

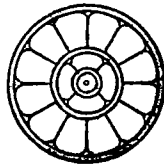
MOTHER INDIA

AUGUST 15, 1963: SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY

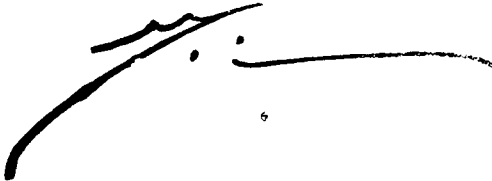
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XV

No. 7

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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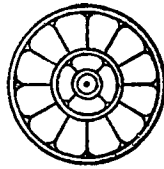
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Indeed, all life is
love if we know how
to live it



THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY,
AUGUST 15

THE SUN

THE Sun in the Yoga is the symbol of the Supermind and the Supermind is the first power of the Supreme which one meets across the border where the experience of spiritualised mind ceases and the unmodified divine Consciousness begins the domain of the supreme Nature, *Para Prakriti*. It is that Light of which the Vedic mystics got a glimpse....

August 19, 1932

SRI AUROBINDO

TOWARDS THE LIGHT

I know that the Supramental Descent is inevitable—I have faith in view of my experience that the time can be and should be now and not in a later age.... But even if I knew it to be for a later time, I would not swerve from my path or be discouraged or flag in my labour. Formerly I might have been, but not *now*—after all the path I have traversed. When one is sure of the Truth, or even when one believes the thing one pursues to be the only possible solution, one does not stipulate for an immediate success, one travels towards the Light taking as well worth while and facing every risk of the adventure. Still, like you, it is now, in this life that I insist on it and not in another or in the hereafter.

✓ August 30, 1932

SRI AUROBINDO

THY GOLDEN LIGHT CAME DOWN...

Thy golden Light came down into my brain
And the grey rooms of mind sun-touched became
A bright reply to Wisdom's occult plane,
A calm illumination and a flame.

Thy golden Light came down into my throat,
And all my speech is now a tune divine,
A paean-song of Thee my single note,
My words are drunk with the Immortal's wine.

Thy golden Light came down into my heart
Smiting my life with Thy eternity;
Now has it grown a temple where Thou art
And all its passions point towards only Thee.

Thy golden Light came down into my feet
My earth is now Thy playfield and Thy seat.

August 8, 1938

SRI AUROBINDO

INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY, AUGUST 15

THIS LAND OF OURS

WE bless today this land of ours which has been even as a mother unto our nation. We bless her sunlit skies; her cool, fragrant breeze; her green fields holding the promise of plenty to her starving people; her rushing rivers carrying the produce of distant lands to her rural homes, snow-capped mountains revealing the glory and majesty of God to her devotees; her orchards resonant with the song of her birds; her woods offering safe shelter to her beasts; her changing seasons that bring health and joy to man and freshness and fertility to mother-earth. We bless this land,—the land of many seasons, the land of many rivers, many mountains, many forests, many living things, and many races of men,—this our own, our Motherland, where our fathers lived and worked, every grain of sand wherein is a witness unto the life and labours of those whose blood flows through our veins; every floating cloud on whose sky, and every breath of whose passing breeze, all bear a thousand recollections of the past of our race. This is the light which illumined the last vanishing gaze of our fathers and our mothers. This the air unto which their last breath was made over. Blessed be this land, this our own, our Motherland, instinct with the lives, the memories, the successes and the failures, the disciplines and the cultures and the hopes and the aspirations of our race. Blessed be this our own, our Motherland, which holds the promise of a far more glorious future for her sons than what had ever been theirs in the past...

SRI AUROBINDO

(*"Bandemataram"* Daily of October 16, 1906)

SOME "AUGUST" LETTERS

SRI AUROBINDO

AUGUST 19, 1932

THE Gita does not speak expressly of the Divine Mother; it speaks always of surrender to the Purushottama—it mentions her only as the Para Prakriti who becomes the Jiva, that is, who manifests the Divine in the multiplicity and through whom all these worlds are created by the Supreme and he himself descends as the Avatar.

The Gita follows the Vedantic tradition which leans entirely on the Ishwara aspect of the Divine and speaks little of the Divine Mother because its object is to draw back from world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation beyond it; the Tantric tradition leans on the Shakti or Ishwari aspect and makes all depend on the Divine Mother because its object is to possess and dominate the world-nature and arrive at the supreme realisation through it.

This Yoga insists on both the aspects; the surrender to the Divine Mother is essential, for without it there is no fulfilment of the object of the Yoga.

In regard to the Purushottama the Divine Mother is the supreme divine Consciousness and Power above the worlds, Adya Shakti; she carries the Supreme in herself and manifests the Divine in the worlds through the Akshara and Kshara. In regard to the Akshara she is the same Para Shakti holding the Purusha immobile in herself and also herself immobile in him at the back of all creation. In regard to the Kshara she is the mobile cosmic Energy manifesting all beings and forces.

AUGUST 12, 1933

There is the utility of the physical approach to the Mother—the approach of the embodied mind and vital to her embodied Power. In her universal action the Mother acts according to the law of things—in her embodied physical action is the opportunity of a constant Grace—it is for that that the embodiment takes place.

★

★

Her embodiment is a chance for the earth-consciousness to receive the Supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation necessary for that to be possible. Afterwards there will be a further transformation by the

Supramental, but the whole earth-consciousness will not be supramentalised—there will be first a new race representing the Supermind, as man represents the mind.

AUGUST 13, 1933

It is the work of the Cosmic Power to maintain the cosmos and the law of the cosmos. The greater transformation comes from the Transcendent above the universal, and it is that transcendent Grace which the embodiment of the Mother is there to bring to action.

AUGUST, 1935

I don't believe X or anybody would have the vision of the Mother's full divinity at first view. That can only come if one has already developed the faculty of vision in the occult planes. What is of more importance is the clear perception or intimate feeling or direct sense : "This is She." I think you are inclined to be too romantic and poetic and too little spiritually realistic in these things. With many people the faculty of this kind of occult vision is the first to develop when they begin sadhana and with others it is there naturally or comes on occasions without any practice of Yoga. But with people who live mainly in the intellect (a few excepted) this faculty is not usually there by nature and most have much difficulty in developing it. It was so even with me. It would be something of a miracle to see things without the faculty of seeing. We don't deal much in miracles of that kind.

AUGUST 25, 1935

I use the language of the mind because there is no other which human beings can understand,—even though most of them understand it badly. If I were to use a supramental language like Joyce, you would not even have the illusion of understanding it; so, not being an Irishman, I don't make the attempt. But, of course, anyone who wants to change earth-nature must first accept it in order to change it. To quote from an unpublished poem¹ of my own :

He who would bring the heavens here,
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

¹ "A God's Labour" subsequently published in *Poems Past and Present* by Sri Aurobindo.

AUGUST 10, 1936

It is true that the Mother is one in many forms, but the distinction between the outer and the inner Mother must not be made too trenchant; for she is not only one, but the physical Mother contains all the others in herself and in her is established the communication between the inner and the outer existence. But to know the outer Mother truly one must know what is within her and not look at the outer appearances only. That is only possible if one meets her with the inner being and grows into her consciousness—those who seek an outer relation only cannot do that.

AUGUST 20, 1936

Whatever one gets from the Mother, comes from myself also—there is no difference. So, too, if I give anything, it is by the Mother's Force that it goes to the sadhak.

AUGUST, 1936

...perfection in the physical plane is indeed part of the ideal of the Yoga, but it is the last item and, so long as the fundamental change has not been made in the material consciousness to which the body belongs, one may have a certain perfection on other planes without having immunity in the body. We have not sought perfection for our own separate sake, but as part of a general change—creating a possibility of perfection for others. That could not have been done without our accepting and facing the difficulties of the realisation and transformation and overcoming them for ourselves. It has been done to a sufficient degree on the other planes—but not yet on the most material part of the physical plane. Till it is done, the fight there continues and, though there may be and is a force of Yogic action and defence, there cannot be immunity. The Mother's difficulties are not her own; she bears the difficulties of others and those that are inherent in the general action and working for the transformation. If it had been otherwise, it would be a very different matter.

AUGUST 17, 1938

The Divine puts on an appearance of humanity, assumes the outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human beings, but does not cease to be the Divine. It is a manifestation that takes place, a manifestation of a growing Divine consciousness, not human turning into divine. The Mother was inwardly above the human even in childhood.

SRI AUROBINDO

. I THINK there are two things that present themselves to us very forcibly about Sri Aurobindo.

The first is the infinite dispassion (and compassion) with which he views the human state in general, and our individual one in particular. It is as if he said to each one of us : "Yes, you were born with an unquenchable desire for happiness, but somehow happiness is very illusive. You are the prey of grief, anxiety, suffering and disease. The world, when you look at it and imagine what it *could* be like, is ghastly. Indeed, until you are utterly disgusted with it, and yourself, I have nothing to say to you."

Then, if we are prepared to listen to him, he tells us with the detachment, yet true concern, of a doctor, how we can disentangle ourselves from the wrong thinking, wrong feeling and wrong action which has conditioned us into such a state of helpless bondage that we can only say of so much that we do, in the Irish phrase, "It is not of my will but my unwill I do it."

The way of release which he offers us, provided we are prepared to pay the cost, is a very simple one. That is not to say it is easy. On the contrary it is the most difficult to which any one can aspire. I mean that its basic assumptions and its principles of practice are simple enough for any one to grasp.

Man, Sri Aurobindo says, through descent into the material world has become oblivious of his divine origin. He is, indeed, a "king in exile" who has forgotten the divine country where he once held sway. With it, he has lost the knowledge essential to wholeness—that all creation is One and that he is part of this Oneness. Because he sees himself as separate (and therefore insufficient) the world stands over against him. It is at once hostile, in that it must often threaten his interests, and desirable, in that it can also gratify them. So that it both seduces him as a field for his aggrandizement and threatens him with deprivation.

The realization of an unassailable unity and harmony, what we might call "the original vision," has given way to a sense of division and conflict. In short, to duality. Instead of being a divinely self-conscious integer in an organic Whole, he is torn between what Jung terms "the opposites." If there is good, there must be bad. If there is pleasure, there must be pain; if there is love, there must be hate. That which he calls good, pleasant, is that which bolsters up his sense of insufficiency, dopes, or helps to keep at bay the feeling of mortality which dogs him, of being threatened by a world of separate beings also bent on the same competitive struggle to wrest what they can from life. Likewise, that which seems to him evil, painful, is all that which threatens to deprive or hurt him. In short, he has come under the baneful sway of desire, or craving, whether expressed in attraction or aversion. The world of light and darkness,

spirit and nature, which should combine fruitfully, like night and day, has been torn asunder in him.

This is the state in which, as divided beings, we all stand. This is how the Masters see us—those beings in whom that lucid consciousness exists of which a Zen Master observed “We can only say ‘No two’.”

“They that are whole need not a physician,” said Jesus, “but they that are sick.” We cannot begin the long journey towards wholeness until we admit that we are sick. And in this century we need—pre-eminently—the healing of a physician familiar with the particular life-and-world condition in which it is our destiny to strive for our own release, and to serve the divine purpose and our fellowmen. A physician, moreover, who has striven in those conditions himself, and who speaks to us in contemporary accents.

How can we heal this divided state and become “whole” again ? Sri Aurobindo says we shall regain that original vision only when we have become disinterested, when we have learnt to act in a way that is no longer overtly or subtly dictated by self-interest, when, in fact, our acts are pure of self-reference.

To do this we must lay the axe of awareness squarely at the root of desire, which twines insidiously amongst all our thoughts, emotions and habitual reactions. For behind self-interest lies desire, and behind desire lies the greed of gain—a fault, says Lao Tzse, than which there is none greater, and of which the Buddha pronounced all suffering the result.

When that task has been accomplished, spirit and nature—those two hemispheres of our being which desire has sundered,—will once more combine into that harmonious Whole which both reflects and contains the cosmos. Then we shall know, as a fact of our own experience, “the Many are the One”.

Then, says Sri Aurobindo, and then only, we can begin to put ourselves actively on the side of the Light and work with It for the completion of Its purpose in the world. Then, and not before, we are ready for the divine life.

To this point few of us, we know, can expect to win. The most that we can hope for in this life is to put our house in order. But it is the beauty and relevance of Sri Aurobindo that he says to us : “Make a beginning. Start now. Life itself is the ground of this work. Whether you are in the market place, the farm, the kitchen, in the places of commerce, the seats of learning or of government—make that place your Kurukshetra, the field of your endeavour where you do battle with all the forces of your nature and the world which oppose enlightenment.”

For our destiny, our dharma, has set us in a certain place, called us to certain conditions, right for us in this life. We do not need to go anywhere to find what we have never lost. As that great Chinese sage has said : “Without looking through his window a man may see the Tao of Heaven. The more he goes abroad, the less likely will he find it.”

The second great thing about Sri Aurobindo which strikes us so vividly is, I think, the continuous note of joy which sounds through all his utterances. We might almost say it is the dominant chord on which all the rest of the music is based. “Joy is the characteristic emotion of the completely spiritualized life,” said Keyserling. And how wonderfully this Master exemplifies it !

Yet it is not, as the writer of a recent article on this very aspect of Sri Aurobindo remarked, a joy that has not gathered in grief or been torn on the world's rack. How could we give it credence, otherwise? We listen with belief—and almost, I think with awe and homage too—when those who have suffered speak of joy, because we know that it cannot be an illusion. That deaf, ill, suffering composer through whom the tranquillity and joy of those glorious Quartets flowed. Delius, blind and paralysed, giving birth to those tumultuous Songs of Immortality. The peace and gladness which lit Shakespeare in *The Tempest* after *Lear* had brought him to the edge of madness. This is the joy that stands at the Centre—which is the Centre—the joy which nothing can break.

From the beginning of his life, when he was sent to England as a little boy and deprived of all proper parental cherishing, on through the penurious struggles at Cambridge to his battles in Yoga, we know that Sri Aurobindo suffered more than his share of adversity. Yet for him joy is the dynamis of the divine life.

No one in our time has seen more clearly the causes of spiritual blindness and its results in the lives of individuals and of the world. No one, who has talked about the transformation of life, has more fully assessed the power of the forces opposing it. Yet there is hardly a page, or a letter, which does not breathe the Upanishadic affirmation: "From Delight all these beings are born, by Delight they exist and grow, to Delight they return."

It is often hard for us in this distressed world to believe in a teaching based on joy and the affirmation of life, which means that we need it all the more. We live in a time of testing and trial, with one age dying and another being born. To try and live lives of the highest quality; to steadily affirm that there is a divine purpose working itself out in the world, despite all appearances, needs a courage which is often hard to sustain. The stress and strain of so many changes makes us forget that it is also a time of high adventure and that we are like a kind of Pioneer Corps sent in to prepare the ground of the New Age.

However much we may try and forget it, we live under the fiery glow of the atom bomb. Yet Fire is the great symbol of Purification throughout the mythologies of the world. Will Man accept the challenge of that Fire and purify his selfish national interests? Naturally, there are times when the stoutest heart quails at the razor's edge upon which we are balanced. Then, in the words of one of the most moving phrases ever written, we feel with Keats when he said "I am straining at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness."

At these moments it is good to read a letter written shortly after the war by Sri Aurobindo to a depressed disciple:

He said: "In the world there are much worse symptoms such as the general increase of cynicism, a refusal to believe in anything at all, a decrease of honesty, an immense corruption, a preoccupation with food, money, comfort, pleasure, to the exclusion of higher things, and a general expectation of worse and worse things awaiting the world. All that, however acute, is a temporary phenomenon—I myself foresaw that this worst would come, the darkness of night before the dawn; therefore I am not discouraged. I know what is pre-

paring behind the darkness and can see and feel the first signs of its coming.”

And again he writes : “I know that this is a time of trouble for you and everybody. It is so for the whole world. Confusion, trouble, disorder and upset everywhere is the general state of things. The better things that are to come are preparing or growing under a veil and the worse are prominent everywhere. The one thing is to hold on and hold out till the hour of light has come.”

That this hour of light *will* come, this great teacher steadily affirmed until the end with all the power of his immense spiritual knowledge. It is his challenge to us that we can hasten or retard its coming. For he can only show us the way towards it. It is for us to choose whether we shall tread it.

MORWENNA DONNELLY

(From ART AND LETTERS, Vol. xxxi, No. 2, with grateful acknowledgment to the Royal India Pakistan and Ceylon Society)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

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

FEBRUARY 2, 1939

FOR two days we had no conversation. Sri Aurobindo had suddenly developed some swelling on his injured leg and we were all anxious about it. Nobody was in a mood to talk. At last Sri Aurobindo himself came out with a reference to politics and the talk started.

P : X has sent a telegram to Y, saying this is the end of Fascism and the beginning of true democracy and declaring : "You will be a true President."

SRI AUROBINDO : Does it mean that the true President will follow his followers ? That is true democracy ! He will choose his followers and then follow them.

S : Instead of Fascism of the Right, what they perhaps want is a Fascism of the Left.

P : The question of the Indian Princes and the States has become a live one now.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. If the Princes could come to a settlement with the Congress, things would be much better. My opinion is that there should be, as some Princes have suggested, an Advisory Board with all the interests represented, as in the old Indian democracies. But nowadays people want the modern type of democracy—the parliamentary form of government. The parliamentary system is doomed. It has brought Europe to its present sorry pass. It has succeeded only in the North—in England and the Scandinavian countries. That is because they are practical materialistic people : they don't

live on ideas and theories. In France you find about thirty parties, and if a new man comes along, he starts the thirty-first. But it is difficult to see where one party differs from another.

P : A friend of mine was telling me that in Norway and Sweden the Socialists and the Agrarians have made common cause and evolved a common scheme. They find, for instance, the margin of profit of the industrialists and then see how much the wages can be raised.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is because they are practical people. For in every other place you will find the Socialists and the Agrarians at daggers drawn. If Socialism is to succeed, it has to be on these lines. In other countries the Socialists would demand a raise in the wages without looking into the profits and if thus the industries are killed so much the better according to them : they will be out of the way.

P : Did J. Herbert bring any news of Europe ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He says that France is lost. She has no friend now. No one trusts her after the betrayal of Czechoslovakia. They didn't expect anything from England because everybody knows that she cares only for her own interest and, besides, she didn't commit herself to anything. But France has backed out of her promise. Herbert also says that France has now become a second-rate power because of the loss of the allies. She is following England's lead but at the end England may leave her in the lurch. He adds that if the dictators are clever enough they will get all they want because France cannot fight alone with them.

P : But cannot England and France combined meet them ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. Even the two are no match for the dictators. And, besides, one doesn't know what England will do. As I said, she may leave France in the lurch. Blum and Daladier made the worst possible blunder : one by his non-intervention policy in Spain, the other by betraying the Czechs. Franco's victory is most dangerous for France.

P : But when the two dictators stand together, why is it not possible for England and France to do the same ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The dictators know their own interests. There is no one to oppose them in their own countries and they can't be separated. England and France tried the game of separating them. England wanted to placate Italy while France tried to win over Germany, but both failed. It is not that Germany and Italy like each other. The Germans despise the Italians and the Italians hate the Germans. But they know which side their bread is buttered. England is quite unreliable under her present leadership.

Another possibility is the departure of the dictators. A prophetess friend of Suryakumari says that she doesn't see any future for Mussolini : she sees his body covered with blood. And about Hitler astrological predictions are that his stars are with him up to December. After that his decline will begin. But these prophecies and predictions can't be fully relied on. If by any chance the dictators go, they won't have any successors.

P : Papers report that although Germany has military power, her economic position is unsatisfactory.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, that is Germany's weak point. The question is whether the economic structure will last long enough to allow her military strength to tell. If the Germans can win a war quickly, they can go on winning.

And dictators are not people to give up things easily. They have nobody to oppose them or say "No" to their demands. Once a country is involved in war, economic factors don't count very much. For instance, Italy was badly hit by the League of Nations when they applied sanctions in the Abyssinian War. But she persisted and carried the war through.

P : And what has happened to the military power of France ? We used to hear so much about her preparedness.

SRI AUROBINDO : She foolishly stopped building aeroplanes and started producing only 250 per month while Germany's number was 1000 and England's about 500. Now they are trying to make up, but it will take a long time to catch up with Germany. However, it is not always preparedness that wins a war. As General Gamelin said, "Though we are not prepared, we shall win." He was for intervention in Czechoslovakia because in war-time you can get things done at a tremendous rate. If France goes on yielding Jibouti, Tunis, etc., there may be an internal revolution in France and perhaps a strong dictator may come and retrieve the disaster. If you want to keep your place and prestige in the world you must stand by your pledges and obligations.

The problem is to save the world from domination by Asuric (Demonic) Forces. It would be awful to be ruled by the Nazis and Fascists. Their domination will let loose on mankind what are called the Four Powers of Hell—obscurantism, falsehood, suffering and death. Suffering and death mean the horrors of war.

Herbert also says that in Germany the people know absolutely nothing about world opinion. He has been to Germany, so he should be well-informed about it. The Germans know only what Goebbels allows them to know. In Italy too not a single foreign paper is allowed to enter.

P : Jwalanti was saying that if one wants to discuss politics or criticise, one must look round carefully to see if anybody is overhearing; one must shut doors and windows.

SRI AUROBINDO : These are the Powers of obscurantism and falsehood.

P : America is alarmed after the Fascist success in Spain. She is afraid of trouble in Latin America.

SRI AUROBINDO : Have you seen Roosevelt's statement ? The French paper reports that it has not appeared in the English papers. Roosevelt has said that if the dictators become powerful in Europe and Japan in Asia it would be the end of America. She will be attacked from both the Atlantic and the Pacific. They will begin trouble first in Latin America and then in North America. There are many Germans and Italians there and they will start Nazi propaganda.

Roosevelt has foreseen the whole thing and has taken his decision to back the democracies. But it is doubtful whether he can carry the American nation with him. The Americans won't come into the war unless some Americans are killed by Hitler, and Hitler won't do that. If they remain aloof, then it will

be a question merely of being eaten up last. France will come first, then England, and finally America. Do you know of the three dreams Washington had? (1) War of Independence. (2) Civil War. (3) America attacked by many nations and by the Yellow Races, and her cities destroyed. He dreamt that by a supreme effort she shakes herself free. It seems at present as if the third dream were coming true. But if England, France and America stand together, they have a chance of success. For, America has the biggest navy, enormous economic resources and huge man-power. She may not have enough military strength on land, but her economic resources and man-power will make up.

P : Roosevelt is supplying armaments to France and that she can do even if she doesn't come into a war.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, but Americans may object to it because it may involve them in war.

P : Jwalanti was praising Mussolini for what he has done for Italy. She hates his international policy but declares he has done wonderful work for his country.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh yes, especially at the beginning he did very good work. You haven't read Brailsford's article about what he did in Libya? Very great efficiency—of course without freedom: each house of the same pattern as the other—all regimented.

(After a pause) By the way, who is this Wazir Hossain we read of?

P : He is a retired High Court Judge in U.P.—a leader of the Shias and a Congressman. His son is a Socialist and was imprisoned by the last administration. He comes from Aligarh University.

SRI AUROBINDO : Is Aligarh University nationalist?

P : Yes, but Dara says its nationalism is very unreliable, like that of the Ali Brothers who remained with Gandhi as long as he was agitating for Khilafat.

SRI AUROBINDO : But now the percentage of nationalists among the Muslims is increasing. Look at U.P. and Berar. The number is surely greater than some years ago?

N : Was Dara at Aligarh University?

P : You seem to doubt it by your question.

SRI AUROBINDO : He wrote an article when he was there. He said that Newton discovered the Law of Gravitation when the apple fell, but he, Dara, would have been busy eating it rather than thinking out anything.

N : He has written a short drama about the Cyclone and the Flowers—very amusing.

P : His rhymes are most original. But he says that with "Supramental" only "dental" can rhyme.

SRI AUROBINDO : That concerns Satyendra and establishes his connection with the Supramental. But why only "dental"? There is "transcendental".

P : That is again "dental"—at the end.

SRI AUROBINDO : What about "rental"?

S : That will be rather prosaic.

SRI AUROBINDO : "Oriental"? Is that all right? Sometimes Dara writes clever things.

P : To return to the Princes. The States are not coming forward with any progressive policy. Bikanir is trying to crush the national movement. Udaipur also.

SRI AUROBINDO : Udaipur is understandable; he is old-fashioned. But Bikanir has knocked about in the world. If the Chamber of Princes give some reforms, they'll forestall Vallabhbhai Patel. One should begin with the old Panchayet system in the villages and then work up to the top. The Panchayet system and the Guilds are more representative and they have a living contact with people. They are part of the people and have to stand before the opinion of the people and carry out the people's ideas. On the contrary, parliamentary system, with local bodies—the municipal councils—is not workable. These councils have no living contact with the people. The councillors make only platform speeches and nobody knows what they do for three or four years. At the end they reshuffle and rearrange the whole thing, making their own pile during their period of power. The old British parliamentary system was more representative. The man chosen belonged to the county and had a more living touch with his electors.

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS ON *SAVITRI* : A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

SRI Aurobindo intended to write a long Introduction to *Savitri : a Legend and a Symbol*. Together with one Book out of the twelve of his epic—significantly enough the Book of Death—the eagerly awaited Introduction never got written. Nothing that anybody may pen, however acute, can replace it as an expository and illuminative document on the unusual poetic afflatus—unusual both in message and music—that blows through the nearly twenty-four thousand lines of this Legend of the past that is a Symbol of the future. But luckily we have a substantial number of letters by Sri Aurobindo on what can be called, if any one achievement by so vastly and variously creative a genius can lay claim to the title, his literary lifework. Out of these letters an introductory *ensemble*—necessarily in certain places more informal, personal, unreserved, focussed on details, quick-shifting, repetitive than a specially composed piece for the public would be—has been made with the object of throwing, in the poet's own valuable words, some light on the poem's conception and development and on its qualities of inspiration, vision and technique.

Very few, however, know how the letters came to be written. We have to go back nearly three decades for their origin, and even farther for the background against which they emerged.

No sooner did I commence my contact with Sri Aurobindo in 1927 than I found the air of his Ashram humming with rich rumours of the masterpiece that had been in progress ever since his days in Baroda. Having always had a passion for poetry and having myself tried to catch a spark of the celestial fire, I was extremely thrilled, and I longed to set eyes on this most significant work of his which he was repeatedly recasting to make it accord with the ever higher ascension of his own consciousness in Yoga. But Sri Aurobindo was in no hurry to show it before it reached the intensest spiritual perfection. It was I, on the contrary, who kept showing him my own little efforts at expressing the few strange glimmers of beauty and truth that at times my discipleship under so gracious a spiritual and literary guru brought me. On one such occasion, to illustrate some point, he sent back with his helpful comments two lines describing "the Ray from the transcendent penetrating through the mind's passive neutral reflection of the supreme quietude of the silent Brahman." They ran :

Piercing the limitless unknowable,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless peace.

I was struck by the profound word-reverberations that reinforced the mystical word-suggestions with a tremendous immediacy of spiritual fact. I asked where the lines came from. The reply was : "*Savitri*."

I never forgot this first brief impact of the closely guarded secret. Even before it, Sri Aurobindo had tried to make me conscious of a certain element in poetry that hailed from what he called the Overhead planes, the hidden ranges of consciousness above the intellect, with their inherent light of knowledge and their natural experience of the infinite. He distinguished four planes: Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. The last-named has been, according to him, the top reach of the dynamic side of man's spirituality so far : a transcendental poise of immutable Brahman or featureless Nirvana is the Beyond to it usually realised when in isolated cases there is a leap to the ultimate status of that infinite silence of self-liberation which can be attained on any plane of the cosmos by an inner withdrawal. The master dynamism of the Divine, the integral earth-transformative power which Sri Aurobindo designated as Supermind or Gnosis or Truth-Consciousness and which was his own outstanding personal realisation, rendering his Yoga a unique hope for the world, has lain unmanifest and mostly unseized and, until certain radical conditions are completely fulfilled, cannot find direct expression in life or literature. Even the expression of the Overmind with its massive and comprehensive yet intensely immediate vision—especially in the entire authenticity of its undertones and overtones of rhythm—is rare, as is also to a less degree that of the Higher Mind's broad connective clarity, the Illumined Mind's many-sided opulence of colourful insight, the Intuition's swift and close and all-seizing focus. What the ancients termed the *mantra*—the stuff of Divinity itself appearing to become revelatory scriptural word as in some parts of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita—is the clearest voice of the Overmind in its few past visitations on earth. Less openly, the Overmind is the chief presence in the world's greatest poetic phrases of various types. More and more Sri Aurobindo sought—by patiently criticising, appraising, distinguishing—to help me not only respond, in my appreciation of poetry, to the rising scale of the Overhead note but also bring some strain of it into my own verses. The quest of that note grew for me a dominant occupation and most I prayed for a touch of the Overmind.

One day, emboldened by his innumerable favours of tutorship, I made a singular request. I wrote :

"I shall consider it a favour indeed if you will give me an instance in English of the inspiration of the pure Overmind. I don't mean just a line like Milton's

Those thoughts that wander through eternity

or Wordsworth's

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone,

which has a brief burst of it, but something sustained and plenary. I want to steep my consciousness in its rhythm and its revelation. It will be a most cherished possession. Please don't disappoint me by saying that, as no English writer has a passage of this kind, you cannot do anything for me."

He wrote back in his characteristic vein :

"Good Heavens! how am I to avoid saying that, when it is the only possible answer—at least so far as I can remember? Perhaps if I went through English poetry again with my present consciousness I might find more intimations like that line of Wordsworth, but a passage sustained and plenary? These surely are things yet to come—the 'future poetry' perhaps, but not the past."

With the familiarity—almost the impudence—he permitted us, I replied :

"I think the favour I asked was expressed in perfectly clear language. If no English poet has produced the passage I want, then who has done so in English? God alone knows. But who is capable of doing it? All of us know. Well, then why not be kind enough to grant this favour? If difficult metres could be illustrated on demand, is it impossible to illustrate in a satisfying measure something so naturally Aurobindonian as the Overmind? I am not asking for hundreds of lines—even eight will more than do—all pure gold to be treasured for ever. So please.... Perhaps it is possible only on Sunday—the day dedicated to golden *Sūrya* and rich for you with leisure from correspondence: I can wait answerless for twenty-four hours with a sweet *samatā*."

The answer came the very next morning:

"I have to say Good Heavens again. Because difficult metres can be illustrated on demand, which is a matter of metrical skill, how does it follow that one can produce poetry from any blessed plane on demand? It would be easier to furnish you with hundreds of lines already written out of which you could select for yourself anything Overmindish if it exists (which I doubt) rather than produce 8 lines of warranted Overmind manufacture to order. All I can do is to give you from time to time some lines from *Savitri*, on condition you keep them to yourself for the present. It may be a poor substitute for the Overmental, but if you like the sample, the opening lines, I can give you more hereafter—and occasionally better."

And then with an "e.g." there followed in his own fine and sensitive yet forceful hand sixteen lines of the very first Canto of *Savitri* as it stood then¹:

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
 Across the path of the divine Event
 The huge unslumbering spirit of Night, alone
 In the unlit temple of immensity,
 Lay stretched immobile upon silence' marge,
 Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change.
 The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still.
 Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.
 A slow miraculous gesture dimly came,
 The insistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
 Persuaded the inert black quietude
 And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.

¹ At present this prelude—slightly altered in phrase and with its opening and its close considerably separated—stands in a passage of 93 lines: *Savitri*, pp. 3-6.

A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
 That glowed along the moment's fading brink
 Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
 A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.

Below the quotation were the words: "There! Promise fulfilled for a wonder."

After a whole day's absorption in the absolute nectar, I sent him a note :

"Like the sample? Rather! It is useless for me to attempt thanking you. The beauty of what you have sent may move one to utterance but the wideness takes one's breath away. I read the lines over and over again. I am somewhat stunned by the magnitude and memorableness of this day : I think your description of the divine dawn can very well apply to its spiritually poetic importance for me. Perhaps you will laugh, but I had two strange feelings before writing this letter. I was reading your verses, when I had a mute sense of big tears in the heart and a conviction that having seen what I had seen I could not possibly remain a mere mortal! What do you say to my madness?"

The day of days was October 25, 1936. From then onwards, for months, Sri Aurobindo kept sending passages which I typed out and he touched up again or expanded. About the next passage I remarked :

"It goes reverberating in depth upon depth of one's being. What I admire is that the burden of infinite suggestion is carried with such a flexible ease. There is no attempt—as in the poetry of us lesser fry—to make things specially striking or strange or new, but a simple largeness of gesture which most naturally makes one surprising revelation after another of beauty and power."

His comment—intended, no doubt, for only my eyes, for in his public pronouncements he rarely spoke about his own work without reserve—was :

"Well, it is the difference of receiving from above and living in the ambiance of the Above—whatever comes receives the breath of largeness which belongs to that plane."

Our correspondence went on and it continued, though with several long breaks, up to almost the end. It was a correspondence with many features. All the critical appreciation and understanding I was capable of I brought to *Savitri* and all that I could write in my own manner by way of Introduction to the poem was put into the last chapter of my book *The Poetic Genus of Sri Aurobindo*, about which Sri Aurobindo was both generous and modest enough to say : "it seems to me very fine both in style and substance, but as it is in high eulogy of my own writing, you must not expect me to say more." But while I could not help eulogising most of *Savitri* with whatever analytic and imaginative apparatus was at my disposal, I did not abstain from questioning a few things here and there. Nor did Sri Aurobindo either expect or desire me to abstain.

The precise character and motive of this questioning must not be misunderstood. Just as the merits of *Savitri* were appreciated to the utmost, whatever seemed a shortcoming no matter how slight and negligible in the midst of the abundant excellence was pointedly remarked upon so that Sri Aurobindo might not overlook anything in his work towards what he called "perfect perfection" before the poem came under the scrutiny of non-Aurobindonian critics at the

time of publication. I was anxious that there should be no spots on *Savitri's* sun. My purpose was also to get important issues cleared up in relation to the sort of poetry Sri Aurobindo was writing and some of his disciples aspired to write. Knowing the spirit and aim of the criticisms Sri Aurobindo welcomed them, even asked for them. On many occasions he vigorously defended himself, but on several he willingly agreed to introduce small changes. Once he is reported to have smiled and said : "Is he satisfied now ?"

Sri Aurobindo's grace to his uppish critic was boundless. And, although the amount of fault-finding was pretty little, I sometimes feel most ashamed and think that occasionally I encroached with the play of the surface intelligence overmuch on Sri Aurobindo's meagre and precious spare time. On the other hand, without that little amount and without my pressing upon his notice some unfavourable comments by an academic friend outside the Aurobindonian circle, the chance would have been missed for ever of seeing the finest critic I have known pass elucidatory judgment on the greatest poem I have read—a poem written by the most enlightened Master of Yoga and the most patient as well as considerate Superman one could hope to have the privilege to serve.

K. D. SETHNA

SRI AUROBINDO THROUGH THE EYES OF ONE OF HIS STUDENTS

(These reminiscences, appearing here for the first time, were related to the writer a few years back by a Sindhi student of Sri Aurobindo in Baroda College.)

SRI Aurobindo used to be very silent, almost shy. He was greatly respected by the students. We got the impression that he was preparing for something great. He used to be terribly serious and never joked in the classroom. When he would come he would sit against the table with his thumb on the forefinger. Mostly he would keep his eyes down and speak as if in half meditation.

I liked his lectures extremely. Many of the students found him too difficult to understand. The reason was that he never used the question-answer method in the class. He never posed or invited a question nor answered any. He seldom gave home-work. He never prepared the students from the point of view of examinations. But as he lectured he would throw light on the subject in an all-round way.

I remember him once lecturing on the political philosophy of Burke. His exposition was so luminous that there was no need of questions and answers. Also I remember the days when he was teaching us *Reflections on the French Revolution* by Burke. Sri Aurobindo never took the help of the book and never cared to read it with us to the end. He would go on giving comments without once opening it. Some of the students, who wanted to put questions and get answers from him on this or that point, were not satisfied with his method of teaching, because he did not deal with the points of the book para by para, in the sequence of the book. He took a broad, overall and penetrating view of the subject. He would give his lecture in the class and leave the students to ponder over his exposition. He left them to study the book elsewhere with the help of his expository comments. But I was very much satisfied with his way of teaching and if I did not understand anything, I would often go to him to get my difficulties solved.

When I passed the Intermediate Examination in First Class, he was very happy over it, for First Class at that time was rare. As a result of getting First Class I was offered a scholarship in Elphinstone College. He tried to dissuade me from leaving Baroda College but due to my pecuniary condition and the substantial amount of the scholarship I could not but go. I remember he gave me a testimonial.

He used to attend social gatherings and dramatic performances. But mostly he remained silent. I remember how he appreciated Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*, in which I took part as Portia. Barindra, his

younger brother, was also there during those days. Later Sri Aurobindo left Baroda College and joined the National College in Calcutta. His articles in the *Bande Mataram* used to inspire me greatly. I still remember one of his articles which appeared in this paper under the caption, "The Wheat and the Chaff."

A couple of years later he came to Bombay and gave a series of lectures. I enthusiastically took the opportunity to attend them.

One day we invited him to tea among my Sindhi friends. He climbed up the three storeys to have tea with us. As I rose to introduce him and started speaking in praise of him, he made a gesture to stop me and said, "We are all children of the Mother." By "Mother" he meant Mother India. Then he spoke to us, in a calm contained tone, of our responsibilities to our country. His very silence was inspiring to all.

As long as he was in the political field, he was the sole inspiration of my national ideals and activities. The flame of patriotism that burns intensely in my heart was lit by him. But when later he left for Pondicherry, my attitude towards him changed, for I believed that the country needed him badly at that hour. My interest was mainly confined to the freedom of the country. With his departure my extraordinary enthusiasm for him became a little cold, for I always thought of the battlefield of action. His leaving this field did not appeal to me. And I felt that our deep and intimate link was then severed.

I admired and remembered him like a God. While people would repeat the name of God, I used to repeat the name "Aurobindo, Aurobindo" in my mind. I have no words to express how much I was aflame with him.

I remember when once he spoke of the moonlit night and I have an impression that he jocularly linked it to my name (Chandwani).

Recorded by HAR KRISHAN SINGH

TWO IMPRESSIONS OF THE ASHRAM

A YOUNG man from Zurich in the course of his Indian tour paid a flying visit to the Ashram in 1952. Nothing impressed him then. When he was taken round the various departments, he wondered what there was specially to see. Was the Ashram a museum ? And why was everything referred to the Mother ? It appeared to him very disturbing. Still he bought a set of Sri Aurobindo's major works.

Another surprise waited for him at the Balcony. He could not understand why grown-up people were standing with folded hands before the Mother, behaving like children. It looked to him very strange.

The first book that impressed him was *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part I—The Yoga of Divine Works. This led him to read *The Life Divine* and other books.

It took him four years to feel that the writer could not be a mere philosopher; he almost felt that no human being could write such things. It is said that one must read and read spiritual things, then only the realities enshrined therein could reveal themselves by degrees.

So was the case with our young visitor. The more he read, the more did he have glimpses of the truth, the more the light radiated from Sri Aurobindo's writings. Then something new dawned on him. He realised that Sri Aurobindo's books contain a Divine Message.

Hence he ordered some more books. One among them was *Sri Aurobindo On The Mother*. Here Sri Aurobindo had said that the Mother's consciousness and his are one. It went home to the young Swiss. Thus it took him quite a number of years to recognise the Mother.

Now he felt that as the books had done so much to bring about a change in his outlook he must do something for the Ashram.

But how could he help ? In order to spread the thought of Sri Aurobindo he has opened a Book Distribution Service in Zurich and also arranges meetings and talks at various places. Moreover, he has opened the first European branch of Sri Aurobindo Society at his place. His one aim is to serve the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Asked about his impression of the Ashram now, he said : "So far as organisation is concerned, it is nothing unique in comparison to the west but as a spiritual endeavour, there is nothing in the world like it. I feel altogether at home here."

(From Narayan Prasad's *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram* now in the Press.)

REMINISCENCES

XV

ATHLETICS

(Continued from the last issue)

PHYSICAL culture has its side of expenditure or utilisation of energy when you execute a particular movement and follow it to the end. But there is, in addition and precisely because of this, another side to it; that is the gathering or accumulation of energy. The body utilises energy, so it needs to recuperate it; that is the way it conserves its energy. A man works during the day and sleeps at night; the energy he spends in the waking hours he recuperates at night-time. You may want to know, "But then what about the food he takes?" Food, that is, adequate nutrition, is a vital source of energy, but I am not discussing the need for food in this particular context. I am not speaking here of the need for the material basis of physical substance. My point just now is about the life-force or physical energy in the body. The method of acquiring and storing that energy is what may be called relaxation, which release implies a of tension, a loosening of the limbs and muscles. We are all familiar with the process; all I wish to do here is to give a somewhat elaborate account of this relaxation, for in my experience I have noticed some special features about it.

The first thing to note is this. All those who take part in physical exercise are, no doubt, already familiar, or they have to get familiar, with the truth that relaxation is not merely an end-product of exercise, it has a place in exercise itself. Let me explain.

In all physical-culture activities and in every exercise, one has to pay particular attention to one thing, for success depends on it to a large extent. Normally, we are inclined to work up all our muscles and nerves at the same time, even when only a certain limited number actually come into play. This means tension. And if the tension is excessive, it leads to what we call stiffness or rigidity. Instead of that, what we should do is to give as much relaxation as possible to the other parts of the body and work up only such of the muscles as are actually called into play and for the time are needed for the work. These too should remain passive, that is to say, relaxed, till the very moment they are called into play. You have heard that story about the watch. One day it suddenly became conscious about itself and discovered that it had been working constantly without a break or pause for rest for twenty-four hours a day. So it complained to the owner, "My dear sir, all of you work no doubt but you take rest as well : if you work the whole day, you get the whole night for sleep. But I have to go on working throughout the day and night without a wink of sleep." And the

owner replied, "But don't you see, you go on ticking and between the two ticks you take a good rest." This is a very fine analogy. When, for instance, we take part in a race, that is exactly what takes place. It is not at all necessary to tense both the legs at the same time. All that is needed is to use with all their strength the muscles of the leg that is to strike the ground, but only for the duration of contact; they could be held relaxed until the next stroke. The other leg should in the meantime remain relaxed, and alert—I say alert, not active—till its turn arrives. This applies to all the other parts of the body. We might recall in this connection the two types of heart-beat, the systole and the diastole, the movement of contraction and that of expansion, with an interval or pause in between.

This, in fact, is the way to a right working of the body : right, first because it is efficient and secondly because it is harmonious. It is efficient in the sense that it gives better results and acts with more power and vigour. For, under this method, only those muscles are brought into play that are needed and exactly when they are needed. If other muscles get worked up by a sort of reflex action, that leads to the wastage of a good part of the energy through useless channels, it is not utilised in full when and where it is needed. And secondly, as I say, it makes for harmonious action which acquires the natural ease of a rhythmic graceful movement. Relaxation is just another name for what is known as the pause in the rhythmic movement of poetry; for after all, it is pause and movement that make up rhythm.

But this is not all. I have used the term relaxation in the sense of pause or rest, but I do not thereby imply that it is a going off to sleep. Sleep is normally a lapse into inconscience and that brings inertia and rigidity. One must remain equally conscious and awake during rest as during work. Unconsciousness in action renders the act mechanical, brings with it a lifeless rigidity. The movements of the body have to be permeated by an awakened consciousness, so that the consciousness in rest is helped thereby to get infused with new force. If the consciousness is of the right sort, the new force can descend even from supraphysical worlds and give to the movements of the body a supreme beauty and strength.

In fact, relaxation is in truth what in our language, in the technical phraseology of Hathayoga, is known as *śavāsana*, the corps-like stance. But it could be made into a stance of life instead of death. And that indeed is its true object. In other words, it is not a negative condition of doing nothing, it can be changed into a positive state. We are apt to think of it as a state of absolute inaction. That is not true, it has to be raised to a condition of positive action, at least when we are awake. Normally, to remain silent and still with all the limbs of the body in a state of complete relaxation means drifting into sleep. One is no doubt rested in sleep, but a conscious sleep is preferable to the unconscious type. Conscious sleep means conscious immobility. •

There are two or three steps in this process. First, there comes a general relaxation and immobility of the whole body. Next, there has to be a relaxation of each separate part, one after the other. One may begin with the toes—there is a relaxation of the muscles and joints of the toes; then the muscles and joints

of the ankles and legs, the knees, the thighs, the abdomen and the waist, the chest and throat and the face including the lips and chin, and finally the forehead and the eyelids and the scalp are all relaxed in turn and stilled. In the same way one may come down step by step from one level to the next down to the toes. All one has to do is to watch and see how everything gets relaxed and falls quiet, just as the thought waves subside and grow calm.

This all of you can try and you can see for yourself how greatly it invigorates the body, how fresh and alive it becomes.

The results are still more deep and intense if you can rise a step higher; then it becomes a part of yoga and spiritual training. To relax a part of the body means unravelling one of its knots or strands, widening and opening out what was limited within bounds and self-centred; that means putting it in contact with all that is around, with the universal. It is as if you had within you a pipeline which was corked and clamped and which you open up now to let in the gradual flow of the universal life-energy. This, in more erudite language, is called *cakrabheda*, breaking through the six or, according to another count, twelve or more centres of consciousness or energy that are there in the body; these are liberated and brought into play. Through *śavāsana* one becomes unified with the universal life-energy, from head to foot there streams in the vitality inherent in all Nature.

One may proceed still farther, take a higher step. I have just been speaking of ascending and descending up and down the different parts and levels of the body, as it were polishing them smooth in the process, making them quiet and still. But when the being or consciousness reaches the level of the head and takes its firm station there, it can not only widen itself out by opening horizontally on all sides; it can also rise to a higher plane, even without any definite knowledge, simply with the feeling that it has reached somewhere. You may remember that somewhere in the Beyond is the Force and the Presence of the Mother. If you can get into touch with Her nearness and presence there in this manner, then you have already broken through the six centres, accomplished the end of Hathayoga and Tantra. There comes pouring into each limb not only a wide peace but also a strength and an illumination. This you may say is an easy simplified method of breaking through the centres.

There is an enormous difference between consciousness and inconscience; they belong to two different worlds as it were. The same work or action, if done in an inconscient manner, will give one result; the result will be very different if it is done consciously. The Mother once told you about this. How many times in the day we have to go up and down the stairs, but most of the time we do it in an unconscious manner, mechanically like inanimate things. Such unconscious or mechanical movements and exercise do not help the body much. But if you do the same movements consciously, if the steps are taken and the legs moved with full consciousness or concentration, two good results follow : first, you avoid the possibility of an accident, for then there is little chance of stumbling or slipping down the stairs, and secondly, your muscles develop more strength and capacity. Indeed, the entire body may gain in vitality by this little exercise if performed consciously.

The lower animals know of no such conscious exercise, in fact they have no possibility of any kind of voluntary training. Their bodies grow and the muscles develop, naturally and inevitably as they grow in years. And they decline as naturally and inevitably with the coming of old age. You know the story of the animal in the fable who had lost its power to bite and scratch, *galita-nakha-dantaḥ*. Man alone of all terrestrial creatures has the capacity of overpassing the limits set by Nature, and he does that by virtue of his conscious power of will and thought.

That is why the Mother has often said that the real foundation of all work, of all true action is peace. The vast multitudinous movement of the universe has for its base an unfathomable Peace; out of the Silence springs the rhythmic Word of the Truth.

Now to conclude.

It is not true that an elderly person taking part in exercises undergoes an unnecessary strain or should be made an object of ridicule. It is not a mere waste of energy, there is a definite feature of gain. An old man doting on his pretty young wife ? Perhaps so, if you like : you know the famous line of Valmiki on Dasaratha, how he held his young wife dearer even than life, *vrddhasya taruṇī bhāryā prāṇebhyopi garīyasī*. An old man may very well fall in love with exercise much in the same way. To young people in the abundance of their youthful vitality, the need for physical exercise is not always so apparent. How the children of our Green Group shun like poison the rules and regulations of the Playground and try to shirk work is known to their captains. But for an elderly person accustomed to regular training, to miss a single exercise-period seems like wasting a whole day : he feels so out of sorts. You might ask Rajen about this, even though he is only just past fifty and not exactly an old man.

But apart from the question of likes and dislikes, there is a real difference, a difference in kind, between the old and the young. To young people physical exercise is something that is easy, spontaneous and natural; in their case the bodies execute the movements out of a natural capacity for imitation, by virtue of an instinctive reaction or habit. When a child learns to take his first steps, it does so because it sees others doing the same; one acts as one sees—*yad-dṛṣṭam tat kṛtam*. The movements are passed on to the limbs directly from the vision. It is not quite the same thing with an elderly person. He has first to see the movements executed, he has to remember them and his own movements follow upon a kind of reflection; it is the mind that has to act as intermediary. The mind has to commit them to memory and it is only then that the body can be made to obey, like a servant taking orders from the master. This process has its points both good and bad.

The first defect is that the body takes time to learn and, what is worse, the movements it executes remain somewhat rigid, lifeless and inharmonious. But good results may come and do come if one pays attention. In other words, the movements of the body can be performed consciously. Generally speaking, so long as we are young, our physical movements and exercises are carried out more or less unconsciously, just as the animals act naturally and automatically under the impulse of habit. We are not always conscious of what we are doing.

But as we grow in age this spontaneity of the body disappears and one has to cajole it into action. That is to say, the movements have to be done consciously. As I have already remarked before, it is this conscious action that is one of the gifts of age. I should, however, add that this consciousness is not the same thing as the deliberative power of the intellect. Deliberation is only the beginning of conscious growth. But mere deliberation rather adds to the rigidity of the body. Still, it is a necessary stage in the growth of consciousness, a first step in that direction.

The very aim of life is to grow in consciousness. We pass through life mostly in a state of ignorance and inconstancy, under subjection to Nature. In place of that we have to become conscious, not only in a general way, but by infusing consciousness into every limb in its activity. The result will be that there will manifest in them a light, a beauty, and finally a light and force that are not of this world, but come from the higher ranges.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(Translated by Sanat K. Banerji from the Bengali)

SPIRITUAL CAUSERIE

It was only two days ago that I was narrating to my sister the terrible encounters and trials which Milarepa—the master yogi of Tibet—had to face during his practice of Yoga. She exclaimed : “Why is it that suffering is always the lot of good people?” A good man, a god-fearing person has never a smooth life. One after another he receives checks and blows, whereas the bad ones prosper; even if they commit the very wrongs for which the good are penalised, God lets them go scot-free. The plums of life go to the bad while the good groan. Why is that so in God’s creation ?

This in substance is the conundrum that has faced, time and again, many of those who think. If this world is really a creation of the Divine, why does the best in life go invariably to the least deserving ? Not merely in the case of individuals but even on a collective scale the question applies. Power and wealth flow more into wrong places while good and progressive Causes languish for want of means. Such a state of affairs would seem to indicate that this world is not God’s creation but the Devil’s. Or perhaps the Illusionist is right after all in stigmatising the universe as a fantasy of Maya, a gigantic falsehood ?

A closer consideration of the problem, however, reveals that this state of things—real enough to justify the accusing finger of the defeatist—is but natural in the present condition of our universe. I say *present* because the conditions in which Life functions in our cosmos are not fixed once for all; they are not permanently set. The world moves, *jagati*, and the conditions too move and change. Ours is an evolving creation, moving from one state to another, from lower states of consciousness to progressively higher and higher states, from Ignorance to Knowledge, from darkness to Light. Our creation has evolved far above its original physical base in Inconscience but it is still in the realm of Ignorance and of its issue, Falsehood. The cosmic organisation as a whole still functions in the grip of the dark forces; all movements and velleities turn in their groove. Everything is geared to serve the powers that rule. All is naturally weighted in favour of Falsehood and what promotes it. This reign of the Asura will end only when it is replaced by the reign of the Deva. That is why every step in the direction of the growth of Knowledge and Light is vehemently opposed by the occupying powers of Ignorance. They are all marshalled to attack and smother every movement for liberation from their hold, whether individual or collective.

In this setting it will be clear why those that serve the empire of Ignorance find their way easier and inviting, while those that seek to affirm the claim of the True and the Right find themselves opposed at every step. All power now naturally vests in the Adversary and it will be so till it is fully wrested by the

Divine. Only when that is done will the order of things change.¹ And this change is on its way. The struggle between the elements of Falsehood and Truth, of Darkness and Light, has been a constant feature of this creation from its birth but each decisive battle has been won by the progressive Forces of Light. The war is still on but it is now in the last phases and with the plenary emergence of the direct Consciousness-Force of the Divine—what we call the Supramental Power—the victory of the Divine is certain. The balance of forces is already showing signs of change. The long-established order of things is gradually yielding place at some levels to the pressure of the New.

Relevant to the subject is a legend in Teutonic mythology which is very significant. In this tradition, Valhalla is the heavenly paradise of Heroes who die in battle and win a place in the community of gods. The whole day they engage themselves in fierce fighting and retire by the evening. During the nights, their wounds heal up and they feast together till dawn when the fighting is resumed. Now, the gods once realised that they needed to have a strong castle for their dwelling as it was not always convenient to be on the back of fluffy clouds. A mighty big castle in keeping with their exalted status was required and they approached the burly titans and asked for their help in the construction of the edifice. The titans agreed but on one condition and that was this : after the castle was ready the gods were to part with one of their goddesses—the goddess of LOVE. The gods were in a quandary. They took counsel among themselves and one of them, a hopeful, suggested that the construction would take long years at the end of which they could see how things shaped. In the meanwhile they could assent. And so, hoping that something would intervene in their favour later on, the gods accepted the proposal.

The titans set to work. They piled up mountains after mountains and with surprising speed they completed the job. A magnificent castle was ready. Now it was the turn of the gods to fulfil their part of the bargain. Nervously they broached the subject to their goddesses and great was the wail set up by the goddesses. The titans demanded their due; the goddesses would not agree. There was an *impasse*. Then one god, a wise one, spoke to the assembly of titans persuasively and pointed out how impractical it would be for so many giants like them to have only one goddess. Would it not be more welcome to all of them, he proceeded, to have immense gold instead that would suffice for everybody ? The titans fell in, but insisted that the quantity of gold must be so much as would cover up entirely the figure of the goddess of Love from top to toe, from side to side, so that not a part of her could be seen. *Gold shall put away from sight the very visage of LOVE.*

All available gold was collected from everywhere, from everyone, by the gods and it was heaped up all around the goddess of Love. And when this was done the titans were called in to take their due. Gleefully they trooped into the hall where the ceremony was held and as they looked closely at the gold-wrapped figure, they found that one small lock of her golden hair was hanging out through a small chink in the heap.

¹ The individual aspect of the question has been discussed elsewhere.

“No, no,” they said, “we will not accept this gold. This crevice too shall be filled up.” The gods were in consternation. For every bit of gold in heaven had been combed up and nothing was left with any goddess. They found that the only gold that remained was the gold ring on the finger of Wotan, the King of the gods. But how could Wotan the King part with his ring ? For it was the ring of authority, the sceptre that conferred and affirmed his lordship over all and, if he were to part with it, he would have to part with his kingly power too. The gods were in a fix : Love or Power ? They deliberated and ultimately decided in favour of keeping Love and entreated their king to give the ring which alone could cover up the crevice and save the goddess of Love for them. Reluctantly Wotan agreed. But before parting with the ring of power, he held it in his palm and cursed it saying that whoever wore the ring of Power would go corrupt and perish.

The chink was duly filled up. The titans rejoiced in their gain of Power and Gold. The gods were content with the goddess of Love.

And to this day it has been so. All Power—Power that corrupts—and all Gold, *i.e.* wealth, vests in the hands of the Adversary. But the gods have in their possession Something which is greater than all power, all wealth—the Truth of LOVE in whose alchemy the very texture of life is slowly changing.

PRABUDDHA

MYSTICS AND SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

“Ping-ting comes for fire.” Suzuki, *Essays in Zen*.

WAY back in 1920 Miss Underhill spoke of “the strong need for restatement” with regard to institutional religions and mysticism. Today the need is even stronger and one is not surprised to find the redoubtable Toynbee, “reminded by the quickening touch of the Adversary”, harking back to the same issue, the issue that is always the same. As part of “the characteristic experience of the living generation in the Western world” he had reached a point, he says, when “the question ‘What is your attitude towards religion ?’ was calling for an answer too insistently.”¹ The question did not centre round the destiny of a single individual or generation but that of an entire civilization on trial, to use another of his phrases. These are two evidences, out of many, and both point in the same direction—towards religion and mysticism, “personal religion raised to the highest power.”

Nowadays one hears much about “return to religion” or even “return of religion”. For a lucky few this has proved to be a lucrative proposition. But such a return to any credal conformity or hidebound institution will not solve our difficulties and is not the intended way out. It is more likely that mysticism is that way out, out of all compulsions and accidents of history into the freedom of the Spirit. As Marquette has pointed out, “In fact mysticism seems to be able to solve most of the dilemmas confronting our generation in nearly all the avenues of thought and activities. Hence the timely character of our attempt to study its modalities and to interpret whatever message it may have in store for puzzled modern man.”² Or, in an earlier and somewhat different context, Meister Eckhart : “I am sure that if a soul knew the very least of all that Being means, it would never turn away from it.” Whoever else has, the mystics have never turned away from it, “all that Being means”. In fact, they have turned away from most other things that from men care for and turn to. That precisely is what has brought them in open conflict with all authoritarian systems. Between organised religion and mysticism the gap has been sometimes wide, even unbridgeable. Though a modern psychologist like Allport has told us that “the cultivation of mystical states...(is) a reasonable consequence of a thoroughly religious outlook”, members of the church have been rarely so reasonable. An opposition, harsh or secret, at least minimal, has always been felt. Whether when mysticism throws off external authority altogether, it goes mad or not,³ as a rule the two have not pulled on well. Leuba is perhaps a prejudiced observer where mysticism is concerned, but in this matter he seems to be right when he says : “In his search for God, the mystic goes his own way. If need be, he

will brush aside formula, rites and even the priests who would serve him as a mediator....Persons of this sort, harbouring such convictions, may obviously be dangerous to the stability of any institution that has come to regard its truths as the only truths, and its way of worship as the only way. And so it comes to pass that the more highly institutionalized are the...religions, the less tolerant they are of mystical piety when it rises beyond the ordinary." But such a permanent state of conflict can be hardly called ideal. Luckily, it has not always been so. Either institutions have been more tolerant, or the individuals less aggressive who have gradually earned their role in the milieu.

In any case, it is too late in the day to force men to be free. (*Pace* dictatorships, *Wahr macht frei* was the motto of the concentration camps, a very different type of concentration from what the mystics have known and recommended.) The growing impatience of progressive thinkers with sectarianism and form-bound religions suggests that a non-gregarious, non-contractual, non-compulsive association, with greater elbow room for the individual is the need of the hour. As Récéjac put it, "The Mystic City is without walls." No rigid or fixed formula, secular or monastic, can meet our complex needs. The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* says, a little gnomically, "Obedience and Rules cannot be imposed." That is, only a more plastic social and spiritual ordering than what politicians know, or can know, will meet that deep demand for an equation between the One and the Many—where all are different and all is one—which every society has attempted and none perhaps achieved.

However men may deny it or deny themselves, "Freedom is a capacity into which you are born, just as space-time is a frame into which you are placed."⁴ It is the fifth dimension of our personality. The need for freedom—to grow, even to make mistakes—and the need for free variation, or "all roads", is too ingrained to be denied for long by any juggernaut of Establishment or Organization. Unfortunately, this is a sphere where "progress" is a demonstrable fact, where, thanks to organised lying, and heresy in high places, the scientific "nothing but" explanations and the "historical necessities" of rapacious regimes, the last may well be the first. The tendency everywhere has been to force, to conform rather than to be free, with now all the additional help received from applied science. And all this often in the name of freedom itself. But, as the wise have always known, "The heart of so great a mystery cannot be reached by one road only", certainly not by the narrow lane of doctrines and rigid religious groups. When the Devil wants to spread confusion, it has been said, he starts an institution. It will be foolish to deny the need and usefulness of religion, but it is a means and not an end. As Vivekananda once said, it is good to be born into a religion, it is bad to die in it. Whatever else religion has done, it has not changed human life and society, at least not brought about that complete change which is the heart of the mystic promise and effort down the ages. Defending the churches Underhill said, "Man needs a convention, tradition, a limitation if he is not to waste his creative powers; and this convention the mystics find best and most easily in the forms of the church to which they belong." One can only ask : Do they really ? In any case, after a time men have also felt the need to break conventions and open new ways of the Spirit,

lest one good custom corrupt the world. The great religions themselves would have been impossible without this mystic core, inevitable but unpredictable, for who shall set a limit for the workings of the Spirit ? It bloweth where it listeth.

It is also a fact that in trying to rule rather than bind society, most religions have more or less compromised with questionable, recalcitrant, even unspiritual elements. They could not always insist, except in a manner of speaking which no one need take seriously, on that inner change of the whole being which is the essence of religious living; they had to be content with credal adherence, a formal acceptance of ethical standards and conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. But this, by itself, cannot transform the race, it has not; it cannot create a new principle of human existence, such as the poets and prophets have dreamt of and which is perhaps the secret purpose presiding over our evolution. A total spiritual direction given to the whole of life and the whole of nature alone can lift humanity beyond itself. Only a few mystics have known and tried that. Will or can the rest follow ?

At first sight this insistence on a radical change might seem to put off all hope to a distant future. Even if that were so, it would still remain the sole possibility. For, as Sri Aurobindo says truly, "to hope for a change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual solution cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance. To that call in the being there must always be some answer in the Divine Reality and Nature."⁵ There, in brief, is the hope and the faith, to which some have always responded or something in man has always responded. As even modern physics now tells us, bigness is no index to psychological force. The few will "save the city."

However few, the mystics lift human history into a new dimension and provide it with this adventure of ideas and more than ideas. Mysticism, the art of union with Reality, is not played out. Even to C. D. Broad, usually a cautious thinker, it seemed "more likely than not that in mystical experience men come into contact with some Reality or some aspect of Reality which they do not come into contact with in any other way."⁶ The game has but begun, with new rules and dénouement.

Throughout history, the free have spoken with one voice. The verdict has not only been unanimous but complementary and self-correcting. That it has a bearing on our time of troubles only the pervert and the deliberately blind will deny. The present work was undertaken in the belief that a re-statement, however brief and fragmentary, of mystical theory and practice, might bring home to us some principles or conclusions that have weathered the storm of centuries and still stand, as pointers, to tease us out of thought as doth Eternity. They can still help us to build on surer foundations. Of what we have

instead, the Persian proverb has the last word, "if the first building-stone is askew, the structure may reach to the heavens, and all of it be crooked." Whether it reaches the heavens or the moon it can but be the same, an extension of fearful folly. Who among us has not felt an occasional misgiving about the direction of modern history, of these our "warfare states", the possibility, the eagerness, and now the proved ability to wipe out large masses of men and land areas at a stroke or in a second? Genocide is now taken for granted, almost as casually as one takes a tablet of aspirin to cure common headache. Most of our thinkers, artists and "disinherited minds" have felt the shadow of racial suicide descend on the human stage. As Dean Inge had noted long back: "There has never perhaps been a time when the sense of doom has been so widespread."⁷ Yes, and with such good reason! The agony of extremity as well as the failure of popular panaceas have forced men to look for help everywhere, in unlikely places. But there is little hope anywhere, at best false hope,—except among the mystics. They alone have fought the inner battle and won. How can we socialize that victory?

Some at least have felt that the mystics, a neglected and misunderstood minority, may have a knowledge and technique that could save us from impending disaster. This will be a test for both mysticism and the modern age. Obviously it will not be a magical remedy, something to be applied from the outside, nor will it run according to any formula. As Alexis Carrel put it with some force: "We will not establish any program. For a program would stifle living reality in a rigid armor. It would prevent the bursting forth of the unpredictable, and imprison the future within the limits of our mind."⁸ There is also no guarantee that it will succeed. Who knows, the mystic might succeed by using the piercing paradox of apparent failure, the "divine technique" of affliction, as Simone Weil once said? The mystic is not unfamiliar with nor averse to the call of supreme sacrifice. As Karl Jaspers has recently insisted, "Sacrifice remains the foundation of true humanity. If its soldierly form disappears, it will assume others....The great renunciations are not only necessary to save a free world but also to bring men back from a life lost in an empty consumer's existence after a few hours of unrelished work. Sacrifice would not only make peace possible; it would fulfil it."⁹ In the words of Lecomte du Nouy: "The martyrs represent one of the most powerful levers of humanity....That is why governments are usually careful not to 'make martyrs'....Who knows if Christianity would have developed had Jesus not been crucified?" Again, "The human flock obeys an obscure order: it must rise, it cannot do without a leader. Thank God, if there have been evil influences, they have been counteracted, on an average, by that of certain rare, privileged men, comparable to the transitional animals who were in advance of their time. These men attained a higher stage of evolution....Strange to say, in spite of their handicaps, of the fact that the doctrine they taught was less pleasant and demanded sacrifice it is they who gained the higher prestige in history, and their teachings outlasted and outshone all the others."¹⁰ Mysticism is stern stuff and it can do without propaganda. The case for mystics can stand by itself, on surer grounds of the Being, if only one has the courage and the capacity to

verify what they have to say and what their presence implies. This calls for a revision of modern errors and heresies, a revolution in thought. If, as the Buddhists hold, we are the result of all that we have thought, it is time to change our thought. If our times are out of joint, a psychologist has told us, it is because they are *philosophically* out of joint. If we are to set them right, we shall have to set them *philosophically* right.¹¹ The mystics invite us to that mental spring cleaning.

The metaphysical barbarities of a few centuries are perhaps endurable agony, the inevitable price to be paid for the hindsight that is another name for wisdom wise after the event. But to admit mysticism it is not necessary to give up our gains from science. That is a popular mistake. In 1950 Einstein had spoken of "a new way of thinking if mankind is to survive". This "inner road to salvation" was more explicitly stated by another thinker speaking of "The idea of the goal of a conquest of contradictions, which involves a synthesis encompassing both rational understanding and the mystical experience of unity, as the explicit or implicit mythos of our own present time". There need be no quarrel between science and spirituality. Mysticism itself is as much a knowledge as a feeling, there is more of knowledge in it than many suspect. It is a *vidyā*, or science; it is *ekavidyā*, the knowledge of the One or the knowledge that unites or reconciles the different sides of existence; above all, it is *Brahmavidyā*, the knowledge of the One Self, one in all. In the House of Self there are many mansions and in the Garden of God many games to play other than Darwin, Marx or Freud knew of. For this all that we have to do is to admit degrees of knowledge and levels of understanding. The laws of one plane do not hold good on another—how much correction in that simple truth !

The hard shell of materialism is cracking, both from within and without, with the crack of doom. When scientific atomisation and manslaughter reach satanic proportions it is perhaps time to cry halt—and point out, plainly, the diabolic potentialities of our own Mechanomorphism. In exorcising the devils of industrialism and the insane ideological conflicts that tear the world's heart apart, we may have to return, humbly, to the age-old insights of the mystics. This book could not have been written without that hope and faith, a certain belief in mysticism and its possible application to the problems of our day. "The enclosed life is the ancient form of religious life...and will always be the most modern,"¹² says one who has embraced it willingly, with open eyes. The enclosed life, of an apparently separate community is always a strategic necessity, the necessity to concentrate. It is not an exclusive club. As we shall see, the Order of Mystics is not an ancient luxury or refuge for a maladjusted elite, "outworn ideas of a bygone age, or at best religious poetry"; it is a way of life, everlasting life, always extending in new directions, always capable of fresh formulations. The Infinite is not exhausted, it is eminently adjustable to our overdramatised *Angst* and the *avant-garde* theatre of the Absurd, perched above the Abyss.

The mystics have a right to be heard, though they themselves might not claim it, because both their insight and their criticism are part of First Principles, modern man's major omission. Also because they have lived out what they talk

about. Those who fail to practise, said Wang-Yang Ming, also fail to understand. The mystics practise what they preach. If they speak with authority it is because they know what they are talking about and they don't double-talk ! Through their images and parables, their doctrines, above all through their examples shines the clear imprint of experience and an appeal that neither custom nor age has been able to stale. Whether it is Lao Tse returning upon the Black Ox or Thomas Merton telling us of "the silence of the far mountains on which the armies of God and the enemy confront one another in a mysterious battle, of which the battle in the world is only a pale reflection" or Sri Aurobindo speaking of a spiritual evolution,¹³ it is the same voice. For the sake of safety and sanity, if not salvation, why not listen ?

....We know the truth has been
Told over to the world a thousand times;—
But we have had no ears to listen yet
For more than fragments of it; we have heard
A murmur now and then, an echo here
And there....

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Arnold Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, Preface.
2. Jacques de Marquette, *Introduction to Comparative Mysticism*, 18.
3. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, II, 356.
4. Samuel Rosenkranz, *The Meaning of Your Life*, 77.
5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*.
6. C. D. Broad, *Religion, Philosophy and Psychical Research*, 172-73.
7. W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, 137.
8. Alexis Carrel, *Man the Unknown*, 321.
9. Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind*, 66, 154-55.
10. Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, 251, III.
11. H. A. Overstreet, *The Mature Mind*, 119-20.
12. Sister Mary Francis, P.C., *A Right to be Merry*, 47.
13. Sri Aurobindo, in a letter to a disciple, wrote : "It is because people do not understand...or realise the significance of the emergence of consciousness in a world of inconscient Matter that they are unable to realise this inevitability. I suppose a matter-of-fact observer, if there had been one ...would have criticised any promise of the emergence of life in a world of dead earth and rock and mineral as an absurdity and a chimera; so too afterwards he would have repeated this mistake and regarded the emergence of thought and reason in an animal world as an absurdity and a chimera. It is the same now with the appearance of the supermind in the stumbling mentality of this world of human consciousness and its reasoning ignorance." *On Yoga*, I, II, 14.

DARSHAN

MOTHER DIVINE,
My heart in gratitude bows down at Thy feet.
Against the pink-rose background of Thy Eternity
Each moment is a revelation, each shadow an apocalypse of Thy glory,
A diamond-constellation which shall never appear
In the canopy of heaven till the end of time,
The dream-washed faces we shall never see, the same yet so charmingly different,
The hands we shall never clasp to convey the message of our hearts.
Life is so fascinating, so beautiful and so mysterious,
Half in jest, half in seriousness all is play of Thy boundless Love.
Who is good or who is wicked? None can be neglected.
Behind the veil of our forgetfulness shines the omnipotent Divine in all.
Even the flicker of the eye is a chosen rhythm of His marvellous design.
Children from the infinitudes of His indivisible existence,
We enjoy harmony and strife on this tiny uncharted island of beatitude.
Pageantry of magnificent souls gladly robed with titanic difficulties,
Reverent procession of seers and mystics in the guise of an average humanity,
Nascent pilgrim sparks, moths in love with night attracted by a hidden Light,
Gods and goddesses and Lords of the Earth whom man venerates through the ages
Move silently with folded hands in front of the Dais of the Two-in-One.
Offering their lives in homage, they stay on or pass through the Shrine.
All are blessed for eternities to come in this benign Hour of Grace.
Who can ever reach Thee, Mother Divine?
Active, puissant and immobile, Thou art all around us, within and above.
Pursued Thou disappearest in the far and the wide.
Who can ever contain Thee, Mother Divine ?
Like water through the mesh, Thou escapest from the strongest wit,
Yet chooseth to abide in the heart of Thy children.
Who can ever know Thee when Thou seekest Thy own self ceaselessly ?
Mother Divine, Thou only art, Thou only hast been,
And Thou only shalt be, Origin self-born, Supreme.
In Thee we move and live and have the bliss of our being.
My heart in gratitude bows down at Thy feet.

NIRANJAN

THE SONG OF THE BATTLEFIELD

Do not cry, my fields,
Do not weep, O meadows,
When the cloud of dreadful shields,
When the mass of iron shadows
Bury the Sun's face...

When ruthless feet with black delight
Our breast crush, squash each smiling bud
That leans out from green beauty, when Doom's might
Tramples the radiant warriors into bloody mud,
For this too is Grace...

Do not cry, do not weep,
For in our secret valley's heart
On slopes of mystery hard and steep
She fights the Battle from her victory cart—
The Queen of the golden race.

JANINA

MEDITATION

THE Eternal's inscrutable will is this branching universe,
Rooted high in the invisible, the infinite.
The visible is a crust, its inner immortal lines lie coiled deep within deeps;
Mind's thousand-hooded probe, and yet a beyond, a miraculous sun-sight!

The immaculate Mother of the all-revealing diamond blaze, the Supreme,
She alone, in her timeless wisdom, can unseal the doors of Spirit-expanse.
The Seer within must speak the inevitable word, a sudden wonder-gleam
Serpent-like shall break through the clay, obliterate the sense—

And in a God-given moment our being, in bliss-trance,
Clasped by the unexpected, shall answer in ecstasy's arms.
Meanwhile, O soul, rest in faith, have a poise, a calm
Even like the ageless Himalaya: wait thy hour of the deathless dance.

VENKATARANGA

O COME THEN SOON TO ME

At that doomed hour come soon to me,
Fling me not from Thy memory.

When I go stumbling to the pit and fall,
And the world passes, laughing at my plight,
When, slipping down, my feet all lost to light
Lead me into the mud unfathomable,
Give me Thy finger, pull me Thou upright!

With failing mind fate-stricken when I lie
In the dark pool of deep despondency,
Nor faintest gleam of human help descry,
When breaks my heart in bits, one glance of care
Have Thou for me, one smile of mercy spare!

Fear-smitten, when my tongue is locked and numb,
When thought forgets Thee and grows dull and dumb,
Thyself then call me unto Thee or come!
When elephants have trampled down my hours,
Then with Thy lips' touch kindle deathless flowers!

When none to me an arm of help extend,
Wilt Thou too spurn me with world-flying feet?
Once Thou hast held my hand in Thine, O Sweet,
Hold it for ever, guide me till the end!

NARAYAN PRASAD

(Translated and adapted from the Hindi by Har Krishan Singh and K.D. Sethma.)

THE URGE FOR WHOLENESS

(PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE 33RD INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS :
SECTION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE)

(Continued from July)

AMONG contemporary psychologists there are evidently a good many who have in some manner more or less sensed a form of consciousness higher than the thinking consciousness. Bose's principle of unity seems vaguely to suggest it. But he has otherwise affirmed 'consciousness as such'. Mitra is very explicit in asserting 'a state of perfectly stable equilibrium quite content and at harmony with itself'. Freud too is not closed to the possibility of a completely harmonised personality. 'Integration of personality' is a very concrete proposition with McDougall and he contemplates a master sentiment, which will be able to afford a complete synthesis to the personality as a whole. However, Jung's work in this connection is definitely the most striking. By a strictly empirical investigation of personality involving primarily an interpretation of dreams of 'normal persons of superior mentality' and of the symbolism of mediaeval alchemy and the religious life of the east and the west, he discovers a centre of personality, which is the one factor that unravels the mystery of human personality more than any other known explanation.

But, while the characteristics of the consciousness of the centre are so distinct and unique, Jung does not see in it a new plane and level of experience. The ego-consciousness, he clearly recognises, is marked by 'exclusion, selection and discrimination' and is a polarity in human personality opposed to a principle of the unconscious, which he calls the shadow or alter-ego. The consciousness of the centre or self is a consciousness of wholeness above all polarities. Evidently the latter is an experience of a level and plane different from that of the ego-consciousness, as the ego-consciousness of man organised by memory, imagination and thinking is different from the consciousness of the animal, determined by the immediate impulse. We can virtually distinguish three levels of experience : impulse, desire and aspiration. Experience being primarily conative, these three terms are well-suited to designate its levels. Impulse is a conation self-seeking and limited to the present moment. A 'here and now' is its necessary condition. Between impulses themselves there is hardly any co-ordination. Each impulse as it arises governs the organism. However, if two impulses happen to be aroused simultaneously they can mutually inhibit each other or reinforce each other, according as they happen to be contrary or mutually helpful. The impulse is the order of the day of animal life. Man with the emergence of ideation is able to re-live old experiences in memory and imagine new ones, and thus desire, which is 'impulse working on the plane

of imagination,' comes into being. Desire is a wider principle of conation, in the sense that it is not limited to here and now. It can cover past, present and future. That affords comparison and therefore a relative co-ordination of desires becomes possible. Out of such co-ordination sentiments and individual characters arise. However, desire being essentially impulse and therefore self-seeking and egoistic, the organisations of character presented by men are ordinarily of the nature of compromises among rival impulses. A life of wholeness, in which the individual impulses become like members of an organism, all seeking the common good of the organism, is not possible at the plane of desire. Conflict, compromise, suppression, repression are normal and natural to this plane of life. And this is the general human plane of existence. The third plane of human experience is revealed by the fact of psychic consciousness achieved by any kind of religious, mystic or yogic discipline of life involving a whole-hearted turning of life's thought, feeling and will to the highest ideal of disinterested Truth or Divinity, capable of unifying life's countless desires. The result of such a course is the emergence of a new type of conation, which proceeds out of the united energies of the individual's life. This conation we would call aspiration, the psychic's own seeking, the willing, the whole willing of the psychic consciousness of Sri Aurobindo or of Jung's centre or self of personality.

Now, while Jung clearly recognised the quality of whole-willing in relation to his centre or self, he did not see that it was qualitatively a new experience marking a distinct plane of consciousness. The result has been much contradiction and confusion in his thought: *e.g.* "Exclusiveness, selection and discrimination are the root and essence of all that claim the name of consciousness", and "a universal consciousness is a contradiction in terms". However, the yogis are to him 'past masters' in the art of attaining to wholeness of life. But the *samādhi* state, which they aim at, seems to him "to be equivalent to an unconscious state". "In their case," says he, "the unconscious has devoured the ego-consciousness." "An accurate appreciation of the methods of the Pali-canon or of the Yoga-sutras," he is prepared to grant, "produces a remarkable extension of consciousness. But the contents lose in clearness and detail with increasing extension. In the end, consciousness becomes vast but dim, with an infinite multitude of objects merging into an indistinct totality—a state in which the subjective and objective are almost completely identical."²²

So Jung recognises that the yogis attain to a wholeness of life, yet the highest state which they achieve is to him one of unconsciousness, which by his own characterisation is 'chaotic' in character. Surely we cannot ascribe to the unconscious the quality of wholeness, if its essential nature is chaotic. Jung argues, "I am unable to separate an unconscious below from an unconscious above, since I find intelligence and purposiveness below as well as above."²³ And therefore what is not conscious—in the sense of ego-consciousness—is unconscious, and a superconscious state—a consciousness higher in organisation than the general human—does not exist. But surely the intelligence and purposiveness of the chaotic unconscious are very different from those of the state of whole living possible to man. Jung ascribes to his unconscious a great variety

of attributes. It is chaotic, it possesses the wholeness of the yogi and the contrary qualities usually ascribed to the absolute of the mystics.²⁴ And, in addition, he is so emphatic about his consciousness of the 'centre' or 'self', which reconciles the last opposition of consciousness and unconsciousness. Evidently Jung's thought involves a recognition of a form and plane of consciousness, which is essentially characterised by the quality of wholeness. However, owing to failure to recognise its full character he could not but class it with the unconscious. The superconscious is surely unconscious to us at the moment, but while the unconscious is the dynamic retention of our past, the superconscious is the inherent evolutionary possibility for our future.

If man is not the end state of evolution then surely the future possibilities of the growth of consciousness have in some sense a present reality. That is really our superconscious. The human form of consciousness is a superconscious condition with reference to the animal consciousness. And as in the higher animals it is possible to detect indications of the thinking mind, so in the human, at its highest reaches, indications can be detected, as they must be, of the future trend of evolution. This trend is clearly for a consciousness acting as a whole, possessing complete inner organisation. This trend is not a partially realised fact so far as the ego-consciousness is concerned, and so far as the unconsciousness is concerned we have in it just the raw material of that organisation. This trend cannot be accredited to the one or the other. It is, therefore, a possibility that is being progressively realised. Individuals, however, do exist and have existed throughout human history almost, who have confirmed the possibility by presenting it in their life as a realised fact. Jung got mixed up at a number of points for failure to recognise the superconscious as a sphere distinct from the unconscious. But this is the pre-eminent field of research so far as Indian psychology is concerned. Yoga has primarily aimed at realising the highest possibilities of human life. The past has mattered to it in a secondary way. For western psychology the investigation of the past has been the whole business of psychology. But evidently the future of mankind is bound up with our knowledge of the superconscious, the laws of its working and the methods of its realisation. And in this connection the importance of Indian psychology is unique.

Jung's characterisation of the *samādhi* state as unconsciousness is inappropriate in more ways than one. The yogic discipline essentially proceeds by the practice of concentration. That the end of concentration should be complete dispersion of attention and unconsciousness is ununderstandable. Further, there are agreeing accounts of a large number of persons of the mystic class all the world over, who have described *samādhi* or the ecstatic condition as a state of intense delight. Moreover, persons who have reached that state and are capable of enjoying it periodically display in their ordinary life a composure and integration of life much higher than the average. All this would show that the *samādhi* state is not an unconscious condition. However, it must be granted to Jung that certain yogic tendencies, which were perhaps of the nature of aberration of yoga proper, have really aimed at an unconscious state and *samādhi* has been to them no more than a deep slumber. Jung is also mostly right in stating that yoga 'winds up with *samādhi*'. But such is not the case with all systems of

yoga. Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga, for example, cares for *samādhi* as a means for raising the general level of consciousness, for transforming the divided consciousness into the form of 'whole living' normally. "Our object is," says Sri Aurobindo, "to make spiritual life and its experiences fully active and fully utilisable in the waking state and even in the normal use of functions." ²⁵

(*To be continued*)

INDRA SEN

REFERENCES

22. Jung, *Integration of Personality*, p.26.
23. *Ibid.*, p.16.
24. Cf. "The identity of the opposites is the characteristic of every psychic event that is unconscious," Jung, *Ibid.*, p.225.
25. Sri Aurobindo, *Arya*, Vol. I, p.245.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

The Tarot By *Mouni Sadhu*. Publishers : Allen & Unwin Ltd., London.
Price 63 sh.

Hermetism is an ancient system of Philosophy largely developed and bequeathed by the older order of Mystics in Egypt. The central feature of its Teaching is that the Creation of which we are a part is of one piece. Innumerable though the gradations of Existence be, they are but several emanations from One Being, governed by One Law. Everything is related to all else; what happens here has its repercussions everywhere else. As above, so below. Each individual formation in the universe is a projection of the One Being planted in the multi-tiered field of evolution. The destiny of each is to grow in the image of the Father-Soul and, rich with the gains of evolution, to join with It ultimately: *Reintegration*. The corpus of knowledge covering the processes of the working of the several Forces and Beings that make this evolution possible, the means of participating in this grand universal Action and thereby forging one's own destiny, forms the *occult* content of this Mystic tradition. *Tarot* is the quintessence of Hermetic Occultism, preserved in a series of illustrated Cards, 22 major and 56 minor, each comprising one *arcana*, mystery.

Every card has a Figure, a Hebrew letter and a sign. Correctly interpreted and worked out in its full symbolism, each *arcana* reveals the secret of the working of a particular sphere of life. The present treatise is the result of over thirty years of patient study, research and verifying practice on the part of the author who has had the benefit of looking into rare original parchments and receiving initiations from recognised masters of the Science.

Mouni Sadhu makes it clear at the very outset that occultism must be distinguished from spirituality and emphasises again and again that, for those who are on the active spiritual path, occultism has little of benefit to offer. Its principal role, as he sees it, is to enlarge the domain of the mind, prepare the consciousness to expand and familiarise itself with realms of Being other than the physical, acquire a certain mastery over the environments and generally to equip oneself for the inevitable journey to the Spirit. The *Tarot*, writes the author, is 'a useful instrument of cognition', an 'algebra of occultism'; it embraces Alchemy, Astrology, Kabbalah, Magic and other sciences of practical import. "The Tarot is neutral; neither good nor evil in itself, just like figures which can express any quantity, suitable or unsuitable, true or false. The whole system is based on the Universal Principle which manifests itself in every sphere of life. We may call it the 'Law' (*Tetragrammaton* or *Tetrad* of Hermetists). The symbols used are letters of the old Hebrew alphabet, plus figures and numbers. Three veils for three worlds. This is comfortable, for knowing the meaning of such a letter-symbol, and so on, that is, the fixed idea behind it, we can operate just as a mathematician does with algebraic formulas and terms."

Each *arcana* is abundantly illustrated and presented in a number of lessons, each lesson covering a single topic. The precise method of applying these occult theorems is shown. The learned writer has, however, taken care

not to say too much for fear of misuse. He has taken pains to deliver as much of helpful knowledge as possible in understandable terms and is, on that account, entitled to the special gratitude of all who are interested in the Science of Occultism. While it is not possible to follow the exposition step by step within the limits of this brief study, we should like to cite a few extracts from these lessons for the fresh light they throw on many of the phenomena puzzling the modern mind.

Speaking of the advantages of learning the art of exteriorisation, separation of oneself from the physical body in a subtle way, the author writes : "If you can exteriorise even partially at the moment when your body receives an injury, you will be healed much quicker and more surely than otherwise. In such a case the tourbillons,¹ and the ganglions of your astral body, will have been only slightly affected, or even not at all, and then the astrosome² works quickly and effectively to repair the damage. Some fakirs make use of this method when they allow their bodies to be cut or pierced. The returning astrosome heals everything in a short time. I remember an instance in my own life when I made a spontaneous exteriorisation almost unconsciously, when my body was in great danger. It fell from a considerable height, and rolled down a stony hill; but as 'I' was then momentarily 'apart', the injuries were only superficial."

In an interesting passage the writer points out how, "long before there were Western physicians, Hindu occultists knew that sound emits calories, exciting movement by their impulses of power". "Some fakirs have been able to raise themselves into air for some time just by the use of a certain sound, while being under special nervous tension." Drawing attention to the use of sound-vibrations in battles, in calamities and in occult practices, the author remarks : "I have heard it said, that the insincere laughter of some people is able to crack the glasses on a table." No greater compliment to the destructive role of falsehood could be given !

We know that abstention from non-vegetarian food is commended for seekers of the higher Path. Why is it so ? "Vegetarian food fosters instinctive moods, while meat creates animistic passions. In tropical countries the by-products of a meat diet are well substituted by the richness of the astral solar emanations... Meat often contains bad astral, that is, it is often magnetically bound with the phantom (lower part of the astrosome) of the animal, frightened, angry or full of hate during the process of hunting and killing. We should not forget that a phantom directs the processes of decomposition and the returning of the dead body to Nature. How unfavourable it would be for your body, if in its stomach, involutionary work is being done on the substances in it by a foreign phantom, which belongs to the dead animal."

Repeatedly has the Mother said that if we are well-protected by being in the proper poise of consciousness, no harm can befall us from the ill-will or even occult practices of others. If we are so immune, the evil force redounds on its source. How does it happen and why ? Here is an explanation : "Nothing

¹ "astral creations of force which are the bases of all astro-mental realisations" (p. 29).

² astral body (p. 25).

perishes in Nature. If the action cannot hit the original target, it will act on some other entity, which will be the one most tied to the astral tourbillon by its astrosome. And who will that be ? Of course in the first place, the operator or sender himself, and the energy he has created will react against himself. This is known as the 'return blow'." What the author adds further on is interesting :

"In order to avoid such return blows, representatives of black magic always secure themselves in their magic operations, by directing the force of a vortex¹ against two persons, ensuring that it is much stronger against the true target than against the substitute. Example : a sickness is directed against you, but in the case of failure, also to a dog, a horse, and so on, or on another very passive human being from whom the magician cannot expect his arrow to rebound."

Mouni Sadhu devotes a large number of pages to the subject of what happens after physical death, the stages of the onward journey of the disembodied being, the various possibilities—good and bad—in the subtle-physical planes of transit, etc. Western occult tradition is one with the teaching of the Upanishad : as in life, so in death. What you are while living in the body determines what you will be when you cast off the body. The treatment is elaborate and instructions for helping the departed are given in sufficient detail. However, one has a feeling that the author does not give as much weight to the innate power of the soul, which is a divine emanation, in these states of transit as he does to the influence of forces and beings *en route*. He does well, happily, to underline the protection afforded to the journeying soul by the Guru, by the Great Ones active on earth.

Speaking of *astrology*, the writer observes that it 'catches just the sphere of Destiny'. He commends the saying that the stars incline but do not compel, and points out that astrology exists for an average man but not for those who exercise their will-power to fulfil their chosen aims. On the matter of birth-days and anniversaries this is what he writes : "It is interesting to note, that the fulcrum of our relation with the whole outer world—in time and space—is subconsciously based on *natural* astrology. Take our measurement of time : as the basic element we have rightly taken the way and time of the Earth's passage round the Sun.... But there are also purely occult reasons for giving importance to the revolutions of our mother-planet. It passes through different *clichés*² in time and space, and these are related to one another. In its passage through the space around the Sun, the Earth each time encounters the same position as it did exactly one year ago. The clichés of happenings are closest to us on their anniversaries. That is why we celebrate our birthdays."

And at the end of this magnificent exposition covering over 470 pages of closely printed matter, the learned author concludes : "Several ways lead to Truth, and one of them...is that of Hermetism, the Tarot.... As with every

¹ astral creation of force (p. 29).

² "Surrounding conditions. *Cliches* may belong to the past, present or future. They are impressed on the subtle matter of astro-mental planes" (p. 25).

³ *Vide* Sri Aurobindo on the topic : "There is a rhythm (one among many) in the play of the world-forces which is connected with the sun and the planets. That makes the birthday a day of possible renewal when the being is likely to be more plastic."

attainment, Reintegration is always the result of a definite effort.... Our older Brethren have passed along the whole Path.... One of the milestones on that Path for us, as we are now on this planet, is the traditional Tarot, presented in this book for those who are able :

to will, to dare, to know and to keep silent."

To know and yet be silent —this is the first and the last lesson in Occultism.

M. P. PANDIT

Sri Aurobindo Circle, Nineteenth Number, Journal of Sri Aurobindo Society, Bombay. Price Rs. 5

This yearly publication on 24th April, the date of the Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry, is once more before us. It continues to serve its useful purpose by presenting valuable papers on various aspects of the life and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

We have in it the first picture of the Mother giving *darshan* from the New Balcony on the terrace according to her changed programme. Some words of hers, bearing on the present civilisation, are very thought-provoking. Sri Aurobindo's short unpublished letters on World-Personalities like Plato, Plotinus, Napoleon, Stalin, Madame Blavatsky, Bergson, Dumas and Freud, etc., put them in proper focus and illumine our outlook on their real work and place.

Prema Nandakumar's long article on Sri Aurobindo's Unfinished Plays is the first of its kind reviewing these plays with deep understanding and grasp of the subject. Similarly we have a deep-probing article by M.V. Seetaraman on the Seer-Poet's "The Rishi". Kishor Gandhi continues his learned and well-prepared series on the Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, originally written for the Higher Course students of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. Another article by him, "The Object of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga", goes to the heart of the matter systematically, with a very profound and original vision. Then we have the thorough-going and erudite pieces "Sankhya" by M.P.Pandit, "The Conquest of Ignorance—Elimination of Evil and Suffering" by Rishabhchand, "The Metaphysical Basis of Integral Yoga" by Arabinda Basu, "God and Evil" by S.R.Mukherji. Sisirkumar Ghose's "Mystical America" and "Ideals of Indian Education" and Sisirkumar Mitra's "Indian Renaissance—Early Phase" are a fine treat. K.D.Sethna's translations from Mallarmé, continued from earlier issues of this Journal, have been handled with skill and insight; appended to it is his penetrating commentary on the French poet's sonnet *La Chevelure Vol D'Une Flamme* ("The Hair a Flight of Flame"). Near the end we have quick bright glimpses of mystical moods in Romen's short-lined "New Poems".

Printing is of high quality and the paper-cover get-up is simple and pleasing.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

IN MEMORIAM : NAROTTAM DASS MEHRA

“MOTHER DIVINE !”—

Only this word on his lips a-shine—

Her Grace alone his vision's Light—

Her Victory's Sun his soul's pure might.

Narottam (meaning “the best of men”) proved all true to his name.

Impelled from within he came to Pondicherry from his Calcutta home and had the darshan of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on August 15, 1950, for the first time. That was the golden moment of his life—a new birth of his soul.

Narottam's old ideal of a successful life merely culminating in a flourishing business changed its entire motive and colour under the direct guidance of the Mother. Then and there his soul, his psychic being, came to the fore and took charge of his career. The Love that ruled all his moments now became his shield against the shafts and arrows aimed at him. The shocks of the world came upon him, but unbowed he stood, unscathed he emerged.

His connections with the world were replaced by one all-comprehensive Connection with the Source of that Love, the Mother Divine.

His offerings to the Mother knew no reserve, no expectation of return, none of recognition. The Love effaced every dividing line of his personality. His was a single whole of self-dedication. This was the simple picture of the fire-pure change of Narottam.

On July 24, a few hours after his demise, the Mother disclosed that his psychic being had clasped her and would not leave. She said also that it was luminous and his next incarnation would be remarkable.

On July 27 an inmate of the Ashram wrote to the Mother his vision regarding Narottam's departure. A part of his vision was that Narottam might have lived for twenty years more had he lived an ordinary life outside the Ashram, free from the stress of the spiritual-seeking, but that by throwing himself at the Feet of the Mother he had achieved through her Grace the spiritual progress of twenty coming births. The Mother made a correction, saying, “He would have passed away three years ago had he lived outside.”

The disciple is extremely grateful to the Mother that She has made known what would otherwise have remained unknown.

Much more grateful is the whole family that they had their dearest one with them for three long years more because of his Ashram life here.

Six years before he breathed his last, Mamaji (as Narottam was familiarly called) spoke to me of one of his dreams in which he found himself among a group of people sitting by a burning pyre. Happy and cheerful within, he asked who the dead was. “It is Narottam, who was my life's support,” said one, heaving a deep sigh. “He was goodness itself for everybody,” said another shedding his tears. “He was a hero of the Divine Mother and died fighting her battle, a hero's death,” said the third with a broad smile. Deeply moved by this last answer, Mamaji drew close to the man and warmly blessed him.

The end of his dream came true at 10.7 a.m. on the 24th July, 1963, shortly after he had entered his fifty-sixth year.

CHINMOY

Students' Section

THE DESCENT OF THE BLUE

ACT 10

SCENE 1

(Aurobindo's residence. August 15, 1913. Birthday celebration. A small gathering. Amrita pays his homage to Aurobindo for the first time. Time : 5.15 p.m. One of the callers garlands Aurobindo amidst cheers.)

The guests are seated in rows and served with sweets. Aurobindo slowly passes by, facing each of the party for a moment. Amrita's eyes sparkle with delight. After the repast the guests take leave of Aurobindo one by one. Amrita stays on.)

IYENGAR *(to Amrita)* : You would see Babu privately ?

AMRITA : That's what my heart longs for.

IYENGAR : Then you'll have to wait some time more. Three important persons, Bharati, Srinivasachari and V.V.S. Ayer, are expected. Do you want to meet Babu with them or with the inmates ?

AMRITA : Preferably with the inmates.

IYENGAR : If so you must wait.

(As these three leave after paying homage to Aurobindo they glance at Amrita with a shade of curiosity in their eyes as if to know if he wanted to be one of Aurobindo's inmates.)

(Time : 8.15 p.m. Aurobindo at a table. Amrita goes into Aurobindo's Presence with folded hands, walks around him and finally stands in front for a moment, their eyes meeting. Aurobindo signals to an inmate to give Amrita a sweet. Amrita withdraws from the Presence, visibly moved.)

SCENE 2

1914. Calcutta. C.R.Das in his study with a friend. He is absorbed in reading the English version of one of the poems in his Sagar Sangit (Songs of the Sea) rendered by Sri Aurobindo. He reads aloud.)

All day within me only one music rings.
I have become a lyre of helpless strings,
And I am but a horn for thee to wind,

O vast musician ! Take me, all thy mind
 In light, in gloom, by day, by night express.
 Into me, minstrel, breathe thy mightiness.
 On solitary shores, in lonely skies,
 In night's huge sieges when the winds blow wild,
 In many a lovely land of mysteries,
 In many a shadowy realm, or where a child,
 Dawn, bright and young, sweet unripe thoughts conceives,
 Or through the indifferent calm desireless eves,
 In magic night and magic light of thee,
 Play on thy instrument, O Soul, O Sea.

C.R.Das : Could any rendering be more beautiful than this ? I too have attempted an English translation of the book. But mark the difference here between a born poet and a made poet. It can easily pass for original work, and as a true poet he has taken the liberty to improve upon the original in many places. To read his work is to enter into the splendour of Beauty that is Aurobindo. God has listened to my prayer. He had acted through me as an instrument in the Alipore Bomb Case and it was He who brought about Aurobindo's release. Aurobindo is now His chosen instrument in His Play to save man from himself, the world from itself and set up His own Empire upon earth. Who knows that, in the great work of His re-creation of Man, Aurobindo will not release into our minds, hearts and souls an Himalayan stream of divine poetry ?

FRIEND : Your prevision strikes an echoing note in the depths of my heart. The days are not far off when you may hear a call to participate in his great undertaking.

SCENE 3

(Aurobindo's house. Seated two of the inmates. March 29, 1914. Time : evening.)

A : Well, I have seen a new arrival from France meeting Aurobindo today. Do you know anything of her ?

B : Only this much that in France she was carrying on Sadhana almost on Aurobindo's lines—of course, without knowing it; and, what's more, she had several visions of someone she called Sri Krishna !

A : Interesting ! Wonderful too ! Then ?

B : And the very moment she saw Aurobindo, she recognised him as the Krishna of her vision.

A : What predestination ! This is the way the Divine does His work !

B : And you have marked how simple and affable she is as if she has come home to her own people.

A : That's my feeling too. Over and above that, she inspires regard.

B : Quite natural for her personality, for one who could see Aurobindo

inwardly from across the seas and who could tread the path the Master has chalked out for us here.

A : I marvel at the coincidence.

B : We may marvel, without doubt. The coincidence seems a symbol of West joining East in a great synthesis.

A : An outright *Yes* springs from within me.

B : Let us put this question to the Master. Let us hear him on the point.

A : Very well. To-morrow itself, if possible.

SCENE 4

(*The verandah of Aurobindo's room. Time: evening. Date: 30 March 1914. Aurobindo seated in a chair on the verandah. A and B, his associates, seated opposite to his table.*)

AUROBINDO : Anything for me to say ?

A : A little about the French lady who visited you yesterday, if you please.

B : The striking thing about her is that she seems to be home here among us, strangers, in a strange land in strange surroundings.

AUROBINDO : Long before her arrival here I had been aware of her. You will know her more and more from day to day. Even then she will be far above what you can know. As regards her being at home here, or in any other place, nothing would make any difference for her. She is in all the world and all the world is in her. In a large sense, she is an Indian soul born in a European body.

A and B (*almost in one voice*) : A similar thought struck us yesterday—as if she would link up East and West in a golden chain.

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*) : Yes, and much more.

SCENE 5

(*A's room. Arrives B. Date : 31 March 1914.*)

A : We have our Master's view of the great lady. How to know her view of the Master ?

B : I have had it and I am come to show it to you. The same thought was working in my mind too. And happily I chanced to come across her and I seized the opportunity of sounding her on the point. And true to her simplicity and her kindness, she showed me her recorded view. Here it is. (*He reads out.*)

Le 30 Mars 1914

"....Peu importe qu'il y ait des milliers d'êtres plongés dans la plus épaisse ignorance. Celui que nous avons vu hier est sur terre; sa présence suffit à prouver qu'un jour viendra où l'ombre sera transformée en lumière, et ou effectivement, Ton règne sera instauré sur la terre..."¹

¹ *Prières et Méditations de la Mère.*

(“...It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth : His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be, indeed, established upon earth.”)

A : Oh, a revelation ! Read it again.

B : To be sure, it's a light to our blind eyes. It is God's Blessings received through her. We are infinitely blessed to have been at his feet. So is India, so is the world.

A : And the few words of Aurobindo about her are packed with a far-reaching significance.

B : Certainly. We have now come to a radical turn in our course of life here.

CHINMOY

(To be continued)

T. S. ELIOT

(Continued from the last issue)

THE WASTE LAND

ELIOT composed "The Waste Land" in the autumn of 1921.

Through Ezra Pound's "Bel Esprit" fund, he had been enabled to take a vacation for medical care and it was while recovering his health at Lousanne in Switzerland that he wrote most of the poem.

Before returning to London, after an absence of three months he visited Pound in Paris and left the draft with him.

The skeletal theme of "The Waste Land" employs the primordial imagery of Death and Rebirth in accordance with the Grail legend.

Eliot says in his own notes on the poem—"Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie. L. Weston's book on the Grail Legend :¹ *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge)...." To another work of anthropology he is indebted in general : *The Golden Bough* by Sir James Frazer; especially the two volumes *Adonis*, *Attis*, *Osiris*.

The first symbol we are confronted with is the Latin and Greek quotation on the title page : 'Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent : Sibulla ti Theleis; respondebat illa : apothanien thelo.' Which translated is :

"For I saw with mine own eyes a celebrated Sibyl at Cumae, hanging in a bottle and when her Acolytes (boys) said, 'What do you wish, O Sibyl ?' she replied—'I wish to die.'"

The Sibyl² (guardian of the sacred cave—Gatekeeper to the Underworld) is the link of medieval legend to classical myth, symbolising *Death in life*—because the land is dead, because *Tiresias*, *The Fisher King*, lives in ignorance, without awareness, he is *wounded and has not achieved the goal* of the Quest. *The Sibyl*—(Madame Sosostri); *The Youthful Grail-bearer*—(The Hyacinth Girl); *The Quester*—(variously characterised, *i.e.*, 'the young man carbuncular' and the Fisher King embody sides of the one personality).

"The Waste Land" summarises the Grail Legend, not precisely in the usual order, but retaining the principal incidents and adapting them to a modern setting. Identification of the Grail Legend³ with the common myth of *the hero*

¹ Jessie. L. Weston's thesis is that the Grail Legend was the surviving record of an initiation ritual

Later writers have reaffirmed the psychological validity of the link between such a ritual—phallic religion—and the spiritual content of the earlier Greek Mysteries.

² Connected with the Sibylline Oracles. Apollo loved her and granted her the gift of prophecy and a life of as many years as she had grains of sand in her hand, but she forgot to ask for youth, so she gradually withered away to almost nothing.

³ The Grail Legend symbolises the search for Truth and the fulfilment of life,

assailing a devil-dragon underground or in the depths of the sea,¹ completes the unifying idea behind "The Waste Land".

The action of the poem, as Tiresias recounts it, turns thus upon two crucial incidents : 1) The Garden scene in Part I; and 2) The approach to the Chapel Perilous in Part V. The one is traditional initiation in the presence of the Grail; the other is the mystical initiation, as described by Miss Weston, into spiritual knowledge. The first, if successful, would constitute rebirth through human love and sex; the second—Rebirth without either.

Since both fail, the Quest fails, and the poem ends with a formula for purgatorial suffering, through which Tiresias may achieve the second alternative after the Tapasya of patient self-denial, renunciation—perhaps even after the death of the physical being.

I

THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

WHERE does the poet stand at the opening of "The Waste Land" ? In Lausanne, on the north shore of Lake Geneva;—at the 'Cross-Roads' of *Europe*, ruminating on an ancient Greece, her culture mingling his thoughts with the hopes and aspirations of those *Knights of the Middle Ages*.

The quotation of the Sibyl is followed up by the first four lines of the opening—Memory is revived, desire awakens, the Sibyl may not die, the new summer comes over the mountains,—from the 'Starnbergersee' over the Bavarian Alps. And we—we went on in the sunlight, into the Hofgarten, into the 'Garden of New Hope'—But 'what are the roots that clutch'—Son of Man ? You cannot say....You who know only—A heap of broken images..."

Such is the man who does not know himself, what his purpose is, or what is the purpose of the world. The material things of the earth give no satisfaction for desire—only in the shadow of the appearances can one glimpse intuitively the doom that is to come from following this path of desire and the material world of the senses.

"....Under that shadow....I will show you fear in a handful of dust."²

"Frisch weht der Wind

Der Heimat zu

Mein Irisch Kind

Wo weilest du ? "

....The summer wind blows fresh over the mountains—for those who love.

We enter the garden of *Spring* and *New Hope*—and in that moment *I was neither living nor dead, and I knew nothing*.³

¹ The hero assailing the devil-dragon in the depths symbolizes Man fighting against the forces of his lower nature which are as infinite as the sea.

² Line 20. cf. *Ezekiel* II.1.

³ Line 23. cf. *Ecclesiastes* XII, v —The tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden and desire shall fail"

Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

Oed' und leer das Meer.

Madam Sosotris—the Sibyl, the oracle—may yet tell of the destiny of this Europe laid waste, and its future place in the world.

'Those are pearls that were his eyes'—There is still the possibility of a *'sea-change'*—and therefore hope for the wounded *Fisher King*. But...there is always *Belladonna*,—the fair lady but also deadly night-shade, the lady of circumstance (situations).

Fear of death by water—You too may “die” immersed in the enveloping and engrossing consciousness of the world—sunk in the depths of “living” you may die to the higher “life” of the soul—merged in this amorphous mass of humanity preoccupied with life you may die—forget *the garden of hope*—unless—“Stetson !”—you happen to see one you know and remember, a friend perhaps or a *brother*.

“You hypocrite lecteur !—mon semblable,—*mon frère* !”

II

A GAME OF CHESS

“The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines....”

The motley takes the stage in the first scene. The technique is of contrasted images, and then a blend of sound and imagery to create atmosphere.

Two opposites of a dual purpose placed together in sense or imagery usually make a third factor of association—*i.e.*

day and night—time,
father and mother—child,
good-will and freedom—unity.

Through patterns of this type of poetry Eliot is expressing a Trinity, one pattern being involved in two others forming a co-related objective.

For most people, this pattern makes up the habit-forming basis of their lives where they take everything for granted. So is born the dry monotony of life which really is “death” (however richly endowed with material possessions)—the same old round, the same people all going round in circles of their own creating.

Then the scene shifts to the opposite scale of outer existence and the empty senseless monotony is found to be the same there.

The stanza marked by the barman's shout of Time is the true Cockney setting of the London of pre-war times. Whether the “Game” is played against the background circumstances of wealth or poverty—it is the same.

NORMAN DOWSETT

(*To be continued*)

WOODROW WILSON

EVER-MEMORABLE like the First World War is the name of Woodrow Wilson. Virginia gave birth to him in 1856. His father was a Presbyterian Minister.

Princeton University of New Jersey, one of the most important Universities in the U.S.A., nurtured Woodrow Wilson's youth, and in 1902 he became its Head. As President of the University he successfully carried out a good many reforms of the institution. He held that high position for eight long years. Then he had to steer the course of his life in another direction. He was elected Governor of the State of New Jersey. Just two years later the leaders of the Democratic Party selected Wilson as President-candidate and he was elected President of the United States. The spirit of Andrew Jackson, the seventh President of the U.S.A. and Founder-President of the Democratic Party, once more smiled through his worthy descendant, Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President and a mighty champion of democracies the world over.

The election of Wilson has a special significance, for it was the first time that all the 48 States took part in the election. The two territories, New Mexico and Arizona, were admitted to the great family of the American Union. During 1789-1912 the original thirteen States had increased to 48 and the population of four millions to 95 millions.

A notable feature : Wilson was the only President to deliver his own messages while the messages of his predecessors had been read out by somebody else. He had the gift of excellent speech-making.

In August, 1914 the First World War broke out in Europe. America remained aloof and silent. In January, 1917 Germany's foolhardiness overleapt its bounds. She went to the length of declaring that her submarines or U-boats would sink at sight any ship belonging to any nation carrying goods to the enemy. America, true to her Monroe doctrine, kept clear of the European *mélée*. But when 100 American lives were lost with the torpedoed giant of the Atlantic, the passenger ship *Lusitama*, America was horror-struck. Her next move was to take arms against the submarine-infested sea of troubles. That was in April, 1917. Desperate Britain and France saw the benign Hand of God in America's coming forward and standing by them. In his War Message to Congress Woodrow Wilson called upon all America to put an end to the wanton aggression and brutal tyranny of Germany:

"The day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other."

Further, the truth of his democratic heart cried out :

"The world must be made safe for democracy."

America's action saved France from being bled to death and Britain from starvation unto surrender.

Wilson's Inaugural Address on his assumption of the Presidential Chair is characteristic of the man. "This is not a day of triumph ; it is a day of dedication. Here muster, not the forces of party, but the forces of humanity."

Wilson was the chief Architect of the Organisation known as the League of Nations which was potentially a step towards human unity. In this connection let us not forget William Bolitho :

"Like Arthur and the legendary Alexander, and many other lesser men, he (Woodrow Wilson) left, even though defeated, a hope, a promise, that League which is as it were a symbol of his perished flesh and blood, a fragment torn out of his heart and left with us, to serve for one who will come after in a retaking up of his adventure."

"Unless America takes part in this treaty," Wilson was firmly convinced, "the world is going to lose heart. I cannot too often repeat to you how deep the impression made upon me on the other side of water is that this was the nation upon which the whole world depended to hold the scales of justice even. If we fail them, God help the world! Then despair will ensue."

That the League of Nations was later on used as an instrument of power politics was a sad deviation from the high ideal of Woodrow Wilson which had motivated its creation.

His daughter Margaret seems to have gone one step ahead and wanted to become one with all mankind by union with the Supreme. She was deeply convinced, while in America, that there was none on earth whom one could love all one's life. But then she chanced upon Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*. Deeply moved by her reading of this book, which she came to look upon as her Bible, she sailed for India. In 1938 she joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry. After meeting Sri Aurobindo she declared :

"Here *is* one on earth whom one can love all one's life and in whom one can lose oneself."

She received the name "Nishtha" from the Master. He wrote about it : "Nishtha—the word means one-pointed, fixed and steady, concentration, devotion and faith in the single aim—the Divine and the Divine Realisation" (5 November, 1938).

Margaret used to live a secluded life and refused to be diverted by outer movements that might stand in the way to her spiritual goal.

Once when a physical ailment of hers tended to be grave and it was suggested to her to go back to America and consult her family doctor, she flatly refused, saying: "They can take care of my body, but who will take care of my soul?"

She passed away on February 12, 1944. The cemetery of Pondicherry bears the simple inscription in French :

Ci-Gît
La déouille Mortelle
de Nishtha
Margaret Woodrow Wilson
16 Avril 1886—12 Février 1944

(Here lie
 The Mortal Remains
 of Nishtha
 Margaret Woodrow Wilson
 16 April 1886—12 February 1944)

The present writer is often reminded of her dedicated life while he uses his typewriter since it originally belonged to her. It is as if something of her bright being lingered in this "Corona".

MADAL

NOTE

C. Subbian's articles on Emily Dickinson will be resumed in September.

Book Two of Pujalal's *Sanskrit Simplified* will start in the same month.