

MOTHER INDIA

OCTOBER 1967

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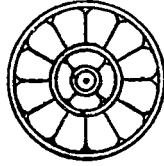
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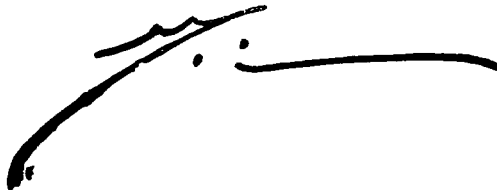
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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Vol. XX

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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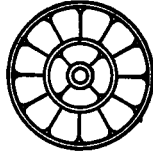
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A MESSAGE OF THE MOTHER

**BROADCAST FROM ALL-INDIA RADIO, PONDICHERRY, ON ITS
OPENING DAY, 23 SEPTEMBER, 1967**

O Inde, terre de lumière et de connaissance spirituelle,
éveille-toi à ta vraie mission dans le monde, montre le
chemin de l'union et de l'harmonie.

O India, land of light and spiritual knowledge ! Wake
up to your true mission in the world, show the way to
union and harmony.

SUR LA MUSIQUE

DEUX RÉPONSES DE LA MÈRE

Q. X et moi jouons de la flûte ensemble. Nous avons trouvé un livre (*Folksongs of North America*) dont les chansons ont des airs très beaux, très simples et faciles à jouer. J'aimerais savoir si les chants d'amour ou de meurtre qui ne semblent pas aller avec notre idéal à l'Ashram ont un mauvais esprit dans l'air. Est-ce que les musiques religieuses catholiques qui sont jouées dans les églises sont mauvaises à jouer? Si oui, nous ne jouerons ni les airs accompagnés de paroles vulgaires ni les musiques religieuses.

R. Il faut supprimer les *mots* et garder seulement la musique, dans les deux cas.

Si vous savez écrire la musique, faites des copies des airs que vous voulez jouer (sans copier les mots). Si vous ne savez pas écrire la musique demandez à quelqu'un qui sait—Jo par exemple—de le faire pour vous ou de vous apprendre à le faire.

Ne gardez pas les livres avec vous, car les livres peuvent avoir une mauvaise influence.

1965

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Q. Qu'est-ce qu'on doit attendre de la musique ?

Comment juger de la qualité d'un morceau de musique ?

Comment développer le bon goût (pour la musique) ?

Que penses-Tu de la musique légère (Cinéma, Jazz, etc.) que nos enfants aiment beaucoup ?

R. Le rôle de la musique consiste à aider la conscience à s'élever vers les hauteurs spirituelles.

Tout ce qui avilit la conscience, encourage les désirs et excite les passions va à l'encontre du vrai but de la musique et doit être évité.

Ce n'est pas une question de dénomination mais d'inspiration—et seule la conscience spirituelle peut en juger.

22.7.1967

ON MUSIC

TWO ANSWERS BY THE MOTHER

Q. X and I play the flute together. We have found a book (*Folksongs of North America*) whose songs have very beautiful, very simple and easy-to-play airs. We should like to know if the poems of love and death which do not seem to go with our ideal in the Ashram have a bad spirit in the tune. Are the Catholic religious pieces of music, which are played in the churches, bad to play? If so, we shall not play either the airs accompanied by vulgar words nor the religious compositions.

A. One should suppress the *words* and keep only the music in both the cases.

If you know how to write the music, make copies of the airs you want to play (without copying the words). If you do not know how to write the music ask someone who does—Jo for example—to do it for you or to teach you to do it.

Do not keep the books with you, for these books can have a bad influence.

1965

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Q. What is it we should attend to in music?

How to judge the quality of a piece of music?

How to develop good taste (for music)?

What do you think of light music (Cinema, Jazz, etc.) which our children like very much?

A. The role of music lies in helping the consciousness to uplift itself towards the spiritual heights.

All that lowers the consciousness, encourages desires and excites the passions runs counter to the true goal of music and ought to be avoided.

It is not a question of designation but of inspiration—and the spiritual consciousness alone can be the judge there.

22.7.1967

THE WRONG WAY TO DIVINISATION

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the September issue)

...It will be very good for you to read and translate the *Arya*.... I will send you a copy of the *Essays on the Gita*, first series ; it will be best for you to begin with this and translate it. Accustom yourself to translate only a little every day and do it very carefully. Do not write in haste ; go several times through what you have written and see whether it accurately represents the spirit of the original and whether the language cannot be improved. In all things, in the mental and physical plane, it should be your aim, at present, not to go fast and finish quickly, but to do everything carefully, perfectly, and in the right manner.

We wish you to understand and keep henceforth the right attitude with regard to the physico-vital impulses of which you complain ; that is as regards food, money, sexual impulses etc. You have been adopting the moral and ascetic attitude which is entirely wrong and cannot help you to master these powers of the nature.

For food, it is a need of the body and you must use it to keep the body fit and strong. You must replace attachment by the *ānanda* of food. If you have this *ānanda* and the right sense of the taste etc. and of the right use of food, the attachment, if there is any, will of itself, after a time, disappear.

As regards money, that too is a need for life and work....Money represents a great power of life which must be conquered for divine uses. Therefore you must have no attachment to it but also no disgust or horror of it.

As to the sexual impulse, for this also you must have no moral horror or puritanic or ascetic repulsion. This also is a power of life and while you have to throw away the present form of this power (that is the physical act), the force itself has to be mastered and transformed. It is often strongest in people with a strong vital nature and this strong vital nature can be made a great instrument for the physical realisation of the Divine Life. If the sexual impulse comes, do not be sorry or troubled but look at it calmly, quiet it down, reject all wrong suggestions connected with it and wait for the Higher Consciousness to transform it into the true force and Ananda.

All these things we have told you are necessary for your being in the physical consciousness and having the right relations with physical life.

March 1927

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...The Vaishnava Bhajan is one that easily excites the vital being and if there are people there of a low nature, all sorts of dark and low forces come in to feed upon the excitement. ...The spiritual fulfilment will come in its time by a steady development of the being and the nature. It does not depend on seizing upon this or that opportunity.

There is another thing which you must learn. If you are interrupted in Sadhana, ...you must simply remain inwardly quiet and allow the interruption to pass. If you learn to do this, the inner state or experience will go on afterwards just as if nothing had happened. If you attach undue importance and get upset, on the contrary, you change the interruption into a disturbance and the inner state or experience ceases. Always keep the inner quiet and confidence in every circumstance; allow nothing to disturb it or to excite you. A steady inner calm and quiet will and psychic faith and bhakti are the one true foundation for your Sadhana.

March 1930

THE PHYSICAL BEING AND ITS RESISTANCE

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q : I don't know what is the matter with me : the converging up of peace and silence followed by decreasing of aspiration, loss of mental control, ending with the tamasic passivity to the lower nature !

SRI AUROBINDO : If there is so much tamas, it means simply that the physical inertia has risen in resistance to the pressure from above. 29-I-1934

Q : During such periods, when I cannot even aspire, how am I to prolong my inner contact with the Mother ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Keep your mind turned to the Mother—that is all.

29-I-1934

Q : Yesterday evening, how did I lose a happy state of silence ? Any negligence on my part ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It may be some flagging in the physical consciousness.

23-I-1934

Q : You wrote, "These are reactions that usually come." And yet do not such reactions of tamas interfere with the descending light ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course, but so long as the whole nature is not transformed, they very normally come.

30-10-1934

Q : Does not the "whole nature" get transformed only when the supramental descends ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes—but there is a preliminary transformation in which the tamas can be greatly reduced or remain only in the most material or be changed in its character.

31-I-1934

Q : This afternoon the peace began to fade and fade till it disappeared totally. Was it due to any interference from my side ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No—it is due to the physical not being yet capable of receiving continuously.

31-I-1934

It is not necessary to have committed anything—the obstacles of vital and physical Nature are sufficient to bring a pause. One has to remain quiet during the pause and not allow vital disappointment and depression.

14-2-1934

Q : You have written : "Passivity must not lead to inactivity—otherwise it will encourage inertia in the being...." In that case why was I forced to discontinue my work during the passive period? You know I had no dislike for the work. The thing is that I simply could not help it.

SRI AUROBINDO : The true passivity does not lead to inactivity—but the physical may wrongly take the pressure of passivity for an invitation to inaction.

22-2-1934

Q : Is the inertia due to the pressure of the Force or to some other reason?

SRI AUROBINDO : The pressure of the Force never produces inertia. It is a resistance or non-response in the physical that produces it.

26-2-1934

Q : When it is my physical that resists the higher Force why does my mind become passive and not react?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the influence of the physical inertia on the physical mind.

26-2-1934

Rest. The body needs rest, if it is given the needed rest, it can be taught to recover quickly—if forced it quickly becomes tamasic.

2-3-1934

Q : Cannot the vital aspirations drive out the mental or physical tamas by their intensity?

SRI AUROBINDO : For the time being only. It must be a higher power that will take them away permanently.

24-3-1934

Q : Yesterday's dream : Two parties were fighting with guns and rifles. I was in one of them, but I did not actually do the fighting. Suddenly I saw that the scuffle stopped. My party at once declared its defeat without any apparent reason, and each of us paid the penalty to the opposite captain.

Has this dream any connection with my present condition?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is probably a symbol of the non-resistance or the ready declaration of defeat with which the physical consciousness meets the attack.

10-4-1934

Q : I feel my whole being invaded by the adverse forces. The mind thinks: how difficult and full of thorns is this sadhana, better leave it. The vital feels as if all the ways of the Mother were not sufficiently impartial. The body accepts its openness to any outside attack; it is filled with pains, tamas and fatigue. What is this phase of the sadhana?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the hostile Force taking advantage of the tamas in the outer consciousness which wants a big result without willing to face the necessary labour,

8-4-1934

Q : When there is intensity in the vital it always brings down a lot of energy. What does the intensity in the physical give?

SRI AUROBINDO : Solidity or stability.

18-4-1934

SRI AUROBINDO : It is more often the physical that lowers like that without cause. In the vital it is only when there is the general feeling of want of interest in the sadhana because the sadhana is concerned with things it does not understand or seek for or else because it is not bringing results rapidly or brilliantly or for some other similar reason.

4-5-1934

Q : Last night I had very little sleep. Whenever some new movement of sadhana takes place my body strains itself thus. But why then do I not feel any such strain? I feel quite normal in the morning.

SRI AUROBINDO : "You" are not the body. It is perfectly possible for the body to be strained without the mind or vital knowing or feeling it. The result appears only afterwards.

10-5-1934

Q : You wrote : "Get rid of the tamas of the physical which makes it painful." I am not aware of this tamas specially during the meditation when the spine and the body ache.

SRI AUROBINDO : That you don't feel it does not prove that it is not there. You had better become conscious of the tamas if you are not. By tamas I mean the inertia of the physical being which resists the Power and so causes the aching of the spine and the body. Why should the spine and body ache if there were no physical resistance ?

15-5-1934

From NAGIN DOSHI

SISTER NIVEDITA AS A DISCIPLE

There is no measure of our indebtedness to Nivedita.

Sri Aurobindo

I

NIVEDITA, the favourite disciple of the Shiva-eyed Vivekananda. Sri Krishna had his favourite disciple in Arjuna; Buddha in Ananda; Sri Ramakrishna in Vivekananda; Vivekananda in Margaret Noble, Nivedita. They were, as it were, one-in-two, two-in-one. Their descent on earth was for a special purpose. Well may we apply to Margaret Noble those lines from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*:

All in her pointed to a nobler kind...

A wide self-giving was her native act...

The two names are unprecedented, they justify their significance. Combined with such grace and purity is each that one would take the name as the form, and the form as the name. The name attracted me to the person. The root of the attraction was Sri Aurobindo. He had said to us, "Nivedita's *Kali the Mother* is a wonderful book. And her *The Master as I Saw Him*, well, I have never read so good a book on Vivekananda." My Guru had aroused my curiosity. But I am not ashamed to confess that because my modern mind even then had nothing like a deep impress of spirituality, none of its profound notes could strike any chord in my heart. By Guru's Grace, it has now become possible. And along with it I have been deeply moved not so much by the magnitude of Vivekananda's knowledge, or by the sharpness of Nivedita's intellect, as by the intensity of their closeness. The Master's pure unbounded love and grace, the disciple's humility, love and devotion—all this I have been able to sense from my own small but similar experience. This is the best profit I have derived from these books.

In the far-off subject country, Ireland, was this spark born, and Vivekananda brought her as his disciple to another subject country, India ! At a single yogic glance Vivekananda knew who this spark was, what was her destined place and what her future. Just as for the great work of kindling a fire in the heart of India Sri Ramakrishna had prepared Vivekananda, so to the same end did Vivekananda prepare his disciple Nivedita. And this preparation seemed the end of his earthly work.

In the spiritual history of India the relationship between Guru and disciple is great and pure. Above all worldly relations is this affinity of souls. It passes from life to life. Death is not its term. According to Hindu Shastras, the Guru represents God. It is Divine Providence that determines the mutual choice of Guru and disciple.

'One who chooses the Infinite has already been chosen by the Infinite.' The Guru's command is to the disciple the Vedic injunction. 'The Guru,' says Vivekananda, 'is above one's parents, he is spiritual teacher and sovereign lord in one He perceives the hidden vibrations in the depths of the disciple's heart.' The Guru bears the responsibility for the disciple, his life and death, his earthly and spiritual well-being, virtue and vice, *yogakṣema*. His effort for the disciple is beyond compare.

Yet how the disciple harbours in his mind a heap of doubt and distrust and feelings of wounded self-conceit against the Guru ! Misunderstandings know no end, nor revolts. But the Guru, unshaken in love and grace, saves the disciple from all danger, forgives all his wrongs. When necessary, he becomes severe, but that severity is motherly. The disciple forsakes the Guru but the Guru never abandons the disciple.

We need not go far to prove the truth of the *Guru-śiṣya* affinity. If the relationship between the Mother-and-Sri Aurobindo and their disciples is not yet widely known, we have not forgotten Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. In the Vivekananda-Nivedita relationship we hear this eternal note. Vivekananda writes to Nivedita : 'I will stand by you unto death, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but never go back, Once Sri Aurobindo wrote to me : 'I will never forsake you.' Every sadhak knows what hope and confidence such assurance gives him on his long journey to the unknown.

Margaret's soul was in quest of the Eternal Truth. Her keen intelligence was wavering amid hope, doubt and agony. Yet she found no clue to the path. At that critical moment of her agitated consciousness she met Swamiji in London, heard him uttering in a profound and high-pitched voice the message of the Gita and the Upanishads. The truth revealed itself to her, 'Here is my Guru.' Her feelings could be expressed in Sri Aurobindo's words :

...Who then art thou in human guise ?
Thy voice carries the sound of Infinity,
Knowledge is with thee, Truth speaks through thy words,
The light of things beyond shines in thine eyes. (Savitri)

Margaret wrote to a friend : '...Suppose he (Swamiji) had not come ! If he had meditated on the Himalayan peaks ! ...I, for one, had never been here...'

On the other hand, Swamiji with his yogic insight saw in Nivedita the only woman fit for his work in India. When she expressed to him the desire to dedicate herself to his work, he calmly said, 'Yes, your place is in India, but the time is not yet. Prepare yourself meanwhile.' After returning to India, he wrote, 'Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man but a woman, a real lioness to work for Indians, women specially. India cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from

other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood, make you just the woman wanted.'

Many are India's gains from Europe. One of the greatest seems to be this jewel of a woman. In the spiritual India of today women of lofty souls are wanting. That poignant note of Vivekananda's regret still resounds in our ears with the same force. To awaken the power of womanhood in the land of Sita and Savitri, he had to appear at the door of Europe. In the sadhana of Sri Aurobindo too, we see the Mother-Force hailing from Europe. The Sister-Force brought in by Vivekananda has broken and remade our past and present, and the current of it is still flowing like the River Falgu. The Mother-Force accompanying Sri Aurobindo has been giving, from beyond the human gaze, a massive and magnificent shape to our present and future. In Sri Aurobindo's words, the work started at Dakshineswar is not yet finished.

Cutting off all worldly ties, Margaret came to India full of enthusiasm and hope that she would be in the presence of her Guru and be able to apply herself wholeheartedly to his work. Days roll on, months pass. The Guru speaks of many things but nothing at all of the work to be done. When she is impatient in the extreme, he, pointing to the banks of the Ganges, says, 'Live in the sun...Look at what is going on round you....Don't make any plans.' An inner conflict arises in the disciple. The western rajasic urge to activity is confounded by the calm serenity of the eastern Guru. Not impatience but intensity of aspiration, as if all eternity were before you—this fundamental principle of spirituality is alien to the western way of life. The inner intention of the Guru was, first of all, gradually to put upon this excellent *ādhār* the true Indian stamp. The history of how the Guru eliminated from his disciple of brilliant genius and independent spirit all her foreignness and infused into her veins and cells the flame-blood of his own soul, is both thrilling and an indication of the infinite compassion and yoga-shakti of the Guru and of the humility and devotion of his disciple. I shall attempt an account of the little I have been able to understand of this fine mystic story.

True, Margaret had accepted Swamiji as her Guru and service of India as her life's mission. But there were in her nature some strong obstacles due to her western education and trend of mind. In the words of the poet of *Savitri* :

Her spirit bowed; her will obeyed the law
Of its own nature binding even on Gods.

It was the Guru who had to remove these obstacles. First, the great attraction she felt for Swamiji was in yogic terms mixed with *rajas*. That attraction, even though based on the soul, seemed limited to a person. In Yajnavalkya's words, wife, wealth, honour are dear only for the sake of the Self. This spiritual attitude was still *non est* in the disciple. The source of her love for India was Swamiji, her service of India was Swamiji's service. It was far from the Guru's intention that all her personality should grow centred upon him. He wanted that the disciple should break out of

the narrow bonds of the person and attain to the infinite and unmanifest vasts of consciousness. In other words, the Guru put her slowly on the path of sadhana. In a certain context, the Guru said, 'You have to take your stand on your own feet and not be under the wing of...or anybody else.' Again, 'Madness of love and yet in it no bondage....I must not give anyone the whole of mine in return, for that day the work would be ruined....A leader must be impersonal, hard as steel, soft as a flower.'

The Guru's second effort was to train the disciple as an out-and-out Indian woman, free from all deep-seated impressions of her western education and upbringing, so that she might love a foreign land like her own. She had seen and understood India from outside; the illiteracy, poverty and the thousand and one other privations had grieved her. But her western temperament and genius and proneness to activity had followed the external way. Quite different was to be the Guru's way. His initiation would be to help her dive deep into her heart, find her soul, acquire spiritual strength and then get down to the field of work : then the work would be selfless service to God and never for results. The first step to this initiation would be perfect obedience to the Guru. From this obedience and humility would spring forth full freedom of the disciple in her work. Vivekananda warned his brother sadhaks : 'Never restrict her liberty. What do you know about what I have given her ?'

The Guru directed her to live whole-heartedly like a Hindu woman, in dress and food and drink, avoid contact with men, keep under control all impetuous western impulses, and remain calm and tranquil in meditation and concentration. Otherwise how could she undertake the education of women ? She would have to put on a *sāri*, sleep on the floor, eat with her fingers, observe various other customs big or small; then she would be able to get into the core of these customs. Before her was the shining example of Sri Ramakrishna himself. Did he not observe even the externals of every religion in order to experience it through identity in every detail ? In all these unaccustomed forms of askesis, what hardship, what physical and mental strain had she to pass through ! Over and above this, the severe appearance of the Guru seemed to make life even more severe. No breach of rules would escape a scolding. Where was that calm, serene, graceful Swamiji of London ? And how different was this Guru, all absorbed in tapasya ! But by strong will, unshakable fidelity and devotion, the disciple passed through the ordeal. Never even once did she question the necessity of all this.

Every sadhak knows the importance of such severe discipline in the first stages of sadhana. Sri Ramakrishna would say that in the first stage the young plant has to be fenced round. In our sadhana in Pondicherry too we had to go through severe discipline at the beginning. It is said that before she took charge of the Ashram, the Mother also had lived for long years the Indian way of life, and a secluded life to boot.

About two months after her arrival in India, the Guru gave Margaret the preliminary initiation and the name Nivedita. A wonderful coincidence is that at the moment of her birth Nivedita's mother had dedicated her to God. Nivedita now offered herself at the feet of the Guru. The Guru, looking across the Ganges, said to Nivedita : "That is where I should like to have a convent for women."

Swamiji's second task was to acquaint her with the outer world. He had noticed her extraordinary gift of oratory. When she appeared in the Albert Hall, her tall, slim, beautiful figure exercising this power gripped the cultured audience assembled there. Unexpectedly, Vivekananda's voice rang out : "Sister Nivedita is another gift of England to India." Hereafter we see her speaking at Kalighat, in her cordial association with the Brahmo Samaj, in her writings to the Press. Nivedita's reputation spread everywhere. But all this praise did not in the least disturb her equanimity.

It was abnormally hot in Calcutta. An outbreak of plague was feared. With Nivedita and other foreign disciples Swamiji started for the Himalayas. His special purpose was to efface from Nivedita's nature whatever defects and preconceptions were still there. The natural scenery of the Himalayas, their silence, sublimity and vastness, the wonderful self-absorption in them, above all, close companionship with the Guru gave unending joy to Nivedita's heart. On arrival at Almora amid these excellent surroundings, Nivedita felt a deep gloom overtake her. All beauty of universal nature seemed to have vanished. She felt desolate, helpless. After four days of unbearable mental agony, she came to feel as if the Guru had abandoned her and gone far away without any reason. He did not speak much to her or reply to her questions. He took no interest in her work, or in the meticulous service she gave him. She found no difference between his relation with herself and his relation with her friends. Yet she failed to see any reasonable cause of such indifference. As a result of this unexpected treatment from the Guru, her attachment to him diminished no doubt, but only to give place to a vast, dry emptiness. When her mental anguish was at its peak, the Guru said at the intervention of another woman : 'You are right. I am going away into the forest to be alone, and when I come back I shall bring peace.' Nivedita realised that it was her attachment to the Guru that caused her suffering. When the Guru returned, her wounded *amour propre* and her misunderstanding came to an end. She got back her soul's peace. She wrote to a friend of hers, "I am learning a great deal....that there is a certain definite quality which may be called spirituality; that it is worth having; that the soul may long for God as the heart longs for human love." Nivedita's true education had begun.

It was to help her pass this ordeal that the Guru selected that particular time and place. He now realised that 'the time has come when she must stand alone'. That was why he had assumed the mask of severity. He had the firm conviction that as the spiritual surroundings of the Himalayas had given him peace in his earlier years, so would they give the same inner treasure to his disciple.

In this way the Guru purifies his disciples and takes them onward, sometimes by hard measures, sometimes by the touch of tenderness. Once Sri Aurobindo wrote to me on this, and I may summarise him thus : 'If I can be patient with you and your despairs, why can't you be patient with the forces ? Let me give you a concrete instance. X held out to us several threats : revolt, suicide, going back home, and so on. The more X threatened us, the harder I hit X. Our relations with X were not at all as they are with you—of good humour. As a result X stopped weeping. Now X writes of being filled with a vast peace, love and joy.'

Nivedita's ordeal is not over, rather the reverse, indeed it is only the beginning. Mental purification is no easy job. The Guru now travels on to Amarnath with the disciple. The Vedantin sannyasi, the bare-footed, shaven-headed, turbaned pilgrim, staff in hand, chanting 'Salutation to Shiva', '*namaḥ śivāya, namaḥ śivāya*', walks on, the disciple behind. Despite all fatigue, the Guru is all joy. But the disciple is silent and exhausted. The significance of Amarnath is unintelligible to her. Entering the dark cave, the Guru bowed down at the foot of the snow-covered Shiva-image three times and made his only offering—Nivedita. But Nivedita showed no sign of change. Rather was she very much disappointed that she had no experience at all. The Guru also did not share even a particle of his ineffable bliss with her. Agonised, she wondered why she had been taken over rugged mountain paths, hard to trudge along, to a dark cave, all for nothing. She did not even spare the Guru hard words. With tears in his eyes the Guru replied, 'Margaret, I have not the power to give you what you want. You do not now understand. But you have made the pilgrimage and it will go on working.... Call upon Mother Kali ! She will come because you belong to her....' With these words the Guru again retired for a time. During his absence Nivedita took to meditating on Kali. This time too she realised her mistake and wrote to a friend that by hammering her and by burning up the baser elements in her, the Guru was drawing her to himself and to God. Her meditation on Kali made a clean sweep of all her pain and despair, being seemed filled with joy by a touch of Kali's omnipresence. When the Guru returned, the disciple laid her head at the feet of the Guru and said, 'Now I know *my* Divine Mother.'

During this tour, Vivekananda read regularly with his devotees various religious scriptures, books of philosophy, etc. His secret purpose was to liberate Nivedita from her innate national prejudices and to make her literally as good as her name. His 'third eye' was always fixed on the disciple. Like a skilled and experienced teacher the Guru would discuss things with the disciple in order to be able to root out of her subconscious all her settled conceptions. One day he spoke out to her in a rude tone, 'Why do you insist on comparing this country with yours, what is suitable *here* with what is done *there* ? Really, patriotism like yours is a sin.'

The day next to her initiation the Guru asked her in a seemingly casual manner, 'Nivedita, to what great fatherland do you now belong ?' Taken aback, the disciple said, 'But, Swamiji, I am British.' The Guru kept silent.

Nivedita loved India but her love was a mixture of the Christian sentiments of

charity and mercy. The Guru scolded her, 'What is charity ? Is it anything more than a mask of vanity ? You wish to serve India with charity ? Not charity, what is wanted is love; love that embraces all, high and low. You may have to suffer humiliation from the Hindu society on account of your alien blood. Still you have to bear in mind that you are at heart a Hindu. I have loved the West with all my heart but with no trace of pity in it.'

Long years after, Nivedita wrote : 'My education is still continuing. My vision is growing clearer. By Guru's Grace I am getting Light. The preconceptions which blocked my way like a lion are vanishing in the light of awakened intelligence. The wonder is that the Guru only illumines and does not impose his views. This is the fundamental principle of his teaching.'

The other aim of the Guru was to bring about a change in the political mentality of Nivedita. India was a permanent part of the British Empire. 'This diverse and peculiar country can be a united nation only by the presence of a third power. British rule has done and will do India immense good. Every nation demands freedom....India from England, naturally, but it will take the country centuries to be fit for it.' Such were the ideas with which Nivedita's career started in India. The dream of her life was to unite India and England by ties of love. On hearing this, the Guru said, 'Work; seek; perhaps you will find a way. I too held your opinion two years ago.' During these two years much water had flowed down the Ganges. We know how quickly Nivedita's dream vanished into thin air. The Guru had not much to do for this to happen. The more familiar she grew with the British community in India, the more the true form of their lust for imperial glory revealed itself. The first blow to her dream came from the refusal of the Government to grant some land to Vivekananda to establish a Sanskrit college of the Maharaja of Kashmir. Then, who could fail to mark Englishmen's arrogance in dealings with Indians, their maltreatment of men in mills and workshops, of passers-by, of passengers on train or steamer ? How could a woman like Nivedita, independent-minded, educated, self-respecting, put up with all that, in particular when even her Guru was not spared that insolence ?

But all this was external training which does not touch the root without which no development is lasting. That changed, the outer change becomes automatic. Hence the Guru's final injunction : the inner and outer life must be in every way like that of a brahmin brahmacharini. And the result of that should be offered at the feet of God. Above all, her past, even its memory, had to be wiped out completely.

3

The pilgrimage over, Nivedita alone returned to Calcutta. She had received the Guru's instructions into the depths of her heart. Her stay with Saradamani in Calcutta, following her ideal, would serve Vivekananda's purpose. Inspired by Saradamani's saintliness, purity and sweetness and her spiritual power, Nivedita returned to her own home.

There the Guru, for the first time, subjected her to a period of austere discipline. He asked her to live like a Hindu widow, following all the disciplines. He said : 'Now you must give up all visiting, and live in strict seclusion. Control every restlessness of mind, every expression of your face. Realise yourself without a trace of emotion.'

A school was opened for the girls of the locality. After a long time Nivedita got something to do which was after her heart. We are not unaware of how much opposition from orthodox Hindus she had to overcome. The Guru told her at this time : 'Never complain of not having enough time for prayer and meditation. Your mission and achievement lie in your work. That is the goal to which I am leading you. Follow me. March with me. My mission is not Ramakrishna's, nor Vedanta's but simply to bring manhood to this people. The manhood of Europe was kept up by the women who hated unmanliness. When will Bengali girls play their part and drown in merciless ridicule every display of feebleness on the part of men ?'

A terrible plague epidemic broke out in the locality. Nivedita's fearless, indefatigable, self-forgetful service, the Guru's command and encouragement her only protection—all this is history.

Hearing of Nivedita's austere tapasya, a female devotee of Swamiji became displeased with him. The Guru calmly replied : 'Don't pity her. She is now above everything dedicated to India. I have devoted more time to her than to anyone else.'

Now, Nivedita turned to writing in her spare time. Her articles appeared in the *Statesman* and other papers. Especially her description of the plague epidemic created a stir among our countrymen and slowly secured for her a place among the educated. In this connection she came into contact with the Brahmo Samaj. The Guru encouraged her to get into that organisation. She became intimate with the Tagores. Rabindranath came over to her place and discussed poetry with her. One day during such a discussion she had a call from Belur. Full of joy, the disciple at once told the Poet that Swamiji had sent her blessings and that she would be going to him. He perhaps thought within himself, 'Nivedita has found her chosen god.' But her friendship with the Brahmo Samaj did not last long. Nevertheless, Nivedita won a few friends in Suren Tagore, Jagadish Bose, Abanindranath. Suren Tagore became her collaborator in her Swadeshi work. And Nivedita's help in the achievements of Bose and Abanindranath is well known.

Nivedita had calls from many quarters to speak at public meetings. The power of her askesis, so long pent up but now released, seemed to rush out in a flood. Now the Guru put her to a severe test. 'You have to speak on Mother Kali,' was his command. The Albert Hall was packed full of an educated Brahmo and Hindu audience. The disciple was calm, indrawn. The end of the speech was followed by profuse applause. The Guru was proud of the praise given to his disciple. Then came an unexpected invitation from the priests of the Kali temple at Kalighat. Vivekananda was to be the President. But he told Nivedita beforehand that he would not attend the meeting.

His command was for the disciple to go alone. Everyone would sit down on the ground bare-footed. The Guru blessed the disciple before she left for the meeting—'Bear in mind that you are always a servant of Kali.' Nivedita reached Kalighat walking all the way bare-footed. Needless to say that all were fascinated by her speech. Nivedita too felt that she was fortunate in getting Kali's Grace.

In this way, by ceaseless care, affection and control, the Guru was preparing her within herself and in the external world for her future work.

4

Swamiji was unwell. Illness and pressure of work had weakened his body. And on top of that, he was short of money. The thought of sending Nivedita back home was not out of calculation. At this time came an invitation from an American lady who was a devotee. The Guru set out with Nivedita for Europe, perhaps he would get some financial help and also a little rest ! The Guru said to the disciple : Don't forget that you are a daughter of Kali. I see also your past and—future....But for the moment, continue to be docile and obedient.' Before starting, Nivedita sat down at Panchvati, Dakshineshwar, and prayed : O Mother, give him a little ease and rest...and give me the pain you would have given him....I worship, I love him.... Yes, for the personal part of him ...I will live and work until I drop.'

Thanks to the sea breeze, signs of quick improvement in Swamiji's health were visible. The disciple was of good cheer. She felt blessed by the close companionship of the Guru. Sitting by his side in constant silence, walking with him on the deck, rendering him service, collecting jewels from the bottomless sea of his vast knowledge—how many could have such good fortune ? Above all, the silent, spiritual influence of his presence—a thing beyond mind and speech. The Guru too poured into his disciple all his attention to probe whatever flaw there might be at the bottom of her mind, whatever subtle attachment there might be to work, whatever fleeting desire there might be in her mind and vital nature. This was her golden opportunity of liberating herself from their grip. Her repeated question to the Guru was : How to be without 'scar of imperfection ?' How to be intact and whole ? How may a higher peace descend ?' The Guru had the same answer : 'Struggle to realise yourself without a trace of emotion. This is the great secret. Besides, no imitation, no anxiety, no restlessness, be poised in your own power, and liberation will follow. Renounce everything.' In this context we recall Sri Aurobindo's words : 'Equilibrium is necessary—an equilibrium that no earthquake, however terrific, can shake even by a hair's breadth....' During these six weeks, the Guru's unfathomable store of varied knowledge seemed to have passed into the disciple. Philosophy, history, religion, culture, *guruwād* (the need for a Guru), askesis, education, manliness, *sādhana* (spiritual discipline)—no subject was left out of discussion. But over and above all, like the rumbling of the sea, a sonorous voice rang out : '*Abhi*', 'Be fearless'. 'The one Upanishadic mantra I have always and everywhere uttered,' said the Guru,

'is strength. *Nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*, the Self is not for the weakling to win. My own ideal is that warrior saint who at the moment of his murder during the sepoy revolt was heard to say, "Thou also art That." The close companionship of the Guru during those six weeks remained like a brilliant star in the serene firmament of the disciple.

The steamer reached London. A few days later, Swamiji alone set out for America. Nivedita arrived there afterwards; Guru and *śiṣya* met again. There the disciple had a hard task to do : to raise funds by making speeches. In western circles, a good deal of curiosity had been aroused; they were curious to know what impressions the western woman had about India. The Guru was keenly observing the psychological movements of the disciple. On board the steamer he had asked, 'Do you think you can raise funds ?' Her bold answer had been : 'I don't think... I know.' That moment had arrived.

For about a month, at intervals between various kinds of work, the Guru was giving Nivedita instructions on many subjects. One day he said : 'You see, there is one thing called love and there is another thing called union. And union is greater than love....That which we love is not yet ourself....This is the difference between bhakti and jnana.' On one side, Nivedita was drawing strength from the Guru's words; on the other, an unknown fear was surging in her, as if without the Guru she was helpless. But as a consequence of the Guru's closeness, her love for him was deepening and growing purer. It had keenness, but not attachment any more. She said, 'Now he is the whole living...; instead of growing less, I have grown infinitely more personal in my love. I am not sure but his least whim is worth the while....'

In the midst of his various activities and experiences of American life, Swamiji's health was breaking down. He seemed to be hearing his country's call. He put an abrupt question to his disciple : 'How long will you stay here ? When will you begin your true work ?' The disciple was taken aback. In a calm voice she said, 'Swamiji, it was at your command that I came here. I am quite ready to leave.'

The Guru would go to Chicago. Luggage was being packed up. Suddenly he entered Mrs Bull's room with Nivedita and shut the door behind him. The women-disciples were bewildered. His face was peaceful and luminous. Stretching out his hands he said, 'My children, I have come, I have come.' Then wrapping a shawl round the waist of Mrs Bull, he called her *sannyāsinī*. The next moment, placing his hands on the heads of both Nivedita and Mrs Bull, he said, 'I give you all the power given me by my Guru... I am going away to be at peace... It is like a release.' Nivedita bowed down at the Guru's feet. A vast all-engrossing power descended into her; her body, her reason, her intellect and external consciousness, all vanished. The Guru's hand on her head was warm, heavy and full of tremendous power. 'She felt the high Transcendent's sun-like hands.' She felt that she was truly a *brahma-chārīnī*. The Guru had told her that she should remain a *brahmachārīnī* all her life.

This reminds us of Sri Ramakrishna. He too had said to his chief disciple : 'Today I give you all I am, I have become a fakir.'

Nivedita was overwhelmed with joy. But she was distressed too. The fears that passed through her mind were : 'Sri Ramakrishna by making over to his disciple his power in this way retained his life for only a year and a half. Does my Guru too mean the same thing ? I know how he has been suffering. If that is his will, I'll not stand in his way, for our petty satisfaction. But let it be our prayer to God that we may offer at his feet some money as the fruit of our effort,' and she communicated them to her friend.

Nivedita's being was now absorbed in the Guru. Her only dream was to serve him, to help him in his work. But the door of America's wealth did not open easily. Now and then despondency overwhelmed her. Then she recalled the Guru's enlivening words : 'Rely on your own strength. Remember, whoever has anything original to say commands a hearing from the world.' Unshakable was the Guru's faith in the disciple. Gradually obstacles gave way and Nivedita's fame spread from town to town. Money came pouring in. The Guru personally attended only one of her lectures : it was a simple, beautiful, luminous address. A Hindu of Hindus, Nivedita was the voice of India's soul. The Guru's eyes glistened with tears of joy.

The work over, Nivedita met her Guru in France. Her joy was all the greater that she would meet Jagadish Bose there. At the Science Congress there, Bose was to read a paper. On the other hand, Swamiji was preparing to return home. And Nivedita was busy with Bose. One thing the Swami did in Paris cut Nivedita to the quick. She misunderstood the Guru and their difference of opinion badly affected their personal relations. One might say that it was the last revolt of the subconscious. Vivekananda was to hear Emma Calvé, the opera singer whom he had met before in the role of Carmen, at a Paris theatre. The disciple raised a vehement opposition; her puritan mind spoke out in a heated tone : 'Swamiji, this cannot be. People will be shocked and make a strong agitation if they see you at the Opera comique.' Swamiji was most surprised, but a gentle smile was his only response. A few days later, when Calvé called on Swamiji, he expressed his eagerness to hear in her wonderful voice the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*. The disciple objected again : '*La Marseillaise* ! But, Swamiji, that is a battle song. The booming of guns, shouts of soldiers...'

'I want that very thing,' insisted the Guru. 'Don't you see what heroism, what love of country, what inspiring spirit of self-giving are there in this song? In it you feel an expression of courage, a call to love and sacrifice for your country, don't you ?It is a hymn I shall teach the monks of our Math.' The 'childish' ways of the Guru in Paris appeared unbecoming of him to Nivedita. Meetings between them became painful; the Guru too adopted an attitude of indifference to all her work. He said, 'I am free now, born free. Nothing that I do is of any importance. I have become a child again.'

The dissension took a deadly turn over some trivial matters. Like Guru, like disciple. At last the Guru was obliged to say, 'You are obstinate and headstrong, all that I have been myself. But your actions still bear the imprint of your will. Let

the Divine Mother take care of you. Go and live in solitude, since you still differentiate evil from good. Deep down within yourself the mould of every form must finally be broken, so that your spirituality can overflow.'

This stern rebuke opened the disciple's eyes. She realised where her subtle attachment to the Guru and her preconceptions were still nestling. In her work she had sought her own satisfaction rather than God's. Under the mask of satisfying the Guru she had satisfied herself, and expected praise and appreciation from him. In a word, her ego had grown tremendously. As a consequence she had dared to sit in judgement on the Guru. So he ruthlessly rejected her success in America and her work in Paris. In another context the Guru wrote, 'Your letter indicates that I am jealous of your new friends. You must know once and for all I was born without jealousy, without avarice, without the desire to rule, whatever other vices I was born with...have your own choice, your own work.'

One question : How could a disciple like Nivedita, so wholly devoted to the Guru, judge him, doubt his affection ? First, the Guru had given her much free scope for development even while preparing her just as his own Guru had done in his case. Sri Aurobindo holds that man cannot make spiritual progress without freedom, so he was dead-opposed to some political views and forms of government. Secondly, however deep might be Nivedita's love and devotion, her consciousness had not attained identity with the Guru's. She had not, to use Sri Aurobindo's terms, unity of consciousness, what Vivekananda called knowledge, the knowledge by which one's consciousness merges in another's. For this reason, Nivedita's consciousness was still limited by ideas of good and evil, right and wrong. Despite a lot of change in her, one must say that in the background of her nature there was some remnant of innate *sanskāras*. Hence Sri Aurobindo's insistence on change of nature.

On the other hand, the Guru's dealings too may seem unreasonable to our modern mind. But I have not the impertinence to judge a Yogi. The disciple had spotted her own defects. It is not a bit surprising that the Guru too should have done the same. Moreover, I believe that Vivekananda had foreseen that his work was coming to its end. That hint he had given. Now it was for the disciple to purify herself perfectly.

Be that as it may, this letter put Nivedita to no end of shame. She was burning in the fire of repentance. But from this holocaust she emerged, like the Phoenix, into a new birth. Her sincerity saved her.

Before returning to India, the Guru blessed the disciple and said, 'When a great leader has prepared his workers, he must go to another place, for he cannot make them free in his own presence. I am nothing more for you. I have handed over to you the power that I possessed.... Go forth into the world, and there, if I made you, be destroyed. If the Divine Mother made you, live.'

This was the disciple's last act of disobedience. Henceforth thanks to the mantrik power, she was like a charmed snake. Her love was tested gold.

Nivedita was now alone in Europe. Jagadish Bose was also in London : he would read his paper at the Royal Society. Nivedita's help came to him like a blessing of

God. Her earnestness, enthusiasm and care with regard to his work and to his physical illness are known to all. She also made friends with Romesh Dutt. She began gradually to understand political trends, especially the attitude of the British Government towards India. Religion and women's education were not her only activities but politics would be her main object—she returned to India with this conviction when she got the news of her Guru's serious illness.

The Guru was very glad to have her beside him. His yogic insight could see the light of her soul reflected in her ways. The Guru lovingly seated her on his right.

At that time the Indian National Congress was in session in Calcutta. One by one the chief leaders called on Swamiji in sickbed. He held lengthy discussions with them on politics and society. A miniature Congress seemed to form around Swamiji. By his side was Nivedita, listening to the discussions. From time to time the Guru asked her views too. In this way he introduced the disciple to the country's leaders as if he were initiating her into her political work.

The last day, Nivedita had gone to Belur. Swamiji personally served her food and himself washed her hands. Surprised, she looked at the Guru's eyes. Full of infinite love was the Guru's look. Her mind grasped the situation, her heart would not. She returned to Calcutta in deep peace and silence. All day long she felt the Guru's presence. In the sky and in the air, in trees and creepers, in sound and silence, she felt the Guru's presence pervading everything. Overwhelmed with joy, overpowered by tears—that was Nivedita at the moment.

Two days later came the tragic news. Nivedita came to Belur, calm and collected. 'Immobile in herself she gathered force.' She sat down laying the Guru's head on her lap. Her last prayer was, 'Lord, Thy will be done !' During the cremation a piece of the half-burnt ochre robe of the Guru came flying and dropped on the lap of the disciple.

Nivedita was now alone. Before her lay a vast field of work. The Guru had departed, leaving her in charge of his incomplete task of immense dimensions. But with what delicate care, what softness and severity, openly and behind the scenes, from far and near he had trained her ! At times the Guru was severe and indifferent, at others like the dearest friend and father. In this way, through a painful process of building up, pulling down and rebuilding, like a great sculptor's work, the Guru had reared this modern, independent-minded disciple. Rare in spiritual history is such a phenomenon.

No doubt the disciple was alone, but not helpless. Her being and thought were permeated by the Guru's power and subtle closeness. She had his instruction that the service of the masses was her work and sadhana, not only the welfare of Indian women. In that connection she by and by entered the political field and joined the independence movement. She started travelling all over India on a twofold labour : openly, making speeches and writing articles to propagate national ideas and aspirations; secretly, cooperating with revolutionary parties. She was compelled to sever her connection with the Mission, India's nationalism and independence were her only

sadhana. Nevinson has said, 'She was drunk with India.' Swami Brahmananda said : 'Next to Vivekananda nobody else ever loved India so much.' 'I see Nivedita as the Mother of the masses,' said Rabindranath. In various ways and forms she awakened our dormant spirit. Vivekananda knew and said that Nivedita would awaken nationalism among the Hindus and had directed her to dedicate herself to that end. He had warned her brother sadhaks not to interfere with her freedom.

We see her sometimes among the old moderates, sometimes as a fiery spokesman of Nationalists, or as a sister of the youth, as a powerful writer in the columns of the nationalist Press, as preaching Swadeshi, as a worker of the Dawn Society, as a mother or a sister at the door of the flood-ravaged for famine-stricken. There seemed to be no end to her support to the researches of the Indian scientist, no end to her sympathetic help in the great struggle and suffering of the Indian artist, or to her inspiration to the beginnings of every cultural movement. A host in herself was she. I wonder at her inexhaustible vital energy, the self-forgetful wideness of her personality and ask myself : 'Is all this not an expression of a spiritual power won during her apprenticeship and kept in check for so long ? And how could there be so much diversity in one ?'

I am most amazed when I see her as a leader of a secret society. Was it her inherited spirit of revolt, so long dormant, now flaming forth ? To push forward the work of the Samiti, she travelled in the north, south, east and west of India and united in a common bond Bengalis, Punjabis, Rajputs, Maharattas. She came to Baroda to initiate the Maharaja. At that time Sri Aurobindo was at Baroda, and was connected with secret societies. In silence he was preparing for the service of his motherland and had organised secret societies in various places, in particular in Bengal. He came to the station to receive Nivedita. That was their first meeting. Yet both had known of each other. Since he had read her book, *Kali the Mother*, he had been her admirer. Nivedita had read Sri Aurobindo's articles in the *Indu Prakash* and was sure that he would be the nation's future leader. On meeting him, she asked, 'Mr. Ghosh, are you a worshipper of Kali ? (That is to say, are you a revolutionary ?)' When he took her to the Gaekwad, she asked him straight away to join the revolution. Sri Aurobindo has told us that it was not Nivedita's nature to hide anything and that she openly preached revolution.

Liselle Raymond writes in her book that at this meeting Nivedita asked Sri Aurobindo to go to Bengal. 'It is not time yet. I am preparing the field,' he replied. Hearing of his plans and methods, Nivedita said, 'Please count me as one of your group. I am always ready.'

After this Nivedita joined Sri Aurobindo openly in the political movement, and secretly in revolutionary activities. Though they actually met rather rarely, I think that due to the similarity of their ideals the inner bond between them was close and unbroken. It may also be supposed that Nivedita felt in Sri Aurobindo's character, culture and ideals some touch of Vivekananda. Sri Aurobindo has unreservedly affirmed Ramakrishna-Vivekananda's influence on him. When Sri Aurobindo

says, 'Nationalism is dharma, we are, each one of us, instruments of God; our life's aim is to serve the motherland at the sacrifice of our personal interests', one may feel in this spiritual nationalism an ideal after Vivekananda's heart. No wonder therefore that Nivedita should have been his collaborator in every way. But what mighty form the movement in which they worked together took is another story.

The high regard SRI Aurobindo had for Nivedita can be known from a little of our conversation with him. We asked, 'Nivedita is said to have been a sort of a revolutionary. Wasn't she one?' In a tone of surprise, SRI Aurobindo said :

'A sort of revolutionary? What do you mean? She was a revolutionary leader. She visited many places, sought opportune moments for meeting people and openly discussed revolution. No secrecy, no concealment, a nature free and frank—that was she. When she spoke of revolution, it was her soul that spoke out. Whatever the truth about her yoga, revolutionary work seemed to be her swadharma. Her book, *Kali the Mother*, is tremendously inspiring, but totally suggestive of revolution without the faintest trace of non-violence...

'She preached revolution to the Thakurs of Rajputana. No doubt the wind of revolution was then blowing everywhere in the country. I myself mixed with many of the Thakurs. They cherished a revolutionary mentality without the knowledge of the rulers.

'Nivedita had a sense of beauty also. On our way back from the railway station, when she saw the Baroda dharmashala, she said, "How beautiful!" Next moment, seeing the College building, she remarked: "How ugly!" My friend afterwards remarked, "Probably, she has a crack in her head."'

It is surprising that even some great men could not understand Nivedita. They did not hesitate to call her volatile.

SRI Aurobindo's opinion of Nivedita is evident from a single remark of his. One day we commented about a revolutionary leader, 'He was fire!' The Guru heard and kept silent. Then when Nivedita was mentioned he said, 'That was fire, if you like!' This fire—in Vivekananda's words, the lioness—was the real self of Nivedita; 'virgin formidable in beauty.' Wherever she had been, in Indian or European gatherings, everywhere people were struck by her looks, her splendid genius eclipsed every other genius, her unadorned beauty born of purity threw into the shade the richly dressed and bejewelled beauties in Government House durbars.

In another aspect, how gentle she was, softer than the grass under the feet! Infusing fire into the Indian leaders and the youths she said, 'England yields nothing without bombs!... Where are the heroes produced by your generation.... Fight as they would fight in your place.' Again, what anguish she felt when the wives and children of the imprisoned revolutionaries were starving! Deep was her concern. She would give away the last penny she had. Needless to say that her daring love of India did not escape the lynx-eyed Government. But she cared nothing for it. Nivedita, the spiritual daughter of Vivekananda, the initiate of the Adwaita sadhana, Nivedita, SRI Aurobindo's collaborator, could she ever dread fetters or death?

On one side, Sri Aurobindo's fire-breathing writings in *Yugantar* and *Bande-mataram*; on the other, Nivedita's flaming speeches and writings—a royal combination of these two forces stirred up the benumbed spirit of Bengal as well as that of the rest of India. From their joint revolutionary movement many an intimate friend stood aloof. But country came first; Nivedita's revolutionary flag kept flying aloft, steady and unshaken. She was sending young men to Jagadish Bose and Prafulla Roy to learn bomb making, to countries abroad to collect arms and ammunition.

The repressive policy of the Government took a deadly turn. Sri Aurobindo was in jail. Getting scent of the Government's plan to re-arrest Sri Aurobindo after his acquittal, she requested him to go elsewhere and conduct the movement from there. In the meantime, Sri Aurobindo left Bengal at God's command, making over charge of the *Karmayogin* to Nivedita. Again she had to take over someone else's unfinished task.

It is surprising and sad to think that as a consequence of the Government's repressive policy and Sri Aurobindo's leaving the country, the independence movement faded out in a short time and the last ray of the revolution went out with the last breath of Jatin Mukherjee. The reason was not so much the repressive policy. The deep cause was that, as Sri Aurobindo said, 'the Force had withdrawn.'

An incredible change in Nivedita was seen; she was now no longer that flaming fire of enthusiasm. But no despair, no weakness, nothing of the kind. There descended into her an immutable, impersonal sense of liberation, just what we saw in Vivekananda during his last days. She must have received, as Sri Aurobindo himself had done, a hint from God that her part in the work was done as He himself had assumed charge of India's independence. That was why Nivedita slowly withdrew into herself, gently returned into the temple of her soul, imperceptively passed into the being of Shiva.

We asked Sri Aurobindo how Nivedita took up the cause of India's independence as the mission of her life, setting aside her spiritual pursuit. 'By the Guru's command', said he. 'Vivekananda had assigned that work to her.' 'Do you know anything about her spiritual realisation?' To this second question he replied, 'No, we had no such talk between ourselves. But it was evident from her eyes that she had a natural capacity for samadhi.'

Nivedita seems to be almost forgotten in India. But India is a spiritual land. However old and worn-out Hinduism may be even now in her dilapidated temples one can see God. The wheels are revolving fast. We look forward to the day when from her spiritual summit India will, in a trumpet tone, proclaim: '*Vedāham mahāntam ādityavarṇapurūṣam*' ('I have known the Great Being of the Sun-coloured splendour!') when India will again take her place as the Guru of the world. That day will see the realisation of Vivekananda's vision. That day we shall remember again Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Nivedita. The spiritual force in Nivedita, transmitted to her by her Guru, awakened India's dormant Kundalini Shakti; restored her national art to its own glory; installed the Indian scientist in his place in the

world, built the Narisiksha mandir (a school for women); threw open to Indian journalism a new horizon; brought to the view of the elite of the country and the world India's civilisation, culture and religion. Above all, the contribution of this radiant *vibhūti* to India's struggle for independence, even though forgotten by us, will remain inscribed in golden letters in the sanctuary of India's soul. No shade of self-interest, no desire for name and fame, only a vastness of the soul and an abundance of its outpourings—that was Nivedita.

Before the eyes of my imagination arose Abanindranath's painting of Mother India. On her bosom was Nivedita, standing upright; above her head was Vivekananda and above his head, Sri Ramkrishna, both of them lost in meditation. On both sides of Nivedita were the scientist Jagadish Bose, the artist Abanindranath, the journalists, Ramananda and Motilal, the political leaders Tilak, Gokhale and others. In front stood the revolutionary youth-force.

The curtain went up for a moment. The Mother showed a figure in meditation, eyes closed, wonderfully calm and beautiful—Nivedita! Sri Aurobindo's tribute comes to mind: 'There is no measure of our indebtedness to Nivedita.'

NIRODBARAN

THE VOICE OF THE MOTHER

BY SISTER NIVEDITA

ARISE, my child, and go forth a man. Bear manfully what is thy lot to bear. That which comes to thy hand to be done do with full strength and fear not. Forget not that I, Kali, the giver of manhood, the giver of womanhood, the holder of victory, am thy Mother.

Think not life is serious. What is destiny but thy Mother's play ? Come, be My playfellow a while, meet all happenings merrily.

Murmurest thou of need of purpose ? Thinkest thou that the ball is purposeless with which the Mother plays ? Knowest thou not that Her toy is a thunderbolt charged with power to shatter the world at the turn of Her wrist ? Ask not of plans. Needs the arrow any plan when it is loosed from the bow ? Such art thou. When the life is lived, the plan will stand revealed. Till then, O child of Time, know nothing.

My sport is unerring. For that alone get forth on the day's journey. Think it was for My pleasure thou camest forth into the world, and for that again, when night falls and My desire is accomplished, I shall withdraw thee to My rest. Ask nothing, plan nothing. Let My will flow through thee, as the ocean through the empty shell.

But this thing understand. Not one moment shall be in vain. Not one effort shall fail at last. The dream shall be less, not greater than the deed. Thou shalt go here or there for some petty reason, but thy going shall subserve great ends. Thou shalt meet and speak with many, but some few shall be Mine from the beginning. With these thou shalt exchange a secret sign, and they shall follow with thee.

And that sign ?

Deep in the heart of hearts of Mine own, flashes the sacrificial knife of Kali. Worshippers of the Mother are they from their birth in Her incarnation of the sword. Lovers of death are they,—not lovers of life,—and of storm and stress.

Such shall come to thee with torch unlit for fire. My voice cries out over the teeming earth for lives, for the lives and blood of the crowned kings of men. Remember that I who cry have also shown the way to answer. For of every kind the mother has been the first, for protection of her flock, to leap to death.

Religion, called by whatever name, has been ever the love of death. But today the flame of renunciation shall be lighted in My lands and consume men with a passion beyond control of thought. Then shall My people thirst for self-sacrifice as others for enjoyment. Then shall labour and suffering and service shall be counted sweet instead of bitter. For this age is great in Time, and I, even I, Kali, am the Mother of all nations.

Shrink not from defeat, embrace despair. Pain is not different from pleasure,

if I will both. Rejoice, therefore, when thou comest to the place of tears and see Me smile. At such spots, do I keep My tryst with men, and fold them deep into My heart.

Uproot every interest that would conflict with Mine. Neither love, nor friendship, nor comfort, nor home may make its voice heard when I speak. Pass from a palace to plunge into the ocean of terror,—from the chamber of ease to stand guard in a burning city. Know that as the one is unreal, so also is the other. Meet fate with a smile.

Look for no mercy for thyself, and I shall make thee the bearer of great vessels of mercy to others. Accept bravely thine own darkness and thy lamp shall cheer many. Fulfil gladly the meanest service, and leave high places unsought.

Be steadfast in the toil I set thee. Weave well the warp into the woof. Shrink from no demand that the task makes on thee. Feel no responsibility, ask for no reward.

Strong, fearless, resolute,—when the sun is set and the game is done, thou shalt know well, little one, that I, Kali, the giver of manhood, the giver of womanhood and the withholder of victory, am the Mother.

SISTER NIVEDITA

OUR ASHRAM

SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

AN old friend who has just gone back after a visit to the Ashram writes expressing his admiration for the way in which the activities here have expanded under the direction of the Mother during the last few years. At the same time he makes some well-intentioned observations about what he feels as developments in an undesirable direction. I would like to dwell upon these points since these doubts and apprehensions are shared by quite a few others, whether openly expressed or privately whispered.

He notes with satisfaction that the central kitchen of the Ashram serves pure vegetarian food for all. But he has heard that those who want to take non-vegetarian food are allowed to do so. This, writes the friend, is very objectionable as such food is on all counts injurious to spiritual aspiration. He quotes the Upanishad saying *āhāra śuddhau sattva śuddhiḥ*, with the purity of food comes purity of being, and counsels prohibition of eggs, meat, etc.

Now, in the first place, the community here does not consist of sadhaks alone. There is a large section of student population who are here for education—concentrated development of mind, life and body. There are a number of teachers, Indian and foreign, who are participating in the educational effort along with the students, though at their own level. Then there are always a number of residents from the West with families who come for temporary stay which may prolong itself indefinitely. And there are others who are associated with the Ashram but are not sadhaks. Is it practicable to enforce the diet of the sadhaks on all these sections of the community whose main interests here are not exclusively spiritual ? There are many who are accustomed to non-vegetarian diet from birth; there are those who are medically advised to take that food; students who undergo the rigorous programme of physical education that is current here at the Centre of Education may feel the need of more nourishment than is possible by the kind of vegetarian diet that is available in these parts; the physical body demands special reinforcement. Regarding friends from abroad, it has been found that with the best will in the world on their part, their health cannot be sustained if it is deprived, for long, of the type of food they have been used to. It is such circumstances that have made non-vegetarian food permissible—but not, be it noted, prescriptive.

To come to the point about the compulsive necessity of taking only vegetarian diet in spiritual life, there is a good deal of confusion of understanding. Since when has it been so prescribed ? Certainly not in the heyday of spirituality in India, the epoch of the ancient Rishis. Even the statement in the Chhandogya which is quoted by our friend does not mean only what he says it does. When the Upanishad declares *āhāra śuddhau sattva śuddhiḥ*, it does not speak of purity of material food; that goes

without saying and it does not need to be said in such a profound context as that of the text quoted. *Āhāra*, food, here really means the psychological intake;¹ according to the thoughts, feelings, etc., that one admits and lodges within oneself is the stuff of his being shaped. The question of material food really occupies a minor place in the scheme of spiritual discipline. The quality of the sadhana, the rate of progress are determined by factors like aspiration, sincerity, effort, Grace, etc. and not by the 'kitchen religion'. The question of food comes in only to keep the body in sound condition. And unless the body fully cooperates, it is not advisable to force it to a violent change of diet, especially if it is used to a particular kind of diet. There are more important factors to be considered, attended to and promoted other than the item of food. It is pertinent to quote here what the Mother recently said in reply to a query on the subject :

Food has *very little to do* with spiritual life; a sincere and total consecration to the Divine and His work is *infinitely more important* than what you eat or do not eat.

Of course this is not to belittle the value of vegetarian, sattvic diet in spiritual life. There are indeed certain advantages, but they need to be balanced, in each case, with the evident disadvantages of the denial of the food that is normal to the body concerned. There should be a sense of proportion; nothing should become a fad.

The next note of alarm sounded by the correspondent is of the "free mixing" of the sexes, especially of boys and girls both within the classroom and outside. This, we are told, is dangerous to the climate of continence and should be stopped forthwith.

Our aim is to create—within our limits—a society in which the sex consciousness is eliminated. Here one meets another not as a man and a woman, a girl and a boy, but as two human beings, two inmates of the Ashram, two children of the Mother. All work together, study together, eat together, play together, in a free community spirit and the sex element is hardly present in these meetings. There is not the hiatus in consciousness that is promoted by the segregation of sexes. When people are so segregated, complexes develop on both sides, there comes in a secret attraction for what is forbidden, there is a suppressed sense of being held in leash, and a wholly unnatural outlook is built up. Nobody would say that we have indiscriminate mixing of the sexes here; they move together in a healthy environment. And that is, I would confidently say, a more salubrious atmosphere than one where an artificial barrier of taboos and negative injunctions is erected between one human being and another for no other reason than their difference of sex. Segregation accentuates the sex consciousness, sharpens the sex instinct, deforms man's whole outlook on womankind. Ours is an approach more in tune with the spirit and intention of Mother Nature and we are satisfied that the experiment is moving in the right direction especially with an

¹ Even so high an authority as Acharya Shankara explains *āhāra*, food, as knowledge of sense-objects.

increasing realisation on the part of the growing members of the community that sex but plays a small part in the total frame of life. We have found that, barring a few aberrations, the interchange stabilises itself at a healthy level; likes and dislikes commingle in controlled freedom and friendships spring up on the basis of affinity rather than of sex. Sex as a factor in human relations is on the way out in the Mother's Kingdom.

The third feature of life in the Ashram that is frowned upon by the learned friend is the adoration and the devotion that are offered by us to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The Gurus are after all human, he argues, and no human being should be put in the place of God who alone must be worshipped and adored.

Indeed, the Divine is to be adored, to be worshipped, to be prayed to. But is that Divine to be found only as and in some state Beyond ? We proceed on the basis that the Divine is everything, the Divine is everywhere; only, enveloped in Ignorance as we are, we have no sight to see the Divine who is in every form including the human form—*mānuṣīm tanum āśritam*, lodged in the human body, says the Gita. It is the Guru who opens the eye and puts the seeker in contact with the Divine. The Divine is real to us because of the Guru. We feel the breath of the Divine because the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have given us access to it; the Divine is closer to us through them and in them than it could ever be on our own. They are not only our channels but the very Forms in which we feel and embrace the Divine. To us they are the Divine. The timeless injunction not to miss the divinity of the Guru under the delusion of human form is a truth of cardinal importance in the life of the spirit whatever be the dogmas of the half-baked logicising intellect. In adoring our Gurus we meet the Divine face to face. And in loving the Mother who is far, far more than a Guru, we dissolve in the Bliss of the Infinite.

M. P. PANDIT

OUSPENSKY AND HIS VIEWS ON SEX AND SPIRITUALITY

A LETTER OF 1946

OUSPENSKY'S *Tertium Organum* was one of the most fascinating books I had ever read—a masterpiece of logical and mathematical argument for what has come to be conceived by Western mystical minds as the Cosmic Consciousness which transcends our normal experience of space and time. It was a living argument, clear and precise but with a controlled colour of joyful passion as if Ouspensky were measuring scientifically the characteristics of some vast and formless Beloved.

Something of the same livingness pervades *A New Model of the Universe*. Though not equal to the earlier work, it has many fine acts of insight. Ouspensky has a faculty for striking upon unusual aspects of truth—throughout his book we stand all of a sudden face to face with things that shed a new light on old problems. But he slips easily, I regret to observe, from profound intuition which is supported by an elucidating intellect to intellectual ingenuity assuming the hue of intuition, imitating the shape of intuition : the result is often not surprising truth but plausible fantasy. The fascination as well as the value of his book lies in his arriving by unfamiliar individual ways at conclusions which dovetail with the essence of all mystical research, Eastern and Western; the irritating fault of the book consists in his attempt to be original at all costs and in letting his mathematico-logical keenness tamper with his mystico-intuitive flair.

There are other faults, too—a certain ignorance, an incapacity to overleap the bar of a mental test : if, for instance, mathematics did not help the conception of the Fourth Dimension, I wonder whether Ouspensky would find it possible to accept it or induce himself to test its reality by inner experience. He, no doubt, goes beyond mere mathematics, but the props are mathematical. Where there are no such props he sees nothing and feels nothing : thus between the Cosmic Consciousness and the ordinary state of being he finds a gap—the subtle occult planes do not exist for him, all that he intuits is some rarefaction of the intellect, the outskirts of what Sri Aurobindo terms the Higher Mind where ideas take on a kind of solidity and stand in masses or else he touches the fringe of the Inner Mind where figures and designs become symbolically significant and represent universal truths. The whole series of subtle sheaths, occult space-times, supraphysical objects and forces and beings are beyond his conception; so also is a view of many, variously evolving lives and incarnations of the soul, and in its place he mathematically argues out a stale recurrence of self-same life-curves times without number! We at once feel the barren intellect indulging itself; the breath of inspiration carrying ideas over unknown gulfs is missing.

I do admit that Ouspensky has a remarkable mind competent on several levels :

his critique of Einstein, for example, has a power immediately felt by us, a sense of authority which impresses us even though it may be exercising itself wrongly. His "Experimental Mysticism" is extremely interesting and, within its limits, most fruitful. Perhaps it is the most original chapter in the book. His analysis of dreams has a distinct value, but a negative one : he merely shows how dreams that seem profound are often caused by physical stimuli received through bodily movements during sleep, he does not realise that certain movements and positions during a suspension of the outer wakeful being may "fit" us into occult realms, providing a means of entry into domains of other space and time by activating the hidden *chakras* which lie beyond our normal awareness in the outer physical body. At times he is pitifully superficial; this is surprising when we consider how deep he can be and how adequate his mind is for plunging into the very heart of things. I must say, however, that no matter what faults *A New Model of the Universe* may have, Ouspensky has written something that breaks open many startling horizons and, on occasions, he gives us in a few short italicised phrases a whole new world of thought that is like a living sunrise in the dead middle of night !

As regards the passages on Sex which you have bracketed, they have a good deal of truth in them . The entire chapter "Sex and Evolution" makes many brilliant and penetrating points : it has a mixture of sanity and poetry that is indeed attractive. All the same, I do not agree with everything said here. To get a correct picture of things, I believe one must de-westernise oneself a bit and distinguish between sexual passion and sexual emotion and then again between the emotional heart and the psychic or soul-moved heart.

I don't think sex on its purely passion side has any real affinity with the mystic's rapture. The mystical emotion, the psychic aspiration has a crystalline purity, a clear calmness within which a keen flame is upheld—a quality quite opposed to that of sex-experience. Whoever has known the psychic aspiration and the sympathetic chords struck by it in the emotions knows that Sri Krishna and the Gopis could never have indulged in sexual union, as popularly supposed. The whole trend of the inner heart is away from sex—the vibration has nothing in common with the sex-thrill. The devouring desire, the irrational intoxication, the extreme "beglamoured" leap that come with that thrill and culminate in the orgasm have a stuff and a movement of consciousness entirely different from the deep and wide, sacred and pure ecstasy of the soul drawn towards the Divine, the mind rising into the Infinite. The characteristic vibrations stand apart. And whenever sexual passion is let loose, the tendency always is to feel a stone covering the psychic centre behind the emotional heart, a thickness and heaviness gathering in the mind that has put itself in mystical tension. This is not felt so much when one practises a weak and watery mysticism in the midst of ordinary attachments; but as soon as one does Yoga seriously, the utter incommensurability between the mystic's rapture and the thrill of sex is laid bare. The power of sex on human beings is due not to its subtle resemblance to mysticism or its "foretaste" of it but to its being the exact opposite, an *n*th degree of pleasure which

provides the most attractive substitute, the most alluring sham.

Among the animals it is a hot function of reproduction invented by Nature in her blind urge towards the Ecstatic and the Immortal; among men it continues, on their common level of consciousness, to be the same kind of racial as well as individual necessity in a keener form and we cannot forbid it. But let us not have any delusion about its so-called grand phases when it figures as something more than a natural normal function. For, then it becomes, by the disturbance and turbidity it creates in the mind, a rupture, a fissure, in the being through which preternatural presences—the Titan, the Giant, the Demon—can rush into the human mould and attempt to fix it down to a crude greatness. Sex thus can acquire moments of might and splendour which to the surface mind may seem equal to those of mysticism but they are at the very opposite pole : they make a pseudo-god preventing the real divinity from manifesting its own substance and vibration of consciousness.

Running through the sex-thrill, however, with its temporary yet overwhelming bewitchment, there is a glow of the higher imagination of man, a poetic madness, a thirst not for mere might and splendour but for absolute beauty, a yearning to be physically united with a supreme flawlessness of form. Out of the rhapsodical values of sex created by this, a development takes place of symbolic values, all that imagery of Vaishnava and Sufi lyricism, in which the perfect spiritual reality is intuited behind the utter sham of sex, the golden zenith corresponding to the gilded nadir, the undying Bliss aped by the brief and exciting illusion. The symbolism, the imagery is valid in the consciousness standing away from sex and bringing a rare insight to bear on phenomena and catching through superficial resemblances the truths of the inner being, the divine counterpart of the body's experience. The imagery, the symbolism is not valid in the ordinary consciousness indulging in sexual passion, even when the passion is accompanied by the beauty-thirst. The mixing up of these two levels of consciousness, the failure to distinguish between them causes a misunderstanding of the mystical poet's use of sexual figures and leads people to say that in sex we have a "foretaste" of the mystic's rapture. Sex is mystical and mysticism sexual only so far as the poetic mind links them on its own revelatory plane. The use of sexual figures aims at conveying the concreteness, the substantiality, the intense bodily sensation as well as the beauty-madness of the mystical rapture at its completest : that rapture has everything the sex-embrace gives of concrete and rhapsodical intensity but everything without the least tinge of the gross, the crude and the selfish ; and beyond this everything, there is felt by the inmost soul an ineffable infinite of the beautifully Real compared to which the sex-embrace is the veriest shadow of shadows. For, we must remember that the physical is merely one of the forms the Spirit's substance takes when it accepts that diverse self-diminishing which is the world. So the Spirit's ecstasy includes the essence of all ecstasies and at the same time surpasses them in a limitless degree by its pure and luminous and majestic sweetness. As the sex-act, especially if haunted by the poetic imagination, is to us the greatest known pleasure of the body, its symbolism is quite apposite in

hinting with the greatest force the immense union with the perfect Divine enjoyed by the mystic. Only, we must take the intensity and the concreteness and the beauty-gusto of the pleasure and leave whatever in it is blindly animal, narrowly human and viciously preternatural.

When we pass from sexual passion to the emotion of love blended with sex, we are not so utterly divorced from the mystical realm. Sex and love, for all that may be said to the contrary by the Freudianism now in fashion, are not interchangeable terms—they combine by accident, so to speak : even physical love is possible without sex, as a mother's for her son or daughter. In love there is a finer vibration : when it mingles with sex, the thick obscuring heavily riotous atmosphere of the genitals is shot with a rarer keener air. There is less of the devouring instinct, more of a self-giving enthusiasm, an attenuation of the ego's bonds. At a particular pitch of the heart's emotion, at a certain sweeping up of it to lose itself one-pointedly in another person, we glimpse in the far distance a superhuman and divine state. It is but a glimpse of something outside us, it is not an intimate experience, however small, of the Superhuman and the Divine. The glimpse is a sort of "foretaste" in which the Wine of the Spirit is touched by the tongue but not a single drop is drunk ! And because nothing is drunk, we feel dissatisfied and a profound sadness falls over the entire love-ecstasy and there comes what Ouspensky calls "the autumnal taste, the taste of something that must pass, must die, must cede its place to something else". Yes, "something else"—something that is not mere human love : this must be kept in view. No smallest sip of the Spirit's Wine is taken : the foretaste is by an emotional echo. Here too the poetic mind plays a potent role and exercises its rhapsodical insight. But it is also helped by a truth in the experience itself. The experience is not the sham opposite of mysticism as sexual passion is—a far-away feeling or image of the truth is actually there.

We must not forget the "far-away"-ness. Most people remain very vague and scarcely profit by the mystical "foretaste". The profit comes usually when the object of love, being all-too-human, proves unworthy and gives a terrible shock to the lover's idealism. Or else when the poetic mind is extraordinarily powerful. I don't mean that one must actually be a poet writing splendid verses ; I mean just that the dreamer, the imaginative seer who is present in all comes to the fore and begins to look behind and beyond things and does not let the consciousness rest on the surface. When this happens, love becomes aware of its mystical affinity. There is no authentic mysticism yet ; only, an affinity to it by a touch of the psychic plane upon the emotional and mental, the soul upon the heart and the imagination. This renders the passage from the one to the other not so difficult as from sex to mysticism. We cannot turn to the Divine in a sexual way. But we can turn in an emotional way : it is that possibility which affines love to the mystical rapture.

Love, therefore, can be considered a sort of preparation—and a special one when the psyche lays its finger on it. All the same, it becomes mystically fruitful only

when, step by step, it breaks loose from human attachments and personal desires : so long as these attachments and desires have force, it is idle to compare the luminous freedom of the mystical transport with the hot narrowness of love at even its noblest and sweetest. Love's value consists in its capacity to break loose from its own defects at the touch of the psyche and rise towards a divine self-fulfilment ; sexual passion has no such capacity—it is an out-and-out falsehood if taken by itself. Love has evolutionary and progressive qualities ; sex is static and reproductive, a fixture of the lower consciousness which can play no directly helpful part in the soul's ascent towards God. Ouspensky's idea that there are spiritual aspirants in whom sex need not ever be rejected because it is a harmonious factor in their being is not based on any experience of the genuinely mystical. Sex does not harmoniously co-ordinate itself with spiritual growth and finally disappear : it is like a *rākshasa* always on the alert to assert his own will and vehemence, and it has to be swept aside at every turn by a Yogi ; otherwise it will take all manner of specious attractives form and lie in ambush for the developing soul.

Don't imagine I look upon the basic physical drive of desire—"libido", in the modern psychologists' jargon—to be utterly fruitless. I am far from doing so. It is the fundamental creative power of the body ; we cannot do without it ; but the turn it has taken towards the reproductive sex-act is not the only one possible to it. It is this turn that has nothing really to do with genuine mysticism. The libido can be made to serve as a physical energy-support to the higher capacities of the body : it can—as today's terminology has it—be "sublimated." Ancient Indian Yogic experience tells us that *retas*, the force commonly expressed in sex, can be converted into *ojas*, the general bodily dynamism, and then into *tejas*, the subtilised vitality of the organism's higher psychological movements. What I have called physical love is itself fed by the libido's sublimation. And the libido can continue, from below as it were, to help the manifestation of still finer modes of love. It can feed even the *amor dei*—Spinozistically *intellectualis* or otherwise. Indeed its ultimate *raison d'être* is to give sustenance to the Godward hunger. That is why I have spoken of the power of sex as being, in animal existence, Nature's blind urge towards the Ecstatic and the Immortal. But the Ecstatic and the Immortal cannot be found unless *retas* is transformed into manifestations beyond the one that culminates in sexual reproduction.

One last point. I have granted evolutionary and progressive qualities to love between human beings. Yet I should deem it an exaggeration to say with Ouspensky ; "Of all we know in life, only in love is there a taste of the mystical, a taste of ecstasy." In my opinion, the taste can come also when one contemplates Nature or rises into the philosophical ether or rides the crest of a great wave of idealistic action. What gives the taste everywhere is a certain noble self-transcendence aided by a poetic vision which feels the divine truth concealed behind all our movements of mind and body.

K. D. SETHNA

SALUTATIONS

(Continued from the September issue)

*This is how
all sincere aspirations
are fulfilled
With blessings*



1-9-63

10

Bombay
22-3-1954

My sweetest Mother,

A million salutations.

O compassionate Mother ! Today I have received Your indescribable blessings. I have become mute. What I have experienced today has been really wonderful. I have become joyous.

Mother ! now how many colours of the world are still left to show me ? At once on the heels of joy come the covering shadows of sorrow.

I have seen such a death as I have not seen all my life. I became silent—I felt neither sorry nor surprised. You have made me strong like a thunderbolt.

And yes ! what I heard afterwards was nothing but sheer falsehood.

But what did You say ?

“Child, obstacle after obstacle comes to cut short whatever you want to do at any time. And you are disappointed. So do not think, ‘I am doing this or that, it must be done in such and such a way.’ Leave all aside. Only surrender yourself to the Supreme Mother and continue your work. No matter then how many stumbles you may have. Endure everything with a smiling face. If you wish to attain the Supreme Truth, you will have to bear innumerable blows ; then and then only will you gain the Victory.

“Cling to the Truth alone. Do not expect anything else. You may have to face hideous difficulties, but laugh them away. Repeat my Name and forget everything. The world and its inhabitants and their thoughts and ways are strange ; they are not worth getting vexed about.

“Every human being has a different nature and different ideas and habits. And all these are like doorways set with sharp spikes. You shall have to pass through them. Afterwards you will become perfect. Your heart will utter nothing but the Divine Name. In every cell of your body will hum nothing except ‘Mother, Mother’Then you will have no more trouble, desire and anxiety.

“You will understand everyone and everything. And you will find everything mere shadow and smoke.

“You will find the right path and finally I shall take you up and place you in my Heart.”

11

Bombay
21-3-1954

My dearest Mother,

When you are there with me, I have everything.

Indeed, by showing everything in a moment, do You want to wind up for me the whole illusory play of worldly life ?

Is that why You have put me in the midst of difficult circumstances which make me shudder again and again ?

I am aspiring towards the divine, the blissful, the high and pure atmosphere. And yes ! You have shown me in a trice what the world and its illusion are !

My surroundings are so dense and impure that I feel stifled. Sometimes, on hearing falsehoods I am hurt and I hardly know what to do. You have put me amidst such adverse beings that my whole heart trembles. O save me, save me soon !

12

Bombay
20-3-1954

O Mother ! dear Mother !

What to say and what not to say to You ? Don't You know everything ?

You pushed me into a dreadful bush where I found nothing but darkness. I fumble, and I stumble, and I am knocked about amidst thorns and stones. I am searching for the Supreme Light, Truth and Love but I haven't yet found my way.

Mother, I haven't seen You, I haven't put my head in Your lap and obtained the endless peace. That is why I feel suffocated.

But yes ! Even when I stumble in the deepest darkness, You save me by Your miraculous help !

Glory to You ! Hearing my call, save me ever in the same divine Way.

(To be continued)

HUTA

AUROVILLE

On February 28, 1968

the whole world will play a part

in laying the foundation stone of Auroville...

the town dedicated to the youth of the world

in order to establish "a union of comprehensive harmony"

within mankind.

In order to emphasise the universal destiny of Auroville, the youth of the world will take an active part in laying the foundation stone on February 28, 1968.

A teenage boy and girl from each country will come to Auroville bringing with them, as a symbol of unity, a handful of earth from their own country. This earth will be mixed and put into the foundation stone structure. That stone structure will be conceived, designed and built by the youth of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in Pondicherry.

The boys and girls will be representative—in various fields : physical, intellectual, artistic... — of the aspiration of their nation's youth towards progress, harmony and peace.

The foundation stone ceremony will be attended by personalities from all over the world.

The Auroville project, the building of an international cultural township for 50,000 inhabitants, north of Pondicherry in South India, has the approval of the Government of India and was endorsed by the unanimous vote of the General Conference of Unesco—Paris, October 1966.

Auroville Information, Pondicherry 2, India

THE DISCOVERY OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER*

AN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

IN July 1947 Dr. Judith M. Tyberg, a lover of Truth and high ideals, came to India on a J.K. Birla Scholarship to Benares Hindu University. She had received recognition as a distinguished and inspiring Orientalist in her position as Head of the Oriental Department and Director of Studies in the Theosophical University at Point Lorna, California, between 1936 and 1946. Her books, *First Lessons in Sanskrit Grammar* and *Sanskrit Keys to the Wisdom Religion*, were widely used by students of Oriental Wisdom. In 1946 after teaching Sanskrit for a short period in the University of Southern California, she started a "Sanskrit Center and Bookshop" in Glendale, California. J.K. Birla, hearing of Dr. Tyberg's fine work in spreading the spiritual teachings of India, offered her a 3-year scholarship to study at Benares Hindu University under the guidance of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who was then the Vice-Chancellor of it.

When Dr. Tyberg arrived on the opening day of Benares University in July, 1947, she went to the Philosophy Department where all the teachers were gathered in session. She was asked by Dr. B.L. Atreya, the Head of the Department, on what subject she would like to do her research. She said she wanted to find out the inner spiritual meaning of the Vedas which were supposed to be the basis of India's wisdom. Dr. Atreya told her that this had been lost and she had better seek another topic. Her heart sank to think she had come all the way to India in vain. But by her side sat Arindam Basu, a young Instructor. He quietly asked Miss Tyberg if she had heard or read of Sri Aurobindo. She responded that she had never heard of him. Mr. Basu then told her that Sri Aurobindo had the answers and that he (Mr. Basu) would bring her some books the next day.

So on the following day Dr. Tyberg's new life began. Mr. Basu brought her *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, *The Secret of the Veda* and *Bases of Yoga*. She stayed up all night and was overjoyed to find what she had so longed for in every part of her being. She entered the classes on Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* and on "Modern Hindu Renaissance" and with almost daily talks with Mr. Basu she was so inspired by all she found out that she wrote to Sri Aurobindo and asked if she could come and see him. Before she received an answer she was surprised to find herself in the presence of the smell of Jasmine wherever she went. Puzzled, she asked Mr. Basu where it was coming from. He answered, "Did you not write to Sri Aurobindo?" Soon a letter arrived welcoming her to the Ashram.

* A précis of this article will be part of Narayan Prasad's *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram* (2nd Edition).

So on the auspicious day of Lakshmipuja in October of 1947 she arrived in the Ashram. The Mother was giving special Pranams and so Miss Tyberg received her first spiritual blessings as the Mother placed her hands on her head. She felt a strange electric power pass through her being and wondered what was happening. All the joy, beauty and truth and harmony she had loved she found in the teachings in the Ashram, in the guest house called Golconde, in the Meditation Hall and in the warm welcome of the Sadhaks. Her interview with the Mother opened many soul-doors for her. She felt as though she was meeting a goddess friend of old. Asked for a Sanskrit name the Mother said she thought of "Light" and that she would consult Sri Aurobindo. The Mother gave her a slip of paper at the Pranams the next morning, on which the name "Jyotipriya"—"Lover of Light"—was written. Since then she has been known to all in the Ashram as Jyotipriya.

Jyotipriya stayed for the November 1947 Darshan of Sri Aurobindo. In describing her experience before Sri Aurobindo she says she felt as though she was in the presence of a vast Consciousness of great wonder and depth. For days she felt an electrifying prickly current along her upper spine. She asked the Mother what it was; the Mother said that a new power had been poured into her. This wondrous new force kept bringing her back to the Ashram for Darshans at holiday times. Jyotipriya visited many holy places and ashrams and saints of India during her courses at Benares University but finally, after a deep call from within, she spent the last 6 months of her stay in India at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram as a child of the Mother's, joined all the activities and helped with the literary and book-work in Prithvi Singh's Publication Department and became steeped in the wisdom on the Yoga of the Supramental and a very deep love for the Mother filled her heart. Her last Darshan of Sri Aurobindo was on February 21, 1950. At that time she was definitely directed from within to find the guide in her own soul.

When Jyotipriya returned to America in 1950, she lectured and held small groups in Los Angeles where she shared the wisdom she had discovered in India. In 1951 she was the Professor of Sanskrit and Oriental Religion and Philosophy in the newly formed American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco. During her 2 years there she also lectured around and held weekly groups in her home sharing with friends of the Spirit the Yoga and wisdom of Sri Aurobindo. Finally, being somewhat curbed in her teaching of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, she left the Academy and San Francisco and came down to Los Angeles. In May 1953 Jyotipriya started the "East-West Cultural Center" at 136 Catalena St. in Los Angeles in a small room in a friend's home. Soon the activities expanded into other rooms of the house. The objects on the 1st Circular going out were kept broad and non-sectarian to open the way for a vast truth.

East meets West in cultural reciprocity for teaching and integrating its cultural and spiritual values for greater World-unity and progressive creative activity.

Classes and lectures on Great Scriptures, Great Eastern Sages, Religions and Philosophies, Art and Symbolism, Spiritual Disciplines, Sanskrit, Pali and Hindu-

stani as well as directed Research were offered by Dr. Tyberg. A specialised library on Eastern culture was available for study at the Center.

The classes and Open House Lectures were small at first and gradually grew so that a larger place on 3028 West 7th Street was rented in 1954 and the Center continued its activities and more and more people became acquainted with the Great Sages of India and, of course, of Jyotipriya's Gurus Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Work with children began to be included slowly. Then by 1955 this place became too small and some of the students, very anxious for the Center to have its own property, donated as well as loaned money for the down payment for a house and property.

On November 24, 1955 the Center moved into its own home on 1162 North St. Andrews Place in Hollywood.

During all these years Jyotipriya kept in touch with the Mother and kept ordering books for sale at the Center. The Mother's spiritual help and power were the force, Jyotipriya knew, that kept all moving forward in spite of many difficulties.

A small school for selected children was started at the new Center and after a while, because of the students' exceptional training and the fine results, the School was recognised by the City, State and National Government and listed in the Bulletins of Schools.

Living quarters were part of the new home, so students came to live there and entered into the inner life of meditation and Yoga and dedicated service.

The hall downstairs could hold a Library as well as a stage which was built and decorated by students so that programs of all kinds could be presented. There were Indian Dance Evenings, Moving pictures of Eastern Lands, Dramatic Readings and Plays from the Great literature of the World and especially from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. Indian Luncheons and Dinners, Bazaars and Eastern Flower Festivals, Informal Teas, Open Houses, Social Evenings with University students, all functions stressing themes on various spiritual and artistic lines. A patio was also provided for gatherings on summer evenings. The classes in Sanskrit, the Sacred Books of the East and the Yoga Systems, etc. continued. A children's group was formed in the Wisdom-Truth of all times, sages, countries and taught through story, music, art, dance, flags and quotations. The Center gradually became a general information Center on India and calls and visits flowed in continually.

In 1960 the East-West Cultural Center was incorporated as a non-profit educational and religious organisation. Visitors from many parts of the world have come to know of the Center and have enriched the character and unitive consciousness of the Center's activities. The activities of the Center continued to give greater expression in life to that Spiritual Unity, God Power and God Wisdom which universalizes, transforms and leads to an integral Divine flowering in man.

In the spiritual heart of the East-West Center is the Jyoti-Ashram (Holy Center of Spiritual Light). Here the conscious self-perfection and kindling of that burning zeal that conquers opposing forces are carried on in heart, mind and work.

In March 1962 the school and activities had become too large for carrying on

according to rules of Government, and were ordered to find a new place or close within 3 months. By going to court 3 times (while holding the Mother's flower blessings in the hand) the time was extended. For a year and a half a search for new quarters large enough and with required standards was made.

Finally, in 1963 on November 24th, the Center moved to its present headquarters at 2865 West 9th Street, Los Angeles, California 90006. By selling the old property money was obtained for the down payment and repairs and alterations necessary on the new property. The new quarter is a plot of 150 ft. x 100 ft. and contains a large 2-storey house, a large press building which made rent-income, and a parking lot, one of the new requirements for schools and meeting places. The house contains a lecture hall, seating 129 people, a library, an office and a reception room. The downstairs has 3 classrooms, a music room and offices, a kitchen and rest rooms and a living room for Dr. Tyberg.

With expansion of Headquarters, the work has also grown and new activities introduced. Groups of research along educational, scientific, religious, occult and artistic lines rent the hall and class rooms on some evenings. The Center has become a beehive of activity and interest. The Mother's spiritual force carries the work along through Jyotipriya and her dedicated helpers. The Center is gradually becoming a magnet for seekers of the Divine Life. The Mother's Challenge, "Serve the Truth", adorns the center of the Bulletin board along with Sri Aurobindo's words, "The Knowledge that unites is the True Knowledge."

The mission that Jyotipriya carries in her heart in her work at the Center is expressed by Sri Aurobindo as follows :

"Regard your life as given to you for the divine work and to help in the divine manifestation. Desire nothing but the purity, force, light, wideness, calm, bliss of the divine consciousness and its insistence to transform and perfect your mind, life and body. Ask for nothing but the divine, spiritual and supramental Truth, its realisation on earth and in you and in all who are called and chosen and the conditions needed for its creation and its victory over all opposing forces."

"INTERVIEWER"

NEWS OF GROWING INTEREST IN SRI AUROBINDO*

AN important fact worth mentioning is the project to consider the Sri Aurobindo Ashram as a Centre for Research in Yoga. Dr. Hingorani, Deputy Educational Adviser, Ministry of Education, Government of India, paid an official visit to the Ashram on June 18, 1967 and was here till the 20th to collect data and submit his report to the Government.¹

How this Ashram differs from others not only in its aim and ideal but in its way to realise them and why it should be named a Centre for Research in Yoga, the nursery of a new race, can be gathered from Madhav Pandit's exposition in *Mother India*, August 15, 1967.

Under the title of *New Race* a quarterly edited by Dr. V. Madhusudan Reddy has been started by the Institute of Human Study, organised in 1964 in Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad, with the Mother as the Permanent Honorary President. Its object is to study the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the emergence of a New Race.

On July 1, 1967 under the auspices of this Institute the Sri Aurobindo School was started. In the Department of Philosophy at Osmania University a bold and imaginative step has been taken by introducing all the major works of Sri Aurobindo in the Post-Graduate syllabus.

Sri Aurobindo has been introduced also into several Indian Universities like Calcutta and Varanasi.

So far about a dozen persons have obtained the doctorate degree from various Universities on various theses on Sri Aurobindo. Dr. V. Madhusudan Reddy of Osmania University received a U.G.C. Grant of Rs. 7000/—for the publication of his thesis : *Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Evolution*.

Due to Dr. Arindam Basu's efforts since October 1966, Hinduism has been included as an alternative Paper in the Theology Tripos Course of Cambridge University. There Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* forms part of the study as the main commentary on the Gita. A small edition, compiled from these Essays by Anilbaran, has been made the text.

* To be included in *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram* (2nd Edition).

¹ On April 2, 1964 a visiting Committee of the University Grants Commission, Government of India, visited the institution to see if it could "be deemed a University" under Article 3 of the U. G. C. Act.

A variety programme staged in this connection included a recitation from *Savitri* in the sixteen languages taught here—six foreign. English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish; ten Indian: Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Uriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada.

Of the two who have submitted their Ph. D theses to Durham University, England, one is the Rev. N. Sullivan whose thesis is "The Concept of Man in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy."

Dr. Arindam Basu, Durham University, connected with the Ashram for more than two decades, can be described as an ambassador of Indian culture. He has been often invited by various countries to speak on Hinduism, Buddhism and Sri Aurobindo.

NARAYAN PRASAD

SUN, SOL, SURYA

Sun, Sol, Surya—

Sound of the magic word,
Geese across the rainbow,
So the children heard.

Light upon the sea-green waves,
Sunlit songs of joy,
Light from hidden nether caves
Man will soon employ.

Sun and Water, Rocks and Gold !
Elements of earth behold !
Who is Master—Man or Maker ?
Who the slave ? And who creator ?

Man will answer Him on high,
Sun, Sol, Surya of the sky—
O Lord who made the Light of Day,
Come now and take my place I pray.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

PARIS: HEART OF EUROPE—1950

(Editor's Note : This is a poem copied out in my "Scrapbook" some years ago. Somehow the author's name is missing. It is an acute effective work with an expressive free-verse technique, and the acuity pierces to a fine depth at the end. The vision pricked out has a persistent truth in our time.)

DARK soil. Dark empty sea.
Black futility where no roots grow.
Heart of the great plant rotting, waiting,
Wasting from within with the damp rot
Of disillusion. What patina of past
Imaginings can warm the dark recesses
Of the hungry heart ? Or pump the living
Elixir along the clotted ways
Of habit and inevitable death ?
Or feed the fissured tissue of failing faith ?
Or rouse the inaudible pulse of starved hope ?
What resin-toughened tears of troubled thought
Can substitute the nourishment of dew ?
Or freshen avenues of mind of men
Who look alone along lost lanes of dream,
Staring dimly at the picked bones of dis-
Enchantment ? Where is the horsemeat for the mind ?

Civilisation has lost its way. The old
Hear only old battlecries, open
Casement windows on past mornings; the young
Weary from womb to tomb go to seed before blooming,
While a flotsam of souls wrenched from the wreckage of life
Drifts unwanted, dumb with the degradation,
Bewildered by the bleeding of inner tears.

Dregs of doubt dropping, imperceptibly
Settling the mounting dark soil of futility
Under a ferment of old wine, old.

Soundless the lapping of dark waters where deep
In the primal night, at the black heart of time,
The Mother waits, visioning vistas of Truth
Beyond the portal where Death is the entrance to Life,
There to receive at the secret mouth of the hidden
Fount of eternal life the sacrament,
The mighty minutia of the fallen seed.

A VIGNETTE IN VINGT-ET-UN

Oh, there's a Blessing in this gentle Breeze !

Wordsworth, *The Prelude* : 1.

So said the Poet who drank ineffable joy
From every chalice of Nature's opening bud :
Who caught joy dripping from every cranny-cleft
Of Nature's varying moods 'in sun and shower'—
The Poet who fondly held that 'every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes', and fondly limned
A Poets' role : 'retired as noontide dew.'
He talks of 'Breeze' : was it indeed the Breeze
That set the waves and daffodils to dance—
And his own heart withal—'gentle' this time ?
Was it mere flux of weather-vagary
Or just a chance that the Poet held the quill
Quivering in his hand—and a Breeze blew
From seeming Nowhere ? Who knows ? We only know
It blew—and brought its Blessing to the Heart
Waiting for a Token from his One Adored,
And sent him careering over 'strange seas' alone
On a wondrous voyage of self-discovery :
A Prelude-probe of intimate mysteries,
Of Intimations from 'the fields of sleep'—
Spirit embalming sense, and sense embalming Spirit !

CHIMANBHAI

FROM THE TRAVELER'S SKETCHBOOK

RUINS

Someone is buried
Behind the temple wall.

In the fragrant morning
I sense his presence
Like familiar scent
Of wild flowers
At my feet.

He would not cry
Obedience-crowned faith

But I partake
His sacrifice
In momentary sight.

HIMALAYA

Practising white mind
The fields of snow
Which neither move
Nor call advancing eyes

Boundaries none have set
To color time
Except the body
Born within old green

Yet change must come
And purity give way
To claims of sheer delight

Carried the wings
Destined to bear anew.

MARILYN WIDMAN

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH*

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

CHAPTER I

THE AGE-LONG QUEST (in Myths and Legends)

Place me in the deathless, undecaying world.

Rig-Veda, IX. 113-7.

Make me immortal (*mām amṛtam kṛdhi*).

Ibid., IX. 113-9.

Fire of God, I passioned for life....

Life so that Death might die...

SRI AUROBINDO, *More Poems*, p. 41.

And death prowls baying through the woods of life.

SRI AUROBINDO, *Savitri*, Book IX, Canto II

Our mortality is athirst for endless life.

(Pliny)

“....O grim cold death !

But I will not like ordinary men

Satiate thee with cries, and falsely woo thee,

And make my grief thy theatre...

O secrecy terrific, darkness vast,

At which we shudder ! Somewhere, I know not where,

Somehow, I know not how, I shall confront

Thy gloom, tremendous spirit, and seize with hands

And prove what thou art and what man...”

SRI AUROBINDO, *Love and Death*

THE mystery of death on the psychological as well as on the physiological plane has haunted man ever through the ages. But, as Stevenson said in his *Aes Triplex*, even “after a myriad bald heads have wagged over the problem, and after a pile of words have been heaped one upon another into dry and cloudy volumes without end”, the secret of death has eluded the probe of philosophers and scientists and remains till this day as of old unfathomable and inscrutable. We are still seeking a

* In connection with the series *The Destiny of the Body*, this new set of articles forms Part V.

satisfactory answer to the insistent query ringing through the ages : "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?"¹

But the heart of man has somehow felt that the death and dissolution of his body cannot be the ultimate reality or his definitive end. And this undying faith that he must be somehow existing even beyond death has found its justification to the consciousness of man through suggestions, intimations and foreshadowings that have been "darkly hinted in types, faintly gleaming in analogies, softly whispered in hopes, passionately expressed in desires, patiently confirmed in argument [and] suddenly revealed in moments of inspiration."²

But the physical-vital consciousness of the representative man can nevertheless deny the ghastliness of death ; for does it not come stealthily to effectuate a ruthless and most painful separation between us and our near and dear ones ? The vague uneasy fears and the fond hopes that one feels about the lurking danger of death confronting one's loved ones was already expressed by an ancient Egyptian mother in the following challenge to the dark Doom :

"Thou flowing thing that cometh in darkness and entereth furtively in, hast thou come to kiss this child ? I will not let thee kiss him ! Hast thou come to strike him dumb ? I will not let thee strike dumbness into him ! Hast thou come to injure him ? I will not let thee injure him ! Hast thou come to carry him away ? I will not let thee carry him away from me !"³

But still It comes, the hungry Beast of universal dissolution ; and man's heart cries out in agonized distress as the Babylonian hero Gilgamesh once bewailed over the dead pale body of his brother-hero Enkidu :

"Enkidu, my friend, my younger brother—who with me in the foothills
hunted wild ass, and panther in the plains ;
who with me could do all, who climbed the crags,
seized, killed the Bull of Heaven ;
flung down Huwawa, dwelling in the cedar forest.
Now—what sleep, what sleep is this that seizes you ?
And why this lividness, this silence eternal ?"

Gilgamesh touched his heart, it was not beating.
Then he covered his friend, as if he were a bride....
His voice roared out—a lion....
a lioness chased from her whelps.
Again and again he turned towards his friend,
tearing his hair and scattering the tufts,
stripping and flinging down the finery off his body.⁴

¹ *The Book of Job*, 14.10.

² Quoted on p. 13 of *Immortality* by A. W. Momerie.

³ Frankfort-Frankfort-Wilson-Jacobsen, *Before Philosophy* (Pelican Books, 1949), p. 79.

⁴ The Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* composed around the beginning of the second millennium B. C. *Vide*: Frankfort-Frankfort-Wilson-Jacobsen, *op. cit.*, p. 225; also, D. Mérejkovsky, *Les Mystère de l'Orient*, P. 305.

But, alas, all in vain ! Enkidu was stiff and silent like a statue ; he would never again respond to the bemoanings of the hero. Then, stung by the poignancy of a desperate revelation, Gilgamesh cried out :

“Alas, what can assuage the pangs of my pain !
He whom I loved has turned into dust !
Enkidu, my brother, has turned into dust !”¹

Is it then the ineluctable fate of all forms that come into manifestation to perish and disappear in time ? Is death then the absolute and universal law extending its sway over all organisations in this material universe ? Does the sobbing voice of ancient Babylon shedding its tears over all that is departed represent for ever the voice of man ?—

Weep, weep over the body of thy child,...
Weep, weep over the mothers that are gone,
Shed your tears over the rivers that have dried up,
Over the pools in which the fish have perished,
Weep, weep over the marsh without reeds,
And over the forests that blossom no more
And over the plains where the heather does not grow
And over the orchard where honey no longer flows....²

But man, the rebel child of Nature, has refused in his heart of hearts to believe in the inevitability of death as a cardinal condition of existence. The desire for eternal life felt by every son of man has been almost an instinct with mankind. ‘Why must a man suffer death when he has committed no wrong ?’—this has been his insistent query. Thus has man risen in revolt against death in a gesture of protest against the prospect of extinction. A smouldering resentment, a deep-seated feeling of wrong done to him has occupied his consciousness ever since the earliest dawn of his history. He has sought to believe with all the strength of his conviction that death as death has not been always an inseparable companion of life : it must have been a later arrival upon the scene, its intervention having been occasioned either by some hostile will or by some acts of omission or commission on the part of early man himself. Myths as to the accidental origin of death are galore in the traditions of various peoples of the earth.

And if death has not been an inevitable attribute of life since the very beginning, cannot mankind reasonably expect that somehow or other death may be annulled again and everlasting life gained, if not for all men at least for some privileged

¹ *Ibid.*

² Quoted in French in D. Méréjkovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 342. (English translation ours).

few ? Man's mythical consciousness has always believed that for this to happen some particular and specific conditions have only to be fulfilled. Thus in ancient Babylonian myths,¹ Gilgamesh sets out on the quest after *Du-zī* or *Lib-lib-bu* ('the plant of Life'), Etana asks of Samas the Sun-god *sammu sa alladi* or the 'Herb of Life,' and Adapa seeks after the 'life-giving Water and Aliment.' But, alas, due to some fortuitous circumstances they are deprived of their gains at the very last moment. Thus a serpent robs Gilgamesh of the plant of life, Etana fumbles and loses his herb at the penultimate stage of his quest, and Adapa misunderstands the instructions of Ea his God.²

But even if they have failed in their universal mission, were there not some sons of man who have conquered death for all time ? Thus Utnapishtim of the Babylonian legends and Ashwathama, Vali, Vyasa, Hanuman, Bibhishana, Kripa and Parashurama of Indian mythology³ are considered to be eternally immortal and living somewhere even to this day !

Be that as it may, for the common run of humanity does the departure in death mean always an irrevocable departure ? Surely not ! One has only to descend into the land of the dead or intercede with the gods for the restoration of life to the person one has loved. Thus Savitri engages in a debate with Yama, the Lord of Death, and skilfully manoeuvres to have her husband Satyavan restored to life for a further lease of four hundred years.⁴ Behula intercedes with Lord Shiva to resuscitate her snake-bitten husband Lakhindar,⁵ Istar descends into Aralu or Hades and rescues from there her only son Tammuz,⁶ Dionysos goes down into the land of the dead and brings back to life his mother Semele,⁷ and Nachiketas returns to the realm of the living, learning from Yama the secret of death.⁸

In some mythical accounts this restoration to life has been conditional and partial ; thus Alcestis⁹ sacrifices her life so that her husband Admetus may be spared from the jaws of death ; immortal Pollux¹⁰ spends half his time in Hades in order that his twin Castor who was dead might return to life ; Ruru¹¹ sacrifices half of the life-span allotted to him, and his wife Pramadvura revives with this half.

Mythical man has sometimes pondered that if the life upon earth is indeed brief and one has to pass willy-nilly to the other world, cannot one possibly circumvent the experience of death and make the great transition with his body intact ? King Trishanku of Indian mythology attempted to do so with the occult

¹ Vide D. Mérejkovsky, *op. cit.*, Chapter entitled "*Gilgamésh et l'arbre de vie.*"

² Mérejkovsky, *op. cit.*, section II : Babylone.

³ *Aś'vathāmā valīreyāso hanumānsca vibhīsanah kṛpāḥ paraśurāmāśca saptaśte cirajīvinaḥ.*

⁴ *Mahābhārata, vanaparva, sarga 295.*

⁵ *Manasāmaṅgal.*

⁶ Babylonian myth.

⁷ Greek legend.

⁸ *Katha Upanisad.*

⁹ & ¹⁰ Greek mythology.

¹¹ *Mahābhārata, ādiparva.*

power of the sage Vishwamitra but failed in the end. Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas, is reputed to have bodily ascended to heaven. In the Babylonian mythology, the apotheosis of Xisuthros, the hero of the Deluge, was of the same character. In Jewish literature, Enoch and Elijah stand out as the two figures who are held to have escaped death and been bodily assumed to heaven.¹

But, alas, all these are only myths and legends expressing perhaps the wish-fulfilment of the human race but bringing no definite succour or message of hope to death-stricken man. Where can be found the Indian *soma* or the Iranian *haoma* or the Greek *nectar* that would confer the boon of immortality on man ? Paracelsus, the great alchemist, claimed to have discovered the elixir of life that would indefinitely prolong one's earthly existence ; but, lo ! he died before his fiftieth year ! The Babylonian King Asurbanipal addressed his importunate prayer to Istar the goddess who "resuscitates the dead" (*mubali-tat-miti*) :

"I implore thee to grant me everlasting life."

The boon has not been granted even to this day. A physical conquest of death has ever eluded the grasp of man. But will it continue to do so even in the future ?

(*To be continued*)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ J. H. Bernard, "Assumption and Ascension" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Ed. Hastings), Vol. 2, p. 152.

OUR PROBLEMS TODAY

AN ADDRESS*

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It will do us good to remember the past pioneers in the field of Engineering. Michael Faraday was one of the greatest pioneers. I do not know if there is any engineer today who is completely unaware of Faraday's Laws. Faraday observed, among other things, certain electro-magnetic phenomena and formulated the laws governing them. On these laws the whole Electrical Engineering Industry has been built. His life and work are recorded and known. His spirit has inspired other engineers through the years. He was capable of deep, energetic, independent and creative thinking. This we shall remember today and remember always. These are the qualities of a scientific, enquiring mind that we need more today than ever to mould our lives, to solve some of our own problems as he solved his. For us as engineers and citizens, these problems of today concern education, employment, food and the general situation in the country.

Let our mind be alert and at the same time, if possible, quiet. Let the source of our knowledge be deeper than the shallow, slanted views of newspapers. They give us packaged opinions and not enough data to form our own views. They claim to guide the public, but, more often than not, by suppressing some data, exaggerating others, playing on our weaknesses, passions and prejudices for no higher purpose than increased sales, they mislead the public. So do the professional politicians. Politicians occupy today the same place in society as the priests used to do in olden times. They are now the most powerful group but unfortunately they, like the priests of old, do not seem to be always the wisest or the most dependable. So, instead of just swallowing what other people say, let us apply our own tests to whatever we have to do. One such test is of six W's ; we shall ask and satisfy ourselves on :

- 1) What is it that we have to do ?
- 2) Why is it to be done ?
- 3) Who does it ? Is he the best person to do it ?
- 4) Which way is it to be done ? Is that the best way to do it ?
- 5) Where is it to be done ? Is that the best place to do it in ?
- 6) When is it to be done ? Is it the best time to do it ?

There may be other tests, differently designed but based on the same dispassionate, scientific attitude and, better, a quietened mind, that can help us to find a reasonable solution of our problems.

* Delivered on 27th September 1967 on the occasion of the 100th Death Anniversary of Michael Faraday organised by Pondicherry State Engineers' Association at the School of Arts and Crafts.

Take for instance the question of the medium of instruction and the link language in which we as engineers are greatly interested. Look at the heat and confusion created in the country. Is all that necessary ? I suggest that we tackle the problems this way : Let us find out what some countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Canada, South America, China, Japan and South East Asia are doing in this matter ; with these data available, it should not be difficult to find the solution. I do not see why the Central Government cannot work out the greatest common factor (G.C.F.) or the lowest common multiple (L.C.M.) of agreement and confine themselves to specifying only the link language or preferably link languages, both English and Hindi for instance, and leave the rest, such as medium of instruction, number of compulsory languages, etc., to the States to decide for themselves.

Then take the question of employment. We import the bulk of our necessities. We lack so many things and yet we do not make them here but remain idle. This is an intolerable state of affairs, only possible in a devitalised society. We need energetic, creative thinking and dedication to get out of the morass. Let us begin, even in a small way, to produce things and not depend on others to make them for us or guide our lives for us. In America, I am told, half the population can produce all the necessities, that is, food, housing, clothing, etc., for the whole nation. Cannot we, given the will, do so ourselves ? That does not mean that I am advocating the American way of life *in toto*. I was scared when I read in the technical press that America has already produced the nuclear equivalent of 100 tons of dynamite for every living human being and can deliver it to any point on earth. Nor need we accept *in toto* the Russian ideology either. Talking to a communist-minded student I was told that to concern oneself about God is, according to the communist creed, a waste of time. The conversation went on somewhat like this :

This writer : Now let us consider building a machine or a factory. Perhaps you would grant that neither of these could sprout by itself, there must be some conscious human intellect behind it.

Student : Yes.

This writer : You would, I suppose, also agree that the human body is the most perfect machine that we know, in spite of all its limitations ?

Student : Yes.

This writer : Then, I suppose, you would grant that the builder of the human body has an intellect or consciousness higher than that of a human being ?

Student : Yes.

This writer : Then call that consciousness God, Nature or whatever you like.

Student : But a day may come when man may make another man. Then there will be no need to suppose the existence of a God.

This writer : As scientifically trained people, we accept a theory that explains all known facts, we discard it when it is no longer adequate. Till man surpasses or replaces God, we accept Him—till then it seems to me that only

a person without any discerning intellect can say that humanity is the summit and there is no God.

After all, either there is a God or there is none. If there is a God, it is of the utmost concern to us to know Him. It cannot be a waste of time at all.

Next take food. Apart from the necessity of increased production by better irrigation facilities, fertilisers, pesticides, improved seeds and farming, rural credit and land reforms, the avoidable waste in food must be eliminated. The waste at present is colossal—of the order, I gather, of 26% whereas it should not exceed 10%. In a rice mill, the paddy, after being boiled, is dried out in the sun, the top layer of paddy retains a moisture of about 9% which is too dry, and the bottom layer about 16% which is too wet. While husking, whatever gets too dry gets broken; and whatever is too wet gets pasty. This accounts for a loss of about 5% which can be eliminated by controlled drying by heat obtained by burning paddy husks in a simple machine.

Our import of food grains over the years works out to an average of 5% although recently we may have gone up to about 15%. If we can reduce the total waste in processing, distribution and storage to a reasonable figure of, say, 10%, it will free us from the crushing burden of food imports. Is that possible? We must try and make it possible.

Next, consider defence. Our relation with some neighbouring countries, Pakistan for instance, is strained. We need not dabble in politics, but if we exercise our mind we shall probably see that all this strain is quite unnecessary, doing good to none excepting to those richer countries which sell arms and which, in turn, encourage cock-fights and we shall all be a lot happier if, instead of fighting among ourselves and obliging others, there is a federation of neighbouring countries like India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Ceylon, Burma, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Tibet and all others who wish to join.

About population, we fear an explosion and family planning is advocated. I suppose it is a practical solution. I have no views either way. But it seems to me that the living want to live longer and would, if they could, prevent too many new ones coming into the world, crowding them out of peace and plenty. I suppose no one would advocate that the life span should be shorter and new ones allowed to be born to give future generations a chance to make the earth a better place to live in than what we have been able to do.

Man thinks, in his ignorance I am afraid, that he will continue to rule the earth. It may be that evolutionary nature has still a surprise for him, that he will be surpassed by some other species and relegated to a secondary position. His worry about overpopulation may amuse the superior type, as the one-time conceivable worry of animals increasing their number might have amused human beings.

Lastly, let us get through with the unpleasant subject of corruption. In Engineering, delay in execution of work, payment of bills, in fact delay in any form is a prolific source of corruption. Surely any organisation could be streamlined, and

power and responsibility could be synchronised to eliminate avoidable delay.

Again, as soon as we have deified money, we have lowered our consciousness and have created a fertile field for corruption. Clever people will always try to get what is most desired with the least possible effort. Giving sermons to others will not help. It is best to begin with ourselves, our own organisation. It is said that a powerful middle class can restrict corruption to manageable limits. Perhaps with rising prices, we have managed to squeeze it out of existence. Then add to it political corruption and you have a perfect recipe for the more or less certain collapse of a nation. To eliminate corruption would need a change of attitude, a change of consciousness. Let me finish with a story :

A man beset with money troubles met a holy man on the bank of the Yamuna at Vrindavan and beseeched him for the alchemic stone in the hope that anything he touched with it would turn into gold and he would be free from money difficulties. The holy man carelessly picked up a pebble and gave it to the needy person. He touched his keys with it and they turned into gold. The man stood dumbfounded for a while and stared at the calm face before him. Then he threw the pebble away into the river, fell at the holy man's feet and cried, "Sir, give me a little of that, possessing which you do not care even for the alchemic stone."

Perhaps it is only by raising our consciousness to a higher level that we can solve our human problems . We need a scientific attitude of mind and a quiet mind for that.

P. K. BHATTACHARYA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo : Three Essays.

Sri Aurobindo's 'The Life Divine' : A brief Study.

The Aitareya Upanishad.

All three by V. Chandrasekharam. Published by V. Sadanand. The Personal Book Shop, 10, Congress Building, III, Mount Road, Madras-6. Price : Rs. 2.00, Rs. 1.50, 2.00 respectively.

A COLLECTION of three essays first published two decades ago, the first of these three books of the late V. Chandrasekharam published recently will serve as a genial aid to the study of Sri Aurobindo.

In his first essay, the author hails Sri Aurobindo as "the Recoverer and Vivifier of the submerged soul of India" and supports his tribute by a cogent discourse on Sri Aurobindo, mainly in the light of his exposition of the Gita. The second essay is a continuation of the same theme, now in regard to the Vedas. In the last essay, 'The Taittiriya Upanishad', the author proceeds to establish an effective link between the revelations of Sri Aurobindo and the true conception of the Upanishadic *Vijñāna*.

In *Sri Aurobindo's 'The Life Divine' : A Brief Study*, Chandrasekharam provides us with a lively introduction to the great work. Often one comes across glowing expressions of clear conviction in this small book.

The author's English rendering of the *Aitareya Upanishad*, presented with the original text, is a meritorious contribution to modern studies in the Upanishadic lore. A few lines from the recollections of Amrita will speak adequately about Chandrasekharam's propriety in dealing with these elevated themes : "A man of intellectual attainments, he was a scholar in Sanskrit and knew English very well....Sri Aurobindo kindled the fire in him....Can the fire so kindled ever forsake him ?...He studied the Rig Veda with Sri Aurobindo methodically daily at a particular hour. He studied in this way for two or three years, not by the old traditional commentaries, nor in the old style, but in the light of Sri Aurobindo's own revealing interpretation."

MANOJ DAS

The Modern Indian Novel in English by M. E. Derrett. Published by Editions de L'institut de Sociologie, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

In this sympathetic discussion, the author has a comparative approach to characters, forms, themes and style in the modern Indian novel in English. For India, the past two decades have been eventful in a very special sense, for the events have been an achievement, a crisis, and a transition, all in a momentous historic sense. Naturally, Indian literature is expected to have reflected the spectacular surface of these episodes as well as the motifs underneath them. How far does Indian fiction in English fulfil this expectation? Mr. Derrett's work provides, if not an answer, a good basis to ponder over this question. The author not only recognises the emergence of a 'tradition' in this branch of Indian literature, he further observes: "The tradition of this writing is sufficiently established to be worthy the name, and one may have confidence that thereby India will have a worthwhile contribution to make to the world literary scene."

However, it is difficult to accept that in India "the general indifference to worldly values and ambitions, the lack of domestic privacy and personal freedom, the often trying climate and sometimes inadequate diet might well have combined to militate against the creation of a sustained narrative prose fiction." As is well known, the very source of world fiction can be traced to the ancient Indian tales like those of the *Kathasaritsagar* series. If it is to be accepted that in India fiction did not develop on a par with its development in certain other nations at a later stage, then the reason for it must be far deeper. The Indian mind is steeped in the lures of epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, where along with the affluent elements of poetry, philosophy, spirituality and many things more, the *rasa* of fiction is varied and abundant enough to quench the thirst of generations. This, indeed, is a unique position of the Indian mind, and hence that mind did not feel the need to develop fiction as a separate and independent line of literature.

Mr. Derrett's work is a bright example of the growing interest which the scholars of various countries are showing in the contemporary Indian creative process. Certain mistakes in data—for example the one which creates the impression that T.S. Banerjee is no more since 1950, or the other which unwittingly puts V.B. Banerjee's span of life at twelve years only, could easily be avoided.

MANOJ DAS

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

ELEVENTH SEMINAR

30TH APRIL 1967

(Continued from the September issue)

WHAT IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR ?

III

THE world today is a mass of opposing forces striving for supremacy, ascendancy, and the result is a vast unrest, a turmoil of human conditions, of human values, of ideals and ideologies, of facts and realities. There is a power which is driving man in spite of himself towards self-fulfilment. There are other powers very persistently active to check this advancement. These are the powers of vested interests, the clamouring demands of divers egos in men and in nations, and the false cults of hedonism, barbarism and self-assertion which rule men through their inferior nature. Man at present is no less a slave to false and ignorant forces than were his predecessors. Only, the moral and spiritual depravity is becoming more and more accentuated because of a higher light working at his elbow and making his limitations all the more poignantly perceptible. At this crucial cross-roads of human destiny, man is ignorant of his true need. He seeks a continuation of the old habits, old ties, old associations, old methods and values. The new and the unexpected scare him.

Our society shows clear signs of disintegration. All solutions to avert it are merely patchwork. Whatever may be the reason attributed, the remedy never proves to be a true remedy. Our political life is only a hotbed for seekers of fame and economic advantage. We have few selfless workers aiming at a radical and fruitful change. And our international relations and our economic policies are framed in patterns that leave no room for any true inner or outer freedom. Our cultures and cultural activities are merely masks that veil the true soul of the nation, instead of becoming unfailing beacons of its light and beauty. Our art, literature, music, poetry and stage depict these sad failings. Catering for lower and vulgar tastes has now become the task for them. Religion has become archaic with its doctrines and dogmas, its set and soulless principles. So too ethics, as a pragmatic discipline of righteous conduct, has long proved itself to be useless. Science as a principle

that shows a path and guides man has been found to be inadequate, in spite of its technological advances and nuclear progress. All these pursuits have not yet revealed any tangible path that can lead man to a better world because none of them have the power to change him or to show a workable process of transformation. For us, therefore, the need of the hour is to turn towards the Spirit, open ourselves to its highest creative and transforming power and let it guide our personal and collective existence.

But it is not easy to open ourselves to this highest power of the Spirit, the power of the Supermind. For the past lives on in us too persistently, the old nature in us does not offer itself to change so easily, and our whole psychological constitution is too complex and discordant to become a happy instrument for the working of this new power. The forces of ignorance have a great control over us; the retarding agencies make us their easy tools. And consequently we are loath to admit any change within us.

More than anything else today we need an opening to this new transforming power that is now swiftly manifesting on earth; we need an unshakable faith, an immaculate sincerity, a total self-giving to this new force. But before we can hope to attain these psychological conditions, there must awaken in us an intense urge to alter the present conditions.

It must not be supposed that all the factors mentioned above such as religion, science, ethics, etc., have done nothing to further the progress of humanity. On the contrary they have played a cardinal role in man's gradual perfection. But at the present moment, the conditions have grown too complex to be masterfully handled by any of them. Being human in their origin they possess all the limitations of human nature and, as they stand today, cannot aid man in his spiritual ascent or solve his ever-growing problems. Some of these pursuits like religion have become obsolete and have lost their essential value due to the advent of this new gnostic power. Some others have been considerably distorted due to wrong usage, like economics or politics. Even altruism or philanthropy cannot aid man in the long run, for they are mere palliatives meant to redress temporarily some physical ills, but do not bring any lasting remedy for his fundamental problems nor aid him in his spiritual progress. That is, these factors tackle man from without rather than from within. An inner change alone can alter outer conditions; no lasting progress can come from mere external improvements. A true progress is an integral progress, covering all the facets of human conditions and consciousness. But it must proceed from within outwards. This is now our true need.

Opening oneself to the new light is then the first requisite of the spiritual change. Before this could take place certain basic psychological preparations are necessary, otherwise it would be impossible for one to turn to the life of the spirit. There must be a sincere turning away from materialism, a new orientation of the consciousness. That does not necessarily mean that we are preaching the way of escapism in the line of Adwaita Vedanta. On the contrary, instead of the dominance of matter for the

sake of matter, we aim at a conquest of matter by the power of the spirit. If this has to come about, we must turn away from materialism as a guiding principle in our life, thought and values.

Opening signifies a reliance; it also means an exclusive faith in a reality other than our own limited ego-centric existence. Following the modern trend we have now fallen into the vicious habit of stressing on the cult of egoistic self-determination and freedom. This has only made us narrow and self-centred. Our true freedom lies not in the assertion of our ego and its demands but in realising our true psychological centre, our soul, which is really free because it relies exclusively on the Divine and has no attachments that are common to life and mind. Thus, when we realise that not our ego but the Divine is our master, we take a large stride in our progress. We then get faith, which comes from the soul and is based not on logical inference or pragmatic proof, but on direct intuition which is greater than mere intellectual cognition. This reliance and this faith are essential for an opening to our true self and reality.

Our opening would bring to us, as a direct result, the following psychological changes : an organisation of the parts of the being around the psychic nucleus; a definite choice to take up a higher life in place of the common purblind life; a total sincerity which makes possible the stationing of all parts of consciousness at the highest level attained by the being at the moment; and an entire self-giving to the principles of light, felicity and knowledge.

Today man in general, in spite of his intellectual growth, is a disorganised being, without any permanent station in any part of his nature, which could be called his psychological centre. He moves from different strata of mind and life and psychico-psychological centres as he is impelled at the moment. He does not make any effort to rise above this condition, due to mental lethargy and psychological unpreparedness. What is most needed is that he must find his true self and make it his guiding light. The discovery of the soul is by itself a subtle process needing an unsullied purity, a deep sensitiveness and a total turning away from gross materialism. The soul, as an entity, is shy and to call it forth and make it express itself constantly needs patience and will. But once it has come forth, there is no worry for the individual. The Divine itself, through the agency of the soul, takes the entire control of the being. The burden of life, the problems of existence, the riddles of doubts, the whip-lashes of desires, the unpredictability of moods and emotions, all disappear. Love in its true character reveals itself; knowledge, not by the dry and unsure process of ratiocination, but by direct intuitive perception becomes a common fact; there is no problem of choice, of will, of ways of actions and methods. All doubts and perplexities are effaced.

Consequently sincerity becomes a diamond-white reality to the being. Man lives in the highest state of consciousness progressively attained by him and there are no fluctuations in the level of consciousness.

All acts become acts of sacrifice. All movements, thoughts, ideations, emotions and volitions are no longer independent movements but movements of self-offering. The impulsions come from above, and are expressed as different formations of

thoughts, ideations and will and from the side of the instrument these are consciously received and offered back to the source from which they originated.

It may be argued that such a long and difficult programme cannot be for the masses who are too unconscious to follow any arduous path of discipline. But let us not forget some cardinal points. The need of the hour is a turning towards the spirit resulting in a total reversal of the normal consciousness. This would require some extraordinary labour for the individual. But we are, let us not forget, in an extraordinary moment of history, when even a little effort could bring forth enormous results. For this is THE HOUR OF GOD. Thus if we really mean business, here is an opportunity of a life-time, rather an opportunity in a millennium. Secondly, this turning is not for all; it is meant for a few handful, who have by their conscious efforts and the Divine's Grace a vision and premonition of the truth that is now manifesting here. This small nucleus shall be the forerunner of a new age. Lastly, no human consciousness or effort can bring about this change. It is the Divine Grace alone which can, if we open ourselves to it, do all for us.

In conclusion, let us remark, this is an age of action and not of deliberations and theories. We need swift, effective action; we need a sure unconquerable will; we need a true and dynamic spirituality that can reshape our life and our entire consciousness. We need most of all a receptivity to the invasion of the coming future whose insistent steps are already on us. For, on the few who are awake and are eager to serve the Truth depends the future progress of humanity. Let us never forget that the past cannot help us to progress. It can only retard our growth. Our existence lies in advancement and our destiny is in the Noon of God to come.

The Hand of light descends, a ray of God
Changing the course of things, the tide of the stars;
The feet of fire leap from the unmeasured height,
A gold-white avalanche of naked force;
Its tread is the sweep of the whirlwinds and floods;
Its march shall change the face of human days,
Its wonder path the way of the all-consuming day.

ROMEN

**

After all the speeches were over, Kishor Gandhi in his concluding remarks mentioned that when the Mother had been asked to give Her own answer to the subject of the Seminar, *What is the need of the hour?* She had first sent only one word, SINCERITY, written on a big sheet in big letters in Her own hand. Afterwards She had sent another answer as a message for the Seminar : "*Do not try to deceive the Divine*", which he had read at the commencement.

Then he read out the following writing of Sri Aurobindo to which he had referred at the end of his introductory speech :

The boon that we have asked from the Supreme is the greatest that the Earth can ask from the Highest, the change that is most difficult to realise, the most exacting in its conditions. It is nothing less than the descent of the supreme Truth and Power into Matter, the supramental established in the material plane and consciousness and the material world and an integral transformation down to the very principle of Matter. Only a supreme Grace can effect this miracle.

The supreme Power has descended into the most material consciousness but it has stood there behind the density of the physical veil, demanding before manifestation, before its great open workings can begin, that the conditions of the supreme Grace shall be there, real and effective.

A total surrender, an exclusive self-opening to the divine influence, a constant and integral choice of the Truth and rejection of the falsehood, these are the only conditions made. But these must be fulfilled entirely, without reserve, without any evasion or pretence, simply and sincerely down to the most physical consciousness and its workings.

SRI AUROBINDO, *The Hour of God*, pp. 23-4

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

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Fourth Annual Conference of the Association was held on the 10th September, 1967, as fixed by the Mother. The following message, given by the Mother for the Conference, was read at the commencement :

“To break away from the old traditions and not to obey the old rules is good—but on condition that one discovers in oneself a higher and a truer consciousness which manifests harmony, peace, beauty and a superior order, vast and progressive.”

Then some poems on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother by the Ashram poets were read by the members. A writing of Sri Aurobindo, “The Delight of Works”, was also read by Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman of the Conference. Then five members of the Association gave speeches on the following subjects :

1. Abhijit—The Aim of Economics in the New Age.
2. Arati—On Education.
3. Romen—Creatrix of the New Age.
4. Rose—What is Death ?
5. Srijit—Sri Aurobindo and the Future of Indian Poetry.

These speeches will be published serially in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*,

BASIC OUTLINES OF TELEVISION

(Continued from the September issue)

THE PERSISTENCE OF VISION

IN the foregoing issue we have discussed the construction of the human eye and one of its deficiencies. We shall now begin with another kind of main deficiency, namely, the persistence of vision.

Retinal reaction is very rapid indeed but not instantaneous. There is always a time-lag between the retinal reception and the formation of a nervous message inside the brain. Likewise, the retina retains the impression of any image generally for about one-tenth of a second after the image itself has disappeared—this is called the persistence of vision and can be easily demonstrated by rapidly whirling at arm's length any glowing object which, although it is present at any given point only for an instant, yet produces the effect of a continuous luminous circle.

Even if an image is focussed on the retina only for a milli-second ($\frac{1}{1,000}$ th part of a second), the human eye is capable of perceiving it and retains it for about a tenth of a second. This phenomenon is greatly utilised in motion picture as well as in T.V. In motion picture, a series of still-photos can be projected on the screen at the rate of 24/second with automatic interruption of the passage of light at the same rate to produce a continuous effect of natural movement. In T.V. the projections may be at the rate of thirty frames per second to prevent eye fatigue, flickering and distortion of the image and, instead of a complete photograph, *only one spot at a time* is presented on the T.V. Screen. These tiny dots go to make up the entire image. The eye retains these dots long enough for the brain to receive the entire image as a single scene. The picture tubes used in T.V. also aid the eye in putting the separate units or bits of the scene together, since the screen itself has a certain amount of persistence of its own.

THE FUNDAMENTAL WORKING PRINCIPLES OF T.V.

To transmit a scene by means of radio waves from one place to another, it is necessary to take the scene apart, send it as thousands of little bits of the scene and then put the pieces back together at the receiver end. Any picture or scene may be said to be composed of thousands of black and white dots, black dots being comparatively larger in size than the white ones. In T.V. system these dots are sent individually, one after another, at a very rapid rate. To transmit a picture it is necessary to begin in an orderly manner, sending little pulses of energy for each and every dot on the picture starting at the upper left corner, proceeding dot by dot, completing

a line, then returning to the second row of dots and sending them in the same manner from left to right. This process is continued until the bottom of the picture is reached. It may be assumed that pulses corresponding to the black dots are stronger than those of the white ones. The receiver receives these dots and produces spots on a screen in exactly the same manner as was adopted during transmission—thereby reproducing the original picture. This is more or less what is fundamentally done in the elementary T.V. system with certain modifications. The entire process is of course very rapid owing to the extremely large number of dots and number of times the picture must be repeated in each second to prevent flicker.

To transmit sound or Audio signal it is only necessary to modulate¹ the radio transmitter with frequencies from about 15 to 15,000 cycles per second, but in T.V. to transmit picture or Video signal the modulation frequencies must be from a few cycles:sec. to several mega cycles² (mc) per second.

NECESSARY FREQUENCIES

To ensure fidelity³ and detail of image T.V. signals require a much wider band⁴ or channel than is required for sound transmission in radio.

In the T.V. Studio the image is broken down into units by scanning⁵ a narrow portion of the image from left to right with the help of the T.V. camera. As stated before, the scanning takes place from left to right line by line 525 times until the bottom of the image is reached. At the receiver the same process is repeated in the same manner in exact synchronism⁶ with the camera scanning in the studio. As the camera scans from left to right, it receives a large amount of light from the white portions and very little from the black portions. The function of the camera is to convert these light variations into correspondingly varying output currents. If it is assumed that such output current is weak at the white portions and strong at the black portions then a pulsating current for line by line scanning would be produced. Such pulses of currents are used in a radio transmitter to modulate the radio frequency oscillation⁷ generated by a device called Oscillator. The function of a T.V. camera is therefore basically the same as that of a microphone which converts sound to currents in radio transmission.

For an elementary discussion of this nature, a scanning frequency of 525 lines per frame and 30 frames per second may be considered as standard. (Total no. of lines scanned per second is therefore $525 \times 30 : 15,750$.) With 200 pulses produced per line of scanning, the frequencies of the pulsating current will be $15,750 \times 200 : 3,150,000$ cycles or 3.15 megacycles. A 50 mega cycle carrier⁸ can be modulated with this 3.15 mc signal for transmission of clear images. Such wide-channelled carrier of ultra-short or micro-waves⁹ has the advantage of not being appreciably affected by static or artificial interference¹⁰ but has the disadvantage of not travelling the great distances possible with low frequencies having comparatively longer wave lengths : hence the effective radius covered by a T.V. station is of limited range.

To make practical and general use of T.V., it is imperative to adopt standards. There are therefore certain standards of predetermined fixed channels of transmission or bands having the same width and compositional details. The first band may be from 44 to 50 mc, second 54 to 60, third 60 to 66 and soon up to 13, 14 or 15 such channels. There may be even more but all these are standardised to avoid any confusion.

We may briefly note the compositional details of one such transmission channel (44-50 mc). Various frequency relationships exist in this particular or, for that matter, in all other similar channels. The Video signal is amplitude modulated (*i.e.* in this case the amplitude of the continuous carrier wave is varied or modulated by the nature of the incoming Video or picture signal) : its carrier is placed at 45.25 mc (*i.e.* at a distance of $1\frac{1}{4}$ mc from the channel-start). The Audio signal is frequency modulated (*i.e.* in this case the frequency, instead of the amplitude of the continuous carrier wave, is varied or modulated in accordance with the incoming sound signal) : its carrier is placed at 49.75 mc (*i.e.* at a distance of $4\frac{1}{2}$ mc from the Video carrier). The frequency modulation of Audio carrier swings it 75 kc on either side of the carrier for 100% modulation.

Also, one half of the T.V. signal extends about 4 mc on the right side of the Video carrier. The other half is cut out to accommodate the T.V. signal within the 6 mc channel. This is known as *single side band transmission*. Modulation frequencies up to 4 mc are used without extending the signal outside of the assigned 6 mc range, thereby ensuring high image fidelity. The definite separation (*i.e.* $4\frac{1}{2}$ mc) of Video and Audio carriers makes it possible to tune both Video and Audio signals with a single control on the receiver and to use a single local Oscillator in the receiver to produce two different frequencies called the intermediate frequencies (ifs.), one being the Video i.f. and the other the Audio i.f.

LOCAL OSCILLATOR AND INTERMEDIATE FREQUENCIES

Now to explain intermediate frequency it is necessary to state here a few words about what is known as the *Superheterodyne* principles of reception.

The principle of radio reception is generally known. Vacuum tube or valve is the heart of the system. Transistors have now very much come into play and there have of late been much modification and improvement of the original circuits but the fundamental working principles remain more or less the same. A vacuum tube is an evacuated device which incorporates within itself a number of electrodes such as the *cathode* which is the negative electrode and which emits electrons in large number (in the indirectly heated type of cathode there is also the heating element called *filament*), the *anode or plate* which is positively charged and therefore draws electrons; in between these two, there may be other electrodes such as the control grid, the screen grid, the suppressor grid etc., each of which has a definite part to play.

These tubes must be fed with D.C. Hence, when a set is operated on the A.C. Mains, the alternating current from the local supply passes through a rectifying stage where a rectifier tube and its associated circuits filter and rectify the alternating (*i.e.* direction-changing) nature of the current, thereby converting it into D.C.

The sound produced at the broadcasting studio before the microphones is converted into electric current of identical nature and form which is amplified (*i.e.* its volume is stepped up or magnified considerably) before being superimposed upon radio frequency continuous waves called carrier waves which are propagated in all directions from the transmitting station. The modulated carrier waves travel in space at the tremendous velocity of about 300 million metres per second (1,86,000 miles/sec.) and touch the aerial (or antenna) device of receiving sets.

In the receiver they pass through a tuned or resonant¹¹ circuit where the particular signal to be received is only accepted and this accepted or desired signal is then further amplified by one or more tubes and their associated circuits called radio frequency amplifiers. The amplified radio signal is now *detected* in the detector tube whose function is to convert the alternating form of the signal into unidirectional pulsating form of current having a rising and falling intensity. The detected signal called Audio signal then passes through and the stage of amplification called Audio frequency amplifies and finally reaches the *diaphragm* (*i.e.* the moving membrane very much like the moving membrane called "tympanum" of the human ear) of the speaker which converts the current again into corresponding sound waves thereby rendering it audible for the human ear.

In the superheterodyne reception the received signal is combined with another signal generated by a local oscillator tube whose function is to produce oscillating currents from direct current sources of supply. From such combination another frequency termed *intermediate* frequency (i.f.) is produced which is then amplified and detected in the usual manner. Superheterodyne reception is also known as "double detection" or "Supersonic reception".

In T.V. an i.f of 12.75 mc for the Video and 8.25 mc for the Audio signals may be taken as standard for the present discussion. Such Video and Audio signals are always 4.5 m.cs. apart. These two frequencies are automatically obtained when a suitable local oscillator frequency is adopted. For example, if the Audio carrier is 0.25 mc from the upper limit (50 mc) of the channel (44-50 mc) it has a frequency of 50-0.25 49.75 mc; the Video carrier must be 4.5 mc apart, hence its frequency will be 49.75 + 4.5 : 54.25 mc. Under these conditions, if the local oscillator provides a frequency of 58 mc, it will, when combined with these signals, give the following i.fs :-

Video i.f. — 58-45.25 : 12.75 mc.

Audio i.f. — 58-49.75 : 8.25 mc.*

(To be continued)

MALAY KUMAR SINHA

* This article takes as its basis the old writings of C. A. Mansfield, U. S. A.

NOTES

¹ *Modulation* : The process of having the amplitude or frequency of continuous radio waves periodically varied or modulated in accordance with an in-coming signal wave. *Amplitude* is the maximum distance from neutral or zero reached by an alternating wave-form. The distance covered in one period or cycle by a wave is called its *wave-length* or *Lambda*. The higher the frequency the shorter the wave-length.

² Mega cycle (mc) : a million cycles ($1,000,000 = 10^6$). Similarly 1 kilo cycle = a thousand cycle ($1,000 = 10^3$). For frequency (f)—see foot-note No.7 in the previous issue.

³ Fidelity—The degree of faithfulness or accuracy of reproduction of an image.

⁴ Band—The group of frequencies existing between two definite frequencies (also called channel).

⁵ Scanning : The process of analysing in a predetermined manner an optical image having the dimensions width, height, and intensity for the purpose of obtaining an electrical amplitude-time function representative of the illumination intensity of each elementary area of the original image. The amplitude-time function thus obtained constitutes a Video signal.

⁶ Synchronism : Simultaneous in time and action (In phase).

⁷ Radio frequency oscillations : Oscillations are periodical surgings. Electrical oscillations are considered as high-frequency currents flowing in a circuit. Radio frequency (r.f) : generally taken within the range of 20 kilo to 400 megacycles. Below,—audio frequency (a.f) range.

⁸ Carrier—The continuous radio frequency wave used to carry sound or picture signals from the transmitting station.

⁹ Ultra-short or Microwaves : waves having very short wave-length and therefore very high frequency (M) (1 micro = one millionth part = $1 / 10^6 = 10^{-6}$)

¹⁰ Interference : Static, [due to atmospheric conditions; artificial, due to undesired signals, strays, etc.

¹¹ Resonance : The electrical condition of a circuit which enables it to respond exactly to a given frequency to the exclusion of all others.

EYE EDUCATION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Your treatment has done much good to my eyes, now I want to extend the benefit to others. Is there any course to learn, or do you impart training ?

A. We intend to start a medical course in Ophthalmic Science from 1968. This will be a sort of synthesis of Allopathy, Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Bates Nature cure. Its study will enable the student to practise as an eye specialist. For any other information write to the office of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry-2.

Q. What is accommodation ?

A. When the eye focusses at 6 metres or more, it is said to be at rest. When it focusses at a nearer point, it is called accommodation. When the eye is out of focus, the condition is called 'error of refraction' and there is short sight (myopia) or long sight (hypermetropia) without or with change of the eyeball's curvature (astigmatism).

Q. How to read ? Is reading while lying in bed harmful to the eyes ?

A. Hold the book at a distance from where the print is seen best. Usually it is about 10 inches. Then while reading move the head a little from side to side and blink gently once or twice in reading each line. Do not read in the sun or under bright artificial light because the glare reflected from the paper causes strain in the eyes. Reading while lying can also be done without any discomfort; for that, keep the head raised and blink.

Q. My eyesight is all right but often I get strain and headache after reading. What do you advise ?

A. Just measure the distance from the book to your eyes. It may be more than 10 inches. If so, correct it. Take a specimen of diamond type or fine print and read it daily in good light as well as in candle light. By reading fine print the capacity to read ordinary print is vastly improved. Reading fine print daily cures many a discomfort of the eye and quickly relieves headache.

Q. You recommend :

1. Reading fine print
2. Reading in candle light
3. Reading at a close distance.

All these instructions are diametrically opposite to all that we have been taught from our childhood. How will you explain this fact ?

A. The people who tell you to read big print in good light at an arm's length are mostly over forty. At this age the capacity to read fine print, to read in candle light, to read at a close distance is usually lost. And if such persons attempt to read fine print, the eyes are strained. But if they had developed the habit of reading fine print from an earlier age, they could have maintained good eyesight in old age and prevented their eyes from deterioration. Then their advice would have been different. I on my part would advise even these people to take up fine print. They will not be able to read it at first, but they will be benefited by simply moving the sight in between the lines of fine print on the white lines. Fine print reading helps the eyes to relax while large print causes strain because the eye tries to see a large area at a time.

Send one rupee stamp and we shall mail you a booklet of fine print with instructions, as well as a booklet on the general care of the eyes.

R.S. AGARWAL

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 10

OCTOBER 1967

1. Teamwork teaching

SINCE the last world war educationists have talked of and written about and often implemented new methods of teaching so as to make "New Method" seem a commonplace. In every country where education is considered to be of primary importance this search for a more satisfactory method of "imparting knowledge" to the young has been a constant thought-provoking problem in the minds of educationists, politicians and those responsible for the growth of the youth of the nation into powerful, informed, skilled and intelligent citizens.

It is indeed apposite then if we ask ourselves : what outstanding feature or guide emerges from all this experimentation to indicate a truer and better understanding of the problem ? For it still remains a problem. Is there a searchlight of Truth that can clarify the complex welter of methods, amateur and professional attempts, to attack the problem in nearly every country of the world ?

The starting-point of such an understanding could well be a full acceptance of Sri Aurobindo's dictum that the first thing for a teacher to understand is that nothing can be taught.

It is difficult for the average person to accept the fact that all knowledge is *within* and the need of education is to "educate" that which is already latent in the being. It is only by understanding the need to find the *true self* within the individual and the possibility of doing so in the course of education, that one can know the futility of pushing informative data into a growing soul yearning to manifest the truth of its individuality. This is why we have reiterated in these Newsletters that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's teachings are being recognised more and more as the necessary answers to the complex problems modern life poses man today.

All life is Yoga—Yoga is the only possible education of the future because man must eventually educate himself for an expanding universe, a growing consciousness and a widening range of awareness and realisation, both objective and subjective. More and more man is coming to understand that life can only be lived towards a higher concept and purpose ; that the accumulation of material possessions and pleasures have a limit to a growing consciousness and that something more is thirsted after, yearned for, aspired to. To know that something more, to come into contact with a greater life, to realise a union with something higher, man himself must expand in knowledge, love and awareness. This can only be fulfilled

if man agrees to open himself to higher and deeper planes of consciousness, planes of intuitive, overmental and supramental states which alone can organise the growing complexities of our cybernetic age.

The word *Yoga* must be looked at and understood in its integral sense. There was a time when one individualistic path—Bhakti, Karma, Jnana, Raja, Kriya or Hatha Yoga—was alone necessary to reach some realisation of the Divine ; but the individual, divorced from the world in which he lives, is no longer tenable. As we have just passed through the ages of industrialisation and specialisation so have we passed through the ages of big bosses and individualisation. We have arrived at the point where the ego, striving to assert itself, is old fashioned, out of place, *passé*, and we need the sympathy, understanding and co-operation of co-workers and colleagues so that a more powerful knowledge and force is brought to bear, from the occult planes of creative possibility, upon the rapidly growing problems with which man is faced.

One could cite innumerable examples of the rapid growth of man's knowledge and the urgent need to deal with such knowledge as that most beneficial to man. Two or three months ago there was in England an inquiry into medical education by a Royal Commission commented on by Anthony Moncrieff on the BBC where it was stated : "...Today, some of what a medical student is taught will become out of date even during the actual period of training : the increased pace of change is of course common to most science-based disciplines. ...Whether a doctor follows a career in the hospital service or in general practice, he can no longer often expect to become a personal friend to his patients as accessible as the greengrocer, no longer the isolated patriarch whose personal art and knowledge produced a cure. All will be members of a team : indeed the distinction between hospital work and family medicine in patients' homes may largely disappear....The ability of a doctor to work as a member of a medical team, and to direct ancillary and social service workers, will be at a premium. Today's doctor must be able to conduct and co-ordinate all the specialist skills available *and* communicate what is happening."

No less, then, is this a necessary change for the pattern of modern teaching methods.

The communications media of our life today have a tremendous impact on our way of thinking and behaving. We are so often instantly in touch with the thinking patterns of people we have never seen, people on another side of the globe we have never visited, that we can very well include them as our own without being fully aware of the invasion. In this and many other ways our consciousness is expanding beyond the bounds of our awareness. Specialisation was always understood as the prerogative, the natural and peculiar privilege of the university lecturer, but even at this high level of education where graduate and postgraduate studies can merge in a university project, the need is to form teams of workers because the work calls for group work where individual contributions go to make up a co-operative effort to deal with the complex requirements of modern science or technology.

This need will become increasingly more apparent when we take into account the very important fact that science is itself expanding into the fields of philosophy and metaphysics and that a greater complex of life is to be expected as we progress towards the unknown future of this expanding universe.

If we accept the validity of this expansion in the material universe and link it to the increasing impetus and conscious awareness of the modern child, we cannot do other than admit that something quite revolutionary is necessary on the primary and secondary levels of education. Something drastic is needed if we are to measure up to the urgent demands that progressive and evolutionary life make on us. If we are to be true to the ideals we profess and the aspirations that have gone out from the heart and soul of man since he was first preoccupied with exceeding his gross animal nature, we have to surrender ourselves to the tide of consciousness that carries evolving man towards the Perfection to which his soul aspires.

Where we had specialisation, now we need integralisation. The limits and walls of specialisation have to be broken down to give way to a wider and more all-embracing synthesis. Project work was an attempt at this but usually a project was organised by only one teacher on a special subject. This should be carried a step further to include multiple subjects which would require the co-operation of several teachers contributing to various facets of a single but complex idea.

We have initiated this idea in our Free Progress Classes and found the experiment both stimulating and full of true interest for student and teacher alike. Stimulating because of the joy of working together as a team entering on a new adventure, and full of true interest because the work brings forth new aspects of thought possibility and one spark of intuition seems to ignite other latent sparks in student and teacher which lead to a camaraderie of effort towards a higher perfection and joy in the work.

I feel sure this is possible on as wide a base of educational framework as can be envisaged, from the kindergarten to post-graduate work. All that is needed is the right attitude to the work in hand. The student and the work the student does are more important than the teacher or the requirements of the teacher. All is subservient to the work and the instruments of the work and to That towards which it aspires.

2. *Thought of the Month*

"An aimless life is always a miserable life. Everyone of you should have an aim. But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life.

"Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to all.

"But whatever your ideal, it cannot be perfectly realised unless you have realised perfection in yourself."

THE MOTHER, *On Education* p. 1
NORMAN C DOWSETT