

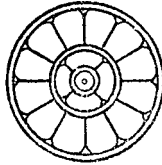
MOTHER INDIA

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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

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Vol. XVII

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	.. 5
THE SITUATION OF TODAY	<i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i> .. 6
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> .. 8
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO : THE VALUE OF INNER VOICES AND VISIONS	<i>From Nagin Doshi</i> .. 11
THE ALL-INDIA LANGUAGE QUESTION	<i>The Mother—SriAurobindo</i> .. 13
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> .. 14
A VISIT TO THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM	<i>K.D.D. Henderson</i> .. 18
SPIRITUAL CAUSERIE : ANIMALS	<i>Prabuddha</i> .. 19
TWO MODERN MYSTIC FRENCH POEMS	<i>Nolini Kanta Gupta</i> .. 22
FIERY RINGS OF GRACE : THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 11, 1965 (Poem)	<i>Niranjan Guha Roy</i> .. 27
SRI KRISHNA (Poem)	<i>M. Mansinha</i> .. 28
POEMS IN TWO MOODS : THE PRESENCE — A BIRTHDAY LAMENT	<i>Naresh</i> .. 29
HYMN TO BEAUTY (Poem)	<i>Bibhash Jyoti Mutsuddi</i> .. 30
LET ME BE GOD-AFLAME (Poem)	<i>Har Krishan Singh</i> .. 31
NEHRU-KENNEDY (Poem)	<i>Chunmoy</i> .. 32
THE DESTINY OF THE BODY : THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER	<i>Jugal Kishore Mukherjee</i> .. 33

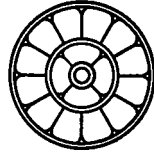
CONTENTS

ESSAYS ON <i>Savitri</i> AND <i>Paradise Lost</i>	<i>Romen</i>	.. 38
TWO LETTERS FROM AMERICA	<i>Dr. H. Choudhuri—Mrs. Lois Duncan</i>	.. 44
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
UPANISHAD SANKALAN (in Hindi)	<i>Review by M. P. Pandit</i>	.. 46

Students' Section

SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH : NEWSLETTER	<i>Norman C. Dowsett</i>	.. 47
TO BELLA (Poem)	<i>Minnie N. Canteenwalla</i>	.. 49
THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION SECOND SEMINAR : 22 November 1964	<i>Compiled by Kishor Gandhi</i>	.. 50
INSISTENCE UPON THE SANCTITY OF THE BODY IN WHITMAN'S POETRY	<i>C. Subbian</i>	.. 60
YOGA AND LIFE : XII. THE GROWING RESULTS OF THEIR ONE-LEVELMENT	<i>Har Krishan Singh</i>	.. 62

WORDS OF THE MOTHER



Why do you want me
to say something?

In silence is the
greatest power.

A stylized signature or flourish consisting of several sweeping, overlapping lines.

THE SITUATION OF TODAY

(1)

It is not of today, nor of yesterday, but also of the day before yesterday and the day before and the day before. The story is as old as human consciousness itself. Whether it will be the same tomorrow remains to be seen.

It is the fate of all spiritual endeavour to raise in its wake a contrary movement that declares and demands its negation. The Buddha says: surrounded as we are by enemies, let us not be inimical to them. The Christ, as we all know, when being led with a crown of thorns on his head and the cross on his back, heaved a sigh and prayed to the Lord to pardon all those who did not know what they were doing. In the early centuries of the Christian era when Rome sought to spread her gospel of Christendom and extend its frontiers, the vandals rose up against it and from their barbarian soil of Germania swept through the countries like a hurricane, laying waste everything before them till they reached the Holy City itself, pillaging and ravaging it, desecrating the basilica,—leaving their name as an immortal legacy to mankind for such deeds of theirs. And centuries later, the little maid of Orléans, Jeanne D'arc, was burnt alive, because she said that she saw the angels and heard their voices and conversed with God. Since then the situation seems to have worsened, not improved; for even as late as the enlightened nineteenth century, towards its end, we find a poignant picture, by the great dramatist Ibsen, of the social crisis of today, how the people, the masses, are not capable of recognizing their own secular good—not to speak of any higher spiritual welfare—and one who does or tries to do a really good turn to them is dubbed “An Enemy of the People”.

Today the opposition is infinitely greater. The call now to humanity is for an infinitely greater change—an inner change in the consciousness and an outer change in life and material existence. Also the change is to be a radical change, that is to say, from the very root, not merely a superficial reform. The aim is not to leave the world as it is or just a little better in some way, if possible, but to remould it in the very substance and constitution of the Spirit. And the ultimate goal of earthly life is not the Divine's crucified body, but the perfected glorious body.

Naturally the old habits, the millennial forces, the ignorant and obscure movements of instinct and tradition cannot suffer such an upsetting. Earthly creatures, wherever they are, cannot bear the light that descends to illumine the earth. Its impact is too strong: the beings that abide in cool shades or cosy darkness struggle and wriggle, they fear to be dissolved; they desire no change. But the decree has gone forth. And earth moves...towards the Light.

(2)

Sri Aurobindo founded the Ashram to give a form to the descending light, to make of man an angel, not leaving him to remain an animal or half animal as he now is.

The Mother's dream from her childhood was to find a place upon earth where

men would be free, happy, wise, pure, one in love, above want, dwelling in the plenitude of prosperity, both inner and outer. She was building up, she is building up a structure in that direction, naturally under the restrictions and conditions of prevailing circumstances, seeking to open them out for the play of a higher order of consciousness, a superior status of being, a luminous mode of life.

Opposition from the stagnant order, opposition from domains that do not want man to be free from his past and present and become a being of the future, is inevitable in the nature of things. Opposition is also meant to be a test and a training for perfection. Through troubles, tribulations, through whatever accidents and incidents happen, we move unflinchingly to the Divine Fulfilment.

Trials and tribulations are not new to the Ashram. From the first day Sri Aurobindo planted the seed here more than half a century ago, it has been buffeted by bad weather. He was advised to quit, offered a cosy retreat in the Himalayas by the Imperial British. The French regime offered him an equally agreeable resort, a peaceful haven on the Mediterranean coast of Africa. And even among well-wishers here, some were eager to take him out for a joy ride to . . . an unknown destination. But Sri Aurobindo had made his choice. This is the holy spot, this is the seat for his sadhana and siddhi—Pithasthan. The Mother has not abjured his choice, she continues.

Even so the Buddha had taken his seat under the Bo-tree and declared : I am here and I do not move. Let my body dry up, I sit firm and go through, to the end.

The passage to heaven, Sri Aurobindo says, lies through hell. Here is his warning and beckoning :

Here must the traveller of the upward way—
For daring Hell's kingdoms winds the heavenly route—
Pause or pass slowly through the perilous space,
A prayer upon his lips and the great Name—

*

*

*

Where the red Wolf waits by the fordless stream
And Death's black eagles scream to the precipice.

The nether forces can never divert or deflect the Divine Decree. That alone is carried out and fulfilled. And in His Will is our peace.

When a mountain surges up, lifts its peak high in the heaven, an opposite movement is generated that seeks to drag it down and bring it to the original level ground—the result being formidable glaciers and cataracts and land-slides hurtling down. But through these accidents and incidents—they are no more than that—the mountain remains firm, the living structure that is to be there abides in its integrality and greatness, although the accidents look like a tearing and a mauling of its body.

Through all contraries and adversities, through all that are broken and torn, through all that pass and disappear grows slowly and emerges irrevocably that which the Supreme wills towards the final consummation. And one day we all shall see

Built is the golden tower, the flame child born.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

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.)

JANUARY 7, 1940 (Continued)

N SHOWED Sri Aurobindo Nishikanta's new poem in blank verse.

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you find the rhythm ?

N : It seems all right. How do you find it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I couldn't quite say, as I have not been familiar with this sort of metre in Bengali.

N : I asked D what he thought of it. I told him that Nishikanta had understood that D had found it very successful. D said : "That is a mistake. Please tell Guru about it. I only said that Nishikanta's overflows were very good but that here and there I found roughness. I hinted this to him but he didn't take the hint."

SRI AUROBINDO : I also had the impression that there was much weightage and crowding of things.

N : I suspected there was something wrong; otherwise you wouldn't have asked my opinion. (*Laughter*) D says that when Nishikanta tries to do something consciously he makes mistakes. He is trying many new things at present.

SRI AUROBINDO : He is trying to bring in force and strength. One has to be very careful to see that this doesn't lead to heaviness. He has a remarkable gift of rhythm, hasn't he ?

After this there was a change of topic.

S : In the quotation from the Rigveda prefixed to the first chapter of *The Life Divine* Anilbaran finds a contradiction. He says : "How can there be a first dawn if there is an eternal succession of dawns ?"

P : I told him that it is the first for those who awaken to it.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : It is the first for those who are coming to it and the last for those who are going from it. The world also has no beginning and no end. Yet they speak of the world as having been created.

P : Anilbaran was also asking about the 3 births of Agni. At first I thought Agni in the physical, the vital and the mental was meant. After looking up the text I found that the Supreme Births were spoken of.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, it is the triple birth of Agni above in the Infinite.

P : Anilbaran referred to Sayana and found that the 3 births are Indra, Vayu and Agni.

SRI AUROBINDO : Oh, if he goes by Sayana, he will be finished.

P : He says people won't accept your interpretation of the Veda.

S : Everybody has interpreted the Veda according to his own knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO : These are matters of experience; they can't be understood by the mind.

P : In *The Life Divine* there is a Vedic quotation which you have translated : "May the restrainers tell us to go to other fields and conquer them." Anilbaran thought restrainers meant only Yogis and Tapasvins.

SRI AUROBINDO : "Restrainers" is perhaps not the right word. "Binders" would have been better. The obstacles bind you down and point out your imperfections. When you have overcome them, they tell you as it were : "Now you have got the right to conquer even other fields."

After the rest had gone away, P started another topic.

P : I had a talk with Nishikanta about artist X. Nishikanta says X is very much handicapped by his wife. One day, when he and X were alone, X told Nishikanta "Never marry."

SRI AUROBINDO : That was the only chance he had of saying it ?

N : I have heard that X has no voice in anything.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not even in his art ?

Once again the talk came to art and democracy.

P : There is an inconsistency in those people who advocate art for the masses.

SRI AUROBINDO : How ?

P : If they really want art to make an approach to the masses, why don't they like the cinema and the radio ?

N : Perhaps they think such things will lower the moral standard.

SRI AUROBINDO : The common people are not concerned with morality.

P : If the cinema and the radio are going to spoil their morality, then what should art deal with in order to appeal to the masses ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? Charkha, non-violence, satyagraha.

JANUARY 8, 1940

P : Have you read C. V. Raman's address ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I believe so.

P : He says they have discovered two new elements—I don't know how.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not discovered, but created, by changing the position of the particles in the atom and making new combinations. But what are they going to do with them ?

P : The cost of making anything will be prohibitive, though the method of breaking the atom by means of cyclotrons is very easy. Raman has supported Einstein's theory about the unity of matter and energy.

SRI AUROBINDO : Has anybody cast doubt on it ?

P : No.

SRI AUROBINDO : But what is energy ?

P : Modern scientists have stopped asking that question. They only answer how, not why or what. But their own discoveries will make the question more pointed.

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite so, because the problem is why a different combination of particles within the atom should make a new element.

P : Energy was once said to be lines of force.

SRI AUROBINDO : That means force in movement and that when force is in activity we come to know energy. But what is force ?

P : They don't answer that question, either.

SRI AUROBINDO : Unless you accept a Being who applies the Force and becomes Matter, there can be no real explanation. But when this answer is given, people say, "What's this nonsense about Somebody behind ?" They explain that it is only the force of Nature. They, however, don't know what Nature is. Nature stands for a magic formula. Everything is supposed to be explained by that formula !

P : They once held rigorously to the law of causation. But now they find it difficult to apply it in the new investigations.

SRI AUROBINDO : The law of causation only means that certain conditions follow certain other conditions.

N : How can one prove the Somebody you have spoken of ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The proof is that there is no other explanation.

S : There is no "body", but only Being.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. I have said in *The Life Divine* that you can't explain the

appearance of consciousness out of matter unless you accept a Being behind. That Being may either be unmanifest and involved in matter or it may become manifest.

S : It is Brahman playing on Brahman or with it.

SRI AUROBINDO : They will accept a playing within Brahman but not outside it.

N : They want to catch Brahman with their scientific instruments.

P : Of even that they have despaired now. They are now going towards mathematics and speak of tensor equations !

NIRODBARAN

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

THE VALUE OF INNER VOICES AND VISIONS

SRI AUROBINDO : What do you mean by progress ? The Mother spent many years entering the occult worlds and [learning all that was to be learnt there. All that time she was making no progress ? She sees things always when she goes into trance. Her capacity is a thing of no value ? Because a great number of people don't know how to use their faculties or misuse them or give them excessive value or nourish their ego by them, does it follow that the faculties themselves have no Yogic use or value ?

8-7-1936

Q : This occult faculty, I think, does not by itself mean much of a progress.

SRI AUROBINDO : Even by itself it is a progress in the development of the consciousness though it may not carry with it any spiritualisation of the nature. 9-7-1936

Q : I see now that my ideas about the occult faculty are elementary. But what I still fail to make out is, since it has such good uses, why does Sri Raman Maharshi discourage his disciples from having any dealings with it ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He discouraged his disciples because his aim was the realisation of the inner Self and the intuition—in other words the fullness of the spiritual Mind—visions and voices belong to the inner occult sense, therefore he did not want them to lay stress on it. I also discourage some from having any dealing with visions and voices because I see that they are being misled by false visions and false voices. That does not mean that visions and voices have no value.

9-7-1936

Q: Some visions are seen in the waking state; others when one goes into trance. Are two different faculties at work?

SRI AUROBINDO : Vision in trance is vision no less than vision in the waking state. It is only the condition of the recipient consciousness that varies—in one the waking consciousness shares in the vision, in the other it is excluded for the sake of greater facility and range in the inner experience. But in both it is the inner vision that sees.

9-7-1936

I do not know what you mean by practical sadhana. If one develops the occult faculty and the occult experience and knowledge, these things can be of great use, therefore practical. In themselves they are a part of opening of the inner consciousness and also help to open it further—though they are not indispensable for that.

9-7-1936

Q: The visions and voices can help us to see or hear our Guru, to receive constant directions from you or the Mother for our sadhana. Well, why can't you open me to them? I shall then have to trouble you much less with my crowd of questions. With this faculty you will always appear before me and talk to me!

SRI AUROBINDO : I shall have first to be sure that you will make the right use of them. I prefer that you should get higher discrimination and knowledge first.

9-7-1936

Q: It was in sleep or meditation, I don't remember. I was approaching the Mother with a dish of various flowers. Before making her my pranams I offered her three flowers of "Divine Love". Has this any correspondence with my sadhana?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not quite clear what this number 3 means in this connection. Possibly it is the aspiration for the Divine's Love in the three parts of the being.

12-7-1936

Q: About the subtle smells and tastes, you said, "They were merely signs of the opening. Their becoming of importance depends on the development of the occult knowledge and powers." By themselves are they not then a sign of occult opening?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not an opening of occult knowledge and powers, but simply an opening of the inner consciousness.

15-7-1936

Q: The inner voices give us a truth and a command. But books also can do that. The former must be bringing also the necessary force. Perhaps we don't get it because some veil between the inner and the outer being hinders it.

SRI AUROBINDO : An inner voice is a voice only—it may give the direction, but not the force. A voice speaks, it does not act. There is a great difference between reading a book and receiving the inner direction.

29-5-1937

Q: It is difficult to develop the inner voices, whereas all can develop the consciousness for their guidance. Again, those voices are always dangerous, aren't they?

SRI AUROBINDO : There are plenty of difficulties and dangers in the consciousness also. There is only one reliable inner voice, the psychic. 2-6-1937

X and Y had no voices but they justified the wrong things their consciousness suggested to them and indulged them as if they were divine things (Y) or very high and noble ideas (X). So what is the difference ? 4-6-1937

From NAGIN DOSHI

THE ALL-INDIA LANGUAGE QUESTION

THE MOTHER'S VIEWS

THE only immediate solution is that each province should keep its own language as official language of the State and that for Central Administration the existing common language of English should continue for the moment.

A GIST OF SRI AUROBINDO'S VIEWS (*From Nirodbaran*)

If India is to be an international State, English has its place and is even a necessity. There English alone can be the medium of expression, especially now that it is replacing French as a world-language.

But as it is a foreign tongue the nationalist sentiment will be against its being the common language of the country. As to Hindi becoming the common language, Hindi cannot replace English in the universities, nor can it substitute the provincial language.

When the national spirit grows, it is difficult to say what will happen. In Ireland, after the revolution, they wanted to abolish English and adopt Gaelic; but as time went on and things settled themselves their enthusiasm waned and English came back.

December 27, 1938

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA

(We are reproducing, from an old issue of "Mother India", an editorial which drives home certain truths which are often not realised.)

INDIA'S decision to remain a member of the Commonwealth in spite of being an independent sovereign Republic has given a new lease of life amongst us to the English language. Until recently English was apt to be regarded as the remnant of a foreign imposition, an inappropriate growth in the way of an authentic indigenous literature. Today it seems an appropriate and desirable link between us and the group of English-speaking nations with whom we have formed a voluntary association : it has become the medium of a larger existence in which we have elected to share. This is all to the good—especially as America with whom we shall have more and more to deal is English-speaking. But we shall be underestimating the significance of the English language in India if we think that it is only a valuable means of promoting our political, economic and technological interests in the democratic world. English is, above all, an immense cultural asset. And it is such an asset not simply because it renders available to us magnificent countries of the mind, but also because it renders possible to us the most magnificent expression of our own soul.

The first impulse, *vis-à-vis* this statement, will be to cry, "Absurd paradox !" and to follow up with the question : "Can India really take to the English language as an instrument of her Indianness and make her utterance in it anything more than an exotic curiosity ?" The answer, surely, cannot be given with a facile pointing out of the great increase in the number of Indians who talk and write fair English. The answer can only be given by seeing whether there is what Galsworthy termed "flower of author". Disclosure of the inmost individuality through the subtlest potentialities of the language : this is "flower of author". Such "flower" need not be in one particular style as opposed to others. Simplicity and complexity, plainness and richness, urbanity and intense vibrancy—all these can equally allow it. Can we affirm that, in any style whatever, "flower of author" is possible in English-writing India as something more than a rare, almost accidental, growth ? Yes, we can. For two reasons.

What is called Indianness possesses as one of its main characteristics a power of multifold assimilation arising from a many-sidedness, a globality, in the unique penchant that is the Indian genius. The Indian genius is, of course, best described as spiritual; but it is not spiritual in a narrow way : it is an urge of synthesis of a hundred approaches to the Eternal, the Infinite, the Divine. Not only does it spiritualise everything in the long run : it also spiritualises everything without depriving any term of its own essential quality. It annuls nothing by the transforming change

it induces : it induces the change by raising all things to their own hidden heights of Supernature, as it were—heights at which they are most authentically themselves by being spiritual, by being facets of the Divine, the Infinite, the Eternal. Wonderfully synthetical and assimilative, it can also embrace and Indianise the quality of any race, the force of any culture; hence it can make both the mind and the movement of the English language part of its activity. This mind and this movement do not confront it as utterly foreign : they come to it striking sympathetic chords in its multi-rhythmed heart. That is the first reason why “flower of author” in English can be an Indian growth drawing not unnaturally or accidentally its nourishment from the soil of the Indian soul.

The second reason is the character of the English language itself. No other modern language is so varied in mentality, so diverse in turn. It is a fusion of many strains—the Celtic, the Roman, the Saxon, the Teuton, the French, the Italian have mingled in it, and the Greek, “psyche” and the Hebrew “ruach” have also coloured it. As a result, it is an extremely plastic and versatile instrument capable of being expressive of numerous types of consciousness. No wonder it does not have any marked tradition of persistent mood or manner—as, for instance, French has; no wonder, too, it is notable for countless idiosyncrasies : and no wonder, again, it has proved so adequate a medium for every innovation in outlook and in-look, whether it be the adventurous imaginative gusto of the Renaissance, the gorgeous oriental religiosity of Hebraism, the passion and wonder and Nature-feeling of the Romantic Movement, the vague poignancies and dim wizardries of Celtic paganism. The synthetical and assimilative Indian genius meets in the English tongue a multiplicity and pliancy of temper and tone which give that genius all the more chance of taking hold of this tongue for living self-expression.

There is no doubt that “flower of author” is, for Indians, possible in English. This does not, of course, imply possibility for all and sundry. Such possibility is not there for Indians in even the indigenous languages : every Indian is not a literary master. And, where English is concerned, it is quite to be expected that “flower of author” should be less common than in those languages. But to maintain that Indian utterance in English can only be an exotic curiosity and never an organic unfolding of genuine Indianness is to indulge in a sweeping superficiality. What now remains to be shown is that true Indian utterance in English is more than just possible and that it can be in quality finer and greater than in any language spoken by Indians today. This is the supreme paradox we have to elucidate—and if we can elucidate it we shall have dealt the death-blow to all efforts by our educationists to minimise the importance of English in our cultural self-expression.

English is unquestionably the most highly developed of modern languages both by virtue of the large variety of racial and psychological strains in it and by virtue of the extraordinary crop of poets in English history. Poetry is the sovereign power of all language : where poets of high quality abound there the language reaches the highest development, especially when the language itself has immense poten-

tialities. No student of the world's literature will dispute that England stands head and shoulders above other modern countries in poetry. Neither in modern Europe nor anywhere else do we find such a poetic galaxy as Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Francis Thompson and Yeats. If we may add from those to whom English was native outside England, there is the free-verse giant, Whitman. In consequence of the intensely inspired impact of poets like these, the versatile English language has acquired a unique capacity for strangely suggestive effects—the super-subtle phrase, the packed visionary phrase, the phrase of indefinable intonation. Even in prose that unique capacity has its play and, within the less daring terms proper to prose, English still surpasses all modern languages, including those of India herself, in the immediacies and intimacies of intuitive speech. If this is so, then English is bound to be most valuable to the genius of a country which is not only synthetical and assimilative in the extreme but also spiritual to the *n*th degree; for, a speech with extraordinary potentialities of strangely suggestive effects suits most the magic, the mystery, the depth, the sudden and sublime revelatory reach of the spiritual consciousness. English promises, therefore, to be the expressive body *par excellence* of our true soul

What adds to our conviction about this promise is the fact that the strangely suggestive potentialities of English have already been pressed into service of the spiritual consciousness by English writers themselves. Herbert's religious simplicity at once piquant and passionate—Crashaw's rich sensuousness kindling into ecstatic devotion—Donne's nervous intricate power troubling the Inscrutable—Vaughan's half-obscure half-bright straining beyond thought into mystical vision—Wordsworth's profound contemplative pantheistic peace—Blake's deeply delicate radiance or his mighty mythology of events in Eternity—Coleridge's glimmering occultism of the weird and the haunting—Shelley's rainbowed rapture of some universal Light and Love and Liberty—Keats's enchanted artistic luxuriance, through allegory and symbol and legend, in the Sovereign Beauty that is Sovereign Truth—Patmore's pointed polished ardour of the intellect for "the unknown Eros"—Francis Thompson's colourful heat of response to "the many-splendoured Thing"—Gerard Manley Hopkins's quiver and flash of aspiration within a God-dedicated discipline—Yeats's bewitched or passionate echo to the Immortal Loveliness in its world-wandering—AE's crystalline contact with superhumanly populated twilights within and divinely inhabited dawns above—all these quickenings of the spiritual consciousness, together with the American Whitman's dynamic delight under the touch of a Cosmic Life and the miniature snapshotting of an infinite Mystery by the American Emily Dickinson, are already present in English and have turned it to what may be called Indian uses. Doubtless, the uses are still somewhat elementary in comparison to what the Indian genius has achieved in the ancient Sanskrit of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. But the fact stands that English lends itself as the fittest body to this genius with an actually accomplished functioning, however initial, along our own national soul-trend. Hence, if we are to fulfil that trend, the most natural no less than the most

desirable act on our part is to find voice in English.

Not that the indigenous languages should be neglected. They must be developed. But English at present comes to us with a face of supreme destiny. And what that destiny is can be seen even now. For, even now, before our very eyes, it is being wonderfully worked out. A band of Indian poets remarkably gifted are uttering in English the mystical experience with an intense fidelity and felicity, and at their head is one of the greatest figures of the contemporary world and he has banished all shadow of doubt regarding the destiny we have spoken of. Sri Aurobindo has given the world what is at once the finest and grandest literary achievement of modern India and the deepest and highest articulation of Indian spirituality today—the epic with which he was occupied in the spare hours of a Yogi and which grew to nearly twenty-four thousand lines : *Savitri, a Legend and a Symbol*. In *Savitri*, we have proof as ample as we could wish that, while our vernaculars more easily provide us with footholds for climbing beyond commonplaces into the revelatory intensities of literature, English alone enables at present the soul of India to attain the absolute peak of self-expression.

And from that peak the soul of India will communicate, to the whole Commonwealth and to all America and to whatever country is in touch with them, the harmonious rhythms of its own greatness. Far and wide, by means of English, the Indian genius will spread the word born from the occult immensities that are the luminous source and support and goal of its unique history. Embodied in this language by India, Inspiration

with her lightning feet,
A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops,

will conquer the heart and mind of humanity. Not through translations from Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil or Hindi—beautiful and powerful instruments of truth though they may prove—but directly through the tongue that was Shakespeare's and is now Sri Aurobindo's, the peoples of the earth will most vividly know India as the creative bride of the Divine and as the mighty mother of a new age which shall justify the light on man's upward face.

K. D. SETHNA

À VISIT TO THE SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

(K. D. D. Henderson, Secretary to "Umon for the Study of the Great Religions", reports in his "Nineteenth Newsletter" a visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during his tour of the East in the spring of 1964. We are reproducing the passages which follow on some remarks of Mr. Henderson's apropos of the theme : "It is this active love of man which seems to me to need greater emphasis. .")

SPIRITUAL ideas *are* being put into practice at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry, which I visited for the first time. Here the *mystique* pervades workshops and engineering sheds and press and paper-mill as well as weaving and arts and crafts education, sport, and contemplation.

Here boys and girls work and play together from kindergarten to undergraduate level, specialising only at a very late stage, with a clear run-through for the clever and no neglect of the dull. Small classes and a devoted community have admittedly disposed of some of the usual educational snags in advance, but the achievement is impressive and encouraging.

Impressive is the word for the whole tremendous enterprise, which seems now to occupy most of the town with its clinics and library, hostels and theatre and dining rooms and canteen and its endless playgrounds, tennis courts, swimming pool, gymnasium, boxing and wrestling rings.

They have even solved the architectural problem of a modern construction suited to the tropics, with outer walls clad mainly with concrete slats looking like gigantic Venetian blinds, keeping the rooms cool and airy, and pleasant to look at from outside.

Out at Le Grand Étang they are converting 250 acres of badly eroded wasteland into a farm, orchard and model dairy with a school of agriculture, soil conservation and veterinary science. There is no end to their achievement, limited only, as usual, by the funds available.

The Ashram is far from being conventional, and is eyed askance in consequence, but one comes away from it feeling that it is essentially alive.

...At Pondicherry my thanks are due to my host, Sri Purani, to Sri Kishorilal who took me round and sent me over in his car to Cuddalore to catch my train, and to the Secretary [of the Sri Aurobindo Society], Mr. Navajata, who entertained me to breakfast.

I was also fortunate enough to have a long conversation with Margaret Lidchi, who edits "World Union Goodwill".¹

K. D. D. HENDERSON

¹ Edited at present under the title "World" by Medhananda and Maude Pickett Smith—EDITOR

SPIRITUAL CAUSERIE

ANIMALS

NAGOD in Uttar Pradesh was the scene, some years ago, of a remarkable happening which has been recently featured by a prominent Weekly in Kannada. Here is the report :

He was a prisoner doing a stretch for some offence. Of a frightening visage, he could be counted on being a bugbear to little children. But he enjoyed a reputation as a mantrik, especially famed for bringing snake-bitten victims back to life.

Once a man was bitten by a black viper. Even before he could be removed to the hospital, the victim had turned blue; his limbs had gone cold.

Doctors worked on the patient all the night but were unable to draw the poison out from his system. Finally they gave up and, pronouncing the man dead, returned the body.

With a glimmer of hope that the mantrik might effect a miracle, the body was taken to the jail where the prisoner had been lodged. The jail authorities had known the prisoner's unusual power on snakes and their deathly bites, and had given him standing permission to go out to treat patients who sought his ministrations.

The mantrik came out, examined the victim and proceeded to collect a few details about the viper that had dealt the mortal blow. Then he took out a few black-grams from his vest pocket and with an incantation began throwing them on the body. Nothing happened; the body lay cold, lifeless.

He would not give up. He commissioned a dish of milk and, even before it arrived, drew three large concentric circles. The body was placed in the innermost circle, the dish of milk in the second and the bystanders were asked to stay in the outer circle, with an injunction not to move out of the circle or to panic.

Incanting he went round the circle once and thereafter continued to repeat the mantra. After a while he took out two coins from his pocket and uttering a magical formula threw them up. Where they landed, none knew, none saw.

Half an hour passed; the mantrik was all in a tremble with rage. Nonetheless the incantation continued without pause or respite. Then the bystanders saw, in abject terror, a black viper approach the outer circle and with its angry open hood begin to rap the ground. The two coins the mantrik had thrown up had stuck to the adder's hood.

"Are you in distress?" enquired the mantrik.

And as if in confirmation the snake nodded its hood. In a futile struggle to dislodge the coins it was repeatedly striking its hood on the floor.

"If you want them gone, you had better set about drawing the poison away from the man's body"—these were the terms of the mantrik to the reptile.

But it would not listen. It continued its antics with its hood. Now the mantrik was indeed roused. He demanded a yard of new cloth and when it was brought to him, he made it into the shape of a snake but not before he had offered yet one more chance to the adder to relent. It did not yield. The mantrik then tore a bit of cloth—which now resembled a snake—at the tail, incanting his formula at the same time. And strange ! blood gushed forth from the tail of the live snake, sending a shaft of terror into the hearts of the crowd. The viper's obstinacy enraged the mantrik still further, who now tore off the tail of his cloth-snake up to an inch, and the live snake's tail too was seen cut and blood began to flow freely. The snake had perforce to admit defeat. Slowly it approached the body and going round once, and then again for the second time, it sought the place where the man had been bitten and began to suck the poison out. In about half an hour's time, the body's colour began to change; in a short while the man started respiring and soon got up as if from sleep.

Allowing for certain possible embellishments inevitable in reportings of this type, there is nothing at all improbable in this account. For it is a fact that one can acquire power over the animal world by means of the Mantra. Each class of animals, *e.g.*, snakes, dogs, scorpions, etc., has its own group-life and its own group-being. We may call it the spirit or deity of that species, the snake-world for instance. It is possible to propitiate this spirit by occult means such as rites that are prescribed in the occult lore of all lands, and through it obtain control over the particular reptile creation. It is also possible to gain this contact by means of mantra-upasana. There are special Mantras which, when successfully practised and realised, endow the practitioner with power to control the forces or beings that preside over their respective domains. One may gain some contact, enter into a relation and seek the favour of that spirit. Or one may acquire a power of control over it and through it over the creation ruled by it. The latter would seem to be the case with our mantrik. By a combination of Mantra and Kriya (ritual) he exercised a compelling power on the snakeworld and—in the incident under report—compelled the snake to withdraw the poison it had injected into the victim.

It may be noted that his preparing a cloth replica of the snake closely corresponds to the recognised technique in black art of this type, of using a likeness or some personal belonging of the person concerned to act upon him. Though it is indeed possible to strike one without any such medium, it is easier to act through concentration on a material object, which by reason of having absorbed the personal vibrations of the intended victim or through likeness of form serves as an effective channel.

There is another kind of relationship which one may establish with these animal types. It is one of friendship, of understanding. And it is amazing to note that once an understanding is arrived at, they keep it much more faithfully than their human superiors. Sri Kapali Sastri once related to me such an incident in his life. It was about scorpions. Scorpions, as we all know, are frequent visitors in tropical countries and the more hot it is the more frequent are their visitations. Their sting is excruciatingly painful and at times even fatal. So many of them used to enter his

house. He had arrived at an understanding with them that he would not harm them and they on their part left him alone. Times without number he would be suddenly startled out of his preoccupations—whether while sitting or walking—and when he looked around he would see a scorpion leisurely sauntering along or sitting and watching. But they never touched him. Things went on this way for a long time. One day, however, some relations arrived in the house with plenty of children. And when a scorpion was seen moving during this period, Sastri's mother told him that it was better to kill it as there were so many children exposed and the risk was not worth taking. Sastri demurred. But she persisted and spoke to him again and again. Reluctantly he yielded and the scorpion was done away with. And imagine, the next day another scorpion came into his room and for the first time he was stung !

Not only have the animals a code of honour of their own, but they have also a remarkable faculty of entering into the spirit and mind of their human companions. A colleague of mine from abroad was describing the other day how he had a darling of a dog which sensed his moods even before he expressed them. If he were depressed for any reason, it would lie on the carpet at a distance from his seat and go on gazing at him with a half-upturned look. If he were cheerful, it would jump on his sofa, caress him with its paws and add a joyous glow to the atmosphere.

Some of the animals are sensitive spiritually too. Cats, for instance, are very receptive to spiritual vibrations. They are found to be very susceptible to spells of meditation. It was, obviously one such cat that moved Sri Aurobindo to this portrayal :

A musing mask is her immobile face...
 An animal creature wonderfully human,
 A charm and miracle of fur-footed Brahman.

PRABUDDHA

TWO MODERN MYSTIC FRENCH POEMS

Here is the first poem. I give only the text, followed by an explanatory paraphrase.

(I)

CHANSON DES ETAGES

Il fait jour chez la reine.
C'est la nuit près du roi.
Déjà chante la reine.
A peine dort le roi.

Les ombres qui l'enchaînent,
Une à une, il les voit.
Le regard de la reine
Ne s'y attache pas.

Le destin qui les mène,
Dont frissonne le roi,
Ne trouble point la reine.
Brillent la mer au bas,
Et, rythme de ses veines,
Celle qui la brûla,
Sœur de la vague même.

O minutes sereines,
Vous n'êtes plus au roi !

Le souvenir d'un chêne
Sur son front de souci
Pose une tache claire.
C'est dans une autre vie,
Quand s'éveillait la reine
Contre le cœur du roi.

Ah ! ferme ton palais
Ou monte en ses étages,
Timide souverain.

Tu comprendras pourquoi
 Sur un rocher sauvage
 Le reine appuie son sein.

Tu comprendras pourquoi,
 Et t'en consoleras.

RENÉ CHAR

(from *POETRY*, Volume 104 No. 5, August 1964)

EXPLANATORY PARAPHRASE

The queen upstairs is the higher consciousness. The king downstairs is the egoistic being in the lower consciousness. While it is dawn and daylight with the queen, it is night with the king—he is just entering into sleep. The king sees dark shadows closing him in, binding him down—bonds of ignorance imprisoning him in the ordinary life and consciousness. The queen, the higher power, is free of all that.

Both are being led towards a high divine destiny. But the ego-being is frightened, while the higher consciousness has no worry. And yet the lower consciousness is aflame; for its veins are flowing with a secret fire which its own sister has kindled in it. Ignorance harbours within its bosom a secret knowledge that is a reflection of the higher consciousness.

There are tranquil moments in the lower eternity that come from on high, from the queen. They do not belong to the king. At such moments a memory comes of a divine tree, the tree of immortal life, and imprints a white seal upon the king's tormented brow. The king feels it is another life, feels the queen awake by his side.

To have the queen always by his side the king must close the doors and windows of the lower storey of his palace and climb the stairs upward.

The king must shed all fear. There will be no palace to live in but a bare rock upon which he will find the queen lying down.

The king will understand that the higher consciousness must come down and touch and kiss the bleak earth-consciousness. The spirit must embrace the cold bare earth. Then only the human soul, the king free of his ego, will attain peace and felicity.

Here is the second poem. I follow the same principle—I do not give a translation but, as I said, an explanatory paraphrase. And I conclude by a short comment.

(2)

POEMES

(Extraits)

Tes soleils sont de houx, de gui.
Jamais perdu, jamais saisi
Qui est en moi, qui n'y est plus !
L'eau va et vient sous les talus.

Je ne vois pas ce que je vois
—Ta nuit de tilleul et de noix.
Je vois ce que je ne vois pas
—Tes mains sont dans les résédas !

Oreille ouverte, oreille close
J'entends les lacs aux lauriers-roses :
Ton nom de silence et de sel.
Mais je n'entends pas les pétrels !

(2)

Mes lièvres, dans l'herbe obscure, quelqu'un les traque.
Un chien frais, un épervier pur sur ma proie.

C'est cache sans abri que ces fourrés, ces cistes.
Des menhirs de verre emmurent mes îles.

O lumière aiguë ! Je m'enracile—m'exile.
Le seul feu que je fuis m'a déjà consumé.

Mon sang est pris. Mon sang ne se soumet
Aux signes sur la proie, mais n'est vivant que mort.

Ne plus tenter de voir, d'entendre, d'ouvrir l'or :
La ténèbre d'enfance est mangée de merveilles !

(3)

Ce sang perdu comme un pas
N'a densité que d'en bas.

—Des basses eaux, de la cendre
Où l'arme aussi doit descendre.

Les statues marchent, s'attardent
Dans une mort tiède et fade.

J'ai mon amour ennemi.
Ses sables m'ont endormi.

Qui charmera d'un chevreuil
Les longues salles de deuil ?

Ma bouche bourbeuse, vide
Crie par morsure d'acide

Sur le silence aggravé.
Un feu survient du névé.

JEAN-CLAUDE RENARD

(From *POETRY*, Volume 104, No. 5, August 1964)

EXPLANATORY PARAPHRASE

All the suns of the higher consciousness are hidden here in the heart of leaves and flowers—the tiniest beauties, the floating fragrances of nature. *That* I never lose, yet never catch, it remains within my heart and yet it is not there. The stream flows and passes through, under the embankment.

It is the hidden Reality that plays hide and seek with us.

I do not see with the outer eye what I see with the inner eye. For the outer eye moves in a darkness made by the wooded growths of the earth. I see with the inner eye what I do not see with the outer eye. The luminous hand of the higher consciousness moves about in the midst of the thorns of life.

With the inner ear open, with the outer ear closed I hear the tranquil waters, bordered with laurels and roses, move somewhere within. That is a sea of silence and of salt, but the cry of the wild storm-bird is not there.

In the dark woodlands of our nature animals rush about. Someone is chasing them. A hound of heaven, a falcon of the sky is after its prey. There are hidden bushes, grottoes, secret holes and corners that shelter my favourite animals. But to the secret luminous eye the solid walls of the shelter are transparent, are seen through.

I follow the Light that pierces me. I uproot myself from my home. I seek to fly from that Fire but I am already burnt up.

My blood is now captured. It is the willing prey, the victim of its hunter. It is living only because it is dead. There is now no endeavour to seek and to hear, to run after the golden treasure, for now it is a child's consciousness made of a darkness, a forgetfulness crowded with marvels.

The earthly blood that loses its way is heavy because it treads here below. Here there are stagnant waters, dead ashes. The arm from on high must extend here too. Here all forms are walking statues. They delay and delay in a death that is yet warm—only lukewarm—but lifeless. The earthly love I bear is my enemy. Its fire ends in dust and I go to sleep into the unconsciousness. My home here is a mourning hall; how can it be changed into a hall of beauty and living and moving shapes? Yes, my mouth is empty and full of dust, yes, it cries bitten by a corrosive acid thrown upon an increasing silence. It is a fire that comes from the chill snowy heights.

A NOTE

The relation between the Higher and the Lower, between the other world and this, the interaction between the two is all that mysticism means. The relation is spoken of sometimes as that of enmity and sometimes as that of friendliness. Ordinarily the two are incompatibles, enemies, as is quite natural. At times however, when the individual is ripe for the turn over, the two collaborate. The lower consciousness aspires for the higher and the higher comes down and enters into the lower to purify and change it.

Various figures and images depict the nature and relation of the two. The lower is darkness and the night, the higher is light and the day. Sometimes it is the opposite : the lower is the day (ordinary common light), the higher is dark night (because unknown and unfamiliar or because of the very dazzle of its light). The lower is imaged at times as a woodland, a shelter for wild growths and roving animals. The higher is the hunter, with his hounds chasing the creatures of the lower domain. Also the higher is the serene infinite sky, the lower the raging sea below. Otherwise, again, the higher is the vast sea, tranquil or quietly rippling above and the lower is the solid material universe. The higher is the delightful sun, the lower is the muddy slimy earth or the bed of stones and rocks. The consummation, the *dénouement* is the interlocking between the two and a final coalescence in which the higher penetrates into the lower and the lower is sublimated into the higher and the two form one integral undivided reality.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

FIERY RINGS OF GRACE

THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 11, 1965

A WHIRLWIND, a volcanic eruption, an earthquake,
Mighty Kali passed, challenging our right to live and breathe,
Defiant, vigilant eagles lightning-swift came tearing down,
Roaring young lions answered forth with their talons and fangs.
Somnolent serpent-powers raised their hoods, hissed and struck.
Complacent souls bogged in trivialities shook off their fatal indolence.
Arrogant tin-gods shut up in their bloated castles of vanity
Came out into a nobler dimension and tasted the impact of oneness.
Galvanised into a giant unity, parts forced open the gates of bliss.
Love and power poured down in grateful hearts in a thousand cascades.
Dynamic, imperative, brooking no insolence, falsehood or delay,
A supernal rhythm has come to stay, a decisive battle been won.
The World-Mother pressed Her children through the fiery rings of Grace,
Proud, She entrusts Heaven's work to their hands. They have justified Her faith.
We are irrevocably one, now and forever, in and around the Mother,
One tree and its million yearning branches,
One Sun and its numberless darkness-destroying rays,
One oceanic Impulse and its eternal passionate waves.
O Kali, we welcome Thy fury, keep us awake.
Shatter the mortal hold of the old deities unwilling to admit the new.
Thyself withdraw and leave the future to the power of Love, Harmony and Truth.

NIRANJAN GUHA ROY

SRI KRISHNA

I OFFER my adorations to that beauteous Krishna,
Whose Blue is the Space limitless,
Over whose crown quivers
The lightning-charged clouds as peacock-feathers,
And Him, who gets adorned each day,
With the yellow silk of sunrises and sunsets.

Witnessed have I His Cosmic *Rasa* on full-moon nights,
When the sky turns into a Dance-ground for Him,
Sprinkled thick with camphor-dust of light,
And the star-maids, clad in nothing but gossamer moonbeams,
Dance the night away in ecstatic gyrations
Round His Blue Presence.

Standing underneath the Kadamba-tree of Love,
On the bank of the Yamuna of Creation,
He plays eternally his Flute,
Enticing folks out of homes;
And a million worlds spin about crazy with that music,
In search, it seems, of something that is rare.

When our souls turn into battlefields of Kurukshetra,
With the warring armies of Duties and Desires,
It is He again, who whispers His simple message :
“Be like the lotus, my child, in this muddy world of yours.”

Hence to that all-pervading and encircling Blue Presence
I bow in front, at the back, below, above and on all sides;
Who would not fain be a milk-maid of Braja,
Surrendering his all for that enchanting beauteous Blue,
Whose breast is decked
With a flower-garland
That is the Milky-Way ?

M. MANSINHA

(Translated from the original in Oriya by the author)

POEMS IN TWO MOODS

THE PRESENCE

WHEN distance hurls unsettling lures again,
Be thou my steel, O fronting smile of Grace !
In every toneless tissue and cell retain
The anchoring grain of one effulgent Face,

Whose vibrant nimbus covering all my void
And stationed everywhere, around, above,
Distils in each tingle of heart's dim blood
The answering thrill from love to greater Love.

A BIRTHDAY LAMENT

MARCH 1

Within a span of the wonder-blaze of a Noon—
From the twenty-first,¹ exactly a week away
There spins year after year my shell of a day,
Its core of light still wrapped in deep night-swoon.

An equal number of letters spell each name,
The initial ones stand close in the alphabet—
Despite such nearness, if one still must fret
Covered with shame, O Mother, who is to blame ?

NARESH

¹ 21st February, the Mother's Birthday.

HYMN TO BEAUTY

“In all poor foolish things that live a day
Eternal Beauty wandering on her way...”

—W. B. YEATS

TODAY I saw Beauty walking lightly on her way
through the sordid streets,
Yesterday I saw her, a radiant smile,
eyes bright
with constellations of delight,
Tomorrow again I shall see her as she nimbly passes by,
a fiery form
turning her votaries to one sudden spell
of heaven-haunting world-oblivion.

It's a happy thing to see her thus on every waking,
It's a baffling thing to muse upon
heavenly beings born of dusty substance
under the grip of pain,
a lily and a lotus fashioned by the mire
only to dissolve after a moment's pleading with Time !

Is it because the transmuted sod too fair
must change and remake itself as ceaselessly as a blown flame
to feed the revenge of the lowly birth-giver?
Or is it because a rich and inexhaustible Beauty,
hid deep beneath the heated earth,
must
from its nescient Dream
forever burst forth
into forms more living, miracles and joys more palpable ?

Let all questions be :
Enough that with a ray of her momentary Smile
she transports us to other loves other joys other shores
where names and forms are not—
a Beatific Beyond unknown yet so familiar
that the soul finds a fit home there
and feels ecstatically free.

Let all questions be :
 Enough that SHE IS,
 though never halting, ever escaping,
 teasing us with a touch of madness on our soul,
 eluding and vexing the poor exalted heart :
 "Not here, not yet, is my appointed Hour."

BIBHASH JYOTI MUTSUDDI

LET ME BE GOD-AFLAME

HEAVEN is Thine as well as the abyss,
 And all Good-Evil, Ugliness-Harmony
 Thy forms; Thy touch translates both pain and bliss.
 Love-Hate, Law-Grace come from Thy unity.

But let my choice fall on Thy emerging Self,
 My being follow Thy manifesting Sun;
 Let me not turn back to the yawning delf
 But be the Mother-Earth's fire-denizen.

If freedom is Thy law, let discipline
 Be mine, let me reciprocate Thy Love
 With smiling service; nothing can outwin
 Thy Will, one staff that makes me ceaseless move.

No doubt or peril shall impede my path,
 For God-aflame I march, with flag of faith.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

NEHRU-KENNEDY

SLOWLY, steadily, unerringly
Nehru fought.
He won the fight.
Youthfully, speedily, dynamically
Kennedy ran.
He won the race.

Kennedy-Nehru.
Nehru-Kennedy.
Two are the hearts
That ached to fling wide
The windows of slumbering faith
In the house of humanity.

God's Fragrance of Peace,
God's Bliss of Freedom
In measureless measure
They knew how to inhale,
They knew.

Never were they parched
In the deserts of false hopes.
Desires they had for the world.
God slaked their thirst
In His own mystic way.

Nehru-Kennedy.
Kennedy-Nehru.
They are one, indivisible.
They are one, invincible.
They are one, a tornado
Of God's stupendous laugh
Toppling the towers of sorrow,
Fear and defeat.

CHINMOY

THE DESTINY OF THE BODY

THE SEER-VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

PART TWO : THE CONQUEST OF SLEEP

VI. The Role and Function of Sleep

An inertia sunk towards inconscience,
A sleep that imitates death is his repose.

(*Savitri*, Book II, Canto V, p. 186)

Even in the tracts of sleep is scant repose;
He mocks life's steps in strange subconscious dreams,
He strays in a sublime realm of symbol scenes,
His night with thin-air visions and dim forms
He packs or peoples with slight drifting shapes
And only a moment spends in silent self.

(*Ibid.*, Book VII, Canto II, p. 543)

WE have averred that so long as the universal psycho-spiritual slumber is not definitively ended in man's being, his body's sleep, the sleep of common parlance, proves rather to be an effective aid in exploring those higher and deeper ranges of consciousness that are still awaiting their evolutionary emergence and hence for the moment lie beyond the reach of man's normal waking awareness.

To elucidate our point we now propose to examine, albeit in brief, the essential role and function of sleep in the total organisation of our being and consciousness.

SLEEP IN ITS RECUPERATIVE ROLE

In the prevailing economy of the interchange of energies with the universal forces, in the present imperfect constitution of man's physical being, none of its dynamic organs can function in a ceaseless way without succumbing after a lapse of time to a state of utter fatigue and dullness.

Thus "every activity occasions an exhaustion, demands an intermission and necessitates a reparation."¹ And the cerebral activity of man proves no exception to this general rule. Like all other organs in the body, that are seats of active changes, the brain too is subject to periodic exhaustion. Thus an encephalic excitation, continued over a prolonged stretch of time whether through some intellectual activity or due to a sustained functioning of the 'animalistic life' (*vie de relation*) of the creature, provokes in the end a state of cerebral fatigue and depression. This brain fatigue manifests on the physiological plane in some definite degenerative changes

¹ *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Quillet*, "Sommeil", pp.4451-52.

in the cells of the cortex, such as the disappearance of Nissl's granules, a shrinkage in the size of the nucleus and the appearance of small vacuoles in the cytoplasm of the cell. Sleep affords the interval of repose and relaxation during which anabolic or constructive changes in the brain tissues are in excess of the katabolic or disruptive modifications. Hence the interregnum of physical sleep proves to be a period of encephalic recuperation in which the rest of the body indirectly participates.

This scientific account of the function of sleep may be true as far as it goes, that is to say, so far as the purely physical system of man is concerned; but it does not constitute the whole truth of the phenomenon. As we shall presently see, our body's sleep plays a much greater and profounder role than merely to help in the recuperation of our energies through the process of sustained relaxation.

But it is well to point out in this connection that even otherwise a state of complete relaxation conducive to a total restorative repose of the being is not feasible and in fact never achieved in the course of our ordinary untransformed sleep. The reason is twofold, physiological and occult-spiritual.

To grasp the physiological explanation of why the state of our normal sleep fails to produce total repose and relaxation, we should first have a cursory view of the constitution and functioning of our central nervous system (CNS).¹

The living web of the CNS is in a state of ceaseless activity. There is "an uninterrupted passage of sensation from all parts of the body towards the spinal cord and brain, and an unending procession of return messages in the opposite direction". For the web is a double one containing nerve fibres of two different types :

(1) *efferent, motor, centrifugally conducting fibres*, which carry outgoing impulses from the nervous system, resulting in muscular contractions ; and

(2) *afferent sensory, proprioceptive ("self-feeling") centripetally conducting fibres*, which convey the incoming impulses.

These afferent nerves carrying incoming messages have their starting points widely scattered over the surface of the body and also *amongst the muscles, joints and viscera*. They form the intelligence agents which furnish to the spinal cord and the brain mentally conscious as well as unconscious information regarding the state of affairs in different parts of the body and also their mutual relation. These intelligence agents may be divided into *external sense organs* and *internal sense organs*. The former take note of conditions external to the body while the latter report on the state of the body itself. Thus "muscle sense, literally a sixth sense", contributes greatly to the *continuous stream of ingoing impulses* rushing towards the cerebral cortex. Thus, "a person shuts off the streams of visual and auditory impulses by retiring to a dark, quiet room and decreases cutaneous impulses by lying down on a soft, smooth surface, but the proprioceptive impulses, coming as they do *from the body itself*, are still

¹ The following account of the process of propagation of messages along nerve fibres is based on: Kenneth Walker, *Human Physiology*, pp. 114-15; and N. Kleitman, "Sleep", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.20, p. 792.

there, gradually decreasing only when and as the body musculature is relaxed. [But] muscular relaxation and immobility are never absolute".¹

It follows then that in ordinary sleep, although the doors of the external Physical sense may be effectively sealed up, not so are those of the internal sense. The result is that the responsive activity of the nervous system or the brain never ceases completely, and the relaxation and repose never attain their desired maximum.

But even if this state of muscular relaxation and physiological repose could somehow be made total and complete, it would not automatically and necessarily convert our physical sleep into a state of perfectly recuperative blissful repose. For, as we have remarked more than once, our body's sleep does not entail the sleep of our whole being nor for that matter indicate a total abeyance of all consciousness. In fact, during the dormancy of our physical mind, our consciousness withdraws from its surface preoccupation and becomes instead awake and active in regions of our being as widely distinct as they are disparate in their consequences.

Thus, ordinarily, in sleep some activity or other is always going on in our mental or vital or some other plane; and, irrespective of whether we retain any conscious recollection of it or not, a continuous and confused state of dream-activity involving much inner exertion and fatigue is the subjective transcription of this ceaseless agitation of our consciousness during the period of our body's sleep.

Not only this; quite often we slide down in sleep into some heavy and obscure and altogether unrefreshing folds of the subconscious, involving some distasteful and disastrous consequences. It becomes pertinent then to examine here, in however summary a way, the occult-spiritual account of the phenomena of sleep and dream.

SLEEP IN ITS ROLE OF INNER AWAKENING

It is a superficial view of the matter to suppose that our consciousness remains in total abeyance during the period of our physical sleep. "What is in abeyance is the waking activities, what is at rest is the surface mind and the normal conscious action of the bodily part of us."² But the inner consciousness is not in the least negated or suspended. As a matter of fact, what happens in sleep is that our consciousness withdraws from the field of its waking experiences and enters into inner realms of our being, of which we are not normally aware in our waking state, although they exist all the time and continue to exert their occult influences upon our life and thought and action. And this is so because "when we are awake,...all that is put behind a veil by the waking mind and nothing remains except the surface self and the outward world—much as the veil of the sunlight hides from us the vast worlds of the stars that are behind it. Sleep is a going inward in which the surface self and the outside world are put away from our sense and vision."³ Our con-

¹ N. Kleitman, *Op. cit.*

² *The Life Divine*, p.379.

³ *On Yoga, II*, Tome Two, p.141.

consciousness participates during this period in new inner activities of which, alas, only an insignificant portion—the portion actually occurring or getting recorded in the threshold of our surface consciousness—we somehow remember as imperfect and interpretative dreams of our night.

Now, as we have indicated in an earlier section of our essay (*vide* Part Two, Section III, in *Mother India*, Nov. 1964), only a very small part whether of world-being or of our own being ordinarily comes into our conscious purview. “The rest is hidden behind in subliminal reaches of being which descend into the profoundest depths...and rise to highest peaks of superconscience, or which surround the little field of our waking self with a wide circumconscient existence of which our mind and sense catch only a few indications.”¹ The ancient Indian wisdom expressed this fact by dividing our consciousness into three, or rather four, provinces : *jāgrat* or waking state, *svapna* or dream state, *susupti* or sleep state, and finally *turiya* transcending these all. “The waking state is consciousness of the material universe which we normally possess in this embodied existence dominated by the physical mind. The dream state is a consciousness corresponding to the subtler life-plane and mind-plane behind . . . The sleep state is a consciousness corresponding to the supramental plane proper to the gnosis, which is beyond our experience because our causal body or envelope of gnosis is not developed in us . . . The Turiya beyond is the consciousness of our pure self-existence or our absolute being.”²

The sleep state and the dream state are thus seen to be the figurative names for the superconscient and the subliminal that lie beyond and behind our normal waking awareness. This last state, our waking state, is all the time blissfully ignorant of its occult connection with these higher and deeper reaches of consciousness, although it is receiving from them, without any overt knowledge of their source or secret nature, inspirations and intuitions, ideas and volitions, sense-suggestions and urges to action, streaming down from above or surging forward from behind.

Now, it is impossible for us in our normal consciousness to get back from our physical mind into these sublimer planes of consciousness without at the same time receding from the waking state and going in and away from its hold. This fact explains the tremendous importance generally attached in spiritual sadhana to the phenomenon of yogic trance or Samadhi; for, this latter is considered to be a potent means—an almost unavoidable one, many would insist—of escape from the shackles and the obscuring glow of the physical nature and consciousness.

But sleep too, like trance and “trance [itself] . . . can be regarded as a kind of dream or sleep”³), can very well open the gates of these superior planes of our being; for in sleep, as in trance, we retire behind the veil of our limited waking personality and “the surface mental consciousness...passes out of the perception of objective things into the subliminal and the superior supramental or overmental status. In

¹ *On Yoga, I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p.592.

² *Ibid.*, p.592.

³ *The Life Divine*, pp.405-6.

that inner condition it sees the supraphysical realities in transcribing figures of dream or vision, or in the superior status it loses itself in a massed consciousness of which it can receive no thought or image. It is through this subliminal and this super-conscious condition that we can pass into the supreme superconscience of the highest state of self-being."¹

Thus physical sleep becomes, or can be made to become, a highly valuable means of unloosening, however temporarily, the stone-grip of the ignorance of 'our waking that is sleep' and awakening instead in the superior states of consciousness and being. And herein lies *the great role of 'sleep-trance' and 'dream-trance'*, to which we have alluded in the beginning of this section. Did not the Orphic doctrine, that only when free from the body does the soul awake to its true life, lead naturally to the view that "in sleep the soul converses with eternal things and receives communications from Heaven to which it is not accessible by day" ?² Thus "Pindar says that 'the soul slumbers while the body is active; but, when the body slumbers, she shows forth in many a vision the approaching issues of woe and weal.' And the poet Aeschylus declares that 'in slumber the eye of soul waxes bright'."³

But the situation is not as simple as we have painted it to be. For, we must not forget that our ordinary untransformed sleep suffers from two serious handicaps which detract much from its value and, unless remedied in time, make of the state of physical sleep a veritable problem for the sadhak who seeks for the transformation of his total nature.

The first of these limitations is that it is altogether unconsciously as it were that we make the passage to these higher and deeper realms of our being, so that when we come back to our waking consciousness we retain very little of the sublime experiences that we may have had while in those regions.

Secondly—and this is all the more tragic—this movement of ascension or penetration into the subliminal or the superconscious realms is not the only or even the normal movement that we happen to make while in the state of our physical sleep. Most usually we enter into the subconscious darkness whose consequences are, to say the least, highly deleterious to the spiritual health of our being.

Hence arises the necessity to be conscious in sleep itself and change by degrees its nature of tamasic absorption into that of a luminous and blissful exploration of the inner and higher worlds and a state of yogic repose.

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJEE

(To be continued)

¹ *The Life Divine*, p.406.

² A.E. Taylor, "Dream and Sleep", in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 5, p.31.

³ A.E. Taylor, *Ibid*.

ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

PHILOSOPHY

(Continued)

SRI Aurobindo conceives of an earth in evolution in *Savitri*, unlike the static earth of Milton. This earth is in motion, in progress, as against the poise of the Gods. In *Life-Heavens* we hear :

I, Earth, have a deeper power than Heaven.

The turbulence, the ceaseless action here are signs of evolving nature; this motion may be ignorant, yet it drives towards a goal that is in the plan of God. But the static earth that Milton conceives leaves many questions unanswered—like that of nature and her ways, of man's proximity to animals on one hand and his states of intuition on the other. Science and psychology have traced in their own ways these phenomena and yet we get no true solution to the problem. Christianity has a categoric way of explanation : the possession of the Devil or the grace of God. But, about nature's own manner of working, it is silent. And about earth it remains totally in darkness. Even Bergson or Hegel does not give an acceptable enough reason and, after all, what they speak of is the reality as a moving and evolving principle and not of earth's evolution as such.

Science conceives man as an evolving species. This throws a gleam on the problem but something more needs to be said. Man is not a disjointed phenomenon of nature. What is true of man is true of Nature herself, of whom he is a part. If man is an evolving principle, nature standing behind him must be too an evolving force. This explains his attraction for higher principles of existence and the pull he feels towards the lower animality from where he has emerged.

This puts Christianity in a dilemma. But it further fortifies Sri Aurobindo's position. Not only that; he explains what biological science has left as an unfinished proposition.

Science conceives the earth to be a mass of changing minerals. Christianity conceives it to be the creation of God. Sri Aurobindo visions it to be both a mass of changing minerals and as having a soul. The earth, being an evolving principle, has a future and a goal to be attained. Although it has come from God, the earth according to Christianity has no soul, and Christianity does not see it as a living organism. This is because its consciousness cannot pierce beyond the thick veils of ethical thought. What Sri Aurobindo conceives is not against science, for science too has discovered a source of latent untraceable life in earth. To Sri Aurobindo, the earth is not only evolving but has a separate consciousness of its own; it possesses a soul, a definite place in the creation. This place and status are due to its capacity to grow and out-

grow its limits, not to remain content with its fate, its joys and sorrows. This makes it possible for the Divine to manifest here, as we see in *Savitri*, and work out His will, His plan.

In stacticness is death; in evolution is life. Alone the Imperishable can remain static and yet live : this is due to its omnipotence. But all lesser modes of existence do not possess this quality and, being limited, must act in the condition of limitation. In motion and progress existence thrives. Even the Avatar, by a series of descents, shows greater and greater portions of Himself—a sort of unveiling as the earth evolves.

Are then change and mutability synonymous with evolution ? Can we say that because the earth is mutable it is evolving ? Seen from the station of the Permanent Reality, all is a flux and a mutation. But mutation does not symbolise progress, it only shows a change in formation. Also the change does not entail progress. But the change that engenders a greater unveiling of the secret constituting essence is not a mutation. Mutation means the meaningless change of form, while evolution means a change of form that is progressive. This progression is towards the substance, of which all things are constituted. Thus the change of earth is not a casual factor; behind it is the Divine Will and Intention.

We ask next : what need is there of ignorance, what role does it play in the earth's existence ? Milton has given us a most unsatisfactory reply. This question, in fact, is one of the fundamental problems in all philosophies except empiricism.

Sri Aurobindo uses the term ignorance in a specific sense in *Savitri*. Ignorance is Inconscience trying to know, see, feel and act. It stands between the Superconscience that is omniscient and the Inconscience that we can term void. It is not a Miltonic state of sin or evil; it is amoral and is cosmic in its scope. The state of sin is an immoral condition due to the perversion of life and mind. So too is Evil an ethical antithesis of Good. But Ignorance is an evolving world-principle and its essence is not a perversion as such. The perversion that ensues is due to the egoistic condition that grows within the Ignorance and tries to seize upon things for its narrow self-interest and in that attempt brings about a distortion of the truth that is trying to manifest. This condition affects the earth and man, and the Book of Yoga in *Savitri* shows the spiritual discipline that is necessary to overcome this cosmic shadow. Or, as we see in the beginning, by the tapasya of King Aswathya the Divine Mother consents to descend on earth as an exceptional boon, only to break the seals of Ignorance.

Ignorance is also a psychological principle. Its roots are embedded in the recesses of life's unilluminated part, in mind and in the senses. In all that unawakened man does, or feels or manifests, there is always the inevitable stamp of Ignorance. In fact the whole of human existence is conditioned by Ignorance. Only the soul is free from its entangling influence. It works as a stimulus; it works as ego; it works as ambition and all the psychological distortion humanity is heir to. It manifests as anger, lust, envy, revolt, irritation and greed. Its chief work seems to be to distort

the pristine principles of joy into grief, of submission into revolt, of love into lust. What Milton has described is chiefly the work of Ignorance and its presence is discernible even in the action of his God. In fact, whatever he speaks is shadowed by this presence; he does not seem to escape this even in his brightest and highest moments.

What is the origin of Ignorance ? Here Sri Aurobindo gives an answer which shows the twofold truth revealed by experience and arrived at by the highest philosophy. It is told as a panoramic narration in *Savitri* several times, and sometimes he devotes a few lines and sometimes a whole series of pages, especially towards the end of the epic in the debate between Savitri and Death.

Before the beginning of creation, there was no division in the undivided, transcendental reality of the One in whom the Many are ever implicit. But when the One willed to become many in explicit form a division came into being. This was the starting point of Ignorance in its highest term and original essence. But in order to manifest Himself within the void that was separated from His own formulated cosmicity, He willed to cast Himself in the womb of Nothingness and lost Himself in the depth of Inconscience. This act of sacrifice is the state of involution which made the re-emergence as evolution possible. The first sacrifice created a veil between the transcendent self and the universe. The second created a rift that shut out totally its being from the shadows of its own darkness—the Inconscience. The first sacrifice gave rise to the second.

Then out of Inconscience this hidden Reality emerged first as minerals, then as plants, and animals and finally as man; or, in other words, Matter, Life and Thought emerged one after another. If the involution had not taken place, the evolution would have been impossible, for a void could not create what it did not possess potentially. And, as *Savitri* shows, the evolution of Reason is not the last step—a larger and more decisive stride yet is awaited, and the forerunner of this stride is Savitri. Matter, Life, and Reason are under the shadow of Ignorance, the shadow of change, mutation, unsureness. It is in the plenitude of the Gnostic becoming that Ignorance ceases to be. So Ignorance begins with division, its keenest perigee is in the Inconscience and its end is in growth of soul in the Supramental Reality. Its purpose is to create a division, give a formation, create the ego, and build up a separate entity in the totality and cosmicity, in the single undivided Being. But in itself it is not sin or evil.

Evil and sin begin at a much later stage. They are the perversities of life-powers, energies that distort something of the light, bliss, power and will deliberately in order to have their own rule, position and eminence. Some of these powers, as Milton tells us, are of Divine origin and the course they take deliberately is a move to hasten their union with the Ultimate Reality from where they have strayed. Miltonic Christianity conceived the first kind but could not imagine the next and thus left an unbridgeable gulf in the story of creation. Some of these powers are anti-divine, and some are more powerful and others are less so. But their work is to bar the path of the

divine manifestation so that the Divine in his own person might intervene and manifest on the confines of earth. Some of these powers are almost permanent, others are transitory, and they are tolerated because the Divine Creator has no moral adherences and his tolerance is infinite, and all, even the darkest demons, are his offspring and have a place and purpose in the scheme of creation.

This purpose is seen neither by Christianity nor by Advaita Vedanta. Not only in Being but in Becoming the One manifests itself. Not only in poise but in energy, not only in will but also in calm it abides. It is the Person and also the non-entity. It reveals itself as the Light and veils itself as the Darkness; it enjoys with the play of the gods and also lurks and strikes as the demon and the titan. It is both the Angels and Satan; it is both the heights of transcendent unity and the abysses of multitudinous diversity. This must be so, for the Upanishad declares that all is Brahman and in that totality these variations of darkness and light, of joy and pain, of evil and good find place. That is why we see at the end of the Tenth Book in *Savitri* that Death is shown as a projection of the Divine consciousness, a being who is essentially divine and yet limited and whose purpose is to lead men across the pattern of many births to the goal of Immortality. And when Savitri conquers death by her soul-power, it dissolves into the Inane.

Because of a limitation of vision, philosophies and religions cannot grasp the total truth about Ignorance. And much confusion ensues from this misconception. Philosophies are born with divergent doctrines and they attempt to bring about greater enigmas because they posit certain limited truths to be the entire verity. Or else they are entangled in their own logic which leaves no room for any catholic and complete truth to be deduced. Sometimes a partial experience of the Supreme Reality is conceived to be the one unequivocal truth; then too a false or half-true doctrine is born.

We have seen the place and origin of Ignorance. But what place has the soul in the created phenomenal world, and what is soul after all ?

In common parlance soul and mind are used interchangeably. Also each school of philosophy gives a special connotation of it. Milton is unconscious of the soul's presence. To him all is Reason. Some empiricists like Hobbes deny its existence. Christianity recognises the existence of soul, but confuses it with the mind. Modern psychology under the influence of Jung does not negate its presence, but, to it, it is the subconscious entity. To Indian philosophy, it is the essential portion of the Divine in man that transmigrates from birth to birth. Buddhism does not recognise its existence.

Difficulty arises from the maze of theories that are put before us. Mostly what is meant is not the inner Divinity as visioned by Sri Aurobindo but anything beyond the sense-mind—the subtle-physical or the vital being or in some cases the pure rational intellect. Again theosophy attempts to give an occult definition. But all these are either total falsehoods or else only half-truths.

Soul, as we see in *Savitri*, is neither mind, life nor subtle-physicality; nor is it the self or Jivatman. It is the central part of man in evolution, a projection of the Jivatman

that leads the human existence. It is never deluded by appearances or circumstances; it is always turned towards the Divine and its nature is bliss, it being a direct emanation of the Divine. But this entity is not at the same stage in all; it is an emergent and evolving principle. The soul of Savitri, for example, is a fully awakened soul and manifests in itself the Divine Mother; she is the highest soul in existence which has come down with a special mission.

The soul is veiled and works from behind, making this formation consisting of the triple principles of life, mind, and matter its instruments. And to the degree to which they submit to its influence it leads man to a greater goal. When all submit to it, it then manifests itself fully and takes complete control of this disharmonious mass of human life. We see, in Book Six in *Savitri*, Savitri searching for this hidden soul. And she is surprised to see what powers are in her. She is surprised at the various aspects, the moods, the statuses. Yet all these are not the very essence of her—these are offshoots of her personality. Her real soul is behind, a divine principle, an immortal entity always in tune with the infinite—child of the Unique Mother of the worlds.

But the self too is not soul. Self is the highest in us. In Savitri it is the Mother of all. And her soul is her projection into birth. In man it is the Jivatman who remains above and decides about all causal, essential things, events, becomings, growths of the soul sent out below into birth. The Jivatman is birthless but the soul assumes birth, as Savitri assumes one, and grows by the strides of births. The Jivatman is the permanent portion residing between God the transcendent Reality and the soul below. Thus, through the medium of the Jivatman, God leads the soul. And making the soul its medium the Jivatman rules over existence and, making this formation its instrument, the soul carries the dictates of the Divine Will and translates them as actions, becomings and events, facts and formations.

This is no mere philosophical doctrine. Savitri in the Book of Yoga realises one by one the divine steps behind and above her nature's front. All reveal the experience and bear the imprint of the unquestionable experience and realisation. A mere poetical fancy could not have conjured up such real and tangible experience. An intermittent flash of intuition could give a haphazard picture and not show this unique sequence of the divine drama of soul's discovery. This makes real the philosophical theory and proves that philosophy follows spiritual experience and that philosophy cannot be built on mere logical statements or conclusions.

Soul in *Savitri* is not Nature. Nature below is blind, nature above is conscious and is the working principle of the Mother of the Worlds. Soul is subliminal and follows the line of descent of the One into the Inconscient. Here we find the domains of inner mind, life and matter; also the dominions of the soul, standing behind the glaring flux of mentality, vitality and physicality. It is an inner principle and if we followed this line of ascent we would discover the Reality from the standpoint of the soul, as Jivatman and God. Following the same curve downward we would discover the twilights of the dream-plane, the inner occult regions. In the middle station

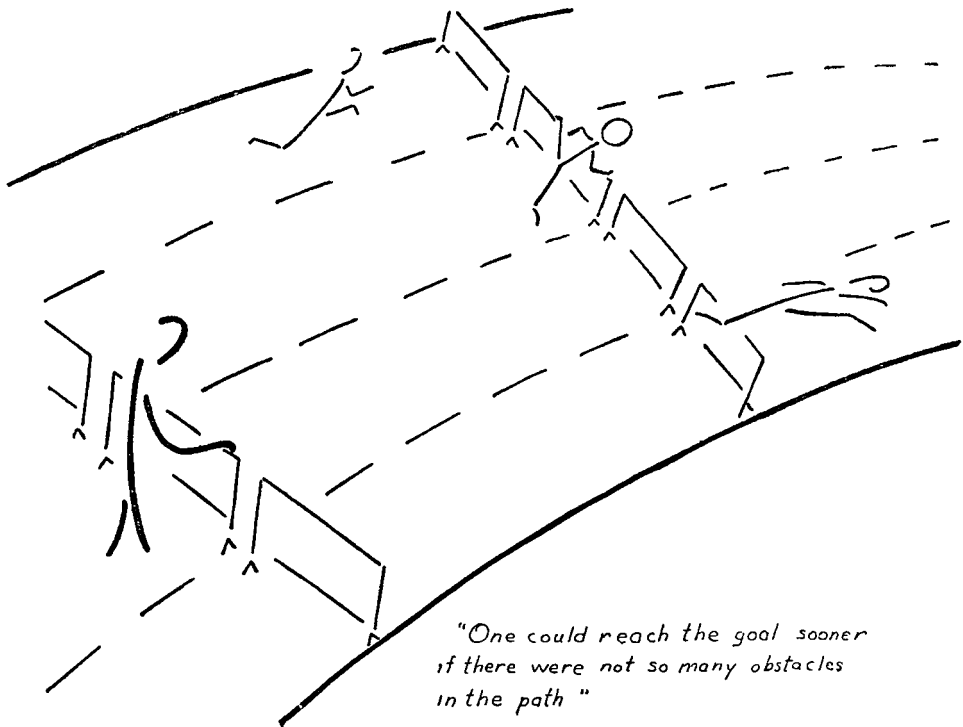
between the two poles of existence is the human soul. It can give into the subliminal depth or rise up to the heights of inner vastnesses.

It is the soul that lends meaning to man's life. His errors, sins, pitfalls, perversions, defects are overcome by this light. It makes existence a pleasure and the wound of birth endurable. Without it, earth would lose its significance and its essential being. In soul is the purpose and aim of humanity. Neither life nor mind can have any meaning without the presence of the soul. They are only the components, the wheels of nature, the outer formations; the soul is the hub, the cause, the end of all these manifestations. Savitri began apparently as an exceptional human being. But, touched by soul, she assumed divinity, became the Mother, whose power is omnipotent, whose vision is all-knowing, whose strength has no limits and whose play is infinite.

Satyavan symbolises the human soul. It is in love with the Primal Consciousness. To save this soul from the doom of Death, Savitri, the Mother comes. And theirs is the great game of love and passion, of death and immortality. The triumph of resurrection is the result.

(To be continued)

ROMEN



TWO LETTERS FROM AMERICA

1. From Dr. Haridas Choudhuri, Founder-Director, CULTURAL INTEGRATION FELLOWSHIP a non-profit corporation devoted to the concepts of universal religion, cultural harmony, and creative self-fulfilment 3494—21st Street, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94110. MI 8-1489

October 9, 1964

Dear Sisir Babu,

I was very glad to receive a complimentary copy of your *Resurgent India*. It was an inspiration to read the book. You have done an excellent job of focusing the significance of the spiritual reawakening of India and her vital role in the future evolution of man.

Our celebration of Sri Aurobindo Jayanti last August at San Francisco Ashram was very successful. Enclosed is a paper clipping. At the American Academy of Asian Studies where I am Chairman of the Department of South Asia, I am building up a good Sri Aurobindo Library. At present twelve students are studying with me at the American Academy Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* and *Essays on the Gita*. A former student of mine received his Ph.D. for his dissertation on "The Principle of Individuality as conceived by Sri Aurobindo and Dr. C. G. Jung". He did his doctoral research under my supervision. He is now professor at San Francisco State College, Dr. Richard Marsh.

You will be glad to know that The University of the Pacific is organizing a seminar on Sri Aurobindo's *The Future Evolution of Man*. I have been invited to participate in that seminar. I am also giving a course now on the same subject at Cultural Integration Fellowship, San Francisco. Twenty-five students have enrolled in the course.

You probably know that in collaboration with Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir our Cultural Integration Fellowship has been sponsoring for the last four years an inter-university essay contest in India. I understand that the response from university students is encouraging.

Did you meet our friend Mrs. Edith Reames who had recently gone to Pondicherry to attend the World Union Conference ? She has been associated with our work here for a long time.

Bina joins me in sending you our warm regards. Please convey our devoted pranam to the Mother.

Most cordially yours,
HARIDAS CHAUDHURI

2. From Mrs. Lois Duncan, Crescent Moon Ranch. Sedona, Arizona, U.S.A.

Sept. 6, 1964.

Dear Dr. Mitra,

Have been wanting to convey to you that I feel your book *Resurgent India* is an excellent presentation of the East to the West especially, and so beautifully written, moving like a symphony to the "grand finale" of Sri Aurobindo, which seems to be not overdone or over-emphasized but just a natural conclusion in harmony with the whole vision. If there are not more copies available through the Centre in San Francisco, I intend to place an order with Prithvi Singh.

It is a much needed book. Just want to express gratitude that it has been written.

We are happy to read what you have said about Americans....

With very best of wishes from us both,

LOIS DUNCAN



"Of course they need plenty of water, but not all at once!
They can absorb it better a little at a time."

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Upanishad Sankalan (Vivekananda Satabdi Jayanti Granthamala, Stabaka II & IV) in *Hindi*. Pub. Sri Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students Home, Belgharia (24 Paraganas). Pp. 185 and 201 respectively. Price One Rupee each.

SWAMI Vivekananda looked upon the Upanishads as reservoirs of an inexhaustible Power of Knowledge and Tapasya which could rejuvenate the entire Indian race and sustain its peoples for all time in their endeavour, individual and collective. It has been a happy idea of the publishers to bring out, on the occasion of Swamiji's birth-centenary, these two volumes containing choice selections from the Upanishads, with easy renderings in Bengali and in Hindi.

The selections have been made by Sri Bidhubhushan (Tarkavedantatirtha) and arranged under convenient subject headings : Prayer; Education; Creation; Jiva and Jivatma; Ishwara; Avidya, Ajnana and Maya; Karma and its result; Birth and after birth; Atman, Paramatman, Brahman; Vidya, Jnana and its fruit; Liberation; Salvation. They are all from the major Upanishads and make for connected reading.

The first volume contains an adequate life-sketch of Swami Vivekananda as also an introductory Note on the Upanishads. The second includes a brief life-account of Sri Ramakrishna and a short compilation from his teachings. The renderings from the Upanishads are accompanied by notes wherever necessary, making the work a very useful handbook on the Upanishads.

We would wish that an English rendering of this work was brought out for a wider circulation.

M. P. PANDIT

Students' Section

**SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

NEWSLETTER

No. 3

MARCH 1965

1. Sri Aurobindo Ashram attacked—11th February 1965

In the Gita, Krishna gives Arjuna the Aryan Creed on the Battlefield of Kurukshetra "...Destroy when by destruction the world must advance, but hate not that which thou destroyest, neither grieve for all those who perish... Do thy work with a calm and equal spirit; fight and fall nobly or conquer mightily."¹

The Mother's first order to the Ashram young men when they asked what they should do was to keep calm and quiet yet fight to defend the Ashram.

Such also was the injunction of Krishna to Arjuna on that historic occasion when the message of the Gita was first laid down as the Creed for all Kshatriyas—our young men have been brought up in this self-same tradition of a high-minded warrior, for they too are sons of Arjunā or Arjuni, the White One, children of Switra the White Mother.²

There is little doubt, especially in view of The Mother's Declaration, that the New Light, descending into the earth consciousness, is now pressing upon the lowest of the dark bastions of ignorance and that this upsurge of hate and violence is the manifestation of this divine Pressure. That the youth of Sri Aurobindo's Centre of Education and His Ashram should bear the brunt of this attack is actually a high honour and a privilege, for he has been chosen as the Kshatriya of the Divine. And it is in him and by his example that the noble traditions of Indian manhood will be upheld. In the words of Sri Aurobindo: "For what is worst grief for a Kshatriya? It is the loss of his honour, his fame, his noble station among mighty men, the man of courage and power; that to him is much worse than death."³ Yet the divine "Teacher bids him to make grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat equal to his soul and then turn to the battle—the real teaching of the Gita."⁴

As The Mother says in Her Declaration, we do not fight against any creed, religion, form of government, social class, nation or civilization, but against division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

¹ *Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita* VII p.92. ² *Ibid.* III p.29.

³ *Ibid.* VII p. 90. ⁴ *Ibid.*

Such is our ideal and tradition upon which our Centre of Education is founded, for education must constantly fight for Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

2. *Revision of Textbooks (India)*

The national Council of Educational Research and Training has been engaged in preparing model textbooks for secondary schools. Ten groups dealing with Hindi, history, mathematics, physics, geography, commerce, agriculture, chemistry, biology and technology are continuing their work under the supervision of the Central Committee on Educational Literature. The 1st drafts for most of the books are now ready for experimental use.

3. *Free Textbooks (Japan)*

In accordance with a recent law, school textbooks were supplied free of charge to all pupils who entered primary school in April 1963. This measure is to be extended progressively until 1967-1968 to all levels of compulsory education.

4. *New textbooks (Sierra Leone)*

Experiments are being conducted on the suitability of mathematics textbooks compiled by participants in the annual conferences held at Entebbe (Uganda). An English course for primary schools, originally drawn up for Nigeria, is also being tested with a view to its application if found suitable. A course in arithmetic which makes use of the new currency is in preparation.

5. *UNESCO prizes for outstanding textbooks*

Prizes intended to encourage the production of school textbooks in developing countries will be awarded each year by UNESCO, in accordance with the terms of a bequest made to the organisation. The first awards will be made this year 1965 for work published between 1960 and 1963 in the following countries : Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Korea, Laos, Malayasia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Viet-Nam.

6. *Statistics*

Let us think and talk of disarmament, for it is the world's greatest need at the moment, the results of which can only be measured in terms of the fantastic.

From the "UNESCO Courier" come the following facts :

(The cost of security— ?)

The costs of a new prototype bomber would pay the salaries of 250,000 school-teachers for a year.

Or, it could be used to build 30 new science faculties with places for 1,000 students each.

For the price of one large atomic submarine, 50 cities could be provided with modern hospitals.

And the funds needed to develop a supersonic fighter plane would build 600,000

homes to house more than three million people.

On the basis of estimates in a United Nations report, it is calculated that the world is now spending \$14,000,000 an hour for arms—money which could be freed for housing, hospitals, schools, laboratories, farm equipment and a better life for all mankind. It recognises, however, that the transition from an arms economy to a peace economy would produce major dislocations and would require careful planning on the part of developed and developing nations alike.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

TO BELLA

VELVET eager soft body, ever straining,
 Beauteous neck, ever arched, alert
 For a reassuring pat;
 If unattended, complaintless hurt.

Lavish love endlessly pouring
 Out of two soft eyes, deep brown.
 Head askance, floppy ears raised sharp,
 So sensitive to a smile or a frown.

Steadfast companion, ready at call—
 Come play-time or time of danger,
 A quivering thrilling streak of colour,
 A stalwart guard against each stranger.

Loyal till her last breath of life,
 Till her last drop of blood a heroine !
 Your sweet name means "The Beautiful"—
 Throned on four legs an uncrowned Queen !

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SECOND SEMINAR

22 November 1964

(Speeches continued from the previous issue)

HOW TO BE STEADY AND SINCERE IN OUR ASPIRATION FOR THE DIVINE LIFE

VIII

THE problem before us is a problem of psychological preparedness. It is not a moral question; neither can any occult opening or capacity, or any religious trend give us the needed sincerity and aspiration. It is essentially a question of turning and finally changing the consciousness, so that this may give us as a direct consequence sincerity and a longing for the life of the spirit. A new orientation of consciousness can alone effect the total and all-embracing change. No exterior effort or endeavour born from Tapasya can give us this. No outer regulations, laws or moral discipline can make us prepare for this single-minded effort. For, now we are facing a new world, a new Light, a new consciousness which makes obsolete the values, standards and methods of the past. We on our part must awake to the call the new descent has clarified forth from the summit. We need therefore other ways, other means, other modes of working and a renewed consciousness.

But the path of the change of consciousness is not easy, nor can we attempt to tread that way in a casual and half-hearted manner. It needs a vigilant heart, a sleepless mind, a purified vital being and a strong physical foundation. It calls for a constant living on that point of consciousness to which we have attained; it also means a vast patience and steadiness against the inevitable odds that always face us when we decide once for all to leave our ancient moorings of lower nature.

But how can this be done ? The problem has two interlinked factors : a personal issue and a universal question. We are part of the cosmic whole; we are helped by its growth and evolution but also its retarding conditions of ignorance pull us down, make us unsteady and insincere. This is a peril hard to avoid. But it is exactly to counteract this evil (along with so many others) that this Ashram was created, so that at least we had less chance of contamination, being a closed and well-guarded human nucleus of a society. And yet we are not totally cut off from the universal current—this sea is always around us. If we had to wait, along with the rest of humanity, till the world-conditions were favourable, we might have to wait for a

millennium or more. On the other hand, the pressing call of the spirit is upon us, goading us to surpass our little surface existence, conditions and values. At the same time we cannot leave the world entirely and confine ourselves to our small body of society, for the world lives with us, so long as we live in the world. In spite of the spiritual light that guards us, we cannot escape its influence. Also the world must progress along with us, if our progress is to be integral. And if we progress, we further the progress of the world as a constituent unit of the cosmic existence. Thus the two go hand in hand in one sense and in another are separate entities.

We cannot be steady and sincere by our own personal effort alone. Although personal effort plays a cardinal role, its effectivity depends on the divine grace. Let us not have this misconception, that personal effort alone can effect all and fulfil everything. It is only the pre-requisite condition, the first necessary step.

A strong central will, the positive sign of the working of the Divine in us, must be at the base of all our efforts. A will born from ambition or desire, or for personal gain, however veiled, will be found ineffective. Such will has its origin in our ego, selfishness and ignorance. It cannot light our path, guide our steps, but only bring to us the sense of frustration and decline at the end. On the other hand, a selfless will to follow this path at any cost, without any hidden motive of self-seeking or interest is the unmistakable sign that we are called to the path and chosen as the emerging nucleus of the future race.

We must be open to the source above us; this alone can give the needed strength and fortitude, the requisite basis of equilibrium and patience. If we open alternately to the higher Divine influence and the lower forces, a shifting of balance would be the result and then it could not be said that we were either sincere or steady. Also if we dally with the vain hope that we have nothing to do once we are here, and ask the Divine to do our labour of rejection and surrender, then we shall only fall into the Tamas of the lower nature. What we need to do is to keep a vigilant eye on our psychological conditions, and never relax the effort until we are self-consecrated enough, when the Divine can work in us unhindered. But till then we must not relax. But which part of our being can truly supervise the working of our nature? Surely not our vital being or our reason, which themselves are swayed by desires, preferences, ambitions and a host of other traits of the lower nature. The soul in us must be allowed to take charge of the workings of our life, mind and body—for it is the delegate of the Divine in us, and to it we must turn for the right conditions of opening to the Divine on one hand and a rejection of the false movements on the other.

To be precise, there must be an overcoming of the lower movements of desires, attachments, habits, angers, crookednesses, disharmonies, and all other perversions, first by growing conscious of them, then by rejecting them and calling down the right movement, the right attitude and the right opening.

The mind must be trained to be quiet, wide, undisturbed, a witness self. The life must be trained to occupy itself with higher movements, richer actions, deeper

sensibilities; and last the body, the basis of all human existence, must be made to learn to outgrow its Tamas, fixed habits and rigidity, thus becoming a plastic instrument of the soul and the Divine.

But the process of this change, as many erroneously consider it, is not to sit down in meditation or to lead a retired life of physical inaction, which may result in the following of a narrow cycle of closed ineffective existence. Rather all movements must be made an occasion for self-offering and dedication, for the elevation of consciousness, till at the end we feel all our actions become attuned with the Divine Will and we become the happy channels of its splendid outpour.

But no opening can come unless we have heard the call and have an unswerving faith, a living and dynamic sincerity and an unflinching steadfastness. For the hour has come when lesser issues must be cast aside; a striding and sure foot must be put out in front. For *here* and *now* is the opportunity that may never come in a millennium or perhaps in the whole history of humanity. We, as the standard-bearers of to-morrow, must rise and answer the call that has been given to us and follow the golden road to the greatest realisation.

ROMEN

IX

The question has a special bearing upon all those who have centrally decided to lead the divine life. And it is of particular importance at the present moment when unsteadiness, or lack of faith or of interest in the divine life, seems to be gaining ground.

The question is quite an intricate one inasmuch as we must have a first hand knowledge or an idea at least, as to what the divine life is, what leads us to aspire for this life, the difficulties that we may have to confront in our way of aspiration to tread along this path, as well as the conditions which we are needed to fulfil to keep our aspiration ever steady and sincere.

Literally, the divine life may be interpreted as the life for the Divine, *i.e.* to take the Divine as our life's aim, to consecrate all our actions in life as an offering to the Divine, to direct all our thoughts and feelings to one goal—the Divine. Or, we may also interpret it as the kind of life which the Divine would like each one of us to live according to the need of each soul that aspires for a rapid and revolutionary progress instead of a slow and gradual evolution of Nature. Whichever interpretation may be appropriate, we are sure that the divine life corresponds to a much higher order of life where the consciousness is much more elevated and illumined [as opposed to what it is in ordinary life which people normally live. Ordinary life is, generally speaking, the materialistic way of life having certain religious codes and dogmas. In this way of life we live more on the surface with our superficial and egoistic nature in front than in our true being deep within, our true and inner

nature. "To look into ourselves and see and enter into ourselves and live within is the first necessity for transformation of nature and for the divine life," says Sri Aurobindo. Harmony and beauty, peace and serenity, light and freedom, are the traits that mark the divine life or the spiritual way of life. In fact, living the divine life is living altogether in a different dimension of existence insofar as the level of consciousness is concerned. To express the inner and secret divinity through our nature and consciousness, in every walk of life, through all our ways and movements or, in short, to effect a radical transformation of our nature and consciousness is our aim and endeavour in the divine way of life. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "A growth into a divine consciousness is the whole meaning of our yoga, an integral conversion to divinity not only of the soul but of all the parts of our nature."

It is an arduous task requiring a firm resolution, an unflagging zeal and an untiring patience.

We must aspire for the divine life in all sincerity and faithfulness; and we must try to maintain an inner steadiness and poise in our aspiration in order to make it effective.

"Sincerity is the key of the divine doors," says the Mother. The aspiration that constantly burns deep within and rises like a steady and unwavering flame can alone be said to be true and sincere. A flagging aspiration or the aspiration that fluctuates cannot properly be regarded as sincere or stable.

In this connection it is well worth mentioning what the true significance is of the terms 'sincerity' and 'steadiness'. True sincerity means focussing the attention of our whole being and consciousness, and directing all our efforts and endeavours towards one goal, our true aim in life. As we find in the Upanishads,

शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत्

"one must be absorbed into That as an arrow is lost in its target." And steadiness means a constancy or a continuity in our aspiration and endeavour for our life's aim. In fact, the quality of steadiness is naturally implied in that of sincerity. If we are truly sincere it is understood we are steady also at the same time. But it is extremely difficult to be truly sincere. Partial sincerity, or sincerity that vacillates between truth and untruth, is no sincerity at all.

How then to get at the perfect sincerity, and bring about a balance and steadiness in our aspiration? It can be made possible, if we always remember, in all that we do, think, feel or speak, by being in a way inwardly conscious, the ideal to be pursued, the goal to be reached. It is then a living aspiration vibrant with a deep spiritual fervour.

But why can't we always keep up this burning zeal in our aspiration? What are the impediments that crop up in our way of a steady and sincere aspiration for the divine life? Let us consider the question from this angle.

One thing that shows itself out is that we are evidently not truly serious or keen on leading the divine life. Or, even though some part in us may be fully inclined towards this life, there are other parts—and larger in number—which are

quite indifferent having rather a bent more for the desires and enjoyments of the ordinary life. And more often than not it is the inferior elements in us that get the upper hand. And quite naturally instability creeps in within us, and insincerity follows in its wake.

Another obstruction which we are likely to encounter in our way of aspiration may result from a lack of proper faith in the divine life. This is the cardinal defect. And along with the faltering faith our sincerity also fumbles.

Also, normally we are not willing in the least to sacrifice our creature comforts for the sake of a better and spiritual life. We live, on the contrary, in a happy-go-lucky fashion leaving the entire burden and responsibility of our aim and aspiration to the Divine for adjustment. This is nothing but sheer insincerity. In fact, to play fast and loose with life may ultimately prove dangerous.

Another factor which comes to our notice is that our thoughts and preoccupations are at times too much outward-diverted which causes a diffusion and dissipation of our consciousness, whereas to maintain a steady and sincere aspiration for the divine life we are expected to get more and more indrawn and centralised. "The whole foundation of the gnostic life must be by its very nature inward and not outward," says Sri Aurobindo.

Then, mental preferences, vital obstinacy and physical inertia constitute a serious handicap thwarting a smooth and one-pointed aspiration for the divine life.

Quite another factor that brings itself to our gaze is the possibility that because of the difficulties and disadvantages of the path a state of despair and despondency may take hold of us, as a result of which our aspiration may suffer a considerable setback.

Then a glaring factor which makes itself felt is : if we harbour behind our apparently sincere aspiration some personal demand or grudge, or hanker after some personal gain or achievement, then our aspiration is sure to culminate in a final frustration.

These are the many stumbling-blocks in our way jeopardising our steady and sincere aspiration for the divine life. Thus our aspiration diminishes in intensity and gradually dwindles.

So now, how to counteract these defects and drawbacks of our nature and gradually arrive at a state of flaming aspiration for the divine life ?

Well, the first step towards this should be to wake up and be conscious, उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत, as the Upanishads proclaim,—conscious of the various impediments that our own nature presents before us and which we will have to fight and surmount, and conscious also of our high and unique aim, *i.e.* a complete reversal of consciousness in life itself which we must strive to achieve ; "... here, in life, on earth, in the body,—*ihaiwa*, as the Upanishads insist,—we have to unveil the Godhead," declares Sri Aurobindo. We must be earnest about our life's aim, careful to avoid at the same time too undue a haste which amounts to a lack of patience and steadiness. This will intensify our aspiration, heighten our sincerity and strengthen our inner stability.

Then, our aspiration to be steady and sincere must be anchored on our faith in the final triumph of the Divine over falsehood and obscurity. The faith must be spontaneous and deep-rooted, unhampered by doubt and disbelief, unmoved in the changing circumstances of life.

Another important point. If we really mean to adhere to the divine life, we should try to be spiritually minded. We must be ready to give up the most common and material comforts and enjoyments which the ordinary life offers us to the complete detriment of our divine way of life. The eventualities of mundane life should not be allowed to encroach upon our steady and sincere aspiration.

And it will be well to get ourselves accustomed to regular meditation with a view to silencing the mind which is essential for maintaining a steadiness and sincerity in our aspiration for the divine life; "...without this inwardness, this spiritual origination, in a too externalised consciousness or by only external means, no greater or divine life is possible," writes Sri Aurobindo. We should pray for peace and equanimity to permeate our whole being and nature. This will greatly help us in organising the different parts of our being centering round the psychic being. "It is the psychic that gives the true aspiration," affirms Sri Aurobindo. And with this end in view we should try to collect ourselves in a serene and silent concentration.

Another condition which is indispensable is a conscious and willed control over our thoughts and speech, our impulses and actions so as not to allow the obstacles of our mental and vital as well as physical nature to sidetrack our steady and sincere aspiration for the divine life.

A word regarding the difficulties that besiege us in our way of aspiration. Difficulties are natural and inevitable in any great or high enterprise of life. The existence of difficulties should be no reason to deter us from our aspiration for the divine life. Difficulties and reverses, instead of overpowering us, should be taken as occasions and opportunities for taking a big and bold stride forward. They should be, in fact, thrown as incentives in the fire of aspiration which will burn all the brighter. "In the unseen providence of things our greatest difficulties are our best opportunities. A supreme difficulty in Nature's indication to us of a supreme conquest to be won and an ultimate problem to be solved," Sri Aurobindo tells us. It is not depression and disappointment but courage and confidence that are needed to face them. Not to court defeat but to conquer is our mission. If we can go in life with this attitude, then indeed, we shall find it easier to keep our aspiration for the divine life ever steady and sincere.

Lastly, the sole aim of our aspiration for the divine life should be to exceed ourselves or to transform our consciousness. In other words, our aspiration should be for the sake of the Divine alone, without our cherishing any personal or egoistic motive behind, if we mean to be truly sincere, and if we want our effort to be crowned with success. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "If we seek the Divine, it should be for the sake of the Divine and for nothing else, because that is the supreme call of our being, the deepest truth of the spirit."

So these are some of the conditions and pre-requisites by way of accelerating our aspiration for the divine life along with a bid to make us steady and sincere therein.

Still, we must always remember that this path is not smooth and easy—far from it; in the words of the Upanishads,

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति—

“Sharp as a razor’s edge, hard to traverse, difficult of going is that path, say the sages.” And we need to strain every nerve and muscle to attain a state of perfect steadiness and sincerity. Aspiration itself is a virtue which it is hard to keep ever burning in our present state of consciousness; along with the varying moods of our imperfect nature it tends to flicker like an unsteady lamp, and so often it gets totally obscured in the mist of ignorance to which our nature is prone. The adverse forces are always alert to seize on any conceivable opportunity to shatter our aspiration and disintegrate us. What is most needed is a resolute will instinct with an ever wakeful vigilance and attended by patience, perseverance and endurance. “Resolution is the one thing required—resolution is the master key,” says the Mother.

Along with self-confidence and a quiet strength within, we must have a complete trust and reliance on the Divine’s transforming Grace. We must open ourselves in a spontaneous self-giving to the Divine’s guiding Light and Force, and pray for the intervention of the Grace in a receptive silence. With will and perseverance aided by the Divine’s unfailing Grace nothing is ultimately impossible. As the Mother assures us, “Persist in your aspiration and it will be fulfilled.”

ROSE
(MANJULA SEN)

X

To strengthen and to purify our aspiration, we must have an absolute faith in the Divine and we must be fully conscious of ourselves.

Perfect faith in the Divine can alone give assurance to the confidence in our aspiration. Sri Aurobindo says that an unshakable faith—pure, candid and perfect, not tainted by ego, ambition or self-will—can carry us in perfect security through all difficulties and obstacles.

This perfect faith is not a blind faith followed by fancy or through an impulse; it is not abstract, but a true and direct perception, a deep contact, a spontaneous identity with the divine Presence that is felt within or around us.

If the faith wavers, the slightest doubt can infect our being and the wrong suggestions find an easy way into us to shatter our aspiration.

This faith is not based on any mental reasoning but on a spontaneous feeling, sure and concrete, which can never mislead us. Armoured with faith, there is no fear

of going astray. An integral and absolute faith can conquer all. It is not merely a force of mental thought and will; it is a deeper force which gives strength to our thoughts, feelings and movements. Then we feel everything as coming from the Divine.

The Mother says : “An unshakable faith is a sign of the presence of the Divine Will.” When the Divine Will supports us, what on earth can shake our aspiration ?

Thus our burning aspiration can be guarded from every passing wind. But the flame must rise ever higher and brighter and purer. For that, we must be vigilant. To be sincere in our aspiration, the Mother says that we must be conscious of our nature and movements, we must know why and how we do things or feel or think them. We must stand back and understand the motives and impulses.

We need to be honest to ourselves, for the crude mind with its ignorant demands commits errors and passes wrong judgements. Our own judgement will testify to our sincerity. If we look clearly and more observantly at ourselves, we can discern the right way or the right motive from the wrong. And it is only in quietude and silence that we can judge ourselves rightly. To be sincere is to choose the way that is right for us, rejecting the false.

With that, our aspiration for the Divine Life will be made firm and ardent. The Mother has said : “When the resolution has been taken, when you have decided that the whole of your life shall be given to the Divine, you have still at every moment to remember it and carry it out in all the details of your existence.... You must feel at every step that you belong to the Divine.”

With entire trust in Her, just that remembrance, just that feeling is enough,—She will carry us through in our aspiration.

SELVI

XI

In order to be steady and sincere in our aspiration for the divine life, the most essential thing is to establish a contact with the soul or the psychic and try to remain in unison with it even in the midst of all outward activities because the true nature of the psychic is to turn Godwards, to accept nothing but Truth, to cling to all that is divine or progressing towards it. Naturally it is not easy to establish the contact with the psychic but with a silent and sincere prayer on our part and by the Grace of the Mother the contact and union become possible. And once the psychic is allowed to influence the nature, it acts like a flame of light which shows all that has to be changed in us, and purifies all our sensations, emotions and desires. Ultimately it burns away all that is ugly, narrow, base and undivine.

But do we allow the psychic to govern our lives, to do its work of transformation ? We seldom do. And the greatest enemy that comes on the way is desire—the desire to do this, to do that, to have this, to have that and so on. We must try to become

free from desire. A day must come when we shall desire nothing, ask for nothing, wish for nothing but repeat these lines of Sri Aurobindo at every moment of our life :

I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,
 I have offered up my will to be Thy will
 Let nothing in myself be left behind
 In our union mystic and unutterable. (*Last Poems*, p. 23)

Then will the psychic have direct control even over our outer activities. And this alone can ensure a constant steadiness and sincerity to find the Divine and be one with Him.

SHOBHA

XII

Regarding sincerity I have nothing to say of my own; I will merely quote a passage from a letter by Sri Aurobindo which is a short and yet so explicit and categorical an answer, that it needs no explanation :

“To be absolutely sincere, straightforward, open, is not an easy achievement for human nature. It is only by spiritual endeavour that one can realise it—and to do it needs a severity of introspective self-vision, an unsparing scrutiny of self-observation of which many sadhaks and yogis even are not capable and it is only by an illumining Grace that reveals the sadhak to himself and transforms what is deficient in him that it can be done. And even then only if he himself consents and lends himself wholly to the divine working.” (*On Yoga II*, Tome One, p. 537.)

In order that we may know how to be steady we had better first ask ourselves : why are we unsteady ? What is it that forces our mind to vacillate, throwing it to and fro like a shuttlecock between the two poles of duality ? Indeed the Mother has stated clearly : “By definition, the Ashramite has resolved to dedicate his life to the Divine Realisation.” (*Bulletin*, August 1964, p. 98.) Why then do we waver ? True, at a certain exceptional moment we dedicated our life with resolution never to waver ; at that moment at least we had uttered the solemn oath : we want the Divine and the Divine only. But no sooner did we utter it than we found ourselves struggling desperately to keep our promise. Why ? Because of various reasons. Probably the oath was not genuine. Or perhaps together with the oath we dived headlong into the path of yoga without even pondering for a while to take into account the tremendous difficulties that await us. We did not take into account the ever-watchful sorrow and suffering and depression that may overwhelm us; we did not take into account the apparently unending length of the path, to traverse which we may have to spend our whole life and yet not reach it ; or else we did not take into account the dire fact that to reach the Divine each and every movement of our thought and energy has to be spent for that alone. And, above all, did we note with care the fact that a complete faith in the Divine Grace is indispensable to reach the end which comes but rarely ?

Thus without being prepared to meet these difficulties and a host of others, we easily collide against them and collapse, only to give ourselves up to resentments. This is the critical juncture where we may fall so low that we may doubt even the existence of the Divine, we may doubt our own capacity, and worst of all, we may turn away from our aspiration for the Divine Life to the gruesome and alluring call of the vital impulses. In other words, we become unsteady. But if we take a clear cognition of all the possible hazards of the path as we advance on it, then instead of staggering under their unexpected pressure or staring at them dully through our ignorant haze, we get ready, like Job in the Bible, by girding our loins to meet the challenge of each rebuff steadily with an undaunted courage. For then we know clearly that each and every inch of the way must be fought out for our triumphant entrance into the Kingdom of the Divine.

But a mere awareness of the difficulties of the path without the strength to fight the battle is not enough. And the strength can come with the right attitude. With one part of our mind we must feel suffocated by the shallowness of the human nature; the stronger this feeling, the better our chance for the success. With the other part we must love the Divine for the Divine's sake; again, the stronger our love, the better our chance to be steady. Steadiness will follow spontaneously if we can have the right attitude towards the Divine, which is best expressed as : "To want it, and to want only that." (*Bulletin*, August 1964, p. 102.)

Once we embark on the voyage of Divine discovery with this clear understanding and the right attitude and pure and whole-hearted love, then do we not carry with us the very source of steadiness ? Do we then not know that the Divine who is our aim is also our guide, that He like the pole star shines ever brighter in the darkness of the night ? And, pointing ever ahead, does He not whisper with full assurance—

"Rejoice and fear not for the waves that swell,
The storms that thunder, winds that sweep;
Always our Captain holds the rudder well,
He does not sleep" ?

(Sri Aurobindo, *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. II. p. 131.)

TARUN

★

★

After all the speeches were over, Kishor Gandhi read out the Mother's own answer to the question in the subject given by Her for this Seminar :

"Consider the Divine Life as the most important thing to obtain".

Then he thanked all the participants in the Seminar and also those who had come to attend it.

After that the Seminar ended.

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

INSISTENCE UPON THE SANCTITY OF THE BODY IN WHITMAN'S POETRY

WHITMAN was the first to smash the old moral conception that the soul of man is something 'superior' and 'above' the flesh. In his work we find the same insistence upon the sanctity of the body, but the accent of protest against former suppression, as we find it *e. g.* in Heine, is present only as an undertone. He had never been really subjected to a strict Christian religious system and he ignored the conditions which his European contemporaries denounced vehemently. He desired to embrace all religions and philosophies, and so he did not attach too much importance to Christianity, which was after all one form of religion. He wanted to build up his own system and give it a universal relevancy by cutting out of it everything likely to make it depend on a merely temporal spirit of the age. Moreover, the influence of Transcendentalism and his own mystical awareness prevented Whitman from taking an extreme materialistic view of the reaction against spiritual oppression.

Whitman considered the body sacred : "If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred." This meant restoring the senses and desires to their original dignity : "Seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle." He universalizes his experience : "Whoever you are ! how superb and how divine is your body, or any part of it." He sings of the joy of being in physical touch with the earth : "The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections."

Body and soul became a unified whole, in Whitman's view, with a pantheistic comprehension. God is to Whitman a great living force, pervading and generating everything, at the same time *being* everything and *uniting* all existence. This "God" he calls the Soul.

Was somebody asking to see the Soul ?

See ! your own shape and countenance—persons, substances,
beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All these are incarnations of the Soul. And the human body is another incarnation :

Behold ! the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern—
and includes and is the Soul;

And when he says :

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be
the most spiritual poems,
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,

For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my
Soul and of immortality—

there is no contradiction.

The Soul manifests and realizes itself in the body. Thus the body is not other than the Soul. And also the life of the body is as important as the life of the Soul.

Was it doubted if those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves ?
And if those who defile the living are as bad as the who defile the dead ?
And if the body does not do as much as the Soul ?
And if the body were not the Soul, what is the Soul ?

It is only by the body that man becomes an identity; it is in the body that the Soul individualizes itself :

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and father—
it is to identify you . . .

I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had received identity by my body . . .

The real life of the body comes from its relation to the Soul; and the senses and the flesh achieve a sublimation and a transcendence.

O the real life of my senses and flesh, transcending my senses and flesh,
My body done with materials, my sight done with material eyes
Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my material eyes which
finally see,
Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs, shouts, embraces,
procreates.

Man is divine, and is the centre of his own existence since he partakes of the Soul :

Whitman says,

And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,

again,

I am only he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond
what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Everything in the Universe is for the Divine in Man :

Whoever you are ! you are he or she for whom the earth is solid and liquid,
 You are he or she for whom the sun and the moon hang in the sky,
 For none more than you are the present and the past,
 For none more than you is immortality.

Whitman's clue to the realization of this is "to have no mockings or arguments—
 but to witness and wait". All is Self and perfect :

And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
 Nor any more heaven and hell than there is now.

C. SUBBIAN

YOGA AND LIFE

XII

THE GROWNING RESULTS OF THEIR ONE-LEVELMENT

WE have studied the possibility and then the inevitability of the one-levelment of Yoga and Life as well as the methods that will enable us to achieve that objective. Such a one-levelment is not only possible but inevitable in Nature's evolutionary progress. In this progress we arrive at a more and more complex, vast, rich, beautiful and delightful harmony on higher and higher levels of consciousness. The Supramental is the contemplated summit-plane whose harmony is sought to be achieved in the earth-consciousness. But before this supernal, this perfect harmony becomes possible and realisable, we must change the triune lower existence of man into its corresponding divine nature by a process of complete transformation, named the Yoga of Life, and briefly enunciated in the preceding articles.

This change and harmony must first be effected in the individual and a good number of individuals and later carried on to the larger human groups seeking and capable of such transmutation and spiritual concord. This growing movement must spread to and effectively influence and change all the institutions of man's life and make them conscious of the new call for self-transfiguration and then world-transfiguration. The all-revolutionising flame of aspiration for the reorientation and rejuvenation of the entire human life into the divine life must be kept burning

and carried from individual to individual and from group to group, creating societies of higher divine beings. Such beings will live in the Purusha-consciousness of the Universal Self and not in the ego.

A greater and greater spiritual harmonisation on the ascending levels of consciousness is the hope of the future. This should work in the race as in the individual. This endeavour is difficult for the individual but much more so for the race. But the passage from the purely mental and material being and life to the spiritual and supramental being and life must be made in the individual as well as groups.

“Harmony,” says Sri Aurobindo, “is the natural rule of the spirit, it is the inherent law and spontaneous consequence of unity in multiplicity, of unity in diversity, of a various manifestation of oneness. . . . In infrarational life harmony is secured by an instinctive oneness of nature and oneness of the action of the nature, an instinctive communication, an instinctive or direct vital-intuitional sense-understanding by which the individuals of an animal or insect community are able to cooperate. In human life this is replaced by understanding through sense-knowledge and mental perception and communication of ideas by speech, but the means that have to be used are imperfect and the harmony and cooperation incomplete. In . . . a life of superreason and supernature, a self-aware spiritual unity of being and a spiritual conscious community and interchange of nature would be the deep and ample root of understanding : this greater life would have evolved new and superior means and powers of uniting consciousness inwardly and directly with consciousness, thought with thought, vision with vision, sense with sense, life with life, body-awareness with body-awareness, would be its natural basic instrumentation. All these new powers taking up the old outward instruments and using them as a subordinate means with a far greater power and to more purpose would be put to the service of the self-expression of the spirit in a profound oneness of being and life.” The supramental realisation will bring in its wake many unknown and unconceived powers of awareness and vision, of sense, action and contact, and the individuals possessing them will create conditions to carry this evolutionary achievements to other prepared grounds in the spiritualised individuals.

But such an evolutionary change, however enlightening and heightening cannot be imposed on society. As the individuals have to choose and adopt this change as their law of progress so also must society take it up in all its spheres of activity and growth : ethics, aesthetics, arts, science, education, economical and political thought and practice. The achievement has not to be in high heaven but here on earth and any spiritual and supramental realisation must also bring a corresponding change in the institutions of life. For, says Sri Aurobindo, “The ascent of man into heaven is not the key, but rather his ascent here into the spirit and the descent also of the spirit into his normal humanity and the transformation of this earthly nature. For that and not some post-mortem salvation is the real new birth for which humanity waits as the crowning movement of its long obscure and painful course.”

The spiritual heaven of perfect harmony which seeks its evolution and manifes-

tation on earth must first be won within before it is realised without. The inner divinity of Light, Power, Truth, Beauty, Delight and Immortality must be built up in the human earthly material and shaped out and manifested in society as the Kingdom of the ONE. In the vivid and striking words of Sri Aurobindo, "We must go back to the one thing needful, take up again Christ's gospel of the purity and perfection of mankind, Mohamed's gospel of perfect submission, self-surrender and servitude to God, Chaitanya's gospel of the perfect love and joy of God in man, Ramakrishna's gospel of the unity of all religions and the divinity of God in man, and, gathering all these streams into one mighty river, one purifying and redeeming Ganges, pour it over the death-in-life of a materialistic humanity, as Bhagiratha led down the Ganges and flooded with it the ashes of his fathers, so that there may be a resurrection of the soul in mankind and the *Satyayuga* for a while return to the world. Nor is this the whole object of the *Lilā* or the Yoga; the reason from which the Avatars descend is to raise up man again and again, developing in him a higher and ever-higher humanity, a greater and yet greater development of divine being, bringing more and more of heaven again and again upon the earth until our toil is done, our work accomplished and *Saccidānanda* fulfilled in all even here, even in this material universe. Small is his work, even if he succeeds, who labours for his own salvation or the salvation of a few; infinitely great is his even if he fail or succeed only partially or for a season, who lives only to bring about peace of soul, joy, purity and perfection among all mankind."

(*To be continued*)

HAR KRISHAN SINGH