has been visiting Ila's mother Mahamaya now and then. Ashok's father remains a widower and entrusts the charge of the household to the sister of a distant relation. This cruel lady always tortures Ashok. Ila's mother comes to know of it. So she asks Ashok

to visit her house as often as possible. Ila's mother showers her affection on Ashok freely, so Ila too has affection for him; moreover, she admires his sterling qualities.

Ashok, who has heard all the suspicious words uttered by Haricharan, comes to Ila and says, "Let me go, Ila." After this, Ashok stops visiting that house.

Ila feels the separation from Ashok. A sense of delicacy prevents her from visiting Ashok's house as before, especially because Ashok has stopped coming once for all. She becomes angry with her father and finds fault with his suspicious nature, and specially with his hurting the feelings of Ashok for nothing. He could have called her aside to say what he had to say instead of uttering such insulting words before an outside boy. One who does not know one's own daughter and suspects her for nothing is likely to suspect even his own God. Is God confined to this image ? Does he accept man's worship ? How can God, who creates the world, become a doll-like image ? Such doubts multiply in her mind. She puts any number of questions to her mother and is not satisfied with her replies.

Ila cannot solve her doubts. She finds out that she needs God much less than she needs Ashok. She does not find any truth anywhere in the world.

All of a sudden she discovers some truth in flowers : there are flowers with five petals that never throw up six or seven petals, never deviate from their true nature. She has already a natural attraction to flowers. Now she gets an urge to cultivate them. She takes instructions from a neighbouring gardener, carefully watches his method of work and makes a beautiful flower-garden of her own. Her parents are also happy that she has a whole-hearted new occupation.

Ila has learnt much about flowers but that cannot satisfy her. She wants to have more and more knowledge. She happens to discover that men sit in meditation and have various experiences. She now sits for meditation and repeats the Name and aspires to see the divine light which her elder married sister claims to have seen several times. Through neglect her garden becomes covered with weeds. She spends three years in prayer and meditation. She gets the joy of concentration but remains far from the realisation of Truth.

One day a wanderer comes to their house. He looks an ordinary man but is held in high esteem by all including her own father and mother. She is surprised that the wanderer knows something of her spiritual experiences which she has never revealed to anybody. One precept of his she likes immensely : "It is hardly of much avail to toil hard to bring about spiritual experiences. The thinking of the Divine should be spontaneous and natural like inhalation and exhalation, and Divine Grace is the only sure way to Divine realisation. But meditation is not useless, it helps to make the mind calm."

One day Ila is so absorbed in meditation in one corner of the terrace that the time for the evening service to the deity passes by. Her father searches for her and is told by his youngest son that his sister is in deep meditation. At the order of his father the boy pushes Ila and disturbs her meditation. At this Ila gets furious and refuses to have anything to do any more with image-worship. Her parents are shocked to hear her arguments. Later a single expression of the wanderer totally silences Ila. He says, "Real spiritual progress is not compatible with excitement." The wanderer himself undertakes to perform the light-waving ceremony that evening. All the time Ila gazes at his face with wide-open eyes.

This wanderer was a disciple of a Vedantist guru. But later he had a spontaneous many-sided realisation. Ila asks him why he waves lights before an inanimate image. The wanderer calmly tells her that all forms are but forms of the Divine Himself. Nothing can prevent the Omnipotent from assuming so-called material forms. He also explains to her a quotation from the Upanishad : "Who could have lived, who could have breathed even a single breath if the Delight of Existence had not become an all-pervading ether ?" Ila finds it difficult to love the impersonal Divine. She admits that she had once loved Ashok. The wanderer tells her that the seed of love knows no destruction and advises her to love the Divine by selflessly serving the Divine in all. We owe love to all because the Divine is seated in the recess of every heart. Ila wants to take initiation from the wanderer but is told that she has already been initiated. He promises to help her whenever she needs it, and assures her that love itself will show her the right path.

Coming in contact with the wanderer Ila makes rapid progress and begins to be forgetful at every step of her daily life. The wanderer cautions her. If she fails to restrain herself she is likely to lapse into a life of withdrawal and inaction, which Sri Aurobindo has depreciated in his Integral Yoga. He also taught her to distinguish between the outer being and the inner being. Even marriage cannot matter much if the inner being can remain in communion with the Divine. Further, if she surrenders herself to the Divine, whatever He ordains will be in her best interest. The wrong thoughts are like floating patches of cloud in the firmament of the mind. She has to separate herself from the passing thoughts.

Ila's father has arranged for her marriage. Ila sends a letter to the intended bridegroom through her youngest brother Arun requesting him to meet her on an appointed day in the garden adjacent to their house. There she makes it clear to him that she is ready to do everything for him as a wife but will not allow any physical relation with her body, for she has already surrendered herself to the Divine ; her body belongs to Him. If her body were polluted by force she would have no alternative except to commit suicide. The suitor decided to marry elsewhere and took leave of her.

The proposed marriage is thus nullified. Ila heaves a sigh of relief. Haricharan's anger also subsides in a few days. Ila begins to feel the guidance of the unseen Divine Hand. Soon she has a deeper experience in which she feels that God has really accepted her as His own. Her experiences now begin to multiply. Ila soon develops an all-embracing compassion for all men and birds and beasts, for all things great and small. She experiences an overwhelming calmness during her meditation and feels the touch of Divine Bliss.

One day she remembers Ashok whom she has not seen for five years. She has almost forgotten him in her conscious mind. One day she goes to see him and is shocked to find that his father is dead and he has nearly lost his eyesight.

Ashok has stood first in the engineering examination but his father died of heart failure before the results were out. Soon Ashok himself finds his vision seriously failing in both eyes, cannot bear light, has to remain confined to a dark room. There is nobody to take him to the eye-specialist. Ila offers her services. Ashok thankfully declines the offer. He reminds her of the words of her father and points out the absurdity and awkwardness of her accompanying him to the doctor.

Ila returns home and begins to pray. All of a sudden she discovers a genuine love in her heart for Ashok and finds that their marriage is the solution of the problem.

She goes to Ashok and enquires if he loves her. Ashok asks her to consult her own heart. Ila wants to know why he did not inform her of his disease. "That is due to my wounded pride, because I love you very much ; I have not forgotten you for a single day," replies Ashok. It becomes clear that they love each other and Ashok will bless his stars if he gets Ila by his side ; but he doubts if Ila's father can agree.

Ila goes home and tells everything to her mother. She has no objection. But she fails to induce her husband to agree to this proposal. Haricharan threatens to cut off all connection with his daughter if she marries Ashok. Ila's mother takes the lead and herself gives the daughter in marriage.

Since then Ila lives in Ashok's house, does household work, takes Ashok to the eye-specialist and carries out his directions in detail. They sleep in the same room but in different beds.

Ashok begins to recover quickly. Besides proper treatment and faithful nursing, the delight of having Ila always most intimately by his side contributes to his cure like magic. It takes six months to recover from the near-blindness. Ila's mother pays visits now and then. The Principal of the Engineering College has assured Ashok of a good job.

The wanderer comes again to the house of Haricharan. Ila's mother tells him the whole tale. He comes to see Ila, who relates to him all she has done during his absence. The wanderer says : "You say, 'I have done this, I have done that.' Don't forget that you have been a mere instrument." Ila blushes and begs to be forgiven. "The question of forgiveness does not arise. I just make you a bit conscious," says the wanderer, and wants to know her present condition. Ila reports the happy recovery of Ashok and speaks of future apprehension. Again the wanderer has to remind her that complete surrender knows no apprehension ; and difficulties come only to enhance one's courage, power and the spirit of self-surrender.

On the eve of the wanderer's departure Ashok takes the dust of his feet and apologises for having not recognised him. After he left the house Ila and Ashok discuss long about the wanderer. Ila impresses on Ashok that the wanderer is a very great man; he is a mystic of the highest order; he does not make disciples but is ever ready to help aspirants ; he knows Sanskrit, English, French : many big persons feel themselves blessed if they can be of any use to him. Ashok ridicules her religious mania and Ila in her turn tells him that nobody can resist the call when it really comes.

Ashok gets the post of Assistant Engineer in Ranigunge and settles down there. Ila toils hard and tastefully decorates the house. One day Ashok brings a big basket filled with roses of the best kind. In reply to Ila's query he says, "This day we shall have our 'flower-decorated bed'. And you are fond of flowers."

After the evening meal Ila says to Ashok, "I have a few important things to tell you. All these days I kept silent purposely, but today my principles cannot be kept back from you any more. Well, the relation between us is a relation of pure love, it is a psychic relation. It is with this idea that I have come to you. I have not come to you with the idea of any physical relation with you ; I am unable to fulfil any demand of yours on my body. I have already surrendered this body to the

Divine. This body does not now belong to me ; it is now a conscious habitation of God. Thus I ought to have told you much earlier but you were in ill-health. Besides, you are most intimate to my soul, so I had every hope that you would understand and appreciate the outpourings of my soul as soon as I should reveal them."

Ashok replies, "But I cannot at all understand your words. You have surrendered yourself. All right. I have nothing to say in that respect. But you say that God is there in you as well as in me. If that be true then whatever you give me will be given to God. So your argument does not apply in this case."

Ila says with a sweet smile : "It holds good indeed. God is there in you, it is quite true. But you yourself do not know it, do not feel it at any time. Whatever you will take, you will not take as God, you will feel, 'I am taking it.' Such taking will not amount to His taking. I do not want to argue with you. Argument will lead to quarrel. In short, we shall have no physical relationship. We have been sleeping separately and that custom will continue."

"If what you say is admitted then how can it be said that I have got you completely as my own ? No, never, such tricks will not do. Let God remain in your mind, but your outer being totally belongs to me. Why do you create trouble for nothing ?"

"You know me quite well. I never indulge in shallow talk. What you suggest is quite impossible for me, that is why I say so. Don't think of using force on me. Then you will not find me here any more."

These words create bitterness in Ashok's mind and he says, "That means you do not love me at all. You have come to me only to do me an act of kindness. That is why you have such a hatred for allowing me to touch you. Why not say this in clear terms ?"

"How can I say that ? I really love you. Could you not yourself feel it ? I, who have frustrated the proposal of the marriage arranged by my father, have voluntarily asked to marry you. You did not propose it. Can a woman be emboldened to do so without a very strong urge of love ?"

"Such superficial love has no meaning, you will remain at a distance and look to my needs and comforts. Is that love ? If you love me, love me with all your mind, life and body."

Ila says, "Well, listen to me, I have deeply thought over the problem of love. I had to do so. At that time I had quite forgotten you ; I loved God with my whole being. In fact, a man loves the true Self in his own being. Real love consists in loving this Self. That I love you means that the real 'I' feels happy to see you, to mix with you, that is the reason of my loving you. I commune with God, I love God for the same reason. To love God is only to love one's Divine Self indirectly. But that Self is only one: the same Self pervades all. In fact, to love means to love the Self by the Self. When I love God I love the Self, when I love you then too I love the same Self. And the Bliss derived from the act of loving also belongs to the Self. Thus, from the standpoint of real love, my love for God is no bar to my loving you. But I speak of genuine love and not the bogus love that cherishes in itself the secret desire of sense-gratification. If you bring such trash into it the sweetly glorious and artless relationship between us will perish."

Ashok is not at all pleased. He says that the philosophy about the Self does not appeal to him, it baffles his understanding. He insists that love means absolute possession.

Ila rejoins : "Do love and possession mean the same thing ? You love a rose. A rose is there in your house. Still you will insist on complete possession and put the whole flower into your mouth like babies and crush it by chewing in order to be sure that you have possessed it. If that be your idea of love through possession, don't you see that the flower itself is gone ? That is the tragedy enacted all around us in the world ; genuine love is murdered in this way. Don't you see how pairs of lovers fully possess themselves only to separate themselves in the end ? Let us set a new example that love without possession is the best kind of love."

Ashok is not convinced. Ila goes on : "All along it was your habit to abide by my decision. Would you go against my words today ? You feel hurt now but I assure you, both of us will have an unending bliss in the long run if you act up to my principle." Ashok becomes softened. But again he demands his physical satisfaction. Ila argues that true love can overcome the physical urge. The whole night they argue with each other and have not a wink of sleep.

Ila persists in her struggles. At last an inquisitiveness about God dawns on Ashok. His physical demand often troubles him and Ila has to disarm him in ever so many ways. Advice, entreaty, tears, sweet words, silence and threat, with all these and many other weapons she has to pacify Ashok almost daily.

At the end of winter there comes an epidemic of small pox. Ashok falls a victim. Ila writes a letter to the wanderer and attends on Ashok day and night. Soon he recovers. But there comes the turn of Ila. She too gets an attack of small-pox. The wanderer being informed of Ashok's illness arrives to find Ila ill. Ila passes away peacefully. But Ashok tells the wanderer that he cannot make himself believe that Ila is no more. The wanderer explains to him that such a great shock has come as a necessity to his awakening. Ashok fails to appreciate his words but promises to write letters to him.

In one of his letters he writes to the wanderer, "I have got an enlarged photo of Ila hung up in my room. It has become my habit to look at that picture first as soon as I enter the room. Last night the moment I switched on the light my eyes fell on my bedstead, towards the lower end of which I saw Ila standing. I wanted to catch hold of her but she began to move away from me and finally merged into the picture. Now I have no doubt that Ila is there, though not in her body."

BHUMANANDA.

ON HUMAN UNITY

(Concluded from the October issue)

THE signs towards the formation of a kind of united world are not wanting in history. Nature in her own way has been experimenting in various means to arrive at it. It is supposed that the formation of the great Roman Empire is one of the patterns of nature's experiment by which she tried to shape a supranational unity. Nature's way of action does not proceed in a straight line. She takes up a particular method, shows a considerable progress and then throws much of her accomplished work into the background and follows an altogether new line. She cannot be satisfied and take rest till a perfect unity according to the inherent divine will and plan in the world is reached. Unity in diversity is the secret of the Supreme's will and the scheme of nature's work. In a real unity there will remain ample scope for the play of a full-fledged diversity. The unity constructed by crushing down the different soul-principles by undue and arbitrary pressure and authoritative compulsion is not a thing worthy of the name. For, in that case the spirit of man dwindles and what remains is a stony structure of united body with a number of iron laws and rules as its limbs. But that can never be. That is why the Roman Empire had to perish. The large British Empire has been forced under pressure of circumstances to withdraw from its imperialistic sway over other countries and to remain satisfied with what is essentially her own. Nazism and Fascism which once became a terror for their Asuric ambition to dominate the world are no more. Should we consider that in them also the unifying urge of nature was secretly working ? However this might be, it is apparent that they were wrong steps taken by nature. Wrong or right, it is also a fact that nature's work does not go in vain. The question is to rightly realise the purpose behind the working of nature. These upsurges must have their meaning and purpose. Among other things, they have at least proved by their failure that such are not the ways to bring into being a united world.

The resurgence of India and other Asiatic countries promises, no doubt, a greater, nobler and more deeply secured united future of the world. In this connection it will be worthwhile to concentrate on the following lines from Swami Vivekananda's Chicago addresses :

"Asia is the original seat from which all the faiths of the world have emanated, ...I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. Not only do we believe in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.... I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the refugees and the persecuted of all the religions and all the nations of the earth.... India cannot be killed. Deathless she stands, and will stand, so long as her old spirit remains as the background, so long as her people do not give up the God of India, so long as her people do not believe in materialism ; so long as they do not abandon spirituality."

Here are a few more lines from Sri Aurobindo's *Uttarapara Speech*, where he makes India say : "When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the Sanatan Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world.... It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the Rishis, saints, and Avatars, and it is going forth to do my work among the nations."

In recent times, however, a kind of conscious attempt has been made towards the formation of a united world organisation. The League of Nations, formed after World War I, was a new development with a promising prospect. But it was not without its defects and had, therefore, to end in failure. World War II broke out and stopped with the birth of the United Nations Organisation. The utility and importance of these organisations cannot be overestimated. Surely they can be treated as stepping-stones leading to a greater future, but cannot be taken as anything complete in themselves. International feeling and understanding have found full play in the modern consciousness. Scientific study, research and achievement have helped a great deal to make this possible. The gifts of science have helped to bring the different parts of the world closer and to such an extent that the physical sense that we are the members of one world has been sufficiently proved in spite of ourselves. Moreover, the recent exploration of space and the discovery in near future of the means of going to other planets will perhaps create a more tangible feeling that we are of the world as against the beings of the other planets, if of course there are found any developed ones. But, as has been already stated, this sense of unity, though initially helpful, is in the long run insufficient from a deeper and integral point of view. Insufficient because it is superficial and outer and based on selfish and fragmentary motives. Perhaps it will not be out of place to quote here one or two remarks made on the subject of space research by Max Born, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1954, and this we shall do without denying the fact that space research will contribute a great deal to the fund of astronomical and geophysical knowledge of the world. He refers to "the power rivalry between the two political giants, the United States and the U.S.S.R., for whom success in space is a highly efficient means of propaganda and self-praise." He states again : "However, the real purpose of these artificial satellites is not of scientific, but of a commercial and military nature." Lastly, "By now it (space research) appears to me an inevitable process which together with the development of nuclear arms or chemical and biological destructive means, must lead on to the self-destruction of our civilisation."

The nature of the national ideas, motives and interests should undergo a thorough change before anything better can be expected. The inner spirit and soul of a nation should be discovered and the relation between nation and nation should be mainly and essentially spiritual and psychological and not merely political and economic and even cultural. Unity brought about by this spiritual relation will mean a real awakening of the world. How emphatically Sri Aurobindo states the importance of such a change in order that the world may be reborn into the Spirit and grow and live according to the supreme law of the truth ! "Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal or economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into

the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us that we have issued. These three are one; for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the spirit."¹

Needless to say that the above statement should not be taken as a noble and glorious idea only. The one who has made the statement is the very incarnation of the Truth itself, destined to open for humanity the path towards this unity and transcendence. His mystical life and unprecedented sadhana have been dedicated and directed all through to achieve this divine fulfilment for man and earth. His Ashram in Pondicherry is the living laboratory where the experiment for this new creation is being conducted by the supreme scientist in collaboration with the infinite love and shakti of the Divine Mother—the supreme scientist who is at the same time a seer and a poet :

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.²

(*Concluded*)

CHUNILAL CHOWDHURY

¹ *Mahayogi*, by R. R. Divakar, P. 99.

² *A God's Labour*.

Students' Section

THE DESCENT OF THE BLUE

ACT III

SCENE I

(Early 1927. A Parsi youth of twenty-two, seeking out ochre-robed sadhus in various corners of Bombay. His studies, his own literary talents, his ultra-modern frame of mind, the ease and comfort of his home-life, all that is beautiful in the visible and the known have lost their charm for him. A sudden touch from somewhere has cut him off from his moorings. He is drifting about in a quest of the Unknown. Some method of meditation he has gathered and tried. Yet his thirst grows on unappeased.

Now he comes across a Theosophist and questions him.)

THE THEOSOPHIST *(after a little talk)*: Excuse me, young man, you are a complex problem.

THE YOUTH: How?

THE THEOSOPHIST: There is a passion for poetry in you and there is also an urge towards philosophy.

THE YOUTH: But now I am swayed by neither. The one thing that is master in me at present is a pull towards the Unknown.

THE THEOSOPHIST: True. But the other things have only got pushed into the background. They are biding their time.

THE YOUTH: I don't think so.

THE THEOSOPHIST: Human nature is not so simple. All the elements in you will come up at their proper moment.

THE YOUTH: What am I to do, then?

THE THEOSOPHIST: Nobody can take you up in all your complexity, except one Master.

THE YOUTH *(eagerly)*: Who, please?

THE THEOSOPHIST: Aurobindo Ghose of Pondicherry. He has the Cosmic Consciousness.

(The very mention of the name acts like another mysterious touch, a saving, answering touch. The Parsi youth stands still, a few fateful moments. The Theosophist scans his face.

Sometime later, the youth goes to Bombay's Crawford Market for a new pair of shoes. Back home, as he unwraps the shoe-box, right before his eyes falls that part of the

newspaper sheet, which bears in bold type the headline "The Ashram of Aurobindo Ghose". The third touch ? Assuredly the youth takes it as a "sun-burst".

He devours the long article written by a visitor and finds in it the needed fact : the prospect of a new existence, not rejecting but transforming common life and its concerns. Also, for the first time he comes across those words : "The Mother."

K.D.SETHNA (*speaking to himself*) : Here's the end of my search. I must write to the Ashram authorities. But will they accept me ?

SCENE 2

(Chittagong. Two disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.)

A : I have time and again told you that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are one.

B : But have you ever felt it ?

A : I have no need to feel it. I know they are one.

B : But how ?

A : How? Sri Aurobindo has clearly said that his Consciousness and the Mother's are one and the same.

B : You think I have no faith in Sri Aurobindo ?

A : If you have, then why such hesitation ?

B : Not actually hesitation, but...

A : You must not call yourself a disciple of Sri Aurobindo if you fail to believe in him. Apart from it, it is you who will be the loser, if you are wanting in faith in him. I can tell you something quite striking. Just yesterday when my mother had an heart-attack I called upon Sri Aurobindo to protect her. Whom I actually saw, you know, was the Mother by the side of my mother. And to the surprise of the doctor and others my mother has come round. And to-day when I concentrated on the Mother out of the fulness of my grateful heart I saw Sri Aurobindo before me with his benign smile.

B (*clasping A*) : True ! I fully believe you. Now tell me a little more about their oneness of being and action.

A : Sri Aurobindo says : "The Mother's consciousness and mine are the same, the one Divine Consciousness in two, because that is necessary for the play. Nothing can be done without her knowledge and force, without her consciousness—if anybody really feels her consciousness, he should know that I am there behind it and if he feels me it is the same with hers."

SCENE 3

(Ashram. Sri Aurobindo alone in his room, surveying within himself his ideal and his mission.)

SRI AUROBINDO : "It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up

the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption,—I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others.

“I have no intention of achieving the Supermind for myself only—I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (*mokṣa*) nor supramentalisation. If I am seeking after supramentalisation, it is because it is a thing that has to be done for the earth-consciousness and if it is not done in myself, it cannot be done in others. My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile.”

SCENE 4

(Ashram. A visiting sadhaka and Sri Aurobindo.)

SADHAK : It seems, both you and the Mother are working hard for a new humanity to begin on earth. But will not the Orient only rise to the occasion ? To be more precise, those alone who belong to this land of ours, where the Indian race has done Yoga for millenniums, seem capable of realising your supermind. What about other peoples ?

SRI AUROBINDO : “We are not working for a race or a people or a continent or for a realisation of which only Indians or only Orientals are capable. Our aim is not, either to found a religion or a school of philosophy or a school of Yoga, but to create a ground and a way of spiritual growth and experience and a way which will bring down a greater Truth beyond the mind but not inaccessible to the human soul and consciousness. All can pass who are drawn to that Truth, whether they are from India or elsewhere, from the East or from the West.”

SCENE 5

(The Mother and an inmate of the Ashram)

INMATE : Mother, we know that you are always with us. But in what sense ? Please throw some light on my query.

MOTHER : “I am with you, that signifies a world of things, because I am with you on all levels, in all planes, from the supreme Consciousness down to the most physical; here, at Pondicherry, you cannot breathe without breathing my conscious-

ness....There is a special personal tie between you and me, between all who have turned to Sri Aurobindo's and my teaching,—it is well understood, distance does not count here, you may be in France, you may be at the other end of the world or at Pondicherry, the tie is always true and living. And each time there comes a call, each time there is a need for me to know so that I may send out a force, an inspiration, protection or any other thing, a sort of message comes to me all of sudden and I do the needful... With those whom I have accepted as disciples, to whom I have said 'yes' there is more than a tie, there is an emanation of me."

SCENE 7

(January, 1928, The old Library room in the Ashram. An Interview with the Mother. Having turned his back upon his old life, K. D. Sethna, afterwards renamed Amal Kiran by Sri Aurobindo, sits smartly dressed in European style, facing the Mother across a table.)

SETHNA : Mother, I have seen the world thoroughly. No more of it. I am sick of intellectual pursuits as well. Now I want nothing except God.

MOTHER : You have seen the world thoroughly ? How old are you ?

SETHNA : Twenty-three.

MOTHER : Only twenty-three and...

SETHNA : Yes, Mother. Can I stay here for good?

MOTHER (*compassionately*) : Don't decide in a hurry. Stay here now and see how it suits you. Then...

(The Mother rises.)

SETHNA : Wait a moment, Mother. Let me make my pranam to you. You know, we Indians make a pranam to our Guru.

(The Mother smiles. She does not mention that at least a hundred times each day the Ashramites are making pranams to her.)

Sethna prostrates before her. She blesses him. Later She relates to Sri Aurobindo how a young Parsi "taught" her the Indian way with one's Guru ! Sri Aurobindo enjoys the joke.)

(Some weeks later. Sea-side, Pondicherry. Sethna, meditating alone in the morning on the pier. He was worrying in his mind about not having an opening in the heart or any extraordinary spiritual experience. He had been told that he might think of a book in the heart, opening. The mention of a book had put him out a little, for he was sick of the mental pursuits associated with books. In the course of his meditation now, he felt as if the sea were swaying right through his heart in a rhythm of wide delight.)

(Some time after February 21, 1928, when Sethna had his first Darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sethna and the Mother.)

SETHNA : May I ask if Sri Aurobindo has said anything about me ?

MOTHER : "He has a good face." That's what Sri Aurobindo has said.

(The remark strikes home. Sethna is all surprise. He at once remembers that he himself had fixedly scanned Sri Aurobindo's own face at the Darshan moments and found it "good" !)

(August 15, 1928. Sethna had his second Darshan, and offers to Sri Aurobindo a poem of his. He comes downstairs into Puram's room and sits still, head bent in dejection. He seemed to have lost the inner consciousness that had abided with him for a long time, almost starting from that moment at the sea-side. He had somehow faced Sri Aurobindo now with the outer mind again.)

PURANI : What's the matter ?

SETHNA : I don't know.

(Suddenly he feels as if a huge solid mass were pressing from above into his head, causing giddiness, bringing strange tears to the eyes and making the heart beat wildly with joy.

In the afternoon he comes to the Mother to receive a Blessing-garland from her. The Mother takes him into her interview-room.)

MOTHER : Do you know what Sri Aurobindo has said this time ? There is a great change in you, he has said, and he is very pleased.

(Sethna falls at the Mother's feet and takes her Blessing.)

SCENE 7

(Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Time—10 a.m. 29th May, 1928. Sri Aurobindo and, at a distance, the Mother.)

Sri Aurobindo had sent his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta to receive Rabindranath Tagore on board the steamer when it would be berthed before the pier, and escort him upstairs into the Darshan Room. The Poet came up the stairs and, throwing off his cap and shoes, rushed in, hands outstretched, at the sight of Sri Aurobindo standing at the other end of the room. Sri Aurobindo caught his hands and requested him to sit in a chair.

At this first look and touch, the Poet appeared overwhelmed and drawn back within himself.

Tagore : It is eighteen years since you left Bengal. All this time I have longed, off and on, to see you. My longing is fulfilled today. But I know it couldn't have been if you hadn't made a special concession for me. Hence I am all the more grateful to you. As I have already written to you, I am now on my way to Europe. I ask: if they want to know of you, what shall I tell them ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I too am glad to meet you. As for Europe, if they want to know of me, they are free to come here. My Ashram is open to sincere seekers

from anywhere.

TAGORE : I wonder how you can run your Ashram and do your world-wide work from within your room in a corner of the earth. My wonder increases a hundred-fold when I think of my tremendous struggle and labour, in India and abroad, for the Viswabharati. Now I am out seeking help overseas.

SRI AUROBINDO : I am not troubled about the future. It's the Divine's work which the Divine does.

(Exit Rabindranath, quite a different man. He had come all the way upstairs, talking with Nolini Kanta, complimenting him on his literary abilities, appreciating his originality and terseness of expression of thought and wishing him to turn to short stories : in a word, he was vivacious and "social". After the interview with Sri Aurobindo he came down concentrated and silent. Returning to the steamer he shut himself up in a cabin and spent a long time alone. The Poet's classic reaction to the interview came out in the "Modern Review" of Calcutta some time after.)

CHINMOY

T. S. ELIOT

THE FOUR QUARTETS

BURNT NORTON¹

I

THE Greek quotations from Heraclitus, facing the title page of the first of the 'Quartets', give us a hint of the substance of these poems of meditation which concern : Reason, Man, God and Eternity.

The first of the 'Quartets' is a poetical meditation on Time. To understand Eliot's philosophical background will take us much of the way to a fuller comprehension of the poem's intention. I suggest that this poem begins with an intention, an intention to pursue the abstract movement of Time. The two opening lines are :

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future."

The key word 'perhaps' is a metaphysical tentation that treads without undue pressure—as one, who has learned patience, gently but firmly tries the lock with a new key. However, pressure there is, for now comes a challenge—a challenge in the conditional, it is true, but nevertheless a challenge :

"If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable."

For clarification of the first line we have to turn to the philosophy of Bergson² who observed that philosophers in describing change have taken time into account only in the sense of a conventional measure, spatial in character, and have ignored real duration—that is to say, what a human mind is conscious of—the indivisible continuity of change.

Bergson further affirmed that memories are not stored in the brain—the true memory, not the 'habit-memory', is a psychical not a physiological function. The past has not ceased to exist; and past experiences, as psychical states, have as much survival value as the material things of this world, and at times even more than they.

¹ The titles of the 'Quartets' are, most probably, derived from places significant to the life of the author and perhaps mark specific stages of experience and growth of consciousness. Burnt Norton and East Coker are to be found in Somerset in England while The Dry Salvages are a small group of rocks off the NE coast of Cape Annare on the other side of the Atlantic. Little Gidding is in England, no doubt a place of memory in the geography of the poet's mind.

² It will be remembered that Eliot attended Bergson's lectures in Paris during the years 1910-1911.

So Eliot makes this tentative approach into a meditation on Time. An approach, though tentative, is nevertheless aimed like an arrow to the heart of the question and only needs to penetrate a little deeper in order to arrive at an inner, or at least a more psychological, grasp of the problem so elusive to man's consciousness. Here the true poet and philosopher come together in their awareness, for they know with intuitive wisdom that such problems can only be handled in this way—with humility and respect for that 'Greatness' which is beyond knowledge; a Greatness which will allow or not allow That to be known according to the need and consciousness of the Knower. For, if one were to clutch at or grab for such truths which are beyond the normal consciousness, they would be lost in the clutching as easily as a hand that tries to clutch at quicksilver.

But with all this tentation there is a quiet perseverance. If Eliot in one line uses a restrictive adverb, he can just as easily in the next use an intensifying adverb, *i.e.*—

“...perhaps present...
...eternally present
...always present.”

This play of restriction and intensification—now a polished accomplishment—is an echo of his earlier poetry, reminiscent of Laforgue in playing one type of image against another: a crudity against a form of beauty, a harsh discord against a soft tenderness of sound, a brutal reality of common life against the possibility of an ideal, starting in the mind or heart, and reaching to the stars. Prosaic images and those demanding more of our attention than we are wont to give are brought into sharp focus as now something really significant to be meditated on or at least we are forced to give them due thought:

“...for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.”

And thus such images echo in the mind and one answers the challenge—‘Why, yes ! if roses are not looked at they wither and die, like people, and so all beauty speaks to man :

“...they were our guests,...”

we should take note of them if they are to continue to live—but then if man becomes too aware of such reality—where contrasts intensify experience, he may be caught in an unendurable ecstasy indefinitely prolonged.’

Or as Eliot expresses it :

“Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.”

But all experience is part of the ‘stream of consciousness’—that is of time past and time future, and

“Points to one end, which is always present.”

II

Now we come to an ascending series of contrasted images—from 'garlic and sapphires in the mud' to the more personal 'circulation of the lymph'—to a cosmic leap in :

"Are figured in the drift of stars"

to be almost immediately brought down to earth and below with the symbol of the inconscient and lower nature, and that which pursues the lower nature :

"...the boarhound and the boar"

and this movement of contrasts in time which have always to be reckoned with—the sordid with the spotless, the squalid with the immaculate, the monstrous against the exquisite—makes up the sum-total of our memory in time. Is this also the sum-total of our consciousness, ever present with us? Are we yet slaves to the ungovernable images that invade our thoughts through the instrumentation of our memory?—the dance of the mind which is in time past and in time future and always in time present? Is there no escape? Yes, says Eliot, there is always the possibility of

"...the still point,
There would be no dance..."

The yogi who has enjoyed this experience would recognise it as the *silence of the mind*—where one is out of time :

"The inner freedom from practical desire,
The release from action and suffering, release from inner
And outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
*Erhebung*¹ without motion, concentration
Without elimination, both a new world
And the old made explicit..."

I quote this passage because I believe it is the most significant in the whole of this first of the Quartets. Its significance lies in the spiritual experience which it is able so simply to express. The italicized word *Erhebung* is not used here as an affectation found in so many of the modern poets of today but as a true searching for the inevitable word, and means that type of 'aspiration' that leads to an inner state of concentration but which is yet conscious and aware (unlike as in the old or traditional samadhi) of the material world of the senses. This is precisely what Sri Aurobindo

¹ *Erhebung*—means here 'a rising up'.

says is so necessary for the Integral Yoga, *viz.* to bring the inner experience out into the waking consciousness so as to be eventually one with it. This is necessary if a true transformation is to be effected.

But Eliot continues :

“Yet the enchainment of past and future
Woven in the weakness of the changing body
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
Which flesh cannot endure.

....

To be conscious is not to be in time.

But....

Only through time time is conquered.”

The paradox is now stated—and it is quite clear to the sadhak of the Integral Yoga—for a conquest of time and a transformation of the nature: the inner must project itself upon the outer, one must be conscious of the Purusha and the Prakriti, the Ishwara and the Shakti at the same time if one is to take the next step in an evolution in Time.

III

But what of now? What stage in his climb towards the stars does man stand upon today?

“Here is a place of disaffection

.....

In a dim light;....

Man is passing through a stage of transition. It is the hour of twilight before the Dawn—it is a moment of disaffection where there is no concentration—men are like

“...bits of paper whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time”—

it is a time when there is not even

“...darkness to purify the soul.”

This line might seem somewhat obscure unless one is familiar with the philosophy of dual compensations, or the metaphysical concepts which here enter into pure mysticism, with the inner experience of *the dark night of the soul* as a necessary desert of Sadhana which has to be traversed—or of being hounded through city streets, as suggested by the line :

“Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London;”

which reminds us of Francis Thompson in his “Hound of Heaven”.

Can one only come to Light through darkness ?

"Internal darkness, deprivation
 And destitution of all property

 This is the one way..."

IV

"Time and the bell have buried the day
 The black cloud carries the sun away."

Our day is killed by time and the measurement of time and the darkness of moral disintegration carries away the truth of our existence. So the question is :

"Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
 Stray down, bend to us, tendril and spray
 Clutch and cling ?"

Will our consciousness, that was turned towards the Divine, now turn to us ?
 Will the clinging vine of the Vital World and its attractions clutch and cling to us
 once more—God forbid !

"Chill
 Fingers of yew be curled
 Down on us ?"

The yew tree is the symbol of death in life—the crucifixion tree and the traitor's tree on which Judas Iscariot hanged himself—the tree of the sacrificial king, in Frazer's "Golden Bough". But should this be when we can, through memory, remember?

"...After the kingfisher's wing
 Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
 At the still point of the turning world."

The last line is a summary of the whole movement. The still point is a point of 'controlled' consciousness, out of time, which is, nevertheless, part of the turning world—symbol of earth's time and its measurement in the mind of evolving man.

V

The fifth movement echoes the futility of trying to capture the experience of *non-time* in a moment of time—words are useless, they only reach, eventually, (in time) into the Silence. And there is no beginning and no end—

"All is always now, Words strain,
 Crack and sometimes break, under the burden."

But is there no sign, no symbol that will give us hope ? Is all an illusion ?

“...The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
...

The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.”

However elusive Truth may be in the dimension of time which itself is a chimera, there is a Ray of Light—some have visioned it, have experienced it :

“The detail of the pattern is movement,
As in the figure of the ten stairs.”

The reality of time is to be found in movement, in the process of growth and of man's evolution as an ascending stairway to the Divine—

“As in the figure of the ten stairs.”

Compare the ten heavens of Dante—the ten stairs of ascent to the Empyrean in “Il Paradiso” of the “Divina Commedia”.

There are two poles to the movement : Desire and Love. If one is to ascend the ten stairs, desire is

“Not in itself desirable;
Love is itself unmoving,
Timeless and undesiring
Except in the aspect of time
Caught in the form of limitation.”

True love is undesiring—it only wants to give, give, give—to surrender,¹ to consecrate itself to the Beloved—except in time, of the earth and of the lower nature, the Vital World of the animal caught in the limitations of the senses—but, true love can be seen, can be glimpsed, even on earth and in time :

“Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage.”

Yes, in the unsophistication found in the laughter of children, in the innocence of springtime—the time of New Birth—we glimpse the Light, the sunlight of Truth.

NORMAN DOWSETT

¹ Cf. the line in the *fifth movement* of “The Waste Land” when the Spring thunder rolls out its Himalayan message—

“Damyata, Datta, Dayadhvam” *Subdue ye—Give—Be Compassionate* (Surrender).

WHAT DO THE LIVES OF GOD-MEN TEACH US ?

THE Scripture teaches us what we ought to do. The life of Avatars shows how it ought to be done. Their life puts an example before our very eyes of how, in order to bring down and saturate our life with the Essence, we ought to knead our being like flour and bake it like bread in the fire of unflinching Dedication. Their life illumines our life with the Hope that if we wish and will we can not only abandon our existence of crawling in the marshes but make it high and great and divine. When our lamp of hope starts getting extinguished by the raging puffs of disappointment, then turning over the pages of the book of life of these God-Men, we discover what storms lashed or thrashed them, what mountains cracked and gave way over them, what lightnings struck them during their period of sadhana and how they bore all, and then how the hidden Hand of God saved them and His Compassion flashed over them and God threw His searchlight of Grace in the midst of the dense dark of the moonless night and they were able to receive it. It is to get the message of Hope and the word of Effort that we read their life of inspiring events.

NARAYAN PRASAD

(An extract from the author's Hindi article translated by Har Krishan Singh)

INSPIRATION IN ART

No inspiration, no art. But, as one art differs from another, so one inspiration from another.

An artist of inner experiences can never agree to Victor Cousin's view : "Art for art's sake". Art expresses itself through beauty; but "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" (Keats).

Undoubtedly a higher truth demands a higher beauty. And there can be no higher beauty without a higher art.

Only an ardent seeker can have high inspiration. One who has no aim, no particular mission in life can never hope to have the inspiration that will produce a wonderful or lasting art.

Neither are we to forget that a true inspiration cannot be had automatically or for the asking, in the beginning of one's artistic career. Patience on the part of an artist and Grace from above—when these two qualities are combined, inspiration is born. Ordinary inspiration can be possessed even by an ordinary man. But the inspiration that stirs and enlightens our Soul is indeed hard to come by. But, if ever one gets it, then one not only wins a real delight for oneself but also shares it successfully with others.

Most artists live in their vital nature. So they get the reward of the vital world. Naturally the inspiration of the higher world will escape their search. Further, a spiritual artist will create for the satisfaction of the Divine in him. He has no need to satisfy himself from others' appreciations of his art. His very creation gives him an unimaginable delight. We all know that a subtle feeling is needed to appreciate poetry in its true aspect. Similarly one has to develop a sense of inner sight to appreciate a spiritual art. Here the artist does not express the nature of the object as it is through his art, but expresses himself through art as he himself inwardly is.

"Art is indeed not the bread but the wine of life." No doubt, this is a non-artistic or a materialistic view. For a self-sacrificed artist art is nothing short of bread. And this is the only bread that will satisfy his hunger. Poor artist, he denies himself rest, sleep, fatigue, he offers blood and tears, to come out successful in his art. The most faithful servant of patience is he. But man takes not more than a few seconds to pass his proud comment on this art. What is worse is that without knowing the A B C of art he finds faults with it. And if ever sincerity dawns on him, then it may take his whole life to understand, to realise the truth that lies behind that very art. Even those who appreciate it take only a few minutes to utter their words of appreciation. None on earth can deny the fact that "Art is difficult, transient is its reward."

We can end by affirming that there are two kinds of art, heavenly and earthly. The artists of these two types progress in their own ways : the admirer of earth outwardly, the admirer of Heaven inwardly.

KIRAN MEHRA

GOD DISPOSES

THE mob arrived at the lynching tree !
And waited there for the chime of three.
The man to be hanged was an innocent case,
Yet showed not a sign of fear on his face.

The rope sailed over this tree of Hell—
While the church clock tolled the parting knell !
Then around his neck the rope was flung. . . .
And he gazed at the branch where he'd be strung.

They said this tree had been sown by the Devil,
And the air around was dark and evil.
The leaves of the tree were red as gore,
And groaned like Hamlet. . . at Elsinore.

He sat on his horse as if not caring. . . .
But deep inside asked God to spare him.
He felt the rope just grip his throat,
And thought he'd soon be a soul a-float.

What happened next is hard to say !
For the horse gave a start and leapt away.
The branch went crack where he would hang,
And he fell to the ground as a bullet sang.

One of the mob gave a cry of pain,
Hit the dust. . . never to move again.
Another flash and the lynch mob fled,
For they realised that their chief was dead.

The man to be lynched just sat and stared
When he understood he had been spared.
His pal had arrived there just in time,
To try and stop this terrible crime.

He cut the cords that bound him tight,
And both galloped off, in headlong flight,
Back to his own, his native land,
And his lawful job—an old cowhand.

And many a night, back home on the range,
He thinks of that moment, rare and strange !—
When he called to God, in a voice so quiet. . .
And God looked down, and stopped the riot.

ROBERT

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

1803-1882

A THINKER in the sublimest sense of the term is Emerson. His philosophy touches the core of all earthly problems. "Ends," says he, "pre-exist in the means." Hence what matters is to have our highest aspirations and to cherish them in all sincerity and determination and rest assured in the faith that these will realise themselves.

He came of poor parents, but with an indomitable will and an utter self-reliance. His father, William Emerson, a clergyman, passed away when Waldo was a boy of eight. Soon after, the family was thrown into extreme poverty. It came to such a pass that both Emerson and his elder brother had a single overcoat to help them through the terrible winter. Obviously one had to stay indoors while the other was out. And who but the younger of the two? Waldo missed the attractions, affections and amusements of the outside world; but at the same time this gave him an opportunity to plunge into the sea of knowledge. Voraciously he studied. Plato's *Dialogues* and Pascal's *Thoughts* inspired all his moments. Later impelled from within he offered seats to Spinoza and Montaigne along with his previous masters. Strangely enough, he was taught from within to be cheerful in the face of poverty.

He had many antagonists. Hypocrisy and superstition were the worst of them. He fought and fought. Success was a far cry. He had also numerous friends. Truth and sincerity topped their ranks.

America, the fairest land of freedom, opportunity and progress, inspired in Emerson the thought that his countrymen should utilise all these divine gifts to strive for the divinest aims of life. Indeed America's self will gain her true stature when she lives up to her philosopher-son's towering aspirations.

Emerson's love for the American student stems from his topmost aspiration:

"Our student must have a style and determination, and be a master in his own speciality. But having this, he must put it behind him. He must have a catholicity, a power to see with a free and disengaged look every object."

In other words, he expects the American student to be a useful unit not only of the American nation but of the world-family in the making.

"The things taught in the schools and colleges," Emerson strongly feels, "are not an education, but the means of education." For a student to be furnished with 'the means' is to have the responsibility thrown upon him for going on educating himself till at last the finite and the infinite within him and without are unified and form his greatened personality.

No doubt, philanthropy and charity have much to their credit. But most of the people are either unconscious or consciously unconscious about the great limitations of these two virtues. Being a genuine lover of Truth Emerson makes bold to say: "Philanthropies and charities have a certain air of quakery." Truly, few, perhaps none, are those who have got imprinted on the tablets of their hearts the great teaching of the Bible:

"When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth."

For Emerson poetry and philosophy were no mere intellectual embellishments. Philosophy was a dynamic factor in the shaping of his life. A man of vision, he had philosophy for its sustenance and poetry for its expression. His life was a happy blend of sublime dreams and creative gestures. He knew no compromise with his

ingrained Truth. "When he (the poet) sings the world listens with the assurance that now a secret of God is to be spoken." Does it not conform to the Indian definition of the poet as the seer ? Needless to say that Emerson's high idealism lifted him far above his age.

On March 11, 1829, Emerson was awarded the post of minister of the Second (Unitarian) Church in Boston. Even his worst enemy could not deny his remarkable gift of speech-making. But he had to sever himself from the Church as he had failed to be at one with his congregation regarding the method of teaching. He simply left the Church, but attacked none. It was advisable, he thought, they should have another pastor according to their choice. But one of the reactionaries could not help saying, "We are sorry for Mr. Emerson, but it certainly is like as if he is going to hell." Neither are we to forget the immediate counter-comment made by a true truth-seeker: "It does indeed look so. But I am sure of one thing—if Emerson goes to hell, he will so change its climate that it will become a popular resort for all the good souls of heaven."

Emerson's love of God is too deep for form and convention. That was perhaps why he left his ministry in the (Unitarian) Church of Boston. People below his level of culture must be pitied. Also it is quite natural that they should take him amiss. Emerson seems to have sailed "strange seas of thought, alone," with deep self-knowledge. Emerson's truth "To be great is to be misunderstood" finds its exquisite parallel in Sri Aurobindo, the greatest Seer of India :

"Whoever is too great must lonely live,
Adored he walks in mighty solitude ;
Vain is his labour to create his kins,
His only comrade is the Strength within."

Happily two great contemporaries, Lincoln and Emerson, offer an historic example of mutual appreciation. During the ever-memorable Civil War in America, it was from Emerson's inspiring tongue that came out "the best and the bravest words". He fully supported President Lincoln in his mighty undertaking, and addressed him as "the Protector of American Freedom". Neither could the President remain silent. He honoured the seer in the philosopher Emerson with his warm appreciation: "The Prophet of American Faith."

"The Prophet of American Faith." Yes, but more truly a Prophet of universal Faith, a seer visualising the Future in the living present:

"One day all men will be lovers, and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine."

MADAL

POSTSCRIPT

"One day all men will be lovers, and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine."

These words of Emerson may well have been the motto of that idealist *par excellence* of contemporary America, whose tragic assassination has shocked the world—President John Kennedy whose heart was at one with Lincoln's and whose eyes looked even beyond, compassing the whole world and its sore need of the light of Peace with Honour.