

# MOTHER INDIA

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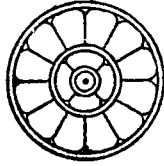
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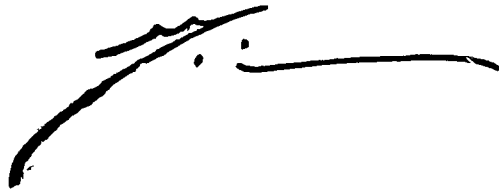


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



# MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XIX

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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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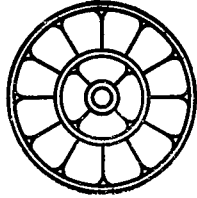
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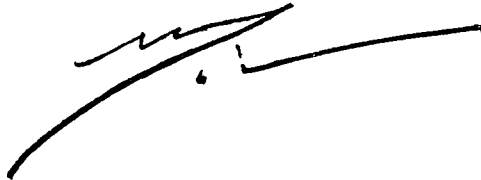


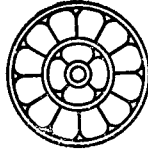
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Men, countries, continents!

The choice is imperative:

Truth or the abyss.





## WORDS OF THE MOTHER

Freedom does not  
come from outer  
circumstances but  
from inner liberation.

Find your soul,  
unite with it, let  
it govern your life  
and you will be free  
beings

## **A MESSAGE FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE**

### **WHAT SRI AUROBINDO SAID TO LALA LAJPATRAI IN EARLY 1915**

THE old petty forms and little narrow make-believe activities are getting out of date. The world is changing rapidly around us and preparing for more colossal changes in the future. We must rise to the greatness of thought and action which it will demand from the nations who hope to live...

Only by a general intellectual and spiritual awakening can this nation fulfil its destiny.. No nation in modern times can grow great by politics alone. A rich and varied life, energetic in all its parts, is the condition of a sound, vigorous national existence...

The new idea that should now lead us is the realisation of our nationhood not separate from but in the future scheme of humanity. When it has realised its own national life and unity, India will still have a part to play in helping to bring about the unity of the nations...

Not a spirit of aloofness or of jealous self-defence, but of generous emulation and brotherhood with all men and all nations, justified by a sense of conscious strength, a great destiny, a large place in the human future—this should be the Indian spirit...

I am convinced and have long been convinced that a spiritual awakening, a re-awakening to the true self of the nation is the most important condition of our national greatness. The supreme Indian idea of the oneness of all men in God and its realisation inwardly and outwardly, increasingly even in social relations and the structure of society is destined, I believe, to govern the progress of the human race. India, if it chooses, can guide the world...

The thought of India should come out of the philosophical school and renew its contact with life, and the spiritual life of India issue out of the cave and the temple and, adapting itself to new forms, lay its hand upon the world. I believe also that humanity is about to enlarge its scope by new knowledge, new powers and capacities, which will create as great a revolution in human life as the physical science of the nineteenth century. Here, too, India holds in her past, a little rusty and put out of use, the key of humanity's future.

## A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

### BERTRAND RUSSELL AND RELIGIOUS APOLOGETICS

*(Bertrand Russell is not only tremendously honest but also piquant in humour. He is never a blind self-deceiver. It was this quality which Lowes Dickinson too possessed in a singular degree. And that was why I admired such atheists far more than many so-called God-fearing men.)*

I have already said that I have no objection to anybody admiring Russell or Dickinson or any other atheist for that matter. Genius or fine qualities are always admirable in whomsoever they are found; all that has nothing to do with the turn of a man's opinions or the truth or untruth of atheism or of spiritual experience. As for Russell's booklet *Why I am not a Christian*, which you sent me, I seized a few moments to run through it. It is just as I had expected it to be. I have no doubt that Russell is a competent philosophic thinker, but this might have been written by an ordinary propagandist tract-writer. The arguments of the ordinary Christian apologists to prove the existence of God are futile drivel and Russell answering them has descended to their level. He was appealing to the mass-mind, I suppose, but that is enough to deprive the book of any real thought-value. And yet the questions raised are interesting enough if treated with true philosophic insight or from the standpoint of true spiritual experience. It is queer that the European mind, capable enough in other directions, should sink to such utter puerility when it begins to deal with religion or spiritual experience.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

*The above letter is evidently a sequel to the one which has appeared in Letters of Sri Aurobindo (Third Series), pp. 343-4 and which may in accord with it be entitled :*

### BERTRAND RUSSELL AND SPIRITUAL TRUTH

About Russell—I have never disputed his abilities or his character; I am concerned only with his opinions and there too only with those opinions which touch upon my own province—that of spiritual Truth. In all religions, the most narrow and stupid even, and in all non-religions also there are great minds, great men, fine characters. I know little about Russell, but I never dreamed of disputing the greatness of Lenin, for instance, merely because he was an atheist—nobody would, unless he were an

imbecile. But the greatness of Lenin does not debar me from refusing assent to the credal dogmas of Bolshevism, and the beauty of character of an atheist does not prove that spirituality is a lie of the imagination and that there is no Divine. I might add that if you can find the utterances of famous Yogis childish when they talk about marriage or on other mental matters, I cannot be blamed for finding the ideas of Russell about spiritual experience, of which he knows nothing, very much wanting in light and substance. You have not named the Yogis in question, and till you do, I am afraid I shall cherish a suspicion about either the height or the breadth of their spiritual experience.

---

## 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. Manlal, 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.)*

FEBRUARY 13, 1940

R WROTE an English poem for the special number that the *Indian Express* is bringing out on February 21. The poem was given to Sri Aurobindo by P.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after reading*): How does he rhyme "era" with "aura" ?

N : Modern rhymes, I suppose. Dilip was surprised that such a poem, with so many metrical errors was being sent for publication.

P : Nolini has kept it back. Of course R doesn't know of it yet.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not a poem at all. His French poems are very beautiful. That is because he had a training from the Mother. In English he has no training.

S : He is a very prolific writer, I hear—with a great flow.

SRI AUROBINDO : Tremendous flow. "Flow" is a mild term. The energy is tremendous.

S : He has written many books in Tamil. He is considered a great Tamil writer.

N : Dilip says his English is very bad.

S : He has written an English book on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. It contains everything—chapters on Asanas, on Pranayama, etc., etc.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not on my Yoga in particular. It is just on Yoga. His English is Tamil English. One must have the true English style to make things effective.

S : He speaks always in superlatives. But he seems to be a great figure. He has many admirers and followers in South India.

N : You must have seen in yesterday's *Hindu* the review of an Annual of English Literature. It is a symposium from all writers of the British Empire. From India four names are chosen—some Kashi Prasad Ghose, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu and yourself. Do you know this Kashi Prasad Ghose ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. Who is he ?

N : Only poets have been included, and the Indian selection has been done by an Indian professor.

SRI AUROBINDO : I wonder which poems of mine he has taken. Does he not mention Harin or my brother ?

N : No.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't then understand the rationale of the selection. Sarojini is all right. But, except for a few things, Toru Dutt does not come to much. And, if Toru can be included, surely Harin and Manmohan ought to be. They are better writers than she. If Romesh Dutt had been alive, he would have protested against his exclusion. He would have said, "If Toru, why not Romesh too ?"

N : The *Hindu* reviewer has complained that only poets have been mentioned and not prose-writers when there are many good prose-writers of English in India.

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't see a single really good prose-writer.

N : The *Hindu* says there are some among the moderns.

SRI AUROBINDO : Does it mean Nehru and Gandhi ?

N : I don't know.

SRI AUROBINDO : They are good, but they can't be ranked as literary prose-writers.

N : What about Amal ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, but he is not known.

N : Neither has he written much.

SRI AUROBINDO : No.

S : But his style seems to have a sense of effort.

P : Yes, it seems to give an impression of hammering.

S : Hammering may be allowed but there should not be any sense of effort.

SRI AUROBINDO : He writes the Victorian style.

N : Yes, his is not a modern style.

SRI AUROBINDO : No.

S : Radhakrishnan seems to have a modern style.

SRI AUROBINDO : No, he has a Victorian stamp.

N : People call Sri Aurobindo's style heavy, while according to them Nehru is the best writer.

P : If the "best writers" wrote on philosophy instead of topical subjects, people would find them difficult too.

S : Amal, before he first came here in 1927, brought out a book of poems which, I hear, had to be suppressed.

SRI AUROBINDO : Or did it suppress itself ? (*Laughter*)

S : The Publishers didn't realise beforehand what sort of book it was and when it came out they felt scandalised.

P : Amal told me about this book when he first came. He was persuaded by his friends to stop it from circulation. Otherwise he would have lost his name. His

motto was, like Oscar Wilde's, to write on anything he liked.<sup>1</sup>

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on how you write. Wilde would have been the last man to approve of writing anything in any way.

P : I mean writing of erotic things.

S : In English books whenever they have to say anything erotic they put the French word for it, not the English. Take the *Decameron*. In the English translation there are so many things in French.

SRI AUROBINDO : I am reminded of Gibbon Whenever he wanted to quote anything which might offend the current taste, he took it in its Latin form. But in English there are more outspoken things than Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Many English novels have erotic, even vulgar, matters.

N : Why then did they make such a fuss over Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Because it made a public noise. The English people's puritanism, I suppose, came out against it.

P : In French such things are quite commonly said now. People have become accustomed to them.

SRI AUROBINDO : In France it has always been so. Except in England and America you find free expression of them everywhere. Our ancient literature also has them and nobody took any particular notice. The English write of them more crudely than the French—as a reaction, I suppose, of the suppression. It is during the Puritan and Non-conformist period that people became suddenly sex-conscious and felt ashamed.

## EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*after trying out flexion of the knee, as medically advised*) : Can't see if the flexion is increasing. It is a very slow process.

S : Yes, sir. Something like the opening of N's physical crust.

SRI AUROBINDO : What ?

N : S is giving an analogy. He means that your knee-flexion is as slow as the opening of my physical crust. (*Sri Aurobindo laughed.*)

<sup>1</sup> The facts are not quite like that No friends advised suppression. Several admired the poems Besides, the poems were published anonymously; so there was no question of losing one's name. The author himself ultimately destroyed the extant copies, just as he tore up several unpublished books of his. That was when he decided to come to the Ashram and wished to make a radical break with all his old life. The poems had bold themes treated with sensuous freedom and intellectual ingenuity The relation to Oscar Wilde lay only in the author's care for nothing except art - moral concerns as such were set aside But what was published was not all eroticism : it traced uninhibitedly a rapid course of development from the erotic and the sceptic to the philosophico-mystic. The publishers, no doubt, were in a somewhat embarrassing situation, for the author had pushed the book through by pulling strings and it came out over the head, as it were, of the business management (Editor).

S : N is all the time murmuring about his crust.

P : He is now trying to open his medical *chakra* for intuition.

SRI AUROBINDO : Or the medical plane ?

N : No, not plane. I said that if there was a medical *chakra* like the other *chakras* I would try to open it and get intuition.

S : If you can open the other *chakras* they will do the job you want.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after laughing*) : It depends on what intuition is wanted. There are many kinds of intuition. Vital intuition, heart intuition and others.

N : Vital intuition is mixed. I want a pure intuition which can be had with comparatively greater ease.

SRI AUROBINDO : Vital intuitions are sometimes extremely correct and pure. Animals are guided by them—animals and Englishmen. Then there is physical intuition.

#### LATER

S : The 13th is passing away, but nothing has happened. The astrologers have proved faulty. Of course, something has happened to me.

SRI AUROBINDO : What is it ?

S : I had a knock. (*Laughter*) Modern architecture is going in for everything plain, sharp and clear-cut. (*Puzzled looks on all.*) That's why I got the knock. The sharp edge of my bed gave it.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : You can call it a modernistic knock.

S : P also had a knock some time back.

P : Yes, and it is still giving pain.

SRI AUROBINDO : P ! Oh P has an athletic movement. He knocks against anything and everything. He will knock even against the Mannerheim Line. (*Laughter*)

NIRODBARAN

#### NOTE BY NIRODBARAN

#### SRI AUROBINDO ON WRITING IN ENGLISH AND ON STYLE IN WRITING

As there are some remarks by Sri Aurobindo in the *Talks* on Indians writing in English and on literature in general, it will be both interesting and instructive to quote a few passages from his letters apropos of these themes.

#### I

(To Dilip)

Indians have naturally in writing English a tendency to be too coloured, sometimes flowery, sometimes rhetorical. ..One ought to have in writing English a style which is at its base capable of going to the point, saying with a simple and energetic

straightforwardness what one means to say, so that one can add grace of language without disturbing this basis. Arnold is a very good model for this purpose.

(16.5.1932)

2

(To Amal)

Avoid over-writing; let all your sentences be the vehicle of something worth saying and say it with a vivid precision neither defective nor excessive. Don't let either thought or speech trail or drag or circumvolute. Don't let the language be more abundant than the sense. Don't indulge in mere clever ingenuities without a living truth behind them.

(14.6.1935)

3

(To Amal)

If you want to write English poetry which can stand, I would suggest three rules for you :

(1) Avoid rhetorical turns and artifices and the rhetorical tone generally. An English poet can use these things at will because he has the intrinsic sense of his language and can keep the right proportion and measure. An Indian using them kills his poetry and produces a scholastic exercise.

(2) Write modern English. Avoid frequent inversions or turns of language that belong to the past poetic styles. Modern English poetry uses a straightforward order and a natural style, not different in vocabulary, syntax, etc., from that of prose. An inversion can be used sometimes, but it must be done deliberately and for a distinct and particular effect.

(3) For poetic effect rely wholly on the power of your substance, the magic of rhythm and the sincerity of your expression—if you can add subtlety so much the better, but not at the cost of sincerity and straightforwardness. Do not construct your poetry with the brain-mind, the mere intellect—that is not the source of true inspiration : write from the inner heart of emotion and vision.

4

(To Dilip)

Each poet should write in the way suited to his own imagination and substance; it is a habit of the human mind fond of erecting rules and rigidities to put one way forward as a general law for all...in any case it was far from my intention to impose any strict rule of bare simplicity and directness as a general law of poetic style. I was speaking of "Twentieth-century English poetry" and of what was necessary for Amal, an Indian writing in the English tongue. English poetry in former times used

inversions freely and had a law of its own—at that time natural and right, but the same thing nowadays sounds artificial and false. English has now acquired a richness and flexibility and power of many-sided suggestion which makes it unnecessary for poetry to depart from the ordinary style and form of the language. But there are other languages in which this is not yet true. Bengali is in its youth, in full process of growth and has many things not yet done, many powers and voices it has still to acquire. It is necessary that its poets should keep a full and entire freedom to turn in whatever way the genius leads, to find new forms and movements...

## 5

(To Arjava)

Too violent condensations of language or too compressed thoughts always create a sense either of obscurity or, if not that, then of effort and artifice, even if a powerful and inspired artifice. Yet very great poets and writers have used them, so great a poet as Aeschylus or so great a prose stylist as Tacitus. Then there are the famous “knots” in the Mahabharata. I think one can say that these condensations are justified when they say something with more power and depth and full, if sometimes recondite, significance than an easier speech would give, but to make it a constant element of the language (without a constant justification of that kind) would turn it into a mannerism or artifice.

## 6

(To Amal)

Most modern (contemporary) English poetry, at least what I have seen of it...is all very carefully written and versified, *recherché* in thought and expression; it lacks only two things—the inspired phrase and inevitable word and the rhythm that keeps a poem for ever alive....There are something like a hundred “great” poets (if you can believe their admirers) writing like that in England just now. It will be easy for you to be the hundred and first, if you like, but I would not advise you to proceed farther on that kind of modern line. It is not the irregular verse or rhymes that matter, one can make perfection out of irregularity—it is that they write from the cultured mind, not from the elemental soul-power within. Not a principle to accept or a method to imitate !

( ?6.1931)

## 7

(To Dilip)

I stand rather aghast at your summons to stand and deliver the names of the ten or twelve best prose styles in the world’s literature.... There are great writers in prose and great prose-writers and the two are by no means the same thing. Dickens and Balzac are great novelists, but their style or their frequent absence of style had better not be described; Scott attempts a style, but it is neither blame-

less nor is it his distinguishing merit. Other novelists have an adequate style and a good one but their prose is not quoted as a model and they are remembered not for that but as creators....What was in my mind was those achievements in which language reached its acme of perfection in one manner or another so that whatever the writer touched became a thing of beauty—no matter what its substance—or a perfect form and memorable. Bankim seemed to me to have achieved that in his own way as Plato in his or Cicero or Tacitus in theirs or in French Literature Voltaire, Flaubert or Anatole France. I could name many more, especially in French which is the greatest store-house of fine prose among the world's languages—there is no other to match it....All prose of other languages seems beside its perfection, lucidity, measure almost clumsy....The great prose-writers in English seem to seize you by the personality they express in their style rather than by its perfection as an instrument...

## 8

(To Amal)

I am in general agreement with your answer to M's strictures on certain points in your style and your use of English language. His objections have usually some ground, but are not unquestionably valid; they would be so if the English language were a fixed and unprogressive and invariable medium demanding a scrupulous correctness and purity and chaste exactness like the French; but this language is constantly changing and escaping from boundaries and previously fixed rules and its character and style, you might almost say, is whatever the writer likes to make it. Stephen Phillips once said of it in a libertine image that the English language is like a woman who will not love you unless you take liberties with her ..

As for "aspire for", it may be less correct than "aspire to" or "aspire after", but it is psychologically called for; it seems to me to be much more appropriate than "aspire at" which I would never think of using...."To contact" is a phrase that has established itself and it is futile to try to keep America at arm's length any longer; "global" also has established itself and it is too useful and indeed indispensable to reject; there is no other word that can express exactly the same shade of meaning. I heard it first from Arjava who described the language of *Arya* as expressing a global thinking and I at once caught it up as the right and only word for certain things, for instance, the thinking in masses which is a frequent characteristic of the Overmind. As for the use of current French and Latin phrases, it may be condemned as objectionable on the same ground as the use of clichés and stock phrases in literary style, but they often hit the target more forcibly than any English equivalent and have a more lively effect on the mind of the reader. That may not justify a too frequent use of them, but in moderation it is at least a good excuse for it. I think the expression "bears around it a halo" has been or can be used and it is at least not worn out like the ordinary "wears a halo". One would more usually apply the

expression "devoid of method" to an action or procedure than to a person, but the latter turn seems to me admissible. I do not think I need say anything in particular about other objections, they are questions of style and on that there can be different opinions; but you are right in altering the obviously mixed metaphor "in full cry", though I do not think any of your four substitutes have anything of its liveliness and force. Colloquial expressions have, if rightly used, the advantage of giving point, flavour, alertness and I think in your use of them they do that; they can also lower and damage the style, but that damage is mostly when there is a set character of uniform dignity or elevation. The chief character of your style is rather a constant life and vividness and supple and ample abounding energy of thought and language which can soar or run or sweep along at will but does not simply walk or creep or saunter and in such a style forcible colloquialisms can do good service.

(2-4-1947)

---

## RENTED SINGLE

3 AM God  
I am your child.

Not mine the gold coin  
Omnia of Sunday vaults  
Where guaranteed salvation  
Occupies each pew,  
Nodding acquaintance  
Confident of heaven  
On a credit plan.

In narrow alien bed I lie  
Pinned to a ruthless scrutiny of court  
Summoned by heart  
Which will not beg redress.

If sense were all  
We could have parted long ago  
But 3 AM God  
I have chosen you.

MARILYN WIDMAN

## DOUBTS AND THE LIFE DIVINE

(A LETTER OF FEBRUARY 1947)

I MYSELF have gone through many of your doubts and waverings. I have none of them any more. I may not be able to dispel all your difficulties, but some remarks may be of help to you.

You seem to be struggling against three kinds of obstructions. The first is a fundamental uncertainty about the Divine's presence. This uncertainty cannot be removed by reasoning only. I dare say I can intellectually make out some sort of a case for the Divine's presence, but I cannot wholly prove anything. Neither, for that matter, can you wholly prove to me the contrary by mere logic. This should make you see that we are in a region where more than the mind's argumentation is of genuine avail. The mystical path and the mystical illumination demand a certain deep instinct to start you off and sustain you. When this instinct is strong and takes a central place in your being, the mind's doubt about the Divine's presence becomes ineffective and you are aware of that presence even in the most dark and distressing situations. To make the most of this instinct you have to turn towards somebody who has followed it in himself firmly and far—a Guru. Then you are enabled to go beyond a living faith into a living radiance, for you contact the soul in you that is always filled with the Divine. I can't say that such a radiance is very intense in me, much less that I have illumined knowledge or the supreme realisation. I am only on the threshold of the mystical life, but Sri Aurobindo has helped me to stand there and not fall hopelessly back. And he has helped me mainly by giving something of his own being, by casting on me something of his own atmosphere. Of course his writings have greatly influenced me, but I could not have properly absorbed their influence without my approaching him primarily for spiritual rather than intellectual aid—a direct touch of his own Yogic state rather than an indirect touch through a mental exposition or arrangement of his experience.

The first thing, therefore, to do if you are mystically inclined and yet have misgivings about the Divine's presence is to open yourself to one you feel to be a Yogi. Nothing else will truly and basically help you. And the emergence of the soul's radiance will also go a long way towards curing you of the restlessness born of the second kind of obstruction—namely, the puzzlement *vis-à-vis* the problems of karma and rebirth, death and after-death, the why and whither of the universe, the *raison d'être* of pain and suffering, poverty and destitution. Even if no complete answer is forthcoming at the start, you will have a profound tranquillity. The mind may go on revolving its problems, but you will not be upset by them—and nothing will make you deviate from the conviction that there is surely an answer even to the most baffling riddle. What is more, you will feel that since the Divine is there, it is only by getting

into full communion with Him that the complete and satisfying solution can be arrived at, for the mind has not made the world nor woven its manifold texture and so cannot grasp in an "interior" way its warp and woof. The Divine's consciousness is not like the mind, it is not divided from the essence of things but is aware of it by an identity because that essence is ultimately the Divine Himself. If there is such a consciousness—and we cannot doubt its existence once the soul in us has put its radiant finger upon our normal being—then evidently our perplexities can end only by our rising into it. The soul by itself is able to give quite an amount of instinctive understanding, but it cannot provide total knowledge. To get that knowledge vaster and higher realisations have to be won through the soul: the Cosmic Consciousness has to be compassed and the Transcendental Truth attained.

Here, however, I must say that the Cosmic Consciousness and the Transcendental Truth have many shades and grades. Various Yogis have given out of their realisations various answers to the enigmas that are plaguing you. These answers they have couched in mental terms according to the type and quality of their minds. As far as India is concerned, there are, for example, Buddha's answer and Shankara's and Ramanuja's and Madhwa's and Vivekananda's. I have mentioned answers more or less philosophically expressed. Some have the character of philosophical intuition rather than philosophical intellection : those of the Upanshads. Others are a blend of the two : the Gita's. Still others have a symbolic poetic character : the Rig Veda's. Some have an air of homely wisdom and a species of commonsense-coloured depth : Ramakrishna's. Sri Aurobindo has an affinity, in the basic message, with the Rig Veda, the early Upanishads, the Gita and the gospel of Ramakrishna, though he brings in addition to the manner of the seer or the poet or the pragmatist a fully formed philosophical expression which can compare quite well with any in the past. The affinity I speak of arises from the many-sidedness which is present in the Rig Veda, the early Upanishads, the Gita and Ramakrishna's gospel. Sri Aurobindo is not inclined to make trenchant divisions and to erect an extreme into the whole truth. He is disposed to be comprehensive and global and not confine himself to a limited and exclusive intensity of insight. He favours no sharp cutting-asunder of the Gordian knot of the universe's mystery : his the attempt to unravel all the devious strands and show how each of them has a part to play and does not deserve to be ripped suddenly and summarily.

An Aurobindonian does not run down any Yogi; he refuses, however, to be single-tracked. Raman Maharshi, for instance, has a wonderfully luminous realisation of the Silent Self and all that he says is charged with its truth. Just because a man follows Sri Aurobindo, he does not reject Raman Maharshi as a false guide : the latter has caught hold of spiritual Reality—but in one aspect out of many, an aspect that cannot be overlooked or left unseized but is not the sole one. If it were the sole one, a devotee like Chaitanya who is all absorbed in a Personal Active Deity would be a hallucinated fool. Even Buddha would be reckoned as misguided since, though he too was the apostle of a Supreme Silence and Impersonality, he did not

call it the Self but named it Non-Being or Nirvana. The large variety of spiritual experience creates the presumption not, as sceptics suppose, that here is a field of hopeless contradiction and therefore purely subjective individual illusion but that here is some Reality which has a thousand faces and that individuals usually see one face or another. A many-sidedness and comprehensiveness and globality seem to be eminently called for. Those who have tended towards them appear to have got nearest the ultimate Truth-Consciousness. Sri Aurobindo goes even beyond all past realisation and expression of them, so much so that he will not reject any part of our nature as lying for ever outside the possibility of divinisation : even our most material being has, for him, a supporting truth or archetype in the Divine Reality and can be transformed by a descent of that archetype. If many-sidedness and comprehensiveness and globality are pointers to the highest Truth, then Sri Aurobindo by his super-synthesis, his absolute integrality, can surely be regarded as "more advanced on the spiritual path, more perfect, more correct, more enlightened than others". And it is not unreasonable to suppose that one who is such is likely also to give us the last word on sundry problems literary and artistic and philosophical and political and sociological, provided there is ample development in him of the literary, artistic, philosophical, political and sociological consciousness. This, of course, does not debar a disciple of Sri Aurobindo's from discussing matters with him and making suggestions to him. Sri Aurobindo encourages discussion and invites suggestion, for often a lively give-and-take of the mind is the best means of preparing the right mental state for a formulation of the truth of things.

I personally find Sri Aurobindo's answers very satisfying because of their integrality : he brings into his vision all the aspects of a case and presses towards such a solution as would draw out the truths of them and combine these truths into a final light. His light is not exclusively of this colour or that, but like the sun's, a sovereign lustre in which the hues of the entire rainbow are held in an ultimate fusion. And with that light playing, the tone and turn of the reply you imagine an Aurobindonian giving when the undesirable phenomena of life challenge him are impossible. I do not maintain my "peace of mind" by a reply like the one you construct for me : "Oh, this is quite simple and clear; this is due to that and that is the result of this; God is in all and all are in God; the world is the manifestation of the One in its process of becoming the Many; there is in fact no sorrow, grief, suffering, and evil but all is an appearance and the Inner Being is indestructible and eternal." Mind you, I am not saying that the reply you imagine is quite off the mark. It has a certain truth, though a limited one : what in it is uncharacteristic of an Aurobindonian is as much the facile form of it as the limitation of its truth. It seems to hail from a rather queer creature—a robustly optimistic Browningsque *Mayavadin* !

An Aurobindonian is not a *Mayavadin* nor robustly optimistic; he is a Yogi radiantly realistic : he does not brush aside obnoxious things with an easy wave of the hand and a cheerful shutting of the eyes as if by ignoring them he could prove them to be not there : he does know that the Inner Being is indestructible and eternal and

that behind all the discord and distress the divine felicity abides and the divine unity reigns, but he faces fully the terrible surface of things and regards it as very real indeed though a reality of the surface and he strives his utmost to change and transform and divinise it instead of fleeing from it as if it were *Maya*, an illusory appearance. No Yoga has the shallow Browningsque attitude—it may be optimistic, yet without minimising sorrow, grief, suffering and evil. What does Sri Krishna in the Gita say? “Thou that hast come into this transitory and unhappy world, turn thy love to Me.” Surely there is no cheap cheerfulness here. Deeply and poignantly the misery of time is felt; but together with it is felt also the possibility of a huge and happy escape by way of love of the Divine, the Inner Being, the indestructible and eternal Reality. Indeed, all Yoga is radiantly realistic—even Buddha with his notion that all cosmos is an illusion recognises intensely the *dukkha* of it, while dwelling with great exultation on the exit he has found from this *dukkha*. Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga is all the more realistic by not subscribing to illusionism in the Buddhist sense or even to the Gita’s doctrine that though action in the world is never to be disdained as a revolving in a field of *Maya* our true and final abode is in some supra-cosmic status after death has brought the God-realised soul its liberation from bodily existence. Sri Aurobindo is not content with substituting *Lila*, or God’s play in the world, for *Maya* or the universal illusion of activity. *Lila* too looks beyond, it does not offer a complete fulfilment here and now of the whole self and nature of us, it does not provide for total divinisation. And inasmuch as it does not, it stresses the Beyond as the goal and puts earth-life into a minor place and tends to see it as not equally real as the Beyond.

Sri Aurobindo never stresses the Beyond at the expense of earth-life : the call of earth is to him as insistent and as real as that of heaven, and a final liberation into the latter does not solve for him the acute problems around us. Unless sorrow, grief, suffering and evil are accepted as realities that will brook no forsaking of them, the Aurobindonian cannot reach the consummation of his Yoga. He must tackle them until they are changed and replaced not by a Beyond but by a divinisation on earth itself of earth’s constituents. Yes, he is most realistic. At the same time, he exceeds all other types of Yogis by being most radiantly so, for he has the largest hope—the hope of transforming what others either accept only for the time being or as only part brightenable by the Divine’s presence. He does not merely realise the Consciousness in which everything is for ever and unchangeably divine—God is in all and all are in God. He adds to it another vision and experience—God not only *in* all but coming *out* in all, all not only *in* God but bringing *out* God. This simultaneously implies for him an unflinching realism and world-labour on the one hand and on the other an unqualified radiance and world-fulfilment. And an Aurobindonian’s reply to the challenge of an imperfect world would be : “Life is no simple scheme of events and it has many chequered passages; its intricacy cannot be explained away or its difficulty met on the cheap; the process of the One becoming the Many is hardly the entire *rationale* of a world emerging from the brute blindness of matter into the hungerings of life and the dreamings of mind; God’s presence is indeed everywhere and yet in

terms of evolution He has still to be everywhere present; the world's essence is divine but the world's appearance which is undivine is no phantasm and it has not to be left at last by the ascending soul but to be transformed by the descending Spirit; the Inner Being's indestructibility and eternity are insufficient for me, the most outer being also must become a stuff that neither perishes nor remains a miserable victim to fate and chance and the powers of darkness."

Mention of the integral divinisation which is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga brings me to the third kind of obstruction in your way. Excuse my dubbing this kind shallow and flimsy. Is it not absurd to prevent Sri Aurobindo from using the words "I" and "me" and "my" just because he has destroyed his ego and surrendered his self to the Divine ? Why should his use of them point to any egoistic motive ? All Yogis use personal pronouns for themselves—from the Vedic 'Rishis down to Ramakrishna. Such using is at times absolutely necessary for intercourse in the world of men. Besides, why do you confine the "I" to the ego ? The ego is a particular formation in ignorant Nature; but behind it is the real "I", the individual soul. To ignore the individual soul is to make nonsense of almost every spiritual attainment, for if the attainment is real and not just one more illusion in a world of illusions there must be someone who attains something, someone who gets liberated from mortal bondage, someone who evolves and reaches fulfilment. Surely the ego cannot perform these acts; it is the individual soul which does so. And the individual soul is not, like the ego, the opposite of the universal or a perversion of the transcendental, it can open into them and be united with them, for it is the complement of the former and a delegate of a divine archetype of itself existing in the latter. When Sri Aurobindo speaks in terms of "I" and "me" and "my", he means the individual soul of him that has become united with its own archetype in the transcendental and embraced its own complement, the universal. A divine triad, with one member of it—namely, the individual soul—as the frontal instrument : that is what Sri Aurobindo the Yogi is. There is nothing egoistic in his employing that frontal instrument. And since the new work he is doing, the work of integral transformation and supramentalisation which none of the past masters attempted with full consciousness of its possibility—since this work is carried on by that frontal instrument of his own highest being, it is quite appropriate that he should occasionally employ terms with a colour of individuality in them.

Furthermore, who told you that it is the impersonal consciousness of the Eternal that works the transformation of the earth-consciousness ? If the impersonal consciousness were the only eternal factor, there would be no personal existence anywhere : personality implies a divine truth of itself which is trying to get manifested in the earth-consciousness : a supreme Personal Consciousness is also an eternal factor and it is this that carries on the transforming process of which Sri Aurobindo speaks and this, whenever a special call for direct utterance is felt, can best utter its messages and its purposes through the incarnate figure of Sri Aurobindo by words like "I" and "me" and "my" : there is no incongruity in his saying, "My Integral

Yoga.” Your notions of individuality and personality strike me as very superficial : individuality and personality are not opposed to self-surrender and self-dedication to the Divine Mother nor are they destroyed by those gestures and acts; nor, I may add, are they incompatible, in the manifold and harmonious truth of the Divine, with a realisation of the impersonal infinite, the impersonal eternal. What is opposed and destroyed is the desire-ridden feverish fragment that is the ego—and the ego also is what is incompatible with the impersonal realisation.

I have tried to clear your mind. I cannot, however, be sure that you will find peace and light by my efforts. Mental aid in spiritual matters can be effective only if you want it to be so or if you are really open to conversion. There is in our minds a perpetual doubter doubting for doubt’s own sake. Don’t let him take possession of you under the guise of the genuine spirit of inquiry and the genuine mood of perplexity.

K. D. SETHNA

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## COVES

A grey-lit mist  
 Unhorizoned  
 The island  
 And dreamed  
 The old summer  
 On a cloudy sea.

Roundly-dim  
 Shadow-shapes  
 The brown-tint  
 Carapace  
 Where white stones  
 Green seem  
 In the emerald  
 Undersea world.

Past the gulls fly  
 Circling cries  
 A sea-diamond weds  
 Present paradise  
 Sunglinted in  
 Our searching eyes.

STANLEY W. COWIE

# CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ATTITUDE TO INDIAN TRADITIONS IN LIFE AND LITERATURE

A PAPER READ AT A SEMINAR IN SIMLA ON  
“TRADITION AND MODERNITY”

## I

IN fact there is not one attitude but attitudes, not one tradition but many traditions. At least the wise speak with many tongues, *viprā bahudhā badanti*. And, to believe Stephen Spender, ‘contemporary’ may not be ‘modern’. All the same, the Indian emphasis on unity-in-variety or the principle of simultaneous validity, is more than a shibboleth, a built-in cultural fiction. One may call it our one abiding national habit, a lethargic rather than creative co-existence, which is part of the problems and pleasure of the Indian scene. That being so, one can only state one’s own point of view, hoping that it might have some coherence and perhaps include other relevant alternate attitudes, at least not ignore them completely. Also, if it is not too much to hope, even to reconcile them according to the well-known scientific principle of conciliation of induction. I suppose I have already stated one of my assumptions which, I believe, is also a basic Indian tradition : faith in unity and reconciliation. If someone does not happen to believe in either I do not know how we can talk to each other and for how long.

As a modern master has said, “All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony. They arise from the perception of an unsolved discord and the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity.”<sup>1</sup> The contemporary Indian, a creature much to be pitied, bears ample evidence of this unsolved discord. Views completely at variance with each other are aired with oracular finality and we seem to be

as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Passionately partial, indeed a victim to a series of exclusive interests or preferences, we seem to be singularly incapable of striking a balance or synthesis, one word too often profaned. Hypnotised by a phrase or an idea, dogmas in disguise, we can, however, argue about these preferences, that is rationalize, provide good reasons for bad decisions. Perhaps men alone need to. For we are not so much a rational animal as a rationalizing animal. This ought to make us a little humble.

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, I 1

Why this gloomy soliloquy ? Perhaps not altogether unconnected with the business in hand. We are met here one does not know whether as alienists of anguish or as heralds of modified hope, whether to prolong or to put an end to the unfinished civil war or schizophrenia that the educated Indian, residing in an area of darkness or the continent of Circe, carries about him. As the expatriate Naipaul cries out at the end of his misadventure, India has broken my life into two. 'Two' of course is an understatement, to which Naipaul, being more British than Indian, is certainly entitled. At different times in our recent past, by which I mean 1757-1966, the battle has waged fiercely and the combatants carried different labels. In course of a 1961 seminar Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao gave a formidable list of some of these apparently opposite pulls and demands, "dilemmas that befog the Indian". Today the latest form of the encounter or conflict is : Tradition *versus* Modernity. Conflict of generations used to be, so far, a western speciality. Now it has Eastern recipes as well. In spite of Kipling the East and the West *have* met. There is the crux of the problem. To use Arnold Toynbee's analysis, echoed by others before and after, the Indian situation is now part of the world situation. To know India today you have to know the world. That is where all partisans agree or have to agree. The contemporary Indian attitude to Indian traditions in life and literature cannot, can no longer, be understood in the Indian context and in Indian terms alone. For instance, even orthodox protagonists of "Back to the Vedas" have often asserted or implied that the ancient insights contain scientific truths. Perhaps here, in the compensatory urge, of the union of opposites, lies the seed of solution, some yet unattempted synthesis of science and spirituality in an open society, at least the hope of a happier fate for *homo indicus* no less than *homo sapiens*. This is, indeed, all I have to say. In spite of apparent opposition and non-recognition this, I believe, is the inner sense of contemporary Indian life and letters, a search for an intense, inclusive and universal order.

## II

There are, luckily, factors which simplify our study. One above all. "An important strand in the web of social causation (in modern Indian culture) has been the birth, growth and decline of an artificial elite group", "a counterfeit class"—the middle class. In a sense the entire literature, part of the life of the period under review, and all its stances have been the work of this new class. A hyphen in history, its characteristic feature, as the sociologist Dhurjati Prasad Mukherji put it, is a curious feeling "of historic denial". It is perhaps not a happy phrase, but we who mostly come from this class know or ought to know what he meant by that. Unlike the western bourgeoisie, and with little or no roots in the soil, instability and insubstantiality mark both its existence and performance. In spite of occupying a disproportionately large area of recent cultural history, indeed becoming for a time a creative minority, it seems to have reached the end of its tether and is busy raising an epitaph to itself. The Prometheus of progress has fallen a victim to doubt and decay.

The middle class is the secular protestant of modern Indian history. But the protestant nature of modern India is not something entirely new, "not solely the gift of the West". One can see that the mediaeval *bhakti* cult left us the triple legacy of "religious emotionalism, humanism, and dissent in the name of Love, Intuition and Man. In many ways, it was perhaps far more well-grounded than what followed, shadow without substance. Another feature of deterioration has been that to our native gift for sentimentality was added—an endless supply—a generous dose of romantic and Victorian gush. Taste was so corrupted—it still is, only sentimentality has gone into the reverse gear, the slightly sophisticated hysteria of the *deraciné*—that when Michael Madhusudan, in his *Meghnadbadh Kavya*, rationed Rama's lachrymal response at the kidnapping of virtuous Sita he was roundly accused by the keepers of conscience as a rank outsider, a *pāṣṇḍa*. To be an Indian one had to shed gallons of tears. What a fall from classical restraint !

But the rise of sentimentality, which has governed our attitude to tradition, was a historical necessity. It was the unheroic compensation of a colonial people, baulked of any healthy outlet. Idealised, slightly suspect reconstructions of the past, especially of Rajput and Mahratta, sometimes Sikh, heroism and chivalry, acted as so many safety valves. The Golden Age, as Sardar Panikkar once said in a cutting phrase, is the dream of the defeated. The tradition of idealising the past still continues. Take the works of Kanhaiya Lal Munshi, his *Jai Somnath*, for instance. Since much or most of this idealisation, or resistance, was aimed against Muslim rulers there was no fear of sedition (secularism could wait), an important consideration as most of the writers happened to be pillars of the British Raj. The original *Bande Mataram*, it may be noted, was sung by a band of Hindu sannyasins against Muslim usurpers of the Motherland. Its author, the first graduate of the Calcutta University, was a Deputy Magistrate. His name : Bankim Chandra Chatterji.

The song is part of a novel, *Ananda Math*. Which reminds us that one obvious, incontestable gain from western impact was the growth and development of vernacular prose. And what helped the new form was political agitation and journalism. Some of the best Indo-Anglian prose, by Sri Aurobindo, Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, was born of their political involvement. This was of course truer of regional writing. The *Kesari*, in Maharashtra, the *Andhra Patrika* in Andhra and the *Navajivan* in Gujarat played a definite role in naturalising the new medium. In Bengal the political prose of the *Jugantar* or the *Sandhya* is unsurpassed.

Every form of writing—poetry, drama, fiction, criticism, *belles lettres*—has reflected the turns of national history, undergone the triple movement we encounter throughout the period : rejection, assimilation and a new universalism. Of course it is not a simple development and the details I shall leave to the several experts in the field, or fields. The attempt to reject the west, science and secularism has, by the way, failed, and deserved to fail. Keeping, for the present, only one significant area or arc of our basic and enlarging experience I shall point to the growing sense of rootedness—to which the scattering of Pandit Nehru's ashes are an incantation—

and larger recognition or universalism that distinguishes the more significant of our writing, in the regional languages no less than in English. The not wholly successful attempts at epic writing, from Bibhutibhushan's pastorals to Sarashankar's studies of the displacement of village by town and, later, by Bimal Mitra and Raja Rao, deserve special mention. Whether the "effort at a total projection of India in vivid fictional terms" is a serpent or a rope, a long rope, only the future can tell. A masterpiece of the non-co-operation movement (and more than the non-co-operation movement) was Satinath Bhaduri's *Jagari* (ably rendered into English by Lila Ray). For the rest, as Chittaranjan Banerji, of the National Library, has ruefully commented, little worthwhile has been done.

Apart from glancing at the Indo-Anglians, for keeping this brief account close to Bengal I plead guilty. There is, however, this little justification, that, as Pandit Nehru once said, "In Bengal we can see more clearly than elsewhere the early effects of British rule and western influence." In his *Western Influence in Bengali Literature* Priyaranjan Sen has shown, with a wealth of detail, how this affected our ideals of Man, Nature and God and much else. It has changed both the form and content of our life and literature, almost created a new tradition which is far from being dead or exhausted. It is only the men and the movement that have changed, the interplay goes on. Excesses, of uncritical imitation and equally uncritical conservatism, apart, it speaks, says Sen, "of the marvellous capacity of Bengali language and literature that it has been able to assimilate so much within so short a time". Allowing for minor differences, what is true of Bengal is probably true of the other states and regional literatures.

Coming to a single representative or perhaps un-representative writer, the single figure that dominates or dominated, the modern Indian literary scene was Rabindranath Tagore. Today it is part of reaction or fashion to insist on his feet of clay. Certainly less hypnotic and unexamined than before, he remains both an example and a warning. Whether or not he "made it difficult for us to be original", as Dhurjati Prasad Mukherji seemed to feel, Tagore is an outstanding and puzzling product of the Indian Renaissance. Harbours, till the end, contradictions galore, among his gifts to the Indian (if not to the present Indo-Anglian) writers are :

i) His lyric poetry. Tagore is better, perhaps more himself, as a composer of songs than as a poet. The endless variations on the Upanishadic theme are amazing. He can lyricise the archetypal *gravitas* as it has been rarely done before. While his influence, acknowledged and unacknowledged, on some of the regional literatures has been plain few have caught the trick of that voice;

ii) Tagore's second gift is not so much an art form as an attitude which has now become a part of the Indian climate of opinion, I mean his universalism, or 'internationalism'. For this he had once been lambasted by his countrymen. But it is perhaps largely because of him that the presentday Indian writer or thinker is not bound by narrow or national boundaries. He has altered our perspective.

Pandit Nehru, for instance, has handsomely recognised the debt. In a private conversation Annadashankar Ray said that it was because of Rabindranath that modern Indian writers are "for ever lost to isolationism", and Rilke and Rimbaud, Baudelaire and Brecht have their Calcutta cousins;

iii) Equally important, for the education of the nation, was his Anti-Fascist stand. Tagore did not reach his position through official Marxism but on his own. It was less dogmatic and depended on

iv) His brand of Humanism, which he later worked out in his *Manusher Dharma*—the enlarged, less natural, Englished edition, *Religion of Man*, was presented at Oxford as the Hibbert Lectures for 1930;

v) In brief, Tagore had a philosophy of personality, history and civilization. Though not many understand or care for these, few are unaffected.

But these did not save Tagore from periodic and acute self-criticism, disillusionment, guilt and humility. In one of the later poems, for instance, where he welcomes the "coming poet of the multitude". All his life he suffered from loneliness and unceasing contradiction that nearly broke him into two. His later short stories, poems, and, above all, the Dionysian doodles and paintings remain still undeciphered. While welcoming, with his last breath, the coming of the New Man (*O mahamanab ase*) his final, existential poems add a frightful dimension, no-man-fathomed, to modern Indian culture. For instance :

The first day's sun  
had asked  
at the manifestation of new being—  
Who are you ?  
No answer came.  
Year after year went by,  
the last sun of the day  
the last question utters  
on the western sea-shore,  
in the silent evening—  
Who are you ?  
He gets no answer.

Was Robi, one wonders, a Dark Sun, darker, at any rate, than what we have guessed ?

### III

But what know they of literature who only literature know ? It is a part of the national mind and virtue. And so as a variation on the theme or a model I would like to take you quickly through the thoughts of a great modern, little-known or rarely recognised. In some ways he represents the entire gamut of response (other than the rootless

variety, our enlightened expatriates within the country) of the Indian Renaissance that we are here to study and make sense of. The pattern of response, I ought to add, is repeated, in a variety of ways, in the career of other Indian thinkers too. That only adds to its value. But few perhaps have seen it with such clarity or renewed the tradition of the visionary.

Briefly, in him we have (as in others) : an intense period or mood of nationalist apology or defence. In the nature of things this would be, at times, a little emphatic, if not "aggressive"; this was followed by a growing feeling or hope of mutual aid and assimilation of the values of the East and the West, striking a balance between what came to be seen as complementary attitudes and institutions and a common need; finally, was posited the new-old tradition of a spiritual vision, cutting across all national barriers and the stereotype East-West dichotomy, in terms of a fairer future, the hope of a new cycle of civilization or a new race, an apocalyptic note, if you like. A timely re-statement of the Vedic dream of creating a divine race and life, perhaps our only, truest and forgotten tradition.

These are the three faces or facets of our tradition, which we are far from having worked out or even understood. It is the one truth that we have turned our backs upon, which explains why we are what we are.

To explain a little these stages of our changing attitude to tradition, we begin with the nationalist defence of Indian culture. It was no doubt historically necessary. And so our thinker, along with others, stressed "fidelity to it (the national ideal) as the very principle" of India's role and her continuity. This alone, he says, "has been the secret of (India's) amazing persistence and perpetual force of survival and revival". Hence the use of superlatives for the sake of national boost or image: such as "We are no ordinary race... a people in whom God has chosen to manifest Himself more than any other at many great moments of our history". Or the repeated emphasis on the sense of mission, that *leit motif* of the Renaissance in its early years : "India's nature, her mission, the work that she has to do, her part in the earth's destiny, the peculiar power for which she stands is written in her past and is the secret purpose behind her present sufferings and ordeals." The tone and manner are part of the Vivekanandan heritage one might say. But, it is important to note, this intense *swadeśiānā* or nationalist mood is neither *Herrenvolk* of the Nazis nor the xenophobia of the Hindu mind that Alberuni had noted in his *Tahkik-i-Hind* or what, at a later date, Stephen Spender calls the "nostalgic fallacy". Leaving the lunatic fringe aside, even during the *sturm und drang* of the Swadeshi days our thinker saw clearly the need for fresh forms and institutions in keeping with the time-spirit. In other words, he was far from being a diehard or a conservative. To use his own words, he drew a sharp but necessary distinction between *prācīn* and *sanātana*, between the merely old and the perennial. In truth the *sanātana* is *ntyā nūtanah*, for ever new, that is creative. He was sure in his mind that "A reshaping of the forms of our spirit will have to take place; but it is the spirit behind the past forms that we have to preserve and give it new and powerful thought-significance, culture-values, a new instrumen-

tation, greater figures. And as long as we recognise these essential things and are faithful to the spirit, it will not hurt us to make even the most drastic mental or physical adaptations and the most extreme cultural and social changes. But these changes themselves must be cast in the spirit and mould of India and not any other, not in the spirit of America and Europe, not in the mould of Japan or Russia". Our thinker is sufficiently sober to remind the complacent: "We must recognise the great gulf between what we are and what we ought to strive for." Also that "spirituality itself does not flourish on earth in the void, even as our mountain tops do not rise like those of an enchantment of dream out of the clouds without a base". Briefly, it is, *pace* Schweitzer, a spirituality of world-affirmation and not world-negation, fully aware of its right and duty of making new formations and adaptations. The idealism is less a glorification of the past and more a loyalty towards the future, world loyalty. In reality the return which the idealists propose is not a voyage backward through time but a return to the centre.

It is this novel and futuristic note which shows that it has less to do with grey heads than with the young in spirit. This is often forgotten. Sri Aurobindo, to identify our thinker, was a teacher of youth and remains so, of those who dare to dream and live dangerously. Our first necessity, he wrote, more than fifty years back, is that the youth of India should learn to think. This is not the voice of dogmatism but of freedom and, as we shall presently see, of fairness, to both past and present, East and West. "The debasement of our mind, character and taste," wrote Sri Aurobindo, "by a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education is a fact on which young Nationalism has always insisted....Let us not (therefore) either select, at random, make a nameless complete hotchpotch and then triumphantly call it the assimilation of the East and West. We must begin by accepting nothing on trust from any source whatsoever, by questioning everything and forming our own conclusions." Further, "We have to treasure jealously everything in our social structure, institution, which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit or helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding...spirit of India in temporary forms which are the creation of the last few hundred years. That would be a vain and disastrous endeavour. The mould is broken; we must remould in larger outlines and with a richer content."

What that "richer content" might be he does not leave us in doubt too long. "Our ideal," he tells us, "is a new birth of humanity into the spirit; our life must be a spiritually inspired effort to create a body of action for the great new birth and creation. A spiritual ideal has always been the characteristic idea and aspiration of India. But the progress of Time and the need of humanity demand a new orientation and another form of that ideal. The old forms and methods are no longer sufficient for the purpose of the Time-Spirit." To call such a thinker a played-out conservative can only be excused in terms of congenital ignorance or entrenched prejudice and poverty of the spirit, a total uprootedness, of which examples are not wanting.

Outlining the needed synthesis and call to co-operation, he continues: "The West has made the growth of the intellectual, emotional, vital and material being of

man its ideal, but it has left aside the greater possibilities of his spiritual existence.... The West has put its faith in science and machinery and it is being destroyed by its science and crushed under its mechanical burden. It has not understood that a spiritual change is necessary for the accomplishment of its ideals. The East has that secret of the spiritual change but it has too long turned its eyes away from the earth.... This must be her mission and service to humanity—as she discovered the inner spiritual life of the individual, so now to discover for the race its integral, collective expression and found for mankind its new spiritual and communal order.”

Years later, in 1947, speaking of his “final dream”, “a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since first he began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society”, he speaks on a more modest, hypothetical but truly oecumenical note : “Here, too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.” Even more wide, unitive and gentle is the tone of his message (1949) to America in which, *inter alia*, he said : “It has been customary to dwell on the division and difference between these two sections of the human family (the East and the West) and even oppose them to each other but for myself I would rather be disposed to dwell on the oneness and unity than on division and difference.... There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers.... East and West could be reconciled on the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things of the Spirit.” This vision or insight, “in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal”, may be looked upon as the essence of the pluralistic contemporary Indian attitude to tradition in life and literature. And the account is not closed. On the contrary it is, one hopes, an attitude and aspiration that will continue to flow when the weeds and tares of imported ideas and forms—disvalues—have been washed away and time provides the revaluation of values, including meretricious contemporary reputations.

#### IV

And now we can sum up. The conflict of categories and confusions of co-existence, the needless war between generations, the past and the present, between modernity and maturity, the crisis of India cannot go on for ever, unless of course our main interest lies in the pursuit of conflict rather than harmony and creative understanding of the forces operating in history. If fullness of living and reconciliation of opposites is what we are or ought to be after, there must be a way out. It is not unreasonable to think or believe that such a way exists. It is a way that is derived from the best in our tradition. Also it perhaps answers the needs of the world today better than any other. It is the Indian Way and it beckons all who have trodden that ancient path and

are *Bhārat Pathik*, pilgrim of the Indian Way, which is how Tagore had described the first of our contemporaries, Ram Mohun Roy. True to all our yesterdays it is as modern as to-morrow. What is it ?

I shall state it briefly. According to this "top view" : "The true and full spiritual aim in society regards man not as a mind, life and body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfilment upon earth, not only in the heavens beyond, which after all it need not have left if it had no...business here in the world of physical, vital and mental nature. It will, therefore, regard the life, mind and body neither as ends in themselves, sufficient for their own satisfaction nor as mortal members full of disease which have only to be dropped off for the rescued spirit to flee away into its pure regions, but as the first instruments of the soul, the yet imperfect instruments of an unseized... purpose. It will believe in their destiny and help them to believe in themselves, but for that very reason in their highest and not only in their lowest or lower possibilities, (and as with the individual so with society) it will regard every human society, nation, people, or other organic aggregates from the same standpoint, subsouls, as it were, means of a (complete and) complex manifestation and self-fulfilment of the Spirit, the divine Reality, the conscious Infinite in man upon earth. The possible godhead of man because he is inwardly of one being with God will be its one solitary creed and dogma."

This possibility or hypothesis of Integral Humanism appears to be the nearest if not the only reconciling idea and image, a true meeting of minds, of thought and emotion, of idea and act, between tradition and modernity, East and West. It is, I believe, the only natural, necessary and inevitable *rapprochement* between cultures and centuries, the hard core of unity and choice in our present crisis and uncertainty. It is the heart of our tradition, the heart of Aryavarta at its barest and its best. To equip it with a new body is our problem and privilege today. The test of tradition is that it makes us creative in time. If its timelessness makes it only a bloodless category, useless, *avyavahārya*, then what shall we do with it except to keep it in the museum of the mind, a legend and not a reality? Out of our contemporary crisis of choice could arise a new and revolutionary tradition, a dynamic rather than a static tradition.

The view we have presented should not be equated with religious revival or an anti-scientific regional or nationalistic resurgence, or even with patriotism. Our concern is with principles rather than with megalomaniac parodies of the truth. Ananda Coomaraswamy is usually looked upon as an uncompromising, orthodox thinker, one who was angry with time for having played false. But nearly half a decade back he had written : "For the great idealists of younger India, nationalism is not enough. Patriotism is parochial, and even banal, and there are finer parts great souls may play. Certainly not as missionaries or propagandists...but as equally concerned with all others in the exploration of the thousand paths that have never yet been trodden. It is life, and not merely Indian life that claims our loyalty. The pursuit of mere liberty is not enough : it is not his happiness, but his task that concerns the idealist....The chosen people of the future cannot be any nation or race.....The flowering of humanity !

is more to us than the victory of any party...The only condition of a renewal of life in India, or elsewhere, should be a spiritual, not merely an economic and political awakening, and it is on this ground alone that it will ever be possible to bridge the gulf which has been supposed to divide the East from the West."

It is not suggested that everyone, thinker or artist—and in India it is mostly Either/Or, rarely both—thinks the same or has acted up to it. Or that the whole of modern Indian thought and literature is one long hallelujah to this Noble Truth that I have tried to set forth. Some are thoroughly opposed to it, among them many well-known "unknown Indians". But, who knows, they also serve who shout and oppose? As our tradition wisely points out, they serve the cosmic scheme by opposition, *śatrubhāvena*. They may not be the salt of the earth but the Indian curry would lose its tang without them. But this negligible or welcome dissent and deviation apart, here in the ideal of a spiritual-scientific free society, the "free development of each depending upon the free development of all", integrated personalities and an "orchestral mind" are the heart of the matter. This is the inner theme or sense of the Indian tradition, "the silent unplanned revolution (that) has been taking place in India for the last 200 years", indeed more. It is also the inner sense of the human evolution and our present crisis of choice, "the choicest gift that India has to give to the world," to use Gokak's phrase. Here might be the long-sought palingenesis or re-birth of our abortive Renaissance, the world's unborn soul, a world renaissance. "If our civilization is not to produce greater holocausts, our writers (and thinkers) have to become something more than (broken) mirrors of violence and disintegration (and Partisanship)...They, through their efforts, will have to regain the initiative for the human person and the forces of life, chaining up the demons we have allowed to run loose." A similar suggestion has been made by a recent, mature visitor. In *A Psychiatrist Discovers India* Medard Boss has pointed to "the higher spirituality and perfected humanity offered by the Oriental tradition in return for our Western gifts of technology". It is such a reconciliation of transcendence and technology, of know-how with know-why, of the height with the abyss that we are here for, the happy "re-establishment of the primacy of the person". As the fragment of a confession I submit this religion of the spirit might be the sum of our labour, the end of our endeavour. The contemporary Indian attitude to tradition in Indian life and literature is not merely a series of imitative modernities, academic, conformist or protestant annotations, passionate preferences and prejudices. It holds within it the *nisus* or urge of a new life. It is an adventure of ideas—or *Viśvābhīśāra*, or world-tryst, to use Tagore's poetic phrase—and adventure is of the essence of civilization, of the new life, *la vita nuova*.

If there was a more intelligent or widespread recognition of this fact or ideal, of unity of tensions, and a follow-up, the crisis of India as of civilization might be controlled and find a sense of direction. For crisis is also an opportunity, and "Sanity is a proportion with reference to purpose". Only then will contemporary India, in the doldrums since 1947 and with her gaping inner wounds that are slow to heal, have ful-

filled her responsibility towards herself, the larger world and towards history. It is up to us, to be either the heroes or villains of the piece. A thin line divides. Our tragedies have been tragedies of unintelligent choice. What shall it now be : martyr or truant ? In the words of William James, the saintly group of qualities is indispensable to the world's welfare.

And so we end on a note of modified but high hope, with what might be called an unexpected, essential and revolutionary concept of tradition. It is up to the artists and thinkers of India to accept or reject it. They will be judged by their 'yes' or 'no' to this Great Tradition beyond all little traditions. What we have tried to outline and emphasize is not an easy utopia, but "the hope of the (saint and) statesman, the solution which the long course of history is patiently disclosing.... There is a freedom lying beyond circumstances, derived from the direct intuition that life can be grounded upon its absorption in what is changeless amid change. This is the freedom for which Plato was groping, the freedom which Stoics and Christians obtained as the gift of Hellenism and the world might receive from India if she is true to herself. It is the freedom of that virtue directly derived from the source of all harmony. For it is conditioned only by its adequacy and understanding. And understanding has this quality that, however it be led up to, it issues in the soul freely conforming its nature to the supremacy of insight. It is the reconciliation of freedom with compulsion of the truth. In this sense the captive can be free, taking as his own the supreme insight, the indwelling persuasion towards the harmony which is the height of existence." In the words of an Indian poet :

Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the children of Time,...  
 Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature's abyss :  
 Make earth the home of the wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss.

This Aurobindean invocation is man's first and last prayer, the link between his historical situation and the realm of yet unrealised values beyond history, new wine in old bottle. Have you not heard the entrance of a new theme ? We have ideas and attitudes that we have not yet tried.

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

## TRANSLATIONS FROM IQBAL

(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1966)

### III. FROM *Bal-e-Jibreel*

1. Blessed be thy carefree abodelessness !  
Here where I stand reveal Thyself no less.
2. Immersed in self's retreats, all unaware,  
I took no notice of God's presence there.
3. At the Friend's effulgent glory I cast not a glance,  
And looked an oddity on Doomsday all trance !
4. With the power of self subdue the world and bare  
The truth masked by the spell of this rosy sphere.
5. As from shore-clingers draws away the sea,  
So from the world's shore-grip shake thy soul free.
6. The trials of love stop not with the starry world :  
Across its path realm after realm is hurled !
7. Make not this fragile world of flowers thy all:  
Nests ever bloom-bright from fadeless gardens call.
8. O earth-cramped eagle, recall thy wing-waft's pride :  
Beyond this sky vast bracing ethers bide.
9. How long this weary round of fret and strife,  
When a different Space-Time gleams—and a deeper life ?
10. Thou art my nest of refuge and its bough,  
My craving and my questing all art Thou.
11. All bound am I, Thou limitlessly free !—  
“Godhead, is it fair ?”—my madness puts to thee.
12. On the path of love what comrades could there be—  
My longing is all the company left to me !
13. Philosophy and verse do only convey  
What yearning's lips directly fail to say.

14. When eagle-souls of youth from slumber rise,  
Their goals appear resplendent in the skies !
15. Build not thy cosy nest on the palace-dome :  
Rugged mountain crag, young blood, is thy hawk-home !
16. What else is the truth behind Thy nights and days  
Save a flow of Time that day nor night displays ?
17. Marvels of art enjoy a blaze too brief—  
Nay, the whole world-effort finally comes to grief !
18. Void seals all—bared or veiled, Void's Source and End—  
Each old or new way unto Void shall wend !
19. But the path hallowed by a man of God retains  
The everlasting hue of permanence.
20. Besides the Present, in Love's almanac came  
Some other counts of Time that have no name !
21. Mind only informs—it heals not agony :  
A glance of Love is thy sole remedy.
22. Life is but zest for the journey's endless roll :  
Beyond each goal comes yet another goal !
23. Love is Thy end and Love my ultimate :  
So even like me Thou art imperfect yet !
24. Bold divers in self have caused by their resolute will  
This rill of being as a boundless sea to thrill !
25. Thy place the astrologer knows not—living clay,  
How couldst thou brook the inanimate planets' sway !
26. An impetuous will to vision lack thine eyes,  
Else here are the Fairies, Gabriel, Paradise !
27. Bestowing sweet immersion in self, what a wrench, that He  
Wills too I cease to live and move in me !
28. Earth-born I am, not therefore earth-allied :  
Above East or West does a God-indweller abide.

29. Nor God nor soul nor world aright Man sees—  
Is he Thy art's loud-rumoured masterpiece ?
30. Inscrutable, shoreless, seemed this cosmic vast !  
With one leap of love, dropped all my puzzle at last !
31. This one prostration which hangs heavy on thee,  
From a thousand other prostrations makes men free !

(*To be continued*)

NARESH

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## CLEOPATRA

*Cleo : I am fire and air. My other elements  
I give to baser life.*

—*Shakespeare*

Helen it was  
That hid the dark Furies within her beguiling breast  
To let loose  
The revel of their frenzied ecstasy  
Amid the clashes of gaping jaws and living skulls  
And the helpless cries of motherless children

Cleopatra came  
Harbouring within her bosom  
The white-dazzle of a blinding passion  
That dance the joy of the agony of love.

Zeus produced a Helen  
Whose reckless beauty  
Like a playful child  
Set ablaze a high civilization  
And, herself immortal, stood rapt amidst the consuming heat.

Earth produced a Cleopatra  
To baffle politicians  
To astound humanity  
With the extravagance of her rich ravishing moods.

Her soul-alluring eyes  
Mirrored the swiftness of her irresistible spirit and gleamed  
Lightning-lustres of enchantment.  
Her mind  
A sheen of sharp steel-edge  
Cut clean through all short-sightedness.

The fire of her bewitching heart  
Bemoted a mighty Caesar, shaker of a mighty world,  
And immortalised a dying Antony.

Her unseizable soul  
Coursed faster than the fastest mind  
Escaping ere it was caught.  
Magnetising the West  
Her siren-charm  
Dreamed the fusion of the abysmal gulf  
Between  
The all-seeing-light and the all-conquering-might.

But the price of an undreamed dream  
Is annihilation—  
Though its guiding shadow  
Broods ever after  
Over a fitful and ignorant world.

BIBHAS JYOTI MUTSUDDI

## CHILDREN OF LIGHT

CHILDREN of Light !  
Rainbowed foreheads,  
Luminous eyes,  
Golden speech,  
Breast wide-open,  
In your swift flight-march  
Towards the prismic blazing Heights !

As arched golden bows  
Thrill your taut bodies  
In their ardent flight  
Towards the Twelve-Rays Sun.

The fruit of an Earth transformed  
Opens the secret alchemy  
Of thousand-faceted power-treasures  
Held in the subtle cores of atoms.

From this miracled new-born Earth  
Shoots up a path of Light  
Woven by the irresistible rays  
Of the Golden Mother calling  
Her children to the heights.

She calls, enrobes and draws,  
Her will, a Calm ablaze,  
A Faith-Force all-transforming,  
With a single absolute aim :  
The heralding of Superconscience,  
The Lord Supreme for all.

Children of Light !  
You have left the dark subconscious,  
You have left the middle mind-realm,  
You are moulded into  
A new consciousness, being, power,  
By a Mother's Light-Force Hand  
To serve the Golden Manifestation.

For in moment formidable  
 Of calm-passionate embrace  
 The Mother and the Lord of All  
 Have seized this alchemical Universe,  
 Struck open its casketed key-secret,  
 Released in a drunk-with-joy atom-chain  
 The Divine Power enclosed  
 In its One-myriad-multiple Heart.

The Eternal has broken its gates,  
 Has rushed upon Earth  
 To be lived  
 As the Eternal HERE AND NOW.

Children of Light !  
 Bold is your look,  
 Swift-calm your determined tread,  
 In your conquering flight-march  
 Towards the prismic twelve-fold Heights.

The whole is held in your hearts.  
 Yours is not the worried search,  
 But the fiery untrammelled path  
 Of Truth upon Truth disrobed  
 By the ever-anew evolving  
 Eternal Mother-Guide.

Children of Light !  
 The Sun of Suns  
 Has exploded upon earth,  
 Within earth.  
 The time of the twelve-rays Sun-Life has come,  
 And you are its first heralds.

# ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

## THE PROBLEMS AND THE SOLUTIONS

*(Continued from the issue of October 1966)*

SRI Aurobindo has not dealt at length with passions. But Milton takes a serious view of them. For he associates passions with the element that caused man's decline. Passions like sin are primal energies but to Sri Aurobindo they are psychological conditions. To one they represent the embodiments of evil, while to the other they are shadows, waves, energies that rise and possess man according to his receptivity. Once one is possessed by these, according to Milton, one is for ever damned, because one has lost one's rational capacity of poise and discernment. Prior to man's fall, man did not suffer this disturbing factor. Decline caused a great havoc in his existence and uprooted his serenity, his peace and this condition continued for ever. Thus passion is one element that found its roots in the human system. Such a categorical statement of a psychological condition falsifies the truth.

Further, how does Milton account for its birth? Is it internal or external, is it individual or cosmic? He does not specifically point out any solution. But what we can infer is that it is an external power which came and possessed man and dethroned his rational capacity. Whether it was cosmic or individual, we have no way of ascertaining, for, closely linked with sin, passions should be cosmic powers, but they express themselves as individual vices when they manifest in Adam and Eve.

Another point: if Satan represents passion, his power of passion existed before it was uncovered by Sin at a much later date in Time. How can we reconcile this? This either means that Evil and Passion existed in Heaven itself and what Sin released was its lesser power of effective working or it means there is gross error in the valuation of the problem. Or it may mean: while Satan was deformation of the heavenly principle, Sin and Error and passions were originally dark powers to which Satan got linked without any premeditation. Thus we face alternative problems. Which one is the verity? As Milton offers us no solution, we shall turn to Sri Aurobindo. Milton by his rationalisation often bungles the issues and there seems no exit from that labyrinth.

All psychological elements, not only passions, but lusts, greeds, desires are manifestations of some psychological falsity, aberration or deformation. In their essence they are the opposite of what they manifest. In their origin they are not rationality as Milton conceives it, but calmness, serenity, nobility, non-attachment, plenitude and silence. Rationality is only a mental status of tranquillity and is not unperturbable as Milton shows us. And the reason for this deformation is not in man's

disobedience as we are told by the Bible, but in something far greater and more pristine than a mere human act. Such a colossal and cosmic deformation was beyond the farthest dream of an ethical scripture like the Bible. We have already discussed this in our chapter on philosophy. Thus all changes either cosmic or individual have their sources in Ignorance. This gave rise to change according to the status of the plane of consciousness to different degrees of crookednesses, falsities, passions, aberrations and evil. If the world was to be, some change in manifestation was inevitable, and this caused problems which man, earth and soul had to overcome psychologically, mentally, in the life-parts, in emotions—and even physically. We thus get quite a different aspect and small ethical values disappear in the universality of the question. That is why we stated earlier that the problems that are real for Milton do not exist for Sri Aurobindo.

Yet one problem remains, though its aspect is considerably altered: the problem not of passions in themselves but of transforming them into their original element. Milton cannot conceive that these passions could be changed. He believes in annihilation rather than transformation, because of his faith that these were primal powers. The remedy too is typically Christian, which is not much of a remedy in such fundamental cases. The remedy is a long, patient waiting, the interim being spent in prayers, mortifications, fasts and faith in the coming of the Saviour. But when the Messiah appears, he is quickly deposed and man is left to lament once more and wait interminably for the day of Judgement. The question remains unsolved. Sin abides; passions rage undaunted. Milton does not speak of this aspect of man's behaviour, and his angel Gabriel, who reviews the world for Adam after the fall, cannot see this gruesomely sordid aspect of human cruelty, man's unchanging mind that admits no new light and for which the sacrifice of God seems vain.

But Sri Aurobindo shows us that these passions can be changed by Yoga. And this practice he has shown as an exacting process in the Sadhana of Aswapathy and that of Savitri herself. This is not a Yoga as the West conceives it, being a few physical postures, but a long system of discipline, which calls into play all the concentration we can muster and all the will and energy we can bring to our disposal. Milton stops at a metaphysical level and as a rational man, he is not interested in the practical solution of the problem. He sees the problem from an ethical point of view and he is not interested in the solution because the Bible gives us no direct indication as to how to do it.

Sin and Evil are almost parallel forces of Ignorance. Milton makes little difference between them. He sees evil to be a lesser untruth and sin as a manifest anti-ethical entity. The one is associated with a lesser active agent of falsehood, while the other is a co-existent power of death and destruction. But in effect both go to the same goal—the misleading of the human soul. To Sri Aurobindo Evil is not a mere anti-ethical presence; it stands for the cosmic manifestation of Ignorance. It stands for the virulent powers that stop divine manifestation and its role is greater than Milton can see it. It is the legendary *Asura* that attempts heaven-conquest, and its

influence can go very far indeed, right up to the dominion of the Gods. In fact Evil is anti-divinity incarnate; it has pledged its life to stopping the manifestation of God on earth. Because Christianity sees all things from its own narrow viewpoint of a limited truth, it misses the greater orbit of Truth, even about Evil, that presents itself to us. Christianity sees the Devil, not evil as such, attempt to take the station of God for his own vicious use. This is only a half-truth. The Devil can never rise up to that sovereign summit, but what he effectively does is to create conditions that stop His manifestation. But the Devil is a personality of Evil, of Ignorance. It is the world-evil that plans, puts forth its emanations into the world; it takes recourse to strategy, subterfuge, open revolts, couched assaults, unprovoked hostilities. But Milton's Devil works in disguise only; we see none of his powers and his aim is only to blacken God's creation. Sri Aurobindo sees evil to be something more positive to be encountered and it does more than awake passions in man. To make man anti-divine is its goal. Passions wake and pass, but anti-divinity is too deep a stain to be obliterated so easily. Therefore the problem of evil is a greater problem than those of sin and passion.

A religious rite, conduct, way of life, an ethical method or viewpoint cannot in themselves solve this problem. They can result in a sort of religious resignation at most, or they may, as did with Milton, wake the ethical fury to burn away all evil in the world, which would result in an utter dejection and a negative attitude of faithlessness. Thus both resignation and fury are ineffective. We must seek a more pragmatic solution and a more effective way to meet the problem. A mere mental cognisance of the power of evil too is not enough. For mind too, like the will in man at the end, suffers defeat at last. There must be an inner awareness of the play of evil, its functioning, together with a calling down of a higher spiritual power to combat the potent evil in us and the world. A mere human effort cannot, by itself, undo the workings of Evil. It must fail, as we see it fail in Adam. But Christianity interprets wrongly the symbolic lore of man's fall and, instead of falling back with energy to a higher power, it turns ineffectively to itself and to its so-called freewill and spoils the issue. Perhaps Christianity has insufficient faith in God's direct intervention, or else it lays a too important stress on freewill, both of which result, in the falsifying of our ideal: the outgrowing of Evil. Hence, while the problem of Evil of Sin remains acute in Christianity, it is absent in Sri Aurobindo.

The question could be solved with the intervention of Grace. But Grace, as Sri Aurobindo interprets it, is diagonally different from its aspect in Milton's interpretation. Because God is a distant entity, a far-away power, too remote to draw near to sullied humanity, Christianity's concept of Grace too is of an ineffective power, which acts through faith, showing the path of redemption in an after-life. And if an illumination does creep in or a miracle take place, of which the Church does not happen to disapprove, the man or woman shoots up to the status of a Saint. And here the role of Grace ends. This means that divine intervention is a rare occurrence in Christian history. Left to himself, man must ply his miserable boat alone and without

a friend, whereas Sri Aurobindo conceives God to be a friend, a lover, a guide, one who feels with man his wounds of ignorance and man's fall and his decline. Hence here each step is a footfall of Grace, each movement is a miracle, each act is a ravishing revelation. In such a condition God himself bears the burden of humanity; and slowly, as the world progresses, there is the gradual dispelling of Evil, first in its workings then in its essential principles.

Milton starts all his propositions from an ethical and religious viewpoint. This in itself raises many complications which weave around the body of Miltonic conceptions, making any solutions impossible.

*(To be continued)*

ROMEN

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# THE TRAGEDIES OF AESCHYLUS

(Continued from the issue of October 1966)

Now, in the *Choephoroe*, flock in the “ministers of vengeance” and lead the action gradually to the climax. The legend says that when Orestes stepped in, it was Clytemnestra who was ruling above all, with Aigisthos as her instrument and most of the citizens of Mycenae fed up with their tyranny. Aigisthos, bossed over by the Daemon-possessed queen and, within himself, constantly spurred by the menace of Orestes’ coming, went sort of half-crazy in the midst of his “worldly paradise”. Squandering Agamemnon’s riches and often drunk, he would leap on the murdered victor’s tomb and cry :

Come, Orestes, defend your own !

And Orestes came at last, almost as tragic a figure as Oedipus or Pentheus. He seems to be torn, on one side by the contemplation of murdering his own mother, on the other by the idea of disobeying Apollo’s order. This conflict between two horrors in the form of duty seems to be quite close to the psychological conflict in modern literature though there is a gulf of difference between their treatments.

But there is a touch of overall determination lurking behind the psychological state of Orestes. For instance, when he invokes,

O Warder Hermes of the world beneath,  
Son of the Father who is Lord of Death;  
Saviour, be thou my saviour; Help in War,  
Help me ! I am returned from lands afar  
To claim mine own—

we find quite a firm tone, which comes close to a rejoicing certitude as he sees his sister Electra approaching their father’s tomb with the Libation-Bearers, “stricken multitude of women here in raiment sable-hued”, and as he says,

...Sure ’tis Electra there,  
My sister, moves alone, none like to her  
In sorrow. O great Zeus, grant me this day  
My vengeance, and be near me in the fray !

As in most of the Greek tragedies, even more in the Aeschylean ones, the dial

is so lively, distributed into such symmetrical replies that, in spite of the epic-like grandeur in the movement, there is an artistic progression that keeps up our interest. The *Choephoroe*, essentially a duet between Orestes and his sister Electra in the beginning, is admirably interspersed with the powerful chorus that comes and goes, "Driven, yea, driven I come .."

In order to understand the force in Electra's prayers, we must not forget that the Greeks, especially Aeschylus, himself an initiate in the Tantras of ancient Greece, were extremely aware of the power behind religious swearing and prayers. It is *her* words together with Orestes' wholehearted invocation and her offerings—the wine and milk and honey—that rouse Agamemnon from his sleep. In the meantime, the call for vengeance sent, as it were unknowingly by Clytemnestra, the murderess, and the repeated story of his old wrongs and the outrage done upon his body—all together rouses and stings him. He listens to these prayers and 'as the great litany grows in intensity of longing, the dead seem to draw nearer to the living, and conviction comes to the mourners, one after another, that he who was once King of Kings is in power among them. And in the midst of this reunion, as it is all through the play, we find that almost all the words of Electra 'are beautiful, and she keeps a kind of tenderness even in her prayers of hate...;' Even her hate against the oppressors 'is based on love', as we hear in her prayer,

Zeus of the orphan, when  
Wilt lift thy hand among men ?  
Let the land have a sign. Be strong,  
And smite the neck from the head.  
I ask for right after much wrong.  
Hear me, O God ! Hark to my song,  
Ye Princedoms of the Dead !

And the Chorus too betray her innocent and loving nature as they address her :

My daughter, rare as gold is rare,  
And blither than the skies behind  
The raging of the northern wind  
Are these thy prayers : for what is prayer ?  
Yet, be thou sure, this twofold scourge  
Is heard : it pierceth to the verge  
Of darkness, and your helpers now  
Are waking...

Echoing Electra's prayer, Orestes prays :

How ? Are you dumb, ye Princedoms of the Dead ?  
O curse of Them that perish, come hither, hither !

Look on this wreck of kings, the beaten head,  
 Bowed in despair, roofless, disherited !  
 Whither to turn, O Lord Zeus, whither, whither ?

Clytemnestra appears in this second part of the play for the first time when Orestes in disguise of a merchant from Phôkis comes to the Palace, with the false news of Orestes' death. 'Though she appears only for two short scenes, (she) preserves still the almost superhuman grandeur' we have already seen. 'Her simplest word has power to arrest the attention; and while she is present, other people seem small and their emotions ordinary. Her own emotions lie deep and complex, fold behind fold. It is shallow to dismiss her as a hypocrite,' says Murray, 'feigning grief at the death of the son whom she fears. The hypocrisy is there, but so is the sorrow; so are all kinds of unspoken memories and hopes and depths of experience.... Even when she calls for the axe of battle to face her son, she has room for a thought beyond the immediate fight for dear life :

To that meseemeth we are come, we two !

Orestes, after killing Aigisthos and his own mother Clytemnestra, stops exhausted and fairly distraught, as he says,

Pain, pain is all my doing, all my fate,  
 My race, and my begetting—and I hate  
 This victory that sears me like a brand...

And overcome with sudden terror, he exclaims, seeing the Furies surround him :

Ah ! Ah !  
 Ye bondmaids ! They are here—like Gorgons, gowned  
 In darkness ; all bewreathed and interwound  
 With serpents !...I shall never rest again ?

And further,

O Lord Apollo ! More and more they crowd  
 Close, and their eyes drip blood, most horrible !'

Yes. Orestes will no more rest again until justice is done and he is pardoned toward the close of the next play *The Eumenides*.

There is hardly any character in *The Eumenides* other than the humanisation of Apollo and Athena, and the sinister symbol represented by the Furies or the Erinyes who 'are the wrath of the dead or the injured acting as a curse and pursuing the transgressor'. But, at the end, Athena, by the will of Zeus, transforms these mechanical

and evil agents of the cosmic law into "Eumenides", their law recognized as an inward aspiration, a standard of right living which men consciously need and seek. Here, in this play, Aeschylus brings in the Benevolent Intelligence of the Creator to intervene in the working of the mechanical laws. But, before that intervention, Orestes has to undergo the experience of the mechanical law and, it is in the end, after suffering and struggle, after cleansing and supplication, that union is achieved between the Law which acts like blind fate and the Father who understands ! As Aeschylus puts it in the mouth of the very last Chorus of Athenians :

Outpour ye the Chalice of Peace  
Where the torches are blending :  
In Pallas the place is found and the task is done.  
The Law that is Fate and the Father the All-Comprehending  
Are here met together as one.

So far we have neither considered the details of the plot, nor those of the sentiments, the diction and the music of words—though we have touched upon them; it is the characters that embody the very essence of every other factor, especially of the plot or the contexture of incidents. On the whole the plots here are too simple and bare in comparison with those of our present-day literature. The entire action—in its conception or "beginning," its execution or "middle", and its consequence or "end"—is so thoroughly upheld by the all-pervading law of Fate that, at first sight, there seems to exist little scope for individual will to affirm itself. But characters like Prometheus or Clytemnestra very well illustrate the ample scope for freewill as well, though even they are subject to the law of Fate—in *Prometheus* we seem to sense that even Zeus himself is no exception to it. As for the magnitude, each book seems to be complete enough though, in the case of the extant trilogy, we are set marvelling by the richness in its extended action, one and entire, more so in its changes of fortune—Agamemnon and his children changing from happiness to increasingly bitter unhappiness; Clytemnestra and Aigisthos changing from unhappiness to the apparent summit of happiness; Agamemnon's children (especially Orestes) delivered from the grim psychological conflict within and without. And, as I have already mentioned, these actions, much like these characters, are such as might have happened, with a clear stamp of the Aeschylean philosophical truth of which I have spoken earlier. There are ample instances of revolution, discovery and disaster in these seven plays—some of which Aristotle himself has mentioned and which are quite evident as they inspire pity (excited by misfortunes apparently suffered undeservedly by, for example, Prometheus, Io, the Danaids, Eteocles, Cassandra, Electra and Orestes), or as they inspire terror (by resemblance between the sufferers and ourselves). The action here is usually distributed to the characters who are neither eminently virtuous nor just (like Eteocles, to choose the most perfect example), nor yet involved in misfortune by some deliberate vice or villainy but by some error of human frailty.

Prometheus is of course an extremely flagrant exception to this rule : he is a god, he is fabulously endowed with qualities of the body and heart and mind, with his only great vice of intolerance toward Zeus. And that intolerance is punished. And a reconciliation is suggested too.

Now let us turn to the Aeschylean diction, to which we have no access except through translations. And fortunately we have the translations by Gilbert Murray, which never read like translations, but always give us the illusion of reading the original plays. There are ample instances of superb figures of speech like Hermes menacing the Chorus of the Oceanides in *Prometheus* :

Away, ye Comforters ! And bless  
Your flying feet ! Away, before  
Your minds be palsied by the roar  
Of God's red thunder merciless !

Or the Leader of the Chorus in *The Seven Against Thebes* entreating King Eteocles :

What seekest thou, O my son ?  
Let not the passion blind  
Of battle beset thy mind,  
And madden and sweep thee on !  
Ere the lust find its deed,  
Quell thou the seed.

It is not possible to make out common words from colourful or foreign-sounding ones, unless we have access to the original versions. But there are lengthy passages in Aeschylus creating an exotic atmosphere that adds a highly romantic touch to the plays. It is this same search for romanticism that led poets of subsequent days, especially of the Romantic period, to write poems like *Kubla Khan*. The entire *Persians* by Aeschylus must have tremendously appealed to his contemporaries for its altogether Oriental setting—which was no doubt very fresh to them. The opening Chorus says,

Among them men of mighty name,  
Amistras, Artaphernes, came,  
Astaspes, Megabâtes, Lords  
Of Persia, kings beneath the Eye  
Of the one King, most great most high,  
Ruling their subject hordes,  
With trampling horse, with clanging bow,  
Dread to behold and stern to know,  
High hearts and faithful swords.

Or take king Pelasgus in *The Suppliant Women* :

...Yea, all the lands wherethrough  
 Pure Strymon floweth are mine own, away  
 To the sinking sun. The limits of my sway  
 Perrhaebia marketh, and the further side  
 Of Pindus, near the Páifônes; then wide  
 Dodona's mountains; and, beyond, the cool  
 Dividing sea. Within those bounds I rule.

The same king says,

I hear your words, strange damsels, but believe  
 I cannot, that our blood is in your veins.  
 More like the rovers of the Lybian plains  
 Than Greek women are ye. Or by the flow  
 Of ancient Nile, methinks, such flowers may grow.  
 And Cyprus hath its type, on woman's mould  
 Impressed by male artificers of old;  
 And tales I know, how Indian women roam,  
 By camels drawn, each in her tented home,  
 Beyond the walled Ethiop, in waste lands.

Also a certain degree of exotic mystery in the following passage in *The Persians*, from the Messengers, description of their travel may remind the reader of passages from *The Ancient Mariner* :

...By Axios' ford we crossed,  
 Passed the marsh reeds of Bolbè and the cold  
 Ridge of Pangaion, that the Edonians hold.  
 That night God sent a storm, and winter came  
 Out of all season and froze hard the stream  
 Of holy Strymon. Many a man, who ne'er  
 Had recked at all before of God  
 Then lifted up his voice and bowed his knee  
 To Earth and Heaven.

Here is another such exotic passage where Prometheus asks to take the route described : this at once reminds us of *Yaksha* describing to the cloud the way leading to his home, in the *Meghaduta* of Kalidasa :

From here first turn thee toward the rising day;  
O'er the world's unploughed acres make thy way,  
And reach the roving Scyths, whose dwellings are  
Of woven reeds, each on his wheelèd car,  
And bows far-slaying in their hands. To these  
Approach not. List to where the stormy seas  
Are breaking, and there cross that evil land.  
A clank of iron then on thy left hand  
Shall sound; 'tis there the Chalyb tribesmen dwell,  
Smiths, fierce to strangers and implacable;  
Be wary of them. Next thou shalt bend thy path  
Beside a lordly river...

*(To be continued)*

PRITHWINDRA MUKHERJEE

# *Students' Section*

## THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

### EIGHTH SEMINAR

14 August 1966

*(Continued from the issue of December 5, 1966 )*

### WHAT IS THE DESTINY OF MAN ?

#### III

Friends,

I would like to introduce the subject : "What is the destiny of man ?" by quoting a sentence from a letter of the Mother : "All human beings have a spiritual destiny that is more or less near according to the resolution of each one." ("Tous les êtres humains ont un destin spirituel plus ou moins proche suivant la résolution de chacun.")<sup>1</sup>

Our destiny then is to surpass our animality and even our humanity in order to become the Divine Superman about whom Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have spoken so often. Omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence—knowledge by identity—will replace in Superman the half-knowledge, ignorance and egoism of present man.

How is this high destiny to be reached ? According to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's teaching, which is based on concrete spiritual experience, our planet is the scene of an evolution from matter to life and from life to mind. Man is the highest product of this evolution and in him the mental faculty is more or less developed, so that he is the only evolved being who is capable of detachment and self-observation. I think that we have ample proof that earthly evolution has now arrived at a crucial point. In order to master our scientific and technical progress it seems quite indispensable that man change and transform himself radically; otherwise he will be the master of his own destruction. This is the lesson of the Bomb.

Sri Aurobindo's yoga is in fact a preparation for this new evolutionary step. The world in general and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in particular are the "laboratory" where the new supramental race is being prepared. The process of the integral yoga

<sup>1</sup> From a personal letter

of Sri Aurobindo is to establish a total mastery of our being, that is of our mental, vital and physical parts, opening them to the Force of Transformation. At first this Force purifies the different parts of our being. By opening ourselves to the supra-mental Force our being will be divinised progressively.

The interesting and practical question which arises in this context concerns the mission of the individual : "Why do we live ? What must we do ? Which way should we choose ?" A mediocre and indifferent humanity rarely asks such questions and lets itself be driven by the various currents of life like a piece of cork dancing on the billows of the sea. But there comes a moment in the evolution of each human being when this slavery to universal nature becomes intolerable, a moment when the hard blows of life make him more conscious and awaken a thousand questions demanding an urgent reply. The most important question for the individual concerns our destiny, our mission in life. How to know what one's mission is ? How to fix one's goal ? First of all we have to know ourselves. A knowledge of our exterior personality is not sufficient. We must pierce the shell of our outer personality which is at the mercy of a million-and-one different influences, desires, cravings and instincts and plunge into the silent depths of our being, where we shall find our real self and the true *raison d'être* of our life, called Dharma.

Looking at modern society I see with alarm how few people care to follow their Dharma, their personal destiny. The vast majority of humanity runs after material success, good social positions, wealth, power and sexual pleasures; the inner life is neglected. We are probably all acquainted with the result : one feels hollow, unsatisfied, unhappy and in order to escape from the void of inner emptiness one seeks refuge in constant action. "Let's have excitement and fun at all cost !" In view of this situation it is not astonishing that youth revolts violently and psychiatrists pop up like mushrooms after a summer rain.

The only true remedy for this individual and social chaos is to get into touch with our inner being and to search in inner silence for our destiny and our way. The individual Dharma, the way each of us must take, will be different. But once we have found our destiny and our inner law, let us follow this guiding star unfalteringly and without compromise ! Then we shall live in the deep, true happiness and harmony which nothing can disturb.

Seeing the immense diversity of individual destinies, we should not forget that we are all on the same evolutionary way to Divinity. The experiences, joyous or terrible, in the successive lives of each individual help to evolve the godhead concealed in him. For a long time this may happen without the conscious knowledge of his outer being, but there comes a moment when the individual becomes conscious of his mission in life. Through his conscious collaboration the pace of evolution accelerates and when, after the meandering of his evolutionary history, he becomes conscious of his spiritual destiny, yoga begins, the conscious aspiration of man to realise the Divine. According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, this realisation of and union with the Divine must be achieved in earthly manifestation. The aim of the

integral yoga is, in biblical terms, to establish the kingdom of God on earth. An evasion or complete rejection of this world by means of a realisation out of manifestation, in "nirvana" for example, is thus a perversion of our integral spiritual destiny.

I would like to add a few ideas on the role which AUROVILLE, the planned "City of Dawn" named after Sri Aurobindo, will play in the onward march of humanity towards its integral spiritual destiny. Auroville will offer man a collective framework for his evolution, creating a favourable atmosphere in which the individual can grow integrally in full liberty. Up to now the élite and vanguard of humanity have always been severely fettered and sometimes even destroyed by society which tends to be conservative in its outlook. I have found in my own travel experience to what a great extent we are conditioned and sometimes even tyrannised over by habitual surroundings, family, country, the time in which we live, accepted moral and religious ideas and beliefs, etc. An example : In Europe the idea of rebirth is frequently rejected and even ridiculed without any serious consideration of its merits and value; I must confess that I was no exception to the rule.

Auroville will allow and encourage each citizen to find his destiny, his way of life and to develop his true personality in an atmosphere liberated from all the limitations of traditional society.

Auroville's essential aim is the integral realisation of the Divine, of the underlying Unity in us. To find unity behind appearances of division is one of the glorious tasks of Auroville. But unity does not imply uniformity; on the contrary Auroville will manifest a diversity and richness of individual and collective personalities not witnessed before, because in order to become conscious of integral unity we have first to become conscious of our true individuality. Up to now very few people have arrived at a stage of complete individualisation, but this is a necessary condition in order to realise human unity in its integrality. The same law applies to the different national groups and cultures which will develop and flower more richly in this city of universal harmony. The task of Auroville will be to liberate the individual and the national and cultural groups from their ego-centric atavism by helping them to understand that they are all members of the human family, unified by the all-pervading Spirit.

This spiritual unity includes true fraternity recognising spontaneously that in essence all beings are equal and free. It is foreseen that in Auroville concord will replace conflict because men will act in accordance with their inner harmony indicating to them in a spontaneous way their true place in society.

The Mother has written : "Humanity is not the last rung of terrestrial creation. Evolution continues and man will be surpassed. It is for each one to know whether he wants to participate in the advent of this new species.

"For those who are satisfied with the world as it is, Auroville has evidently no reason for existence."

("L'humanité n'est pas le dernier échelon de la création terrestre. L'évolution continue et l'homme sera surpassé. A chacun de savoir s'il veut participer à l'avènement de cette espèce nouvelle.

“Pour ceux qui sont satisfaits du monde tel qu’il est Auroville n’a évidemment pas de raison d’être.”<sup>1</sup>

“Auroville must be at the service of the Truth, beyond all convictions, social, political and religious.” (“Auroville doit être au service de la Vérité par delà toutes les convictions sociales, politiques et religieuses.”)<sup>2</sup>

On 20-9-1966 She said, among other things, “Auroville est l’effort vers la paix dans la sincérité et la Vérité,”<sup>3</sup> and : “Auroville is an attempt to world peace, friendship, fraternity, unity.”<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, let us remember that every man carries in him an integral spiritual destiny towards which he is consciously or unconsciously evolving and that Auroville offers him a collective framework which is favourable to an accelerated, free and integral growth towards this destiny. Auroville is meant to be a beacon guiding humanity towards its glorious destiny.

OSCAR

*(This speech was originally delivered in French. It has been translated into English by the speaker.)*

After all the speeches were over, Kishor Gandhi read out the following extracts from Sri Aurobindo’s writings bearing on the subject of the Seminar :

(1)

“The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she wills to work out the superman; the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God ? For if evolution is the progressive manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realisation of that which she secretly is. We cannot, then, bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond. If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth.”

*(The Life Divine, American Ed. p. 5.)*

(2)

“Man is there to affirm himself in the universe, that is his first business, but also to evolve and finally to exceed himself: he has to enlarge his partial being into a complete being, his partial consciousness into an integral consciousness; he has to achieve mastery of his environment but also world-union and world-harmony; he has to realise his individuality but also to enlarge it into a cosmic self and a universal and

<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> & <sup>4</sup> Messages given to Auroville worker.

spiritual delight of existence. A transformation, a chastening and correction of all that is obscure, erroneous and ignorant in his mentality, an ultimate arrival at a free and wide harmony and luminousness of knowledge and will and feeling and action and character, is the evident intention of his nature; it is the ideal which the creative Energy has imposed on his intelligence, a need implanted by her in his mental and vital substance. But this can only be accomplished by his growing into a larger being and a larger consciousness : self-enlargement, self-fulfilment, self-evolution from what he partially and temporarily is in his actual and apparent nature to what he completely is in his secret self and spirit and therefore can become even in his manifest existence, is the object of his creation. This hope is the justification of his life upon earth amidst the phenomena of the cosmos. The outer apparent man, an ephemeral being subject to the constraints of his material embodiment and imprisoned in a limited mentality, has to become the inner real Man, master of himself and his environment and universal in his being. In a more vivid and less metaphysical language, the natural man has to evolve himself into the divine Man; the sons of Death have to know themselves as the children of Immortality. It is on this account that the human birth can be described as the turning-point in the evolution, the critical stage in earth-nature”.

(*The Life Divine*, p. 610.)

(3)

“To become ourselves by exceeding ourselves,—so we may turn the inspired phrases of a half-blind seer who knew not the self of which he spoke,—is the difficult and dangerous necessity, the cross surmounted by an invisible crown which is imposed on us, the riddle of the true nature of his being proposed to man by the dark Sphinx of the Inconscience below and from within and above by the luminous veiled Sphinx of the infinite Consciousness and eternal Wisdom confronting him as an inscrutable divine Maya. To exceed ego and be our true self, to be aware of our real being, to possess it, to possess a real delight of being, is therefore the ultimate meaning of our life here; it is the concealed sense of our individual and terrestrial existence.”

(*The Life Divine*, p. 611.)

(4)

“But if there is a self-existent Reality of which our existence here is a result, then there must be a truth of that Reality which is manifesting, working itself out, evolving here, and that will be the significance of our own being and life. Whatever that Reality may be, it is something that has taken upon itself the aspect of a becoming in Time,—an indivisible becoming, for our present and our future carry in themselves, transformed, made other, the past that created them, and the past and present already contained and now contain in themselves, invisible to us because still unmanifested, unevolved, their own transformation into the still uncreated future. The significance of our existence here determines our destiny : that destiny is something that already

exists in us as a necessity and a potentiality, the necessity of our being's secret and emergent reality, a truth of its potentialities that is being worked out; both, though not yet realised, are even now implied in what has been already manifested. If there is a Being that is becoming, a Reality of existence that is unrolling itself in Time, what that being, that reality secretly is is what we have to become, and so to become is our life's significance."

(*The Life Divine*, p. 901.)

(5)

"To be or become something, to bring something into being is the whole labour of the force of Nature; to know, feel, do are subordinate energies that have a value because they help the being in its partial self-realisation to express what it is and help it too in its urge to express the still more not yet realised that it has to be. But knowledge, thought, action,—whether religious, ethical, political, social, economic, utilitarian or hedonistic, whether a mental, vital or physical form or construction of existence,—cannot be the essence or object of life; they are only activities of the powers of being or the powers of its becoming, dynamic symbols of itself, creations of the embodied spirit, its means of discovering or formulating what it seeks to be.... To become ourselves is the one thing to be done; but the true ourselves is that which is within us, and to exceed our outer self of body, life and mind is the condition for this highest being, which is our true and divine being, to become self-revealed and active. It is only by growing within and living within that we can find it; once that is done, to create from there the spiritual or divine mind, life, body and through this instrumentation to arrive at the creation of a world which shall be the true environment of a divine living,—this is the final object that Force of Nature has set before us. This then is the first necessity, that the individual, each individual, shall discover the spirit, the divine reality within him and express that in all his being and living. A divine life must be first and foremost an inner life; for since the outward must be the expression of what is within, there can be no divinity in the outer existence if there is not the divinisation of the inner being. The Divinity in man dwells veiled in his spiritual centre; there can be no such thing as self-exceeding for man or a higher issue for his existence if there is not in him the reality of an eternal self and spirit".

(*The Life Divine*, pp. 906-07.)

SRI AUROBINDO

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At the end of the Seminar Kishor Gandhi, on behalf of the New Age Association, thanked all those who had come to attend it and also those who had participated in it.

## ANANDA'S VISION OF AN "IDEAL HOME"

A BIG house in an immense garden with a high wall all around so as not to let in any undesirable creatures (animal as well as human). Part of the garden is an immense *volière*, where the birds are free to fly in and out with a special cooling compartment for cold climate birds. There are all facilities for any bird willing to come and build his nest in this garden. There are only easily climbable trees with lots of fruits and flowers. And there are some high swings and lots of nice, friendly animals. The wall has some minute holes through which the water may drain out, but nobody can come in. There will be taps in many parts of the garden and water-hoses fixed to them, which, apart from their regular use, the children are allowed to turn on and spray each other as well as any imprudent grown-up's passing. Some light-weight ladders that the children also may take, carry about and climb up on.

And a very specially built house for Purry-Cat.

And a big swimming pool of plastic, wherein one can't get hurt.

The water is very clean, cool, tasty and one may drink it.

The house has a big, wide verandah with a comfortably low parapet to run and to sit on and when one falls one never gets hurt, but just bounces as on thick mattresses.

The Para-Sols and the Para-Pluies are lightly fixed to your shoulders and stand alone on three or four feet, if you want to move about freely underneath.

All corners are round and the servants noiseless and invisible. A telephone to ask friends to 'come round to play'.

The furniture is light-weight, easy to carry about and easy to keep clean. Table-tops and drawers are all transparent to save lots of trouble searching for things. Beds are big, wide and solid and one is allowed to jump about on them. Unlimited supply of chalk and the permission to write and draw on the walls.

A very big bathroom (or two) with showers, and water that you can drink, nice baths and basins in which one may stand and jump and throw lots of water about.

Windows that let in as much light as you want but not more and let in no heat, but have a clever ventilation worked by a very small lever.

The floors never hurt you, but make you bounce when you fall. Nice, thick, white carpets make the floors even more attractive. Mosquito-Nets are wide and airy and so strong that Purry-Cat is allowed to climb up on them and sleep on top. At least two fans in every room and two lamps in every corner of every room.

And a very big refrigerator with a very specially built-in compartment for Purry-Cat in case he feels too hot. Baskets with all kinds of fruits are standing around, fresh and appetising for everybody to help themselves to them, freely. And a store-room with lots of jars of preserved fruits like strawberries, cherries, apples, pears and peaches, etc., etc. Big rounds of cheese and some sausage.

Clothing should be light and comfortable in which one will not perspire too much. Big towels and perfumed soap in all colours.

Toys and books everywhere, untearable, unbreakable and washable, and they will go back to their places if not wanted. Record-players that are not too delicate for children to handle and music everywhere for people that care to hear it inaudible for the others. Sandals that answer if you call them. Clocks that need no winding; and plates and cups and vases, as well as the glass on the photos of Douce-Mère, are absolutely unbreakable.

There will be NO ants, NO cockroaches nor any other insects, but une photo de Douce Mère dans toutes les chambres.

(Même dans la salle de bain, pour éviter un trop grand gaspillage de savon.)

NEVILLE

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## TWO PAINTERS

### A STORYETTE

There were two painters A and B. Both were proficient in their art. It was difficult for people to say who was the better of the two. The painters decided to go to the king and request him to decide between them. The king was also an artist. He selected a room and asked the painters to do their painting. A was to paint on the east wall while B had to paint on the west wall. A curtain was put between the two walls. The painters had to paint on a given subject. Six months' time was allotted to them. The painters worked for six months and when the period was over they informed the king that they had done their painting. Next day the king and the courtiers went to the room in which the painting was done and before they entered the room the curtain was withdrawn. The king and the courtiers looked at the east wall and then at the west wall and again they looked at both walls turn by turn and finally decided that the painting on the west wall was superior. After the decision was given, B the painter of the west wall requested the king to put back the curtain between the two walls and them to look at his painting. The curtain was put and lo ! there was no painting at all on the wall. The wall was blank but was shining like a mirror. The king and the courtiers were surprised and asked B what this miracle was. B replied that there was no miracle at all. He had done no painting but had worked all the time to make the wall like a mirror and as the wall was made like a mirror it reflected the painting of the east wall and the reflection was more clear than the original as the wall was turned into a mirror. The king was greatly pleased and awarded the prize to B.

VALLABH SHETH

## MARIANNE MOORE

(Continued from the issue of October 1966)

### III. METAPHORICAL PRECISION IN HER POETRY

In his autobiography, *Troubador* (1925), Alfred Kreymborg described meetings in his home at Grantwood, New Jersey, of a group of poets who were subsequently published in his short-lived magazine *Others* (1915-19). The group included William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore and Wallace Stevens. "They enjoyed talking shop most of all, but their discussions spread an evasive levity over the serious current of their actual thought. Like almost every other cultural activity of the new soil, the intercourse of these people was a novel experience. ...It was not a lack of self-confidence which dictated so shy a contact, but a joyous bewilderment in the discovery that other men and women were working in a field they themselves felt they had chosen in solitude." ...The range of their interests varied widely; each one was influenced by what was going on in Europe, but none consciously "followed a school" or wrote according to the dictates of a manifesto of a new movement. They were interested in themselves as poets, in poetry as a form (a new form, almost independent of history), in the *status* of poetry in America. They were, in brief, aestheticians native-grown, freshly original, and naive.

For these writers, poetry was experimental in its very nature; the writing of it was a continuous experience of discovery. They were all preoccupied with the question what great poetry could do, or might do, by ways of elevating mere 'things' to the level of imaginative reality. In their own way they contributed to the new poetry, to the discussion of an artist's role and value, and to the defense and definition of an artist's original talent.

Miss Moore is, in many ways, the rational commentator. Her vivid pictorial sense, her sharp power of observation with respect to small things and narrow perspectives, unite with a conversational shrewdness, a sense of the values of fable and analogy, an incisive insight into the eccentricities and comical absurdities of the human tribe. Her talent is in a sense forensic and admonitory. Her *Observations* are just that: observations of the human and the natural world in strange but significant conjunction; observations of both amusing and profound varieties in human relationships. "There is a great amount of poetry in unconscious fastidiousness," she says in "Critics and Connoisseurs"; and she discovers "poetry" where it is not customarily found—in many poses and attitudes, in creatures small and great. An admirable example of her method of compressing much shrewd thought within a small space, as well as of her talent for inferring much from the perfection of a small object, is the poem "To a Snail", as pointed out by W. F. J. Hoffman:

## TO A SNAIL

If 'compression is the first grace of style',  
 You have it. Contractility is a virtue  
 as modesty is a virtue.  
 It is not the acquisition of any one thing  
 that is able to adorn,  
 or the incidental quality that occurs  
 as a concomitant of something well said,  
 that we value in style,  
 but the principle that is hid :  
 in the absence of feet, a 'method of conclusions';  
 'a knowledge of principles',  
 in the curious phenomenon of your occipital horn.

The first line is a quotation from *Demetrius on Style*, translated by Jonathan Fyfe; 'contractility', 'absence of feet' speak of her own graces of style; 'occipital' brings out her acute observation.

"One critic has said that Miss Moore's poetry is not poetry at all but criticism—actually her criticism is not criticism but an inferior sort of poetry. She not only can, but must make poetry out of everything and anything : she is like Mozart choosing unpromising themes for the fun of it, or like one of those princesses whom wizards force to manufacture sheets out of nettles. And yet there is one thing Miss Moore has a distaste for making poetry of : the poetic. She has made a principle out of refusing to believe that there is any such thing as the antipoetic; her poems restore to poetry the 'business documents and school books' that Tolstoy took away. ...Her poems have the virtues—form, concentration, emotion, observation, imagination and so on—that one expects of poetry; but one also finds in them, in supersaturated solution, some of the virtues of good prose....Miss Moore, in spite of a restraint unparalleled in our time, is a natural, excessive, and magnificent eccentric. Eccentricity has been to her a first resort, an easy but inescapable refuge."

(RANDALL JARRELL)

## IV. IMAGERY OF LIGHT IN HER POETRY

"However much Miss Moore enjoys examining the animal, the vegetable, the mineral," writes Babette Deutsch, "what chiefly attracts her is evidence of mind and spirit. Yet even when she writes on a subject as abstract as the intellect itself, her control of verbal texture is evident. The glitter of sparkling wit beomes not merely visible but audible in these lines of the poem beginning :

The Mind is an enchanting thing  
 is an enchanted thing  
 like the glaze on a  
 katy-did wing  
 subdivided by the sun  
 till the nettings are legion.  
 Like Gieseking playing Scarlatti..."

"The speculative, self-correcting attempt to 'define' the mind, advanced through an imagery of light refracted from a smoothly shining yet living, active surface, is true Marianne Moore in both its quiet abstractness and its detailed excitement. The poem becomes even more characteristically Marianne Moore as it advances through a series of similes ('like Gieseking playing Scarlatti', 'like the apteryx-awl', 'like the kiwi's rain-shawl', 'like the gyroscope's fall') for the mind in action and then, as it nears completion of the figurative network of definitions, through a series of metaphors that gather the intensities of its dominant conception into one last concentrated statement." (ROSENTHAL)

Unconfusion submits  
 its confusion to proof; it's  
 not a Herod's oath that cannot change.

"Only Marianne Moore could write about the mind and fill it with thoughts that glow like buried treasure just brought to light. ...Literally and figuratively, light is the source of her enchantment. What she sees provides symbols for the unseen, the inner vision....Her poetry dreams with its eyes wide open and weaves its spell out of the visible, the tangible, the intelligible; a wide-awake magic; proof that a passionate intelligence can be haunting ... In her poetry the appearance of things—the way they greet the eyes and ears; what they feel like to the touch; their characteristic impact—come to us in a blaze of reincarnation.... Through art such as this, with its demand upon the attention of the whole person, we are restored not to a state of nature, but to that totality of the experience which is a sign of organic development."

(Lloyd Frankenberg. *Pleasure Dome* quoted by Nyren)

(Concluded)

C. SUBBIAN

**SRI AUROBINDO INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH**

**NEWSLETTER**

No. 1

January 1967

1. *Educational Survey*

In every country there is sufficient indication to show that all fields of Education must be up-graded as quickly as possible if a nation is to grow into a worthwhile power and its people are to receive the benefits of technical and scientific progress. But are those benefits in consonance with the pursuit of happiness ? Do they make for a more harmonious living ? Do they lead to a more conscious, a truer way of life ? In other words—is technical and scientific progress a progress of human evolution ?

If man is intended to evolve towards a greater perfection, grow into a more harmonious being, it is becoming increasingly obvious that technical and scientific know-how is only one facet of the diamond he aspires to become. If this is acceptable as an hypothesis then it is equally obvious that we should ask : what is to be done about the remaining facets of human aspiration ? Now perhaps we can see more clearly that moral and spiritual progress are both conspicuous by their absence. Why is this so ?

First we must admit that any assessment of moral or spiritual progress on a world basis is a presumptuous idea because, although we think we can evaluate such progress by its negative values manifested throughout the world today, we cannot define the spiritual force the "few" have generated and in what manner of action that spiritual force has influenced man in his struggle. We have also to remember that *when the world was young* only a very small number in any country were educated enough to read and an even smaller number could write—the mass, the vulgar, were hardly thought of, seldom read about and almost never written of; it is not then surprising if today we have a rather biased conception of man's ethics then and now. With the increase of world population, the base of our triangle of the facet of human aspiration is much broader, therefore the diamond much larger in concept, life more integral, more complex, more complicated. Can mind alone deal with this complexity ? Will an educational system built solely on reason be able to cope with the vast challenging possibilities of the future ? The answer that even reason gives is a dim, reluctant No. What then is the answer to man's most urgent problem ? I am reminded of the first two verses of Sri Aurobindo's sonnet *Electron* :

The electron on which forms and worlds are built,  
Leaped into being, a particle of God.  
A spark from the eternal Energy split,  
It is the Infinite's blind minute abode.

In that small flaming chariot Shiva rides.  
 The One devised innumerably to be ;  
 His oneness in invisible forms he hides,  
 Time's tiny temples to eternity.<sup>1</sup>

What is involved in Matter must evolve. Mind is not the final term of evolution, nor can reason be the arbiter of life. We have to pursue our education in terms of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Our aspiration has to reach deep within and high above to effect a union between mind and spirit, man and the Divine. Our concept of education must also evolve into a vision of the future. That vision shows that subjects in the future shall not be compartmentalised but be brought together as a complex living synthesis. All subjects have a meeting point : History and Geography as also Art and Arithmetic. Especially does this vision become vivid when taken in terms of the evolving consciousness of man. Mathematics and Metaphysics are not apart. From the time of Pythagoras to the twentieth century science and philosophy have, in their essence, been always one with each other.

Man himself is a living example of this synthesis.

His soul informs the beating of his heart,  
 His heart supplies the life force for the brain,  
 His brain controls the sinew, nerve and bone  
 And disciplines the action of his days.  
 All then are one vast aspect of the Truth,  
 Truth and Beauty the object of Man's love.

### 2. *Commonwealth Teachers' Training*

More than 1,800 teachers from developing countries have gone to Britain during five years from 1960 to 1965 for training since the bursary scheme was set up at the first Commonwealth Education Conference in 1959. Tutors' impressions were that "for the first time in their lives most of these men and women had both the opportunity and the encouragement to think critically about the work they did at home and to review their objectives..."

### 3. *Language Barriers*

"Every teacher is an English teacher." Such an optimistic motto may be an excellent piece of tub-thumping philosophy, but can it be justified in educated India ? In technical college teaching where the problem is to teach young technologists to communicate with the rest of the world, the question of language is a very real problem. It is doubtful if the new unified theory of elastic flexure based on the concept of Advaita as elaborated in Sanskrit literature propounded by Mr. T. Muthian,

<sup>1</sup> *Last Poems* p. 3.

Director of Technical Education, could serve as a language for technical studies; especially in view of the fact that today the world of technology can never be seated in any one country.

#### 4. *Language Ecology Today*

An increasing number of teachers today are taking a more realistic view of oral activity especially with regard to teaching English in relation to environment. Students should be guided towards those skills which allow them to perform in English directly through and because of their sense of involvement in language activities related to their environment and sense of social behaviour. This implies a development in oral progress which reflects the students' interest through the situational approach to language. Language must touch upon real experiences aided by sound formations and word drills within the context of everyday situations.

#### 5. *Thought of the Month*

"Art, poetry, music are not Yoga, not in themselves things spiritual any more than philosophy is a thing spiritual or Science. There lurks here another curious incapacity of the modern intellect—its inability to distinguish between mind and spirit, its readiness to mistake mental, moral and aesthetic idealisms for spirituality and their inferior degrees for spiritual values." (Sri Aurobindo—*The Riddle of This World*, p. 46)

NORMAN C. DOWSETT