

MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XX

No. 10 & 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
AN UNPUBLISHED POEM OF SRI AUROBINDO : IS THIS THE END ?	... 663
AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO	... 665
LEST WE FORGET : SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 666
THE SUPRAMENTAL REALISATION : FROM THE MOTHER'S TALKS OF 1930-31	... 667
THE MOTHER ON GOSSIP AND GARRULITY : SOME LETTERS	... 669
THE MOTHER ON CHRISTMAS	... 671
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 673
THE INNER BEING : LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO	<i>From Nagin Doshi</i> ... 679
THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO : SOME LINES OF APPROACH	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> ... 681
SALUTATIONS	<i>Huta</i> ... 689
JOY OF GRATITUDE	<i>Prabuddha</i> ... 693
HOW AND WHITHER (A Poem)	<i>Har Krishan Singh</i> ... 695
A BIRTHDAY LETTER : TO J. A. AGED ONE ON NOVEMBER 17, 1938	<i>Amal Kiran</i> ... 696
AUROVILLE : A PROTOTYPE OF WORLD UNITY	<i>Narayan Prasad</i> ... 698
MAN THE MEDIATOR	<i>Chimanbhai</i> ... 704

CONTENTS

WHAT IS DEATH ?	<i>Rose</i>	... 709
SRI AUROBINDO ON INCARNATION AND THE LOVE OF GOD	<i>E. G. Parrinder</i>	... 719
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLISATION IN ART	<i>Jobst Mühling</i>	... 730
DUST, SUN AND LOVE (A Poem)	<i>Georgette Coty</i>	... 737
THE TRANSCENDENTAL TRAVELLER (A Poem)	<i>Stanley W. Cowie</i>	... 740
THE SLEEP (A SHORT STORY)	<i>Neville</i>	... 741
THE LOOSE TONGUE	<i>Vallabh Sheth</i>	... 754
THE CONQUEST OF DEATH THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA :		
CHAPTER II—THE INELUCTABLE GUEST	<i>Jugal Kishore Mukherji</i>	... 757
ESSAYS ON <i>Savitri</i> AND <i>Paradise Lost</i> :		
THE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS (Cont.)	<i>Romen</i>	... 762
HUGO—POET OF THE FAMILY REUNION	<i>Bibhash Mutsuddi</i>	... 768
BOOKS IN THE BALANCE		
EARTHMAN by Maggie Lidchi	<i>Review by Peter Steiger</i>	... 775
GITA-PRADIP by Keshava Deva Acharya	<i>Review by Rishabhchand</i>	... 780
ANNOUNCEMENT		... 780

Editor: K. D. SETHNA

Assistant Editor : MANOJ DAS

Published by : P. COUNOUMA

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM, PONDICHERY—2

Printed by : AMIYO RANJAN GANGULI

at Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry—2

PRINTED IN INDIA

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers under No : R. N. 8667/63

MOTHER INDIA

DECEMBER 5, 1967

Price: Rs. 2.00

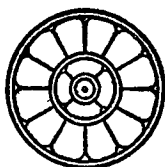
All Rights Reserved. No matter appearing in this journal or part thereof may be reproduced or translated without written permission from the publishers except for short extracts as quotations.

Contributions accepted but previous correspondence is advisable. A stamped self-addressed envelope must accompany all manuscripts. Writers abroad should enclose international reply coupons.

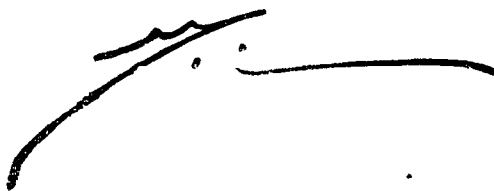
Subscription rates: Annual Rs. 10/-, Sh. 20/-, \$ 3/-
Single copy Re. 1.00 in India.

All correspondence to be addressed to
MOTHER INDIA, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry-2, India.

Publishers : Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.



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.



AN UNPUBLISHED POEM OF SRI AUROBINDO

IS THIS THE END ?

Is this the end of all that we have been,
And all we did or dreamed,—
A name unremembered and a form undone,—
Is this the end ?

A body rotting under a slab of stone
Or turned to ash in fire,
A mind dissolved, lost its forgotten thoughts,—
Is this the end ?

Our little hours that were and are no more,
Our passions once so high
Being mocked by the still earth and calm sunshine,—
Is this the end ?

Our yearnings for the human Godward climb
Passing to other hearts
Deceived, while smiles towards death and hell the world,—
Is this the end ?

Fallen is the harp; shattered it lies and mute;
Is the unseen player dead ?
Because the tree is felled where the bird sang,
Must the song too hush ?

One in the mind who planned and willed and thought,
Worked to reshape earth's fate,
One in the heart who loved and yearned and hoped,
Does he too end ?

The Immortal in the mortal is his Name;
An artist Godhead here
Ever remoulds himself in diviner shapes,
Unwilling to cease

Till all is done for which the stars were made,
Till the heart discovers God
And soul knows itself. And even then
There is no end.

June 3, 1945

EDITOR'S NOTE

(1) It may be of interest to mark that this splendid poem recalls in part some passages of *Savitri*. Though their viewpoint may not everywhere be the same, their general drift is similar. In Book II, Canto 6 (One-volume Edition, p. 223) we read :

Our being must move eternally through Time;
Death helps us not, vain is the hope to cease;
A secret Will compels us to endure.
Our life's repose is in the Infinite;
It cannot end, its end is Life supreme.
Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk;
Some ancient deep impulsion labours on...

Again, in the same Book and Canto (p. 227) we come across :

There is no end of seeking and of birth,
There is no end of dying and return;
The life that wins its aim asks greater aims,
The life that fails and dies must live again;
Till it has found itself it cannot cease.
All must be done for which life and death were made.
But who shall say that even then is rest ?
Or there repose and action are the same
In the deep breast of God's supreme delight.

We may also quote from Book X, Canto 1 (p. 675) :

Although Death walks beside us on Life's road,
A dim bystander at the body's start
And a last judgment on man's futile works,
Other is the riddle of its ambiguous face :
Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state.
The unconscious world is the spirit's self-made room,
Eternal Night shadow of eternal Day.
Night is not our beginning nor our end; ...
We came to her from a supernal Light,
By Light we live and to the Light we go.

(2) In the opening phrase of the penultimate line of *Is This the End ?*—"And soul knows itself..."—the definite article "the" seems to have got omitted before "soul". The pentametric scheme, as found in lines 1 and 3 of each stanza, would suffer without it : besides, the expression "the heart" in the preceding line—"Till the heart discovers God"—would appear to indicate a slip of the pen here, unless the poet had some special effect of rhythmic irregularity in view.

AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

The soul goes out, after death, in a subtle body.

Recollections last only for a time, not till rebirth—otherwise the stamp would be so strong that remembrance of past births, even after taking a new body, would be the rule rather than the exception.

You say “relationships of one birth persist in successive births, the chances depending on the strength of the attachment”. This is possible, but not a law—as a rule the same relationship would not be constantly repeated—the same people often meet again and again on earth in different lives, but the relations are different. The purpose of rebirth would not be served if the same personality with the same relations and experiences are incessantly repeated.

*about
rebirth*

It is not the case that there is complete annihilation of the ego in respect of forms of life lower than man after death.

What was spoken of as being in a static condition of complete rest is not the ego, but the psychic being after it has shed its vital and other sheaths and is resting in the psychic world. Before that it passes through vital and other worlds on its way to the psychic plane.

It is possible to come into direct touch with the departed so long as they are near enough to the earth (it is usually supposed by those who have occult experience that it is for three years only) or if they are earthbound or if they are of those who do not proceed to the psychic plane but linger near the earth and are soon reborn.

Universal statements cannot be easily made about these things—there is a general line, but individual cases vary to an almost indefinite extent.

6.3.1938

LEST WE FORGET

SOME WORDS OF THE MOTHER

PEOPLE do not know what a tremendous sacrifice Sri Aurobindo has made for the world. About a year ago, while I was discussing things, I remarked that I felt like leaving this body of mine. He spoke out in a very firm tone, "No, this can never be. If necessary for this transformation, I might go, you will have to fulfil our Yoga of supramental descent and transformation." 1950

Sri Aurobindo has given up his body in an act of supreme unselfishness, renouncing the realisation in his body to hasten the hour of the collective realisation. Surely if the earth were more responsive, this would not have been necessary. 1953

When I asked him to resuscitate he clearly answered : "I have left this body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way." 1950

As soon as Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body, what he had called the Mind of Light got realised here...

The Supermind had descended long ago—very long ago—in the mind and even in the vital : it was working in the physical also but indirectly through these intermediaries. The question now was about the direct action of the Supermind in the physical. Sri Aurobindo said it could be possible only if the physical mind received the supramental light : the physical mind was the instrument for direct action upon the most material. This physical mind receiving the supramental light Sri Aurobindo called the Mind of Light. 1953

THE SUPRAMENTAL REALISATION

FROM THE MOTHER'S TALKS OF 1930-31

*(Apropos of the phrase in a letter of Sri Aurobindo, dated February 2, 1934—
“4.5.67 is the year of complete realisation”—
the following passages from some old talks of the Mother are of great interest
and value at the year's end, not the least in view of the work going on today for
Auroville.)*

WHEN I first met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, I was in deep concentration, seeing things in the Supermind, things that were to be but that were somehow not manifesting.

I told Sri Aurobindo what I had seen and asked him if they would manifest. He simply said, “Yes.” And immediately I saw that the Supramental had touched the earth and was beginning to be realised.

This was the first time I had witnessed the power to make real what was true....

*
**

In order to know what the Supramental Realisation will be like, the first step, the first condition is to know what the supramental consciousness is. All those who have been, in one way or another, in contact with it have had some glimpse of the realisation to be. But those who have not can yet aspire for that realisation, just as they can aspire to get the supramental knowledge.

True knowledge means awareness by identity ; once you get in touch with the supramental world, you can say something about its descent, but not before. What you can say before is that there will be a new creation upon earth; this you can say through faith, since the exact character of it escapes you. And if you are called upon to define realisation, you may declare that, individually speaking, it means the transformation of your ordinary human consciousness into the divine and supramental.

The consciousness is like a ladder : at each great epoch there has been one great being capable of adding one more step to the ladder and reaching a place where the ordinary consciousness had never been. It is possible to attain a high level and get completely out of the material consciousness ; but then one does not retain the ladder, whereas the great achievement of the great epochs of the universe has been the capacity to add one more step to the ladder without losing contact with the material, the capacity to reach the Highest and at the same time connect the top with the bottom instead of letting a kind of emptiness cut off all connection between the different planes. To go up and down and join the top to the bottom is the whole

secret of realisation, and that is the work of the Avatar. Each time he adds one more step to the ladder there is a new creation upon earth.

The step which is being added now Sri Aurobindo has called the Supramental ; as a result of it, the consciousness will be able to enter the supramental world and yet retain its personal form, its individualisation and then come down to establish here a new creation. Certainly this is not the last, for there are farther ranges of being; but now we are at work to bring down the supramental, to effect a reorganisation of the world, to bring the world back to the true divine order. It is essentially a creation of order, a putting of everything in its true place ; and the chief spirit or force, the Shakti active at present, is Mahasaraswati, the Goddess of perfect organisation.

The work of achieving a continuity which permits one to go up and down and bring into the matériel what is above, is done inside the consciousness. He who is meant to do it, the Avatar, even if he were shut up in a prison and saw nobody and never moved out, still would he do the work, because it is a work in the consciousness, a work of connection between the Supermind and the material being. He does not need to be recognised, he need have no outward power in order to be able to establish this conscious connection.

Once, however, the connection is made, it must have its effect in the outward world in the form of a new creation, beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world.

THE MOTHER ON GOSSIP AND GARRULITY

Q : I think the tendency to gather information is not bad ?

A : It is bad and harmful and lowers not only the consciousness of those who gossip, but also the general atmosphere of the place. (29.7.1967)

Il est certainement très mauvais de parler des défauts des autres; chacun a ses défauts, et d'insister sur eux en pensée n'aide certainement pas à les guérir. (June 1966)

(It is certainly very bad to speak of other people's faults; everyone has his defects and to keep on thinking of them surely does not help to cure them.)

Pour guérir un sens critique qui se manifeste par une incontinence de langage :

1) quand on est dans cet état, se refuser absolument à parler. Au besoin, se mettre physiquement dans l'impossibilité de parler.

2) s'étudier soi-même sans pitié, et s'apercevoir que l'on porte justement en soi toutes les choses que l'on trouve si ridicules chez les autres.

3) découvrir dans sa nature la manière d'être opposée à celle-là (bienveillance, humilité, bonne volonté) et insister pour qu'elle se développe au détriment de l'élément contraire. (11.10.1958)

(To cure a critical sense which shows itself by an incontinency of speech) :

1) when you are in this state, check yourself absolutely from speaking. If need be, make it physically impossible for you to speak.

2) observe yourself without pity, and begin to see that you carry in yourself all the things you find so ridiculous in others.

3) discover in your nature the way of being that is the opposite (benevolence, humility, good-will) and insist on its developing at the cost of the contrary element.)

Naturellement, toutes ces discussions (ou ces échanges d'opinions) sont purement mentales et n'ont aucune valeur au point de vue de la Vérité. Chaque mentalité a sa manière de voir et de comprendre les choses, et même si on pouvait unir et associer toutes ces manières de voir, on serait encore très loin d'atteindre la Vérité. C'est seulement quand, dans le silence mental, on peut s'élever au-dessus de la pensée, qu'on est prêt à savoir par identité.

Au point de vue de la discipline extérieure, il est indispensable, lorsqu'on a une opinion et qu'on l'exprime, de se souvenir que ce n'est qu'une opinion, une manière de voir et de sentir, et que les opinions, les manières de voir et de sentir des autres sont aussi légitimes que les siennes, et qu'au lieu de les opposer il faut les *totaliser* et tâcher de trouver une synthèse plus compréhensive. (5.6.1965)

En résumé les discussions sont toujours assez futiles et me paraissent une perte de temps. (5.6.1967)

(Naturally, all these discussions (or these exchanges of opinions) are purely mental and have no value from the viewpoint of Truth. Each mind has its manner of seeing and understanding things, and even if you could unite and bring together all these manners of seeing, you would still be very far from attaining Truth. It is only when, in the silence of the mind, you can lift yourself above thought, that you are ready to know by identity.

From the point of view of outer discipline it is indispensable, while you have an opinion and express it, to remember that it is only an opinion, a manner of seeing and feeling, and that other people's opinions, their manners of seeing and feeling are as legitimate as your own, and that instead of opposing them you should *total* them up and try to find a more comprehensive synthesis.

On the whole the discussions are always pretty futile and seem to me a waste of time.)

Pour écrire, encore plus que pour parler, si on aspire à rester dans l'attitude la meilleure pour avancer rapidement vers le Divin, il faut se faire une règle stricte de ne dire (et encore bien plus de n'écrire) que ce qui est *absolument indispensable*. C'est une discipline merveilleuse, si on la suit sincèrement. (27.7.1966)

(For writing, even more than for speaking, if you aspire to remain in the best attitude for advancing swiftly towards the Divine, you should make it a strict rule to speak (and still more to write) only what is *absolutely indispensable*. It is a marvellous discipline if you follow it sincerely.)

Tant qu'on est *pour* les uns et *contre* les autres, on est nécessairement *hors de la Vérité*.

(As long as you are *for* some and *against* others, you are necessarily *outside of the Truth*.)

Il faut garder la bonne volonté et l'amour constamment dans son cœur et les laisser se répandre sur tous avec tranquillité et dans l'égalité d'âme. (16.12.1966)

(You should constantly keep goodwill and love in your heart and let them pour out on all with tranquillity and with equality.)

To gossip about what somebody is doing or not doing is wrong.

To listen to such gossip is wrong.

To verify if such gossip is true is wrong.

To retaliate in words against a false gossip is wrong.

The whole affair is a very bad way of wasting one's time and lowering one's consciousness.

Unless this very nasty habit is eradicated from the atmosphere, never will the Ashram reach its goal of Divine Life.

I wish all would repent like you and take the resolution of stopping this unhealthy activity. (12.10.1967)

THE MOTHER ON CHRISTMAS

Le 25 décembre 1950, un disciple explique aux enfants que le jour le plus court de l'année correspond à la plus grande déclinaison du soleil au sud, vers le 21 décembre; puis le soleil remonte au nord.

La Mère reprend :

“C’est pourquoi le 25 décembre était une fête de la Lumière, longtemps avant Jésus-Christ. Cette fête était en vogue longtemps avant le Christianisme; elle a pris naissance en Egypte et il est très probable que l’on a fixé le jour de la naissance du Christ le même jour que celui du renouvellement de la Lumière.”

On 25 December 1950, a disciple explains to the children that the shortest day of the year corresponds to the greatest declination of the sun to the south near about 21 December, then the sun again mounts to the north.

The Mother comments :

“That is why 25 December was a festival of Light long before Jesus Christ. This festival was in vogue long before Christianity; it originated in Egypt and very probably the birthday of Christ was fixed to be the same day as that of the return of the Light.”

THE MOTHER’S MESSAGE FOR CHRISTMAS 1962

“Que la Lumière Nouvelle illumine vos pensées et vos vies, gouverne vos cœurs et guide votre action. Bénédiction.”

“May the New Light illumine your thoughts and your lives, govern your hearts and guide your action. Blessings.”

CHRISTMAS 1963

“Fêtons la Lumière en la laissant entrer en nous.”

“Let us celebrate the New Light by letting it enter into us.”

CHRISTMAS 1964

“Si vous voulez la paix sur la terre, établissez-la d’abord dans votre cœur.

“Si vous voulez l’union du monde, unifiez d’abord les différentes parties de votre propre être. Bénédiction.”

"If you want peace upon earth, first establish peace in your heart.

"If you want union in the world, first unify the different parts of your being. Blessings."

CHRISTMAS 1965

"Bon Noël
à tous
dans la Paix et la Joie."

"Happy Christmas
to all
in Peace and Joy."

CHRISTMAS 1966

Message pour la réunion chez Padma

"Que ce nouveau Noël
soit pour vous l'avènement
d'une nouvelle lumière
plus haute et plus pure."

Message for the Gathering at Padma's

"May this new Christmas
be for you the advent
of a new light
higher and purer."

Report from Udar

On Christmas Day the Mother told me that on every Christmas there is a descent of Peace on the world, but that for this Christmas there was a particularly strong descent of the Peace—very powerful yet extremely lovely. This was perhaps because the world, at this moment, is in such a chaotic state that the Peace has become so very necessary.

(27-12-1966)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

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

FEBRUARY 26, 1940

N : The Princess of Gauripur, whenever she looks at the Mother, finds tears flowing out of her own eyes. She can't look at the Mother !

SRI AUROBINDO (*smiling*) : She can look at her but can't see her.

N : She doesn't know why the tears come. She can't analyse her feelings.

SRI AUROBINDO : They are psychic tears. Her psychic being is behind the veil but sufficiently near the surface.

N : She says she is seeking refuge, inner refuge.

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course.

N : But she doesn't know where to get it. Her family life is in a way quite happy. She is the pet of the family. Her husband loves her very much but she feels guilty that she cannot give him any response.

SRI AUROBINDO : These things can't be helped.

N : Family life doesn't appeal to her. When her mother was dying, she prayed to God to spare her but God didn't listen, so she thought : If God doesn't listen, what is the use of calling Him? She said : "If He does everything according to His own will, I have no use of God." So she became indifferent.

SRI AUROBINDO : She wanted God to act according to her will and not his own ?
(*Laughter*)

P : A wanted to know what you thought of S, his guru. He was telling me that he once heard a voice : "A needs help." At that time A was passing through some difficulty. S came to him and told him about the voice. A admitted his difficulty but said it would get all right. Some time later A came by a copy of your *Essays on the Gita* and when he was reading it he was possessed by some power and he felt that you alone could give him guidance. When S came to give him the Rama-mantra which had been given him by somebody, A had already got the same mantra automatically ; so there was no question of taking it again. Because of this connection with S, A has an attachment to him and so he has requested you to let S have your

darshan. S has come here both from curiosity and because of A. He was telling A that when he was coming for the darshan he heard a voice which was your voice, saying to him ; "You are a special personality and you are welcome." He hasn't spoken of his impression of you or the Mother or of any feelings of his own ; he praised only the external side of the Ashram. So I thought that to come all the way merely to hear that voice was a rather poor result. (*Sri Aurobindo was smiling when he heard about the voice.*)

N : He didn't come in order to hear that voice.

S : But it may have a far-reaching result for him. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : If he was a special personality, he need not have come all the way to know that. (*Laughter*)

S : That special personality was hiding there, Sir, and came out here.. (*Laughter*)

P : He hears many voices and attaches great importance to them. And because he has got some correct guidance at times from such voices he takes them as authentic. Just before the Hindu-Muslim riot in Lahore, he heard a voice predicting that a great calamity would befall him but that he would in the end be all right. Actually he got stabbed in the back. The voice told him not to be perturbed and he became well soon.

SRI AUROBINDO : There are many kinds of voices. Some are of greater beings who have more knowledge than human beings. Some voices are from one's own mental, vital and physical planes. And then there are voices of the inner being which are very difficult to distinguish.

P : In external affairs too he is guided by his voices. For example, in connection with changing houses. He gets warnings about accidents also.

SRI AUROBINDO : Such voices are good for the external life and they can be beneficial but they don't carry one far in the inner life.

P : And this voice about special personality ? I can't believe at all. He must have wanted to hear such a voice.

SRI AUROBINDO : Wish-fulfilment ? (*Laughter*)

S : The voices want sometimes to mock him perhaps. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : The man has force and a great ambition but he has not gone very deep. That was the Mother's impression.

P : When V went back from here he asked him to take initiation from him. V refused, saying "I have had my initiation."

SRI AUROBINDO : S has the ambition to be a Guru.

P : It's very strange he didn't feel anything else here, while Ganapati who also was not a disciple felt a higher consciousness here.

SRI AUROBINDO : Ganapati had considerable spiritual experience. S didn't appear to have gone very deep. Does he know the source of his voices ?

P : He says that they come from the Overmind.

S : That is your term, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. (*Laughter*)

P : According to S he goes to the Truth above the mind and hears the voices.

SRI AUROBINDO : From the Truth-Consciousness ? (*Laughter*)

P : Yes. By Overmind he means anything above the mind. He has many influential disciples and many rich persons follow him.

S : It is all right if he gives them only Rama-nama and stops there.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes. Otherwise, if they go by voices, they will be landed in difficulties.

S : I was the first to come in contact with him, Sir. He had some tooth-trouble and he came to me. I may have passed something to him ! Anyway, he seems to have a fine health and a personality.

SRI AUROBINDO : He is a fine-looking man.

P : A was anxious to know what your impression of him was, and also of his spiritual destiny. He feels that he is stuck. But cannot he be helped out ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is very difficult with people who are self-satisfied with their condition, and, unless he gets rid of his ambition, further advance may be difficult.

P : When somebody said to him that the work here is different from that outside, he answered, "This is said to create faith in the followers. Every great man says about whatever work he is doing that it is divine. Gandhi calls his Harijan work divine work."

SRI AUROBINDO : Why not ? The Divine has several works.

S (*after some time*) : I find that you are the first to distinguish the planes above the mind.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? I have met many Sannyasins who spoke to me about them. They call these planes *bhumi*. They didn't give any names to them but they knew about them.

FEBRUARY 27, 1940

N : Anilbaran's letter. This time it is about politics. He writes : "A zamindar of Mymensingh named Umapada came to see me and said that oppression by the Muslim League has terribly increased."

SRI AUROBINDO : Suren Ghose in his interview with the Mother has said all about it and the Mother has said whatever is necessary.

N : The letter continues : "Brajendra says that communism is spreading among youths and Congress can't stand against it. The only way, I told him, is to propagate Sri Aurobindo's ideas and, leaving Gandhi's constructive programme, take up the old village communism."

SRI AUROBINDO : Communism ? All that is an old formula. It won't do at all. How is he going to link Sri Aurobindo's ideas to communism ? And where was village communism in India ever ?

N : Why ? What about the Panchayet systems, etc. ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is the village commune, not communism. Communism means having common property.

N : I think he means commune. Then he says : "About politics, there is no necessity to fight the British any more, because they can't stand now against India's will. Now by exerting pressure on Government we must get power and accept ministries as a corollary."

SRI AUROBINDO : All that is old; there is nothing new in it. Next ?

N : "To make this effective we must have unity and the pressure of a united will."

SRI AUROBINDO : How is he going to get it ?

N : By following your trends of thought. Unity not only of India but of the whole world : the principle of unity lies there. Now Public Enemy No. 1 is Bolshevism, No. 2 Communalism, No. 3 perhaps Gandhism.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why perhaps ? (*Laughter*)

N : The remedy is to broadcast Sri Aurobindo's ideas and ideals extensively, to try large-scale production.

SRI AUROBINDO : Large-scale production of what ?

N : Don't know.

S : Industrial production he means.

N : Or perhaps human production. (*Laughter*)

P : He speaks of Gandhism as Public Enemy No. 3 because he overvalues Gandhi's influence and his philosophy. His programme is accepted because there is no other.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, Gandhi's programme is the only one at present.

P : When some revolutionary approached Tilak, Tilak said : "If you can show me even 55% chance of success of a revolution I shall be ready to raise the standard of revolt. But is the country ready ? Are the people willing to join the army ? What will you do when the British army attacks you ?" The revolutionary couldn't convince Tilak.

SRI AUROBINDO : Armed revolution is impossible at present. At the time we started work, there was some chance of success because the instruments of war had not developed so much. If irregular and guerilla warfare had been carried out on a country-wide scale, there might have been some chance. But now with aeroplanes and machine-guns, etc., armed revolution would be crushed in no time.

N : Perhaps the aim of the revolutionaries is not so much to fight the British army as to intimidate the British Government.

SRI AUROBINDO : A small number of revolutionaries won't intimidate the Government. Even if they succeed, the Government will give not Independence but Dominion Status, which they are willing even now to give after some time. England will give up India when she finds it impossible to retain her, either because of the threat of defeat or because the whole nation is united behind the demand.

N : In Ireland they were forced to submit. They could have crushed Ireland if they had wanted.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is what Lloyd George threatened—that if De Valera didn't accept the treaty, Ireland would be crushed. All Irish people were united in one demand and object. Every woman and child were revolutionaries and carried out what their leaders said. Even then De Valera had to accept the treaty. In India there is no such possibility of country-wide rebellion. Even an unarmed rebellion...

N : When you started the revolutionary movement, did you think it would succeed ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, I had the idea that it would succeed but found that it was not possible.

S (*after the talk had run on on several topics*): There was a Jain saint, Rajchandra. He seems to have predicted the death of a man, the exact time and date. According to the prophecy he was to die at night. The saint had said, "Unless my consciousness is clouded, he will die at night." But the man died during the day on the same date. Sir, is death predestined ? Can the exact date be given ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The date can vary. There are many factors that may come in and push it off this or that way.

EVENTING

N : Charu Dutt says that the first time he met you was at the station at Baroda. He was passing through Baroda and you had come to the station to see somebody off. You were accompanied by Hesh and Deshpande. Dutt was travelling with an Englishman, an I.C.S. probably and just before Baroda station the Englishman asked : "Do you know where Ghose is now ?" "Which Ghose ?" "That Classical scholar of Cambridge who has come away to India to waste his future." Dutt told him that you were at Baroda. When the train stopped, Hesh saw Dutt and shouted to him : "Dutt, do you know Ghose ?" Then he introduced you. Dutt said to the Englishman : "Here is Ghose." "That ?" the Englishman exclaimed in great surprise because you had come to the station in the Indian official dress and a turban.

SRI AUROBINDO : Turban ? Does he mean Palleri cap ?

N : Probably.

SRI AUROBINDO : But the official dress also ? I don't remember. It is true that at times I used to put on the Maharatti dress. Then ?

N : That was the first meeting. The second was at his own house in Bombay, where you came with a bundle of papers containing the scheme of the Bhavani Mandir. Oh yes, Jatin Banerji was also at Baroda station.

P : Which Jatin ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The one who was at the head of the Baroda army and then went to Calcutta and became head of the young people's revolutionary movement and afterwards became the Sannyasi Niralamba.

N : You spoke to Dutt, it seems, about the scheme of work for the country, that it should be an all-sided activity based on Yoga and Brahmacharya. The idea

and programme of work for the country was the same as his own idea but, as for Brahmacharya...

SRI AUROBINDO : He couldn't accept it ?

N : Yes, and there was opposition to it among the other workers too. And for that reason you had to give it up.

SRI AUROBINDO : Which other workers ? I didn't know anybody else. Barin and I were concerned with the scheme and I didn't give it up because of any opposition. Barin was knocking about for a temple among the hills. He got only hill-fever and not the temple. The whole thing fizzled out. It was not a failure because it was never started. I knew that it wouldn't work out. So it was not meant to be a success.

N : The conception of the Mandir Barin got...

SRI AUROBINDO : In automatic writing.

N : No, in trance, Dutt says.

SRI AUROBINDO : Trance ? I never knew that Barin went into trance. And if he had got it in trance he would have told me.

N : Dutt says it was in a trance, where he had a vision of a temple on a rugged conical hill somewhere between Modhupur and Benares.

SRI AUROBINDO : The hill was near Benares.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

THE INNER BEING

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q : You said the other day, "The pressure for quietude may bring a certain kind of passivity with it at first." During such a condition should I make an attempt to offer or to aspire ? It seems a little difficult to me to do that at the time.

SRI AUROBINDO : There must be something turned towards spiritual progress, otherwise there will be too much inner inertia. 6-1-1934

Q : When one feels the silence deep within oneself and the surface a little disturbed what does it mean ? And "deep" means where ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It means that you feel a consciousness within you which is calm and silent, not disturbed by external thoughts, grief or disturbance—as when the sea is disturbed on the surface but below the surface all is still and calm. 18-1-1934

To throw oneself out means to externalise the consciousness so that it is dispersed, not concentrated, running about after outer things, obeying superficial and lower impulses and without contact with the inner being. 20-1-1934

Q : How to decide without mental ideas the movements of the sadhana ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not a question of ideas but of the perception from within. 22-1-1934

Spiritual movements must be genuine. To imitate means to construct a false mental formation on the surface, instead of having the genuine spiritual experience. 26-1-1934

Q : I think I had failed to explain properly to you what X had actually meant by imitating N's movements. N tackles certain kinds of movements in a particular way. He is successful in them. X too uses the same in dealing with those movements. Do you call this imitation an ungentine movement ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is a mental movement. Why should X suppose that N's way would be successful with him ? With N it is a natural product of his experience—I mean genuine in that sense. If it comes naturally in him (in X), then it can be genuine, but if it is only the mind that uses it because another has used it, then it will remain artificial. 26-1-1934

The psychic can have peace behind it—but the inner mind, vital and physical

are not necessarily silent—they are full of movements. It is the higher consciousness that has a basis of peace.

I-2-1934

Q : Generally, I feel the effect of the Mother's working only after I have received her light or power. When shall I be able to experience it at the very time of reception?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not so very important—so long as you receive and feel the working, it is all right.

10-2-1934

People don't feel all that is going on in them—very little comes to the surface of the ordinary consciousness.

5-3-1934

Q : My mind does not remain so much concentrated with open eyes as with closed. Why still such a difference?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is a usual difference for most, until the whole consciousness is unified.

8-3-1934

Q : When my outer being is busy with physical things or mechanical movements, what does my inner being do during that period?

SRI AUROBINDO : It may be silent or it may be occupied with its own activities which are not felt by the surface mind.

9-3-1934

Q : This evening my consciousness plunged into the inner depths. It aspired and received freely there. Is not even this insufficient? I mean without the inner being's coming in front how can the two mutually complementary movements—the inner coming out and the outer going in—take place?

SRI AUROBINDO : It will come in front if you persist. These things cannot be done in a day or without overcoming the resistance of the ordinary nature.

5-5-1934

Q : My inner concentration and quietude seem to be extending outwards. I feel quietude and can concentrate with eyes open. Now I would like to ask you one question. When one leads an inner life, how does one deal with the outer activities?

SRI AUROBINDO : They are dealt with by the Force that works through the being.

8-5-1934

Q : When I feel drawn into the inner being my consciousness still remains aware of all the things of the outer world, though usually it does not react to their impacts. Does not this remaining consciousness of external phenomena mean that my inward turning is incomplete?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, why should it? To live in the inner being it is not necessary to become unconscious of external things. One is conscious of them, but not affected or controlled by them or subject to the ordinary reactions.

11-5-1934

From NAGIN DOSHI

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

SOME LINES OF APPROACH

(This article was written with an eye to an outsider and a layman who has a modernised mind with scientific leanings and comes to Sri Aurobindo's Vision and Work with a sympathetic yet cautious attitude posing a number of practical questions set within the world-context as well as against the Indian background.)

I

It is the message of Sri Aurobindo that the real call on men today in a world going wrong is not so much to reshape their machines, their technologies, their institutions, as to reshape themselves. By that reshaping, the outer face of their complex and confused civilisation will be transfigured.

It is also the message of Sri Aurobindo that nothing can help the reshaping to the full except what he calls the Integral Yoga. But how does the Integral Yoga set about its gigantic task? Perhaps the easiest approach to an answer is through a correct understanding of the common words "inspiration" and "intuition."

From very early times a number of people have claimed to be "inspired"—that is, to be the instruments of a knowledge, a power, a goodness, a beauty and happiness greater than the human being is ordinarily capable of. Modern psychology confirms the phenomenon of inspiration. From the several recorded facts we may pick out a few to get the nature of this phenomenon into focus.

A brief account is available of how Keats came to describe Apollo in the third book of his unfinished epic, *Hyperion*. The passage arrived "by chance or magic—as if it were something given to him." He did not realise how beautiful the poetic expressions were, until after he had put them down on paper. When he read them he was himself astonished: they appeared to be the production of another person, some more gifted agency.

Mozart says of his musical compositions that they were presented to him as complete wholes. He further reports: "Nor do I have in my imagination the parts *successively*, but I hear them, as it were, all at once." The difficult job of laying out in sequence the musical elements followed the ecstatic experience of the "inspired" totality.

Science no less than Art has its story of inspiration to tell. Lord Kelvin has testified how the solution of a key problem came to him quite suddenly without any direct process of reasoning. And there is the famous incident in the course of the chemist Kekulé's research. While seated on the top of a bus he visualised in an instant the structure of a molecule of benzene. What he saw in a flash was the ancient

symbol of the serpent biting its own tail and immediately he evolved the chemical formula of the "benzene ring."

Inspiration that is not sustained but flashes across the mind in a revelatory moment may be named "intuition." Intuition is, as it were, a sharp edge of light from within oneself cutting through the knot of a problem. It is knowledge by a sort of instant inwardness towards—or identity with—the thing to be known. Scientists may be said to be more intuitive than inspired—though the case of Kekulé is as of a visionary poet or painter.

Possibly Darwin too "saw" the truth in the instance of which Sir Julian Huxley spoke some years ago in a broadcast: "Darwin..., in Ch. 4 of the *Origin of Species* explains at some length why natural selection inevitably produces diversification (and in his autobiography records how he arrived at the solution of this 'problem of great importance' in a flash of intuition)."¹

Perhaps the most intuitive scientist in the past was Clerk Maxwell. His most fruitful intuition is the leap of mind he made in setting forth his equation for electromagnetism. He postulated a term which nothing at the time necessitated and which was found correct by experiment later. His work on the laws of gases, too, contains a similar leap. It has provoked a modern physicist to exclaim: "Maxwell, by a train of argument which seems to bear no relation at all to molecules, or to the dynamics of their movements, or even to ordinary common sense, reached a formula which, according to all precedents and all the rules of scientific philosophy, ought to have been hopelessly wrong. In actual fact it was subsequently shown to be exactly right and is known as Maxwell's law to this day."

What is most remarkable at present in the field of science is that Einstein has given "intuition" a legitimate place at the very basis of theoretical physics. The General Theory of Relativity has not only revolutionised our ultimate concepts but also brought about a revolutionary ideal of what these concepts may be and a revolutionary method of reaching them. Although meant to explain the sense-perceived universe, they become, as Einstein says, "steadily more abstract and remote from experience." Of course, they have to be "verified" by experiment, but what is directly verified is only a number of conclusions coming at the end of a long series of deductions from those concepts: the concepts themselves are never asked to submit to experimental tests. They may well mark an extreme of the materially unpicturable, as does indeed Einstein's own theory of a "curved" four-dimensional continuum of fused space and time, in which all events past and present and future are to be plotted as co-existent, as being "all at once" like the musical compositions heard by Mozart's inspired imagination. And in the search for such theories the physicist, writes Einstein, "is compelled in an increasing degree to be guided by purely mathematical, formal considerations....Experience may suggest the appropriate mathematical concepts, but they most certainly cannot be deduced from it." Einstein calls

¹ *The Listener* (London), May 28, 1959, p. 937.

the fundamental axioms of physics “free creations of the mind.” For, in his own words, “there is no logical path to these laws ; only intuition, resting on sympathetic understanding of experience, can reach them.”

Now, the pertinent query arises : “If at the back of Science there is intuition and at the back of Art there is inspiration, what is the region of psychological being from which these phenomena appear ?”

2

We are all familiar today with terms like “subliminal self” and “unconscious mind.” Psycho-analysis has had to posit a complex working of mental process behind and beyond our known thoughts, feelings, desires and volitions. This process is usually called “subconscious” or “unconscious”, but what is meant is that our surface being is not conscious of it. Nor is the hidden region of the mind merely individual : Jung has noted a common pool of memories and symbols, a depth of racial responses, motives and mythological attitudes preserved through the ages. And he has invented for it the expression : “Collective Unconscious.” An immense range of psychological being unhindered by space or time and full of strange possibilities, brilliant or mysterious creativities, surprising supra-personal effectivities, is supposed to exist. And Jung has attempted to show some affinity between his hypothesis and the assumptions of Indian Yoga.

He is right, broadly speaking. For, Yoga is the systematised endeavour to establish contact with unknown profundities of our self by special methods. But it is not limited to what Freud and Jung and their colleagues have got hold of for their field of study. The field of Yoga is much wider, yet it is continuous with the “subliminal” of the psychologists and with their “Collective Unconscious.” Modern research has, in a very practical manner, provided a jumping-board to the greater claims of this very ancient research.

Yoga chooses as a starting-point the part of one’s being which is most natural to one from day to day according to one’s individual constitution. Thus there are different Yogas for those who are intellectual or emotional or bent upon action—for those who have an introspective turn or such as are physically oriented. This division, pragmatically convenient and effective, has, however, its limitations.

So long as the predominant aim is to pass from the ordinary consciousness to a vaster Beyond and stay more and more absorbed there, believing that life’s destiny is not on the earth but in that mysterious immensity, it does not matter how or where one starts. The moment life here is emphasised, the moment the stress on earth which modern science has given is accepted and the ideal is not only of individual development and salvation but also of collective and social fulfilment, the need arises of taking up the entirety of our being and making our Yoga integral. To cope adequately with this need is the way of Sri Aurobindo.

According to him, all the parts of our being have to combine under the awakened

leadership of that in us which he considers the true soul. Our true soul is not guided by pet ideas, selfish demands, pragmatic facilities. It is the pure push in us towards what we sense as the supreme Good, what we may regard as the divinely human. Unified by this push, all our parts have to make accessible and normal the powers which are now remote and supernormal and known only in brief occurrences labelled as "inspiration" and "intuition". The Integral Yoga, elaborated by Sri Aurobindo and set on a manifold practical basis, promises the emergence of a new state of consciousness by which every one of our persisting problems, individual and collective, will be radically solved.

The reasonableness of such a promise must strike us as soon as we look at the panorama modern biology opens up with its theory of evolution. From insensitive matter we see the emergence of active vitality. From vitality, with its instincts and desires, we see the thinking mind of man emerge, haunted vaguely by the presence of the entity he feels as his "soul". Breaking through the routine of human rationality—helped by the aspiration of that vague presence—there is the sporadic play of inspiration and intuition. A more recurrent play of them is seen in the phenomenon of "genius." Various we are led to mark the evidence of a supramental faculty waiting to emerge and take up the whole of our existence for a new evolutionary embodiment.

"Embodiment" is an important term. For, Sri Aurobindo is all for a more dynamic earth-life in the light of a more-than-human consciousness. As his collaborator in the Integral Yoga—the Mother—puts it: "Yoga is not a contempt for matter but a means to divinise it—not a rejection of the body but a means to transform it."

No doubt, the Integral Yoga—by its very integrality—would make use of past techniques wherever necessary. But it cannot be equated simply to the old Yogas classified as Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, Raja and Hatha. Least of all is it the set of difficult exercises that is Hatha Yoga. Actually it favours physical training more along modern lines, since the psychological benefits along with extraordinary vital powers which Hatha Yoga seeks through its complex postures are sought to be compassed directly by more subtle processes. For, the Integral Yoga is essentially a dynamism of the consciousness, a mode of all-round psychological development which yet evokes hidden potentialities of physical development through the secret consciousness dwelling even in material substance and energy.

3

Free at the same time of an other-worldly outlook and a limited yogic practice, the Integral Yoga cuts loose still more from all fixed dogmas, rites and observances inherited from the past: it is not a revival of any religion or a synthesis of existing religions or a new religion sprouting from the same old root to replace them. It is a broad-based, constantly growing, diversely modulated way of life, which is more

correctly designable as a spiritual science than a religious path. In fact, it is a perfectly secular activity inasmuch as the religion to which one may have belonged is dropped in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. And even those who have belonged to no religion are welcome here. An open mind, an aspiration for a deeper and finer living than hitherto accomplished, a flexibility of nature ready to meet the future's challenge, a whole-hearted willingness to be made anew in the large lines of what may be called the spiritually scientific superman—these are the sole qualifications required.

Since a systematic and organised move is here towards this goal, there is a palpable curve of progress in the Integral Yoga. Concrete inner and outer results are obtained. And a general assessment is possible of the individual's research in Yoga at different stages, as well as of the level reached by the entire group of people dedicated to realising Sri Aurobindo's vision. In a broad sense, we may measure progress by four standards :

(1) With what degree of effortless efficiency is the work in hand done, as if some inner knowledge and power were automatically active ?

(2) How far is the work of one person complementary to that of other persons so that an interrelated totality results as if there acted a single knowledge and power superior to the individual units and making all of them its instruments ?

(3) To what extent does the participant in a work pass through it and out of it with not only a detachment from egoistic desire and anxiety but also an increase in happy awareness of the inner and superior agency ?

(4) How much oneness even in the outer life does the work produce among the individuals concerned, expressing itself in a purer and profounder relationship, an efflorescence of harmonious living, an advance towards achieving the ideal of human unity ?

Thus the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, in which the Integral Yoga is practised, is different from other Ashrams in India. Unquestionably, they have their merits, but theirs is ultimately a refinement of religion and this refinement is turned fundamentally towards individual salvation in some other-world. What they do for this world is not organic to the Yoga and springs from conventional ethico-social motives—good and helpful motives, surely, yet not the direct issue of a super-science of the Spirit such as Sri Aurobindo has developed. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is a research in a new order of existence, with a supramental fount of activity in every department. This research has a particularised aspect in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, with an eye to assimilating special academic qualification into the general inner education that is the Integral Yoga. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram, researching in what may be termed a novel multi-dimensional education, strives by inner conscious self-expansion to form the nucleus of a renovated humanity.

This nucleus would stimulate the whole country and then the entire world to the highest intensity and continuity possible of a divinised life to which the phenomena of inspiration and intuition are scattered pointers in a world not yet awake to that

Yoga of Nature which, through the evolution of matter, vitality and mind, drives integrally towards an earthly unfoldment as of a godhead in the soul of man.

4

In India, of all places, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, with its International Centre of Education, should rouse the greatest interest and win the utmost encouragement. For, its work can be seen in intimate relation to the typical genius of the Indian people. Every country has its own basic psychological character and it can truly develop if it acts in consonance with that national personality. Historical India has been two things pre-eminently. On the outer and visible level, she has been a vast concourse of communities. India is one not by an apparent uniformity of race or by a single strain of culture. She is one by a fusion of a large variety of ethnological elements and by a synthesis of diverse lines of intellectual experiment, social combination, practical pursuit. And she has been able to blend so many outwardly differing components because her true being is attuned to that which is other than the visible forms of life and yet is the common origin of them all, that which is capable of differentiating into a myriad forms without losing its essential identity. This origin is what she has called, by inner inner observation and experience, the Supreme Self or Spirit, a deepmost Reality directly known as an Infinite that is One-in-Many and Many-in-One.

No doubt, India has not always or, rather, invariably been "spiritual" in the obvious connotation of the word. She has also thought and lived along lines which may be considered sceptic, agnostic, atheistic, materialistic. In fact, if she did not do so, she would not be the cultural synthesis that she is : she would be single-tracked—and when spirituality is single-tracked it becomes necessarily limitative and intolerant on the one hand, ascetic and unworldly on the other. A tendency towards that attitude which is, in Sri Aurobindo's phrase, "the refusal of the ascetic" has indeed increased from India's mediaeval age onwards and contributed to her decline. But the original Indian genius was very far from such a negative spirituality—and when spirituality is not only positive but also many-tracked, as in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Puranas, a strong impetus is given to the searching mind and the adventurous life-force to try out every kind of speculation and practice, be it ever so non-spiritual in its surface-shape. With her firm hold on what we may describe as a divine dynamism in the inner being, India could allow without any fear a complete liberty to the seeker in man. All roads, she felt, would eventually lead to that spiritual centre, and the expression of this centre would in the end be all the richer for the apparent temporary deviations.

How pervasive was the influence of this potent centre we may mark by a look at the form which the non-theistic or even atheistic trends mostly assumed in India. Materialism, in the modern sense, was never characteristic of such trends. They showed themselves typically in movements like Sankhya, Buddhism and Jainism,

Judged from the ordinary point of view, these movements were non-theistic or even atheistic ; and yet they were paths leading to a liberation of the consciousness from mere mind : they worked towards an inner illumination which can only be regarded as profoundly spiritual. And the very epochs most coloured by the sensuous approach, like the epoch of the poet Kalidasa, has still a deep instinct of *Dharma* and an intellectual assent to it. *Dharma* is not simply religion : it is the inherent law of things, making naturally for collective harmony and stability as much as for individual initiative and activity, while its direction through all moods and modes of life, all formulations of thought, is towards a spiritual Truth diversely symbolised by the play of the senses.

Yes, India has been great by her essentially spiritual character. Although competent enough in other fields, the quest for the inmost Spirit as the radiating source of all existence has been her *forte*. And she can be great again by being true to her own self. She can be even greater than before. Actually, that is the demand on her by the logic of events in the modern age. For, the key to a divine fulfilment of matter was missed by her and, for all the life-affirmation in her most luminous times, she had to fix her ultimate in a Beyond. That brought about—in the long run, particularly under the impact of foreign invasions—a religious instead of a secular turn. More and more an inward withdrawal took place with a hurry to find a number of separate short-cuts to Nirvana, the Formless Brahman, the peaceful Shiva, the blissful Vishnu. In the outer realm a defensive shell was set up of rigid rites, observances and functions. The Gita was the last explicit testament of a comprehensive and conquering spirituality. Time and again the old urge of the Vedic Rishis and Upanishadic Seers that had reached its largest voice in the Gita broke through the religious turn ; but the zest for a divine fulfilment on earth could not quite subdue the growing discontent and weariness to which Tagore has given tongue so memorably in his poem on the migrating cranes : “Not here, not here, somewhere afar is our home !”

To effect a switch-over to the Here and Now, an age of Science, emphasising matter and asserting evolution, had to come. And, along with it, as its inner rationale, as the total Light of which Science was just a one-sided disclosure, there had to dawn the age of an Integral Yoga such as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have discovered and developed on the basis of all that has been positive and synthesis-minded in the past. With the advent of the Integral Yoga India stands on the threshold of a most glorious future.

If she is not loyal to her own genius she will either degenerate in spite of all technological props or else be a second-rate success on the Western model, always an inferior, however hard she may try to juggle with foreign “isms” and “know-hows.” The Integral Yoga is there not only to save her but also to complete the curve of her destiny.

Hence the Sri Aurobindo Ashram should immediately commend itself to those who love this country of ours and are eager to help it achieve full greatness. The

intensity and continuity of the inspired and intuitive super-life which the Ashram aims at will make India, as the Mother has hoped, "the spiritual leader of the world." Then, by her sovereign answer to an inner need which the whole world bewildered by its own uncontrollable complexity is coming to feel more and more, India will draw to herself an abundance of material aid to lift to the highest peak her own rightly guided prosperity.

Modern to the most efficient degree but dominating her modernism rather than dominated by it, India living illuminatedly from within outwards by means of the Integral Yoga will lead the earth towards an era of universal concord, a self-consummation of Man at once spiritual and scientific. To elevate our country to play that happy role is a vital part of the dynamic ideal of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the Ashram of all-round Educational Research they have founded. Their call to men of good will everywhere is to co-operate with them and hasten the completion of the mighty work which is proceeding here in rhythm with Nature's own secret urge and with India's supreme mission.

K. D. SETHNA

SALUTATIONS

(Continued from the October issue)

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

1-9-63

13

2-3-1954
BOMBAY

Dear Mother,

You have drowned me in the ocean of the worldly life. Whenever I put my head up, You pushed it back into the water. But for what reason? Answer me, save me. Now I cannot remain any more in this ocean.

O Mother! what have you done?

“Child, why do you shout ? Where is the hurry ? Do you know that one day you will drink the nectar of heaven and plunge into Infinity ? Then you will be in need of nothing.

“Keep patience. It is only after taking salt water that you can taste sweetness.”

14

BOMBAY
28-2-1954

O Universal Mother, O Divine Light !

I wrote to You a letter and could understand how You replied. You gave me courage and inspiration.

For two or three days I have been feeling that my mind is changing, and this also is by Your Grace.

Mother, never leave me. I will live according to Your wish.

Whatever my faults, there burns in the depths of my heart a fire of high ideals and of aspiration to attain my goal.

Show me the way, Mother! No, instead of showing the way, lead me there. You are my true Mother. Do something for Your child. Be always with me, and protect me.

15

Bombay
23-3-1954

O Mother,

Only human beings of this earth can understand how strange are the laughter and tears of life.

My life is full of tears. How often tears have fallen like precious pearls ! All those pearls I gather together and set them on a string of hope. I wander bewildered here and there in search of You. One path is blocked, another is full of ups and downs, thorns and stones. Still the necklace of pearls which is in my trembling hands tells me that it will look most beautiful about my Mother's neck.

And I am constantly groping to find You. Now come to me and accept the necklace of tears. O Compassionate Mother.... Come !

The endless flow of tears keeps rolling from my eyes and now the necklace is become so heavy and huge that I have no time to bead more pearls and my frail hands can hardly hold it.

So, O Mother, lighten the burden of my heart and accept the necklace. If not the whole of it, accept at least one pearl. That will be enough. In it will be all my salvation.

16

Bombay
28-3-1954

O Dear Mother,

What have you told me this morning ?

"Dear child, the One for whom you have aspired for ages, She am I. Why do you worry ? Your confidence and faith in me, who am your Mother and Guru—why are they shaken ?

"You have recognised me after many years but then also not perfectly well. Child ! now you will know me wholly and perfectly.

"Your time is approaching nearer and nearer to lead the Divine Life. Finally you will be all mine.

"Child, you will not understand at the moment why you have been thrust into the ordinary world. But I know. It is to make you luminous and perfect. You do not know, O dear child, that nothing can be made divine without a struggle and an effort. In the world there are various types of beings and to adjust oneself to their contacts and be in tune with their thoughts is most difficult. Until the doors of the heart are flung open, everything is useless. However, the man who is hypocritical and cunning and tries to impose himself on others is proved false at last. But on your side you must pray to the Divine that all of them may get true understanding.

"You after all are mine, and you will be mine. I never forget my children. Your salvation is near."

17

Bombay
3-4-1954

My dear Mother,

Salutation to Your lotus Feet.

My mind builds up innumerable thoughts and then breaks them. I do not understand what to do and what not to do.

Mother ! the last two or three days I have been eager to forsake this ordinary world and accept the Divine Life. I feel intensely within my heart that only when I shall come to You will all my confusions vanish : You alone will show me the right path.

Mother, what have You made me understand today ?

"Child, to abandon the ordinary world is no easy thing. It is cowardly to renounce it out of disgust.

"So, say 'Mother, will make everything all right for me.' And with such faith you must throw these ideas aside. When the time comes and when you have reached a certain stage, I shall myself call you. At the moment finish your work where you are. In that lies your dignity.

"Whatever the Supreme Lord has decided for human beings none can alter. So of what use are your excitement and immature ideas ?

"First of all, you must have solid experiences and then spontaneously will you find the way out. Everything will end well in time. But for that you will have to wait with patience.

"I know that you are trying your best. But it will take some time. Rest assured, I shall never leave you. You will have my immense support and by that support you will swim out of the ocean of the ordinary life.

"Come to me and you shall have no other desires and wishes.

"My blessings are there that your highest aspiration may be fulfilled."

(To be continued)

HUTA

JOY OF GRATITUDE

I REMEMBER the Mother once saying that while She receives letters in abundance complaining of circumstances, sufferings and the like, She hardly gets any reporting things when they are good. I have often thought of this phenomenon for it is so true and yet it hardly strikes anyone. When things go well we are apt to take them for granted; we just sail along. It is only when they go awry that we are forced to sit up. And perhaps, from a certain point of view, that is the justification for adverse conditions in the economy of Providence. Indeed there are exceptions, few and rare, like the one I came across unexpectedly this morning.

He is an old man, unprepossessing, homely in appearance and attire. He asked to see me and I received him with considerable reservations in view of possible requests or demands which might prove to be embarrassing. But I soon found that I was mistaken. The encounter was totally different, the first of its kind in my life. There was nothing negative in the person, no voids to be filled in; it was all a positive movement full of contentment, full of happiness, replete with gratitude to the Divine. I should like to report the substance of what he said in the first person, in order to be faithful to the spirit and spontaneity of his testament.

*
**

“I was a business man on a small scale. I had the usual habits of the world and was getting on in the vicissitudes of my calling. One day, some 28 years ago, I heard a voice within me asking me to go to Gorakhpur and read books on God. The effect was so strong that without thinking of anything I went straight away to Gorakhpur and purchased a few cheap books—costing two annas each—on God, religion, etc. I do not have a developed mind or understanding of such subjects. But, when I opened the pages, to my great surprise I followed what I read, new vistas unrolled themselves before me. I suddenly realised that all that I had done so far was useless and a new life was being opened to me. My heart leaped with joy and without any questioning I started to practise what was written in the books according to my understanding. As I said, my habits of life were not very edifying and I commenced correcting them in the firm faith that God would lead me on.

“One day I heard the same voice for the second time, asking me to do intensive Pranayama. Regardless of every other consideration, I started Pranayama and with a mad zeal practised it at all times of the day except when I was eating or sleeping or doing business. I had read in books that Pranayama should not be practised at certain hours and so on. But I simply could not conform to those requirements. Helplessly I pushed on with Pranayama, and while doing so I made a discovery.

“I found that the mind which I had all along thought to be myself was not myself

at all. I saw and experienced that I am different and the mind is different. When this experience settled itself and became a part of my life, things ceased to worry me. The problem of thoughts no more existed because I was not in the thoughts. I felt a lightness about me, my whole being repeatedly rose in adoration of the Divine who had given this new dimension to my life. Tears would come to my eyes when I realised that but for this Grace I would have just lived and died, and now I was lifted out of that round and given a new direction to make my life meaningful.

"A third time the voice spoke : 'Do Japa the whole day.' There was no denying to it. The injunction came with such a force that I had to follow it and, as I did so, I was filled with delight. The whole being was surcharged with a bliss which refused to take account of any happenings elsewhere.

"It was at this juncture that a kind friend suggested to me that though I was in a good condition I should go to Pondicherry for something still higher. And I acted up to it. I had my own trepidations because of my habits which have been there all along. I had been assured by high authorities in the beginning that once one steps into the life Godward, bad Samskaras are automatically displaced by good ones. Now it is thirty years since I started, but, strange to say, those habits and tendencies continue. I have no complaints, for they do not interfere with my inner life. For instance, smoking. I took to heavy smoking when I had reverses in business. And the first thing that came before my eyes on arrival at Pondicherry was the board, 'Smoking strictly prohibited', hung everywhere, in all directions, in the guest house where I stepped in. Naturally if smoking was prohibited I could not very well indulge in it. What was to be done ? I asked myself, and my own reply was that the Mother's Grace would see to it. And the Grace acted. At that moment, the thirty years' habit left me for good.

"I am extremely happy in this atmosphere; the bliss gets intensified when I sit at the Samadhi. As long as there is life in this body I like to put in some service for the Lord and in this spirit I participate in the work around for a couple of hours. After coming here, the voice was heard again—for the fourth time : 'Sing the praises of the Lord, chant the Name.' I was astounded because I have never had any penchant for singing. All the same, can I resist it ?

"I have physical infirmities. Material conditions are not always co-operative. But who cares ? The Lord sees to it that there is no feeling of want. Who could do more to an insignificant creature like myself ? I know no cares, no anxieties, no fears. I know only that He has taken me up and, doubtless, He knows what He will do with me."

*
**

I was deeply moved as he spoke. It was a great education to me. It was spiritually a pregnant moment. I melted; there was a shift in the consciousness.

All that the Mother has been saying of Grace, gratitude and the joy of it, the solicitude of the Divine for the humble, had come to life.

As he rose to leave he asked me whether he could come again and tell me a few of the interesting things that had happened in his life. "Maybe you can write a book on them," he added. I invited him to come the next week.

I am certain I shall benefit by his company, though I am not sure whether I shall write a book.

17-9-1967

PRABUDDHA

HOW AND WHITHER

WHAT irony presents this world of sorrow,
 What trail of tears beneath its grief-gored heart !
 It longs for a happy and moon-far heightened morrow,
 Its ardours beyond the gold galaxies dart.

We see world's cheeks with a touch of tension waning,
 We view its breast a toilsome burden bearing,
 We watch its face a perfect falsehood feigning,
 People who are selfish cheats generosity sharing.

Yet does the world evolve, it moves ahead
 Beyond the stilted sham of religions—
 Falsehood subdued, truth shall to truth be wed,
 Here walk abreast the radiant legions.

Light marches fast, world shall new raptures kiss,
 World marches fast—to Light through the abyss.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

A BIRTHDAY LETTER

TO J.A., AGED ONE ON NOVEMBER 17, 1938

I AM sure this is the first letter you have ever got. Of course you'll realise the fact many years later, but what I have to say now will perhaps not have grown old by then.

I need not wish you a happy birthday : such a wish would be superfluous, since you are so drenched in happiness every hour that your birthday can be no exception. I don't mean that you do not cry : you do that quite lustily, I hope, for it helps you to develop your lungs and throat-muscles. What I mean is that these howlings, even if due to temporary stomach-ache or some such calamity, are really lost in the general flood of joy which is your life-blood at present. You are a baby : your contact with the marvellous secret source of all being is still strong : no hard and dry crust has formed on your simplicity of soul.

It would be wrong to call you, as many students of childhood may do, just a little animal without any care—a tiny lump of smiling thoughtlessness. No doubt, in being free from “the pale cast of thought”, you have an affinity with animal nature. Or, rather, the animal nature that is in all of us is at play in you without our expectations and forebodings, even as it is exempt from our ambitions and rancours. But this nature's ignorant spontaneity, expressing itself unperverted, is mixed with the innocent grace of the divine spark in you. All that hinders the same spark in us is absent from your being. That is why you are not only happy but radiantly so and the happiness you radiate is the very stuff of your existence, needing no cause, depending on no circumstance. And I hope that, as you grow, you will not forget to grow in your soul side by side with cultivating your vital and mental powers. To help you do this, I should advise your parents to surround your childhood with two miracles which are within the reach of everybody.

They must keep you in the midst of flowers. Always there should be a sense of petals and delicate perfume near your bed. And when you are out of your bed they must move you about between green shadows and among gay blossoms. For flowers are the little smiles of paradise that break out of the sleep of Nature. They have at the same time a depth of gentle peace and the brave sparkle of colour. They never sit in sackcloth and ashes but neither are they carried away by their own pomp. Rich they are without being proud of their wealth, for theirs is a natural poise which is not either vain or over-humble : they do not refuse themselves to plucking fingers nor do they clamour to be plucked. Nothing can add to their perfection and nothing can take away a jot from it. This is the consciousness of the psyche, because its hold is on something infinite hidden behind things. May you, my dear little friend, always feel that your eyes are like flowers, that your face is like a flower, that every part of you, however earthly, bears roots in it of an ever-flowering delicacy of quiet and colourful fragrance.

The other miracle which must mingle with your growth is great music. I wish that every day some master-musician would tune your pulse. You will not know what is happening to you, but, as the strains of the world's wonders of sound float about you and gain soft entry into your being, you will become a citizen of a strange land which waits for all those who are not in love with the dust and heat of the common world. Slowly you will realise that though you may not see fairies dancing under the moon or angels bathed in an ecstasy of sun, you can listen to the melodious throb of dream-translucent wings and the golden laughter that drips from the motion of limbs unfettered by mortality. Words, articulate words, may mean nothing to you; but these sounds, delightfully linked together as if by magic, will fuse with the rhythms of your own living body and make harmonious all the instincts of your nature. The Greeks grew up in the midst of great sculpture and architecture: ours is not an age of builders of beauty, but we can raise around you palaces not made by chisel and hammer, spacious patterns of music, and we can set you amidst movements of gods and goddesses, a heavenly traffic heard for us and echoed to us by Chopin and Mozart and César Franck, Bach and Beethoven and Wagner. Live, child, in these palaces, and find yourself, when you are no longer a child, one in spirit with those divinities. I can never wish you anything better on your first birthday.

AMAL KIRAN

AUROVILLE

A PROTOTYPE OF WORLD UNITY*

I

...see a world that is from a world to be.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*

WE have seen what the Ashram, within the last forty years of its existence, has done for the all-round development of man and his evolution into a higher consciousness. Now it intends to carry out its experiment on a larger scale, in a wider field, breaking new ground, embarking upon a new project in the shape of a town modelled on the vision of the Mother and called by her "Auroville" ("Auro" meaning dawn and "ville" city).

It is difficult to conceive how "remaining in the midst of the world as a man of worldly activities," one can yet "be a man of renunciation".¹ But by a concrete example Auroville is expected to present to the world what is meant by a life of bliss in a life of inner renunciation. It is the inner being that must dominate the outer. This done, the ideal of "harmony of renunciation of desire with enjoyment of Ananda"² will remain no more a dream.

"...Yoga is in its essence a turning away from the ordinary material and animal life led by most men... to the way divine³..."

Seen in this light, Auroville will be an example not only of a better world, a better way of living but will ultimately emerge into a new dimension as the model of a new world and a new science of living "so that the Divine can manifest here in this physical world"⁴ of ours, leading to the birth of an "earthly heaven"⁵.

2

Auroville will require some time before it acquires a personality, a character and an atmosphere of its own. But what is most impressive about it at the moment is the thoroughness and earnestness with which the project is being executed.

* This article will form the last chapter of the author's *Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram* (2nd Edition).

¹ Letter to Barin published in *Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir*, 1967, p. 125.

² *Ibid.*

³ (a) *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1965), p. 62.

(b) By yoga we can rise out of falsehood into truth, out of weakness into force, out of pain and grief into bliss, out of bondage into freedom, out of death into immortality, out of darkness into light..." *The Hour of God*, p. 41.

⁴ The Mother's Message, *Mother India*, August 15, 1967, p. 419.

⁵ *Savitri* Part II, p. 112 (1st Edition).

Auroville is divided into four sectors : Residential, Industrial, Cultural and International, symbolising the four aspects of the Mother. Remarkable was the way the whole planning developed after the Mother's symbol. The plan had been made and the diagram completed after several weeks of research and labour when the Mother's symbol emerged from a nebula which came floating before the eyes of one of the architects working in collaboration with the chief architect, Roger Anger of Paris of international standing, and the whole plan took a new and happy turn. The architects themselves felt that their hands were guided by some secret power.

The site chosen will blossom into a spot of beauty, with three lakes on one side and the sea on another.

The Cultural Zone will be a representation of the wealth of the civilisations of the world. As desired by UNESCO, it will have a World University developing the patterns of education to suit the demands of the ever-progressive Future, and an Agricultural Polytechnic with a fully-equipped Research Centre. Besides, there will be various institutions of technology and centres of training in arts and crafts, in sports and games for harmonious development of the physical body as an essential basis of evolution.

The International Zone will bring home to the individual that every nation has a soul which expresses itself in its culture, as can be seen, for instance, in Japan. This area will be allotted to pavilions of the various nations and Indian states. These pavilions will help eliminate cultural and linguistic barriers and bring to the fore the underlying unity through a variety of cultures, variety enriching unity and contributing to World Culture.

This city of the future will be self-sufficient in many respects: it will produce its own food, set up factories to manufacture its requirements and provide for its amenities.

Another feature of the scheme is the village development programme. To begin with, a few villages are to be developed around the township. Workers will have no wages for work but will be given coupons to have their day-to-day needs from the stores run by the Auroville administration.

When they have all that they need, naturally there will be no necessity of wages. The joy of self-giving and self-expression is no less a compensation. Nothing can bring more joy than giving one's best to the selfless service of the Divine.

Our days in the Ashram pass like hours. Why ? Because we do not work for ourselves but to live out an ideal.

Let us ponder over these lines of the Mother :

"In this material world, for men money is more sacred than the Divine Will."

This fatuity shuts people up in their shells.

Auroville calls upon all to change such a selfish way of life and see what rewards await one if he begins to do the Divine Will.

When there will be no exploitation, strike and lock-out will become things of the past. All these developments will give a new shape to industries and infuse a new spirit into them.

There will be no beggars, no unemployment in this City of Dawn. Each able-bodied person will be assured of work according to his or her aptitude. The old will be cared for in a special way. Children will get free education. In short, Auroville will be a solid attempt to translate the ideal of living for and serving a Divine Cause collectively.

Hate and horror will have no place in this City of Sri Aurobindo. It is understood that all will not only learn but love to be governed by a higher law of life, so that the Divine may find a chance to shine in their acts.

All this would be only a preparation,

“That a diviner Force might enter life.”¹

“Auroville being a town with all the comforts and facilities, is not there any fear that people will get involved in material things and competition, forgetting to aspire for a higher consciousness and the Divine Life?”

The Mother’s reply to this question was :

“This will depend on the sincerity of each one and cannot be enforced by exterior means.”

On the subject of individuals and groups willing to aid in Auroville’s development, the Mother said :

“They may not practise themselves, but if they do not know yoga, how can they understand the purpose of Auroville?”

To clarify “the purpose” we may quote the Mother Herself again :

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

“For those who are satisfied with the life as it is, Auroville has evidently no reason for existence.” (28-8-1966)

The first building will be a Guest House named by the Mother ‘Promesse.’ Its foundation-stone was laid on June 19, 1967. The Mother’s message for the occasion was :

“The First Condition for Living in Auroville—

To be convinced of the essential unity of mankind and the will to collaborate towards the material realisation of that unity.”

Town-planning experts, surveyors, engineers, technicians and workers from fifteen different countries are already at work on the project, all without pay. Their living, of course, is assured by the sponsors of Auroville.

The construction of ‘Promesse’ started on August 3, 1967 and is in progress.

“Her small beginning asked for a mighty end.”²

Work in the Industrial Zone will begin in early 1968. One of the first large enterprises to go up will be a flour mill. Electronics will also be an initial development in the Zone.

¹ *Savitri*, Part II, p. 18.

² *Savitri*.

The Indian National Committee for co-operation with UNESCO has approached the Auroville Office with a suggestion for the establishment of a genuinely international World University. The Mother has given her approval and the idea has been incorporated into the Auroville plans.

Applications for residence in Auroville, which require approval of the Mother, continue to come in from all parts of the world and 150 have already been approved.

On February 28, 1968 the foundation-stone of the Auroville township will be laid. The ceremony will be attended by notable personalities from all over the world. And as the town will be dedicated to the youth of the world, a teenage boy and girl from every representative country of the world will bring from their respective lands a handful of earth and mix it with the soil of Auroville and then on this "new born soil,"¹ blessed by the Divine Mother, will be laid its foundation-stone.

"A Power worked, but none knew whence it came."²

3

"All countries are equal and essentially one, everyone of them represents an aspect of the One Supreme.

"In the terrestrial manifestation they have all the same right to a free expression of themselves.

"From the spiritual point of view, the importance of a country does not depend on its size or its power or its authority, but on the response to a truth and the degree of Truth it is capable of manifesting."³

THE MOTHER

The call of the projected City of Dawn is to the people of all nationalities, of all countries, men of all walks of life who are willing to follow or accept Sri Aurobindo's ideal of universal brotherhood and take part in the building of this township of world culture by installing pavilions, embassies of their own art, culture, science and something of what is their best. Here will be at least one place on earth where all shall have a chance to live in peace and harmony, like stars in the sky, free from all tension and breathe a spiritual atmosphere.

The only law that rules the world today is the law of Darkness. Here will be one place on earth where one will not fight for little gains, to seize and swallow, but be inspired by the sense of Service to the Divine, use money and machinery to spread His Light on earth.

It will not only be a meeting-place of East and West but a home of world culture and a practical demonstration of what science, art and architecture can achieve, sparked by the fire of spirituality.

¹ "Upon the earth's new-born soil God's tread was heard." *Savitri*, Book II, Canto 1, p. 92.

² *Savitri*, Part I, p. 42.

³ *Bulletin*, August 1966, p. 85.

The project has been unanimously approved by UNESCO at its general session in Paris (October-November 1966) and commended to 143 countries of the world.

Presenting the resolution before the UNESCO the Indian delegate Sri Poushpa Dass said :

"It is an endeavour, unique in the world, to reconcile the highest spiritual life with the exigencies of our industrial civilisation. All the members of this Ashram lead at the same time a strictly normal external life, healthy and active alongside an intense inner life.

"Now this extraordinary institution, unique in the world by its natural progression, seeks on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of our organisation...to enlarge its action and to radiate still further. It wants a vaster centre, a real town where people of the entire world will be ready to live according to the ideal of Sri Aurobindo's thought....The Government of India wish that the General Conference, acting in conformity with the aim of our organisation, whose ideals we solemnly reaffirm on the 20th Anniversary, give to this unique and exceptional project,—in some respects unprecedented,—its moral support and its confidence."

Mr. Terrou (France) was very much struck by the level of the Indian delegate's speech and assured that the French delegation would warmly support the resolution which he had so nobly presented.

Mr. Gjespal (Assistant Director-General) observed finally, that the Indian draft resolution (14 C/— DR6) was most welcome, and could be voted on.

Mr. A. A. Formin USSR, stated that "the Soviet Delegation fully supported the draft resolution moved by India."

The Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO has written about Auroville to all National Commissions for Co-operation with UNESCO in the world, to foreign countries, Ambassadors in India and Education Secretaries in the Indian States, stating that Auroville "will add a new dimension to UNESCO's activities for the promotion of international co-operation and understanding between different nations and peoples by bringing together in close juxtaposition in one centre the values and ideals of different civilisations and cultures."

Who knew that what the Mother¹ had said in 1930 would prove so true ?

"Once, however, the connection² is made it must have its effect in the outward world in the form of a new creation, beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world."

Imagine a group of souls in whom the higher consciousness is well established and peace reigns supreme, souls who feel that they belong to no country, no nationality, no religion, no race, no society but to the Divine alone. Their only aim in life would be to found a new life—a Divine Life—on earth.

If such men of vision and action be at the helm of affairs in Auroville, will not

¹ *Words of the Mother* (Third Series).

² "connection" between the Supermind and the material being.

that herald a new dawn, a new pattern of living, a new society, finally a new humanity all leading to the victory of Truth in life. ?

There are various artistic creations in the world that thrill the hearts of millions. Our hope and aspiration are that Auroville will be one that lifts the spirit of man by sheer beauty of creation.

Insignificant her means, infinite her work ;...
An endless truth she endlessly unfolds¹

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ *Savitri*.

MAN THE MEDIATOR

Mind is a mediator divinity.

SRI AUROBINDO, *Savitri* I-v

If men were not and all were shining gods,
The mediating stair would then be lost.

Ibid., XI-i

I

WE have a cryptic parable in the Upanishads. When the causal forms of all creatures were ready at the dawn of creation, gods were asked by Brahma, the Prime Creator, to choose the particular form through which they would like to act and precipitate their action in the Universe. They were serially shown the forms of highly-evolved animals like the Cow or the Horse or the Elephant : they demurred and demurred. But when they were shown the form and figure of MAN, they were mightily pleased and readily proffered to enter therein.

Divested of its allegorical cast and costume, the parable only means that, after ages and aeons of experiments and evolutionary labour, Nature has at last arrived at the perfection of her mechanism in the organism of Man, using which as mainspring she can now take a radical stride forward towards the manifestation of gods that she has all along been groaning and travailing for. It is with the instrumentation of the pincer-like faculty of Mind, Manas, characterising the son of Manu, that she can now hope to extricate herself from the meshes and scaffoldings of her own make so far. It is in the perspective afforded by the mirror-like Chitta of the perfected Man, that she can now definitively detach the innermost Subjective from the outermost Objective and envisage an effectual background for the projection of their essential identity. In a word, it is in the consciousness of Man that Nature has had the first glimmerings of self-consciousness, and she can now bid to be Self-Conscious in the truest sense and amplest significance of the term.

If Man, with his several physiological systems and complex psychological centres that can receive and react upon all impacts and vibrations from without, is the Fine Flower of creation, he is, by the same token or earnest, Promise of the Fair Fruit of the very ictus and oestrus of creation. If it is Man's flair for aspiring after far-reaching things and instituting the sacrificial flame that distinguishes him from all other creatures, equally it is his will-potential capable of orienting the blind drive of the differentiating Past towards an integrated luminous Future, that marks him out as a would-be Creator, a sort of reflex-Brahma, Weaver of Patterns and Composer of Harmonies out of the varied strands and strains of Brahma's primal self-expression.

II

Ordinarily, however, man is sublimely unconscious of the high role he has to play and the supreme destiny he has to fulfil. In the early beginnings of his career on Earth, he is a helpless tool in the hands of Nature, organising his movements on the basic ground-plan of his immediate needs and urges; even then he is driven to mimic, so to say, remotely enough, his appointed role of mediation between the plane of Spirit and the plane of Matter. He sees crude material of all sorts on all sides of him, and his innate animal spirits actuate him to turn it to some good account. He begins to wobble about the axis of his physico-vital primitive self, shifting sides and stresses with might and main—playing out his play amid storm and stress—with ever an eye on left-out things that he naively and incorrigibly believes to be his by uncontested right.

Soon, however, does he perceive right modes of conducting things and conceive of codes of right social behaviour and conduct. He begins to spin about now on the axis of his pragmatic-vitalistic self,—ever checking, correcting, balancing, revising, adjusting,—as newer and newer values of Right and Wrong, Good and Bad, Gross and Refined, begin to press upon his growing consciousness. Life presents to him no real difficulty nor any acute problem yet; for the momentum of his past gyrations about his unregenerate self helps him to scramble and scamper through the various hurdles and several toll-gates lying across his way. Mastering and harnessing his refractory Bucephalus-spirits, he carries everything before him with a godlike gusto and roves about in quest of fresh fields for conquest with his vainglorious bravado-cry: “Are there more worlds to conquer?”

And soon, as if in answer to his cry, he hears a still small voice whispering in his ears: “What if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” So, after all, there *is* something that he was missing all along; realising this he begins now to co-ordinate the life of the senses with the life of the soul, discovering another axis to refer to and rotate about, that of his Idealistic self. It is now that he encounters a real difficulty and a real challenge posed by the Sphinx of Life. Things are getting more and more complicate and intricate with three divergent axes, within an ever-expanding three-dimensional world, with three seemingly disparate Absolutes of the True, the Good, the Beautiful, all simultaneously claiming allegiance from him. For a moment he feels bewildered and staggered, overwhelmed by the immensity of the task before him; he would fain lay down his arms, or even lie down forever with the grassy couch beneath and the starry heavens above; but the Hound of Heaven is on the chase and would not permit him to lie there or anywhere for long—till he find the ONE fulcrum of his abiding Resting-place, and therefrom take-off to bring about affiance between Heaven and Earth!

III

Let us look a little more closely into this mystery of mediation from another

and a more realistic standpoint. We are all of us mediators of a sort, conscious or unconscious, between persons and parties, if not between principles and planes. When an elderly child offers to settle an unseemly point of dispute between two younger urchins of the family, it is taking its first lessons in the art of this craft; when an elder statesman offers his good offices to bring about a rapprochement between two intransigent states, he is perfecting statecraft and setting up a wholesome overall precedent. They might either pathetically fail or spectacularly succeed : it all depends upon several factors, possibly on their having their own axes to grind in the affair. But the psychic energies and forces of goodwill released by them in the attempt are a definite contribution to progress at large, progress individual as well as progress collective.

We may be poor mediators at that; we may be only gambling or fumbling about in the dark, like Friar Lawrence of Shakespeare, who found his established prestige together with all his elaborate plans nailed down to the grave in the end; we may have to resort to stunts and shock-tactics like Yaugandharayana of Bhasa, staking our very existence and our cherished dreams, even opening doors to forces over which we might have no control. Yet, for all that, a man's but a man; no good deed goes ever without its meed; and there's a Divinity shaping our rough-hewn things to His own ends; we have done the best that could be done in the given situation, even with our half-lights of mind; we have exercised all resources of our heart-cum-head : faith in humanity, courage of initiative, tactful intelligence, firmness of will, forbearant pliancy, persistent effort, large-hearted charity : all that cannot but bring dividends in due time, to one and all, in one way or another.

Only, we might take a leaf or two from the craftlore of Devarshi Narada—the sagacious sage who always moves about Heaven and Earth with his symbolic veena attuned to the several cosmic planes and principles, so that nothing but symphonic music might issue out of all our melodramatic warring and jarring notes; and we might do well to sit like him in our inner recesses at the feet of the Master-Mediator, Lord Vishnu or Lord Purushottama-Narayana, the perfect prototype of MAN, of whom we are only cells or ciphers—from first to last.

IV

When the Master-Proprietor of a big Factory-Firm sits in his cabin and, pressing button after button and dialling number after number, takes note of every shifting situation regarding man-power, money-power, motive-power; makes efficient arrangements for mechanism of securing raw produce and mechanism for marketing-off finished products; negotiates crisis after crisis and plans ahead stadia after stadia of improvisations in the accredited mode of his manufacture : he little knows that he is in fact rehearsing on a very miniature scale what the Master-Proprietor of the whole Universe is momentarily doing for himself and for all of us; nor has he any inkling that the ONE business of all his business on earth is to attend to the Big Plant installed within himself by his Maker. If he could only sit down as an apprentice at the feet

of the Master seated at the Heart of the cosmic Worskshop—if he could only open to the Grace and Guidance that come flowing from the Fountainhead of all Will and Wisdom—he can very well set his own house in order as a preliminary to casting a Foundry Here in the Image of his Maker and setting up the ‘many mansions’ of his Father’s House.

By all scores and accounts, then, Man is the much-esteemed Middle Term of an endless Progression from Nature to Super-Nature. He is the ‘arithmetical mean’—or shall we say, an ‘algebraic’ one?—between the two infinities of the Inconscient and the Superconscient, the Involutionary Movement of the Past and the Evolutionary Movement of the Future, the microcosmic *Pinḍa* and the Macrocosmic *Brahmāṇḍa*; he is the ‘geometric mean’ between the Unmanifest-*Avyakta* and the Manifest-*Vyakta*, the Absolute Ideal-Real and the Relative Real-Actual, between the ‘Dreams of Heaven’ to see ‘Perfect Earth’ and the ‘dreams of Earth’ to embody ‘Perfect Heaven’; he is the ‘harmonical mean’ between Static-Eternal Being and Dynamic-Eternal Becoming, the Transcendent ‘*Adah*’ and the Immanent ‘*Idam*’, the Immutable-*Akṣara* and the Mutable-*Kṣara*. If he is only a ‘mean’, he is an extraordinary ‘mean’ with widening auras of meaning about him; if he is only a ‘means’ or a ‘medium’ so far in the hands of Nature or Super-Nature, he is an honorable and an enviable ‘means’ or ‘medium’. He has only to bide his time to come into his own, once he is fully and comprehensively conscious of his High Heritage. Once he proves his credentials thereto, he can move about the Earth with the mediating Grace of his Father—perfect Son of God as well as perfect Son of Man.

If man is thus the son of his Father in Heaven, Dyaus, he is equally the child of his Mother Earth, Prithivi. It is with the invigorating touch of Mother Earth and all good things of the Earth that he imbibes from his infancy on, that man builds up his physical sheath, his *annamaya kośa*, on the unassuming but secure basis whereof he raises the superstructure of his vital and mental sheaths, his *prāṇamaya* and *manomaya*. It is on the Terra Firma of that much-maligned and easily-ignored Earth that he will like to land after all his races with Maruts and all his flights into Indra’s realms !

When Wordsworth bemoaned in those strophic lines of his :

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
 And, even with something of a Mother’s mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely Nurse doth all she can
 To make her Foster-Child, her inmate Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
 And that Imperial Palace whence he came :

—he only stressed one aspect of the matter; even then he intuited aright that the

homely Nurse has something of a Mother's mind; we might well add, she has something of a Mother's heart, too ! Does not the Poet himself go on to avow and acclaim a few lines further in the anti-strophic movement of that immortal Ode ?—

Oh joy ! that in our embers
Is something that doth live :

—Surely, the embers keep alive both themselves and the Hearth,—which is the heart of the matter—and the Heart of all Mystery !

We owe a debt of Gratitude and Reverence, to say the least, unto that Foster-Mother who duly and dutifully renders us into the Hands of our True Mother at the right time; and what better way of discharging the debt, even in a small way, than bidding to liberate her from her long-suffering thralldom under the sons of Darkness and Deceit—even as Vainateya got liberated Vinata of yore ? Then shall come the Day when, gifted with Vainateya-vision, we shall not only have 'sight of that Immortal Sea' and see the children sporting on its shore : we shall ourselves be veritable Children playing 'on the seashore of endless worlds', Vehicles of His Will and Standard-Bearers of the Eternal Aurora !

CHIMANBHAI

WHAT IS DEATH ?*

"I, Death, am the gate of immortality."

—SRI AUROBINDO, *Savitri*, Book X, Canto IV, p.276.

"Our life's repose is in the Infinite ;
It cannot end, its end is Life supreme.
Death is a passage, not the goal of our walk."

—SRI AUROBINDO, *Savitri*, Book II, Canto VI, p.179.

"The embodied soul casts away old and takes up new
bodies as a man changes worn-out raiment for new."

—GITA, Chap.II-22.¹

THE phenomenon of death is shrouded in the most inscrutable mystery of life, and is perhaps very deeply embedded in the first mysterious beginning of creation itself, and to unveil it we have to become aware of the profoundest mystery underlying our own self as well. In fact, these three mysterious phenomena are closely inter-linked and have the same source.

Now, it is an intricate job to depict the true picture of Death, the Lord of 'the inconscient Void', the king in 'the home of everlasting Night' guarding 'the secrecy of Nothingness'.

One factor which is clear enough is that life and death are interwoven ; they seem to be constant companions,—death the very shadow of life. Whenever a life is born death follows at its heels.

The questions that naturally suggest themselves to the enquiring mind are : why is death inevitable ? what lies on the other side of death ? is there any life beyond death ? can one ever return from the realm of death ? and so on.

It is possible perhaps only for the mystics and occultists to explore the region of death in order to unravel its mysteries which will perhaps, at the same time, throw a flood of light revealing the mysteries of life as well.

ORIGIN OF DEATH

"A Truth supreme has forced the world to be ;
It has wrapped itself in Matter as in a shroud,
A shroud of Death, a shroud of Ignorance."²

"And one who loves in us came veiled by death."³

* A speech delivered at the Fourth Annual Conference of the New Age Association on 10-9-1967.

¹ Translation from A.B. Roy's *Message of the Gita as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo*.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, Book X, Canto IV, p. 285.

³ *Ibid.*, Book IX, Canto II, p. 228.

Let us state here in brief something about the origin of death as narrated by the Mother in the form of a story.

The Supreme in his infinite Delight of Being willed to objectify himself so as to find him outside himself. And he sent out of himself four emanations in the form of Consciousness, Life, Love and Truth giving them full freedom to create. Whatever is contained potentially in the Supreme must be manifested in his creation also.

After being separated from the Origin each one wanted to be free and work independently, denying even the Supreme from whom they had originated. In this way the Ego was born, and each one of the four emanations was changed into its opposite. Thus, Consciousness was turned into Unconsciousness, Love into Pain, Truth into Falsehood, and Life into Death. And the creation proceeded in utmost chaos and disorder. The whole existence became an interminable ocean of dark Inconscience where the four antagonists of the Supreme had their full sway.

Seeing this horrible and miserable state of affairs, the Supreme himself, in infinite love and compassion, plunged into the obscure depths of the Inconscient with his sovereign power to save the creation, and transform the four Powers into their original states.

And slowly he awakes from the sleep of unconsciousness so that his Presence is there even behind the atom though vaguely. It is consciously there in the developed human being in the form of a well-formed psychic being.

So, the origin of these Beings of darkness is in the Supreme himself. The Mother tells us, "They were four. The first one has been converted, another is dissolved into its origin. Two are still living, and these two are more stubborn than all the others. One is known in occultism as the 'Lord of Falsehood', I have told you, the other is the 'Lord of Death'. And as long as these two beings exist, there will be difficulties."¹

LIFE VERSUS DEATH

"All here is a mystery of contraries :
Darkness a magic of self-hidden light,
Suffering some secret rapture's tragic mask
And death an instrument of perpetual life."²

What is death after all ? Well, to understand this in its fullest implication it is necessary to know something about what life is. Are life and death opposed to each other, one a world of light and air and the other a dungeon of stifling darkness ?

Now, Reality is one ; it is the One with its fourfold aspects of Existence, Cons-

¹ *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education*, February 1965, p.71.

² *Savitri*, Book X, Canto I, p. 234.

ciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind. These four ultimate aspects became in the cosmic manifestation, Matter, Life, Psyche and Mind.

"Essentially it [Life] is a form of the one cosmic Energy, a dynamic movement or current of it positive and negative, a constant act of play of the Force which builds up forms, energises them by a continual stream of stimulation and maintains them by an unceasing process of disintegration and renewal of their substance."¹ Life is the final form of Conscious-Force in its descent, and constitutes the link between Matter and Mind, a medium of 'transition from inconscience to consciousness'. The same Life-Force that lies dormant in inanimate objects including the atom goes on pulsating in the plants, animals and human beings. The difference lies only in its organisation and outer expression in the different grades of existence. So, pervading the whole universe there is only one Life principle, the All-Life. There is no separate principle of death. In fact, death, dissolution and rebirth are all included in the All-Life. Death is just the negative aspect of Life. The transient lives are the waking hours while the intervals of death the periods of sleep and rest in the continual life of the soul in its evolutionary development. Death is nothing but a step, a necessary passage in the continuous flow of Life which is eternal. So, life and death are in fact complementary. Sri Aurobindo writes, "Death has no reality except as a process of life. Disintegration of substance and renewal of substance, maintenance of form and change of form are the constant process of life; death is merely a rapid disintegration subservient to life's necessity of change and variation of formal experience."²

THE NECESSITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF DEATH

"Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound for ever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility."³

Why after all do we come here into life? It is to progressively transform the lower nature and consciousness of our ego-self (including a mastery over our physical body and physical circumstances), born out of the material inconscience, by the pressure and influence of our psychic being from within and the spirit from above so that ultimately our ordinary ignorant self may be completely transfigured and fully express the Divine Consciousness down to the most material.

The multifarious experiences on different lines which a psychic being has to go through for attaining its full maturity are not possible during the course of one life-time, because the consciousness—mental, vital and physical—does not change

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, American Ed., p.164.

² *The Life Divine*, p. 164.

³ Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glances*, p.22.

so easily to express fully the secret divinity that seeks to manifest itself. It is almost impossible to get the co-ordination of the divergent elements in an individual. And by the time a very little has been achieved the material stuff that is the physical body is already far on its way to decay and disability. The bodily form, because of its hardness and fixity, cannot be changed at will to suit the needs of the evolving Spirit. Hence a change of form as well as a change of personality, that is, the instrumental nature, is indispensable. And this change can be effected only through dissolution of the body by death. "Yet if we could infuse into this matter sufficient consciousness so that its rhythm of growth falls in line with that of the subtler parts of the being and if it becomes plastic enough to follow the inner progress, then the rupture of the equilibrium would not occur and death would no longer be a necessity."¹

Death, being a passage from one life to another, cannot be an end in itself. It constitutes, so to say, the chain linking the series of lives that a soul formulates for its gradual growth and development from a mere spark to a fully conscious being. So we find that death is an aid to life, bridging the gulfs in the eternal progression of life of the pilgrim soul.

"Death is a stair, a door, a stumbling stride
The soul must take to cross from birth to birth,
A grey defeat pregnant with victory,
A whip to lash us towards our deathless state."²

It is interesting to note this significant remark of the Mother regarding the presence of death : "...along with this [death] there is in the cells an intensity of the call for a Power of Eternity which would not be there but for this constant menace. Then one understands, one begins to feel in quite a concrete manner that all these things are only ways of intensifying the Manifestation, making it more and more perfect."³

DEATH AND AFTER-DEATH

"Finite bodies have an end, but that which possesses and uses the body, is infinite, illimitable, eternal, indestructible."⁴

What is it that actually dies ? Here we shall have to know what are the constituent parts of an individual.

Essentially, each individual is a soul that in its terrestrial evolution becomes a psychic being, our central being which lies in the inmost depth of our nature, and

¹ The Mother, *Bulletin*, April 1957, p. 83.

² *Savitri*, Book X, Canto I, p.234.

³ *Bulletin*, August 1963, p.47.

⁴ *Gita*, Chap. II-18; translation from A.B. Roy's *Message of the Gita as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo*.

which grows and develops from life to life till it comes to its full maturity, that is, becomes a fully conscious being.

Then, we have an inner being comprised of the inner mental, the inner vital and the subtle physical sheaths. And lastly, we have the surface being which is our normal ego-self made up of the outer mental, vital and gross physical sheaths.

Now, the secret of the whole thing, whether it is life or death or rebirth, is the inmost Spirit, our soul or the psychic being. The events and circumstances of life and death, favourable as well as adverse, have their importance only in so far as they are the occasions for the growing manifestation of the secret soul.

When the psychic being has gathered all the experiences needed and possible during one life-time and when it finds that a particular form and instrument will no longer be suitable for further progress, it seeks to discard the form—through illness or sudden death or accident or somehow,—and in a final effort severs one by one all the knots connecting the subtle body with the gross body and goes out and, as life ebbs away completely from each cell, the body which forms the outermost crust of our real Self dies. “It is the subtle or psychical frame which is tied to the physical by the heart-strings, by the cords of life-force, of nervous energy which have been woven into every physical fibre. This the Lord of the body draws out and the violent snapping or the rapid or tardy loosening of the life-cords, the exit of the connecting force constitutes the pain of death and its difficulty.”¹

What then happens to our real Self, disembodied ? Or in other words, what lies on the other side of death ?

Now, behind and above our physical universe lies the supraphysical domain. There exist many more worlds of much bigger dimension and ever increasing subtlety. The higher or the deeper the world, the greater is its extension since the substance becomes more and more rarefied and ethereal. And each plane of existence is inhabited by the beings proper to that world, and made up of the substance of that particular world just as we of the material world are made up basically of the physical substance.

Since we are not able to look into the subtle worlds with our physical sense-organs we generally tend to look upon those realms as pertaining to death. But the occultists and mystics who have methodically trained their subtle senses can easily visualise the conditions of the subtle worlds just as they see the physical world. To them death does not constitute a line of demarcation between this world and the other world. It is to them only a change-over from one state of being to another, from the world of material density to the subtler regions of existence, causing no break in the continuous process of life of the soul. The Mother remarks, “...there is really nothing like death. There is only an appearance,...based on a limited view. But there is no radical change in the vibration of the consciousness...the importance given to the difference of condition is only a superficial importance, based upon the

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Problem of Rebirth*, p.20.

ignorance of the phenomenon in itself. One who is able to maintain a means of communication could say that for himself it makes no considerable difference."¹

Nothing is totally extinct or lost by death ; only the form changes. The material stuff gets dissolved into the earth-elements. Leaving the gross body, the soul goes to the subtle physical plane and drops the subtle physical sheath which forthwith gets dissolved there.

From there the soul goes to the vital or life plane. Here the being has to confront the most difficult and dangerous ordeal in its journey to the final place of rest. The desires and ambitions, the disappointments and frustrations of one's life constitute so many obstacles that cling to the disembodied being and impede the forward march of the soul. Only the Guru can help the being out of this condition.

Ordinarily, people have a conception of sin and virtue in life which leads to hell or heaven after death. Now, there are people who are too much preoccupied with worldly things, with ordinary pleasures and comforts of life, seeking everywhere to achieve their selfish ends, having very little or no thought of their inner progress, and going at times to the extent of even denying the presence of a soul. These people may get badly entangled (due to their karma) in the domain of the vital and can be said to pass through hell ; to them death appears to be very dark and full of suffering. There are others again who are more concerned with living in their deeper self, and viewing every happening, more or less, in the light of their true self, and who have been able, to a great extent, to acquire the inner states of egolessness, desirelessness and equanimity, and in whom the psychic being is awake and in front. They have a comparatively easy and quick passage through the luminous and happy regions of the vital world which can be called heavens ; and they find the visage of death luminous and beautiful. Of course, the conception of hell and heaven is no inexorable law ruling the realm of death. One normally goes through suffering and happiness in life itself. The soul does not have to wait till death to go through these experiences.

After leaving the vital sheath, the soul goes to the mind plane and, leaving the mental sheath there, goes straight to the psychic world for final rest, and for assimilation of the essence of all its experiences of life before venturing on its next incarnation, wearing a new form and equipped with new instruments for getting new experiences in its ever ascending journey for fuller self-discovery and self-expression, till it stands completely manifest in all its splendour and perfection of being in and through the instrumental nature.

So we see that there can be no question of death with regard to our true being or Self—that which we are primarily and essentially.

"It (soul) is not slain with the slaying of the body."²

¹ *Bulletin*, April 1967, p. 37.

² *Gita*, Chap, II-20 ; translation from A.B.Roy's *Message of the Gita as interpreted by Sri Aurobindo*.

FEAR OF DEATH AND THE METHODS OF CONQUERING IT

"What is this then thou callest death ? Can God die ? O thou who fearest death, it is Life that has come to thee sporting with a death-head and wearing a mask of terror."¹

People are generally scared of death. They have a vague and instinctive fear that death means a termination of their life and existence as a whole, that it is full of grim foreboding drawing a thick veil of everlasting darkness separating them for ever from the world of the living, and that the loss caused thereby is irreparable. "Of all kinds of fear the most subtle and most clinging is the fear of death",² says the Mother. And she has chalked out four methods for getting over this fear of death.

First, the method of reason. This is particularly suitable for the intellectuals. Knowing that death is inevitable in the present condition of the world, one should remain calm and act one's best without thinking about death.

Second, the method of introspection which applies to the emotional people. One should quietly concentrate and go down deep within. In the silence of the depth there burns the steady flame of psychic consciousness which is immortal. And one who comes in contact with this flame independent of the body cannot be touched by the fear of death.

Third, the method for those who have faith in God. They totally surrender and consecrate themselves to God, to His love and protection. And all the eventualities of life they can accept with calm equanimity. They accept every happening as the Will of God meant for their good. There can be no question of fear or anxiety or trouble.

Fourth, the method of war. It is meant for those who are bold and courageous, having an indomitable spirit to conquer death since they consider immortality to be their birth-right. The battle is to be fought on many fronts : in the mind, in the feelings, in the sensations, and the most deadly battle in the material.

The Mother says that there is yet another method which is to consciously enter into the domain of death while remaining in the earthly life, and to come back again into the physical body and go on in life with full knowledge gained thereby. It is possible only for a mystic to try this method.

"O Death, our masked friend and maker of opportunities, when thou wouldst open the gate, hesitate not to tell us beforehand ; for we are not of those who are shaken by its iron jarring."³

IS DEATH THE WAY TO PEACE ?

To some who feel bored with life, who are too overpowered to face the hard

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts & Aphorisms*, p. 60.

² *Bulletin*, February 1954.

³ *Thoughts & Aphorisms*, p. 46.

realities of existence, death seems to be the only door-way whereby to evade the dark conditions prevailing in life and escape into the eternal peace and rest.

This, in fact, is a very wrong notion. The physical body acts as a fortress *par excellence* for the soul. The disembodied soul becomes a helpless victim to all sorts of painful attacks, particularly in the vital world. It is far better and more courageous to retain the body, and boldly face the adversities of life, endeavouring inwardly to win over them than to think of escaping through death. Truly speaking, one should sincerely try to attain the inner calm and peace in life itself.

The Mother says, "Death is not at all what you believe it to be. You expect from death the neutral quietness of an unconscious rest. But to obtain that rest you must prepare for it."¹ It is only by rising above desires and attaining a spirit of detachment that one can expect to have a peaceful death.

It is noteworthy that the progress of the soul is possible only during our life in the terrestrial existence in the physical body, and that there can be no progress after death till the soul's reincarnation on earth.

CAN DEATH BE CONQUERED ?

"There is a means to attain physical immortality and death is by our choice, not by Nature's compulsion. But who would care to wear one coat for a hundred years or be confined in one narrow and changeless lodging unto a long eternity?"²

Will it be at all possible for the ever growing Godhead imprisoned in the inconscience of Matter to finally triumph over death ? In fact, a much greater power than that of death can alone vanquish death. And it is only the supreme Truth and Love that has this supreme Power.

"O Death, if thou couldst touch the Truth supreme
Thou wouldst grow suddenly wise and cease to be."³

Again—

"Love's golden wings have power to fan thy void :
The eyes of love gaze starlike through death's night,
The feet of love tread naked hardest worlds.
He labours in the depths, exults on the heights ;
He shall remake thy universe, O Death."⁴

Now, ignorance and falsehood, suffering and death are the natural outcome and resultant of the basic inconscience. So, to conquer death, the very Inconscient

¹ *Bulletin*, November 1964, p. 97.

² *Thoughts & Aphorisms*, p. 60.

³ *Savitri*, Book. X, Canto IV, p. 290.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book. IX, Canto II, p. 226.

must be conquered as well. The Spirit has deliberately plunged in this bedrock of obscurity with a view to conquering it, so that ignorance may be transformed into Knowledge, falsehood into Truth, suffering into Bliss of the Spirit, and death into Immortality. This is the great adventure of the Spirit in Space and Time to conquer the Impossible.

Now, the instrument and vehicle of the Supreme must prepare himself and make himself capable of coping with death. The crux of the matter is the problem of Transformation. It is the transformation of the dark inconscience of Matter into the luminous Consciousness of the Spirit. And since the very beginning of creation, this work of Transformation has been going on by way of gradual evolution of the secret Godhead which had got itself involved in the very heart of the Inconscience in order to accomplish this apparently impossible task.

Up till now, death has been the sovereign ruler exercising full command over our life. From the mighty emperor to the humblest of creatures, everybody has to submit to the irrevocable but impartial Law of the Lord of Death. Man, with all his vanity for the astonishing achievements in Science and Technology, and a pronounced sense of superiority regarding his unique position in the creation and his latent power and capacity, still proves to be no match for the fiat of death.

So, it is evident that to conquer death man must exceed his consciousness—his original animal consciousness—and grow into superman having an active connection with the Supramental world or the world of Truth-Consciousness. It is not the Ruler of empire but the Self-ruler, not the outstanding Scientist but the full-fledged Yogin that can try to wage a war against death. And naturally, as the Mother has said, of all the elements in man—mental, vital and physical—the physical will be the last to change. In fact, as She observes, “It is a race between Transformation and Decadence, because there are only two things that could be the final points for judging as to how far one has succeeded : either success, that is to say, become a superman—when one can naturally say, ‘Now I have reached the result’—or death. Till that, one is normally on the way.”¹

So it is clear that the coming superman will be able, by the very force of his Consciousness, to keep his body immune from disease and decay no less than suffering, and prolong his life at will. Only by his own choice and will to leave the physical frame can there occur his body's death. That is to say, the superman will have a complete mastery over Matter and Nature. The Lord of Death and the forces of inconscience will have finally to submit to the Power of the Spirit.

“For in the march of all-fulfilling Time
The hour must come of the Transcendent's will :
All turns and winds towards his predestined ends
In Nature's fixed inevitable course

¹ *Bulletin*, February 1959, 2

Decreed since the beginning of the worlds
 In the deep essence of created things :
 Even there shall come as a high crown of all
 The end of Death, the death of Ignorance.”¹

If the substance of the body becomes very flexible and ethereal it can be changed at will, and there can be no question of death. It is only by the supramental power that this radical transformation of the material substance is possible. So it appears that only the supramental being, having a purely spiritual birth and origin, can be absolutely free from the present necessity of changing the body by the method of death. “The supramental body which has to be brought into being here has four main attributes: lightness, adaptability, plasticity and luminosity.”² This body made out of some luminous substance will act at the same time as the physical vesture which can be changed and remade whenever it is needed. Therefore, it is only with the coming of the supramental being that the procedure through death will be overcome altogether. And along with death will also be conquered the dark Inconscient itself at its very root. And the earth will experience for the first time the spontaneous joy of everlasting day, and the throbbing delight of All-Life.

CONCLUSION

“Shall I accept death or shall I turn and wrestle with him and conquer ? That shall be as God in me chooses. For whether I live or die, I am always.”³

ROSE
 (MANJULA SEN)

¹ *Savitri*, Book. XI, Canto I, pp. 330-331.

² *Words of the Mother*, 3rd Series, p. 84.

³ *Thoughts & Aphorisms*, p. 60.

SRI AUROBINDO ON INCARNATION AND THE LOVE OF GOD

This article by the well-known Christian thinker, Dr. E. G. Parrinder, is reproduced from Numen, International Review for the History of Religions. Our acknowledgments are due to the International Association for the History of Religions. The article appeared in the issue of June 1964. One may not agree with two or three small points made en passant by the author, but the piece as a whole constitutes a fine and searching treatment of the theme, even if not quite exhaustive and definitive. Valuable light is thrown here, especially from the Christian viewpoint, on an aspect of Sri Aurobindo's God-vision which connects the Indian consciousness with the mind of the religious West and serves particularly to attract the thoughtful practitioner of mystical Christianity to the spiritual synthesis that Sri Aurobindo's life and teaching have set working in the modern world.

I

SRI Aurobindo Ghose was one of the most eminent of modern Indian philosophers and has a considerable following. His background was thoroughly English; brought to England at an early age and educated in the European classics and literature, and undergoing Christian influence in home and school. His many writings are solely in English, and an English of great fluency and delicacy. Yet after his return to the land of his birth, Sri Aurobindo became thoroughly Indian and indeed Hindu, so that there is less open trace of European thought in his writings than in those of many of his Indian contemporaries. It is striking to compare the writings of Sri Aurobindo with, for example, those of the eminent philosopher-president of India, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Dr. Radhakrishnan is noted for his constant synthesis of Eastern and Western writings. In his well-known commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita there are frequent references not only to Plato and Plotinus, but to Spinoza and Wordsworth, to St Paul, St Teresa, Thomas a Kempis, Eckhart, Tauler, Luther, and so on. But, apart from one or two general references to Greek philosophy and a few to the Bible (of which more later), there is none of this in Aurobindo's two long series of *Essays on the Gita*. And in his masterpiece, *The Life Divine*, where each one of the 56 chapters is headed with quotations from scriptures, these are always from Hindu and never from any other scriptures. Only once is Christianity mentioned in the footnotes in this book and a few times in the text. Far from importing the West into India, Sri Aurobindo, at least in quotations and open references, seemed to be expounding India to herself, and only secondarily to others who might be interested.

Sri Aurobindo has been accused of criticising the West and its philosophy too

much, for its apparent materialism. But in fact he often disclaimed any title to being a philosopher. He had little knowledge of classical European philosophy, had read only two of Plato's works (*Republic* and *Timaeus*), and was only concerned to attack the sceptical philosophers of the last two centuries. He was more a theologian than a philosopher, but an Indian theologian, anxious to interpret his own religious experience to his many disciples. Yet it might be expected that Christian theology might influence him, though open quotations from Christian writers are much more rare in the books of Sri Aurobindo than in those of Dr. Radhakrishnan and other modern Indian writers. Open references to Christianity as a religion are similarly rare. I cannot claim to have read all Sri Aurobindo's many writings, but I make a selection from some of the best known.

There is a mild reference, much gentler than attacks made by many European critics, on the way in which organized religion has at times opposed progress. "We need not," says Sri Aurobindo, "lay a too excessive stress on the superstitions, aberrations, violences, crimes even, which Churches and cults and creeds have favoured... either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, though it may be an important side of it, is not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindness are also and even more divine."¹ Here both Hindu and Christian extremes of asceticism are kindly put aside, and in the name of terms that Christians understand well—love and charity. Priests and cults, of all religions, may stifle the faith or bolster up outworn social systems, but finally they cannot destroy the mighty power of the religious spirit in man.

In the *Essays on the Gita*, after a glancing reference to some "exoteric" Christian interpretations of the revelation of God (of which more later), it is remarked that "the permanent, vital, universal effect of Buddhism and Christianity has been the force of their ethical, social and practical ideals", even on those who have "rejected their religious and spiritual beliefs". And in *The Life Divine* the "Christian emphasis on love" is said, in a footnote, to indicate "the dynamic side of the spiritual being".²

These are typical of the few mentions of organized Christianity. Christian and popular Hindu ideas may be referred to in general criticisms of the ideas of hells, "the fables of half-enlightened creeds", but these are judged in the name of "love and compassion". The "poetic parable" of the Fall of Man as taught in the Hebrew Genesis is quoted in the light of "the dividing consciousness which brings with it all the train of dualities, life and death, good and evil...this is the fruit which Adam and Eve, Purusha and Prakriti, the soul tempted by nature, have eaten". The Semitic revelation is referred to in the story of creation, "the Self-awareness of the Infinite ranges freely creating forms which afterwards remain in play so long as there is not the fiat that bids them cease....But when we say, 'God said, Let there be Light', we

¹ *The Human Cycle*, 17.

² *Essays on the Gita*, International Centre edn. 1955, p. 230; *The Life Divine*, International Centre edn. 1959, p. 1252.

assume the act of a power of consciousness which determines light out of everything else that is not light". The power of creation is identified with Maya, which is the work of infinite consciousness fashioning Name and Shape out of the illimitable truth of infinite existence. So the Hebrew concept is given a fully Hindu expression. On a later page there is a reconciliation of the belief that "it is in the heavens beyond that we must seek our entire divine fulfilment, as the religions assert", with the other assertion of "the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the perfect upon earth". But there is no reason to limit ourselves to one view or the other. "The material can be transfigured through higher laws, and there is an ascending series of divine gradations of substance."¹

Even with these few references, considering the great extent of Sri Aurobindo's writings, there seems to be little open effect of Christian teaching, and little marriage of Christian with Hindu ideas. It would be indeed strange that one brought up in a strongly Christian environment, with both Congregationalist and Anglican ministers to teach him, and with a profound European classical training, should not show more obviously the influence of those early days and their teaching.

Yet having said all this, perhaps it is in the very spirit of synthesis that was so profoundly at work in Sri Aurobindo, that there is a unification of Hindu and Christian thought that is no less important for being transmuted into a fully Hindu setting. For if one considers basic Christian beliefs, as distinct from secondary concerns of church history and organization, then it may well be true that an acceptance and synthesis of West and East is indeed to be found throughout the writings of Sri Aurobindo. As in the social and political views of Mahatma Gandhi, as in the devotional poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, so in the theology and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo there is that great modern movement of synthesis, so different from the past, in which modern India is pre-eminent in the world of ideas.

Two fundamental Christian beliefs, on which it is instructive to consider the interpretation given by Sri Aurobindo, are those on the Incarnation and the Love of God. Belief in God Christianity adopted from Judaism, and shares it with most religions. But the conception of the nature of God is fundamentally affected by the interpretation given to the person of Christ. Let us consider the idea of Incarnation first, as Sri Aurobindo deals with it.

There is little directly on this subject in *The Life Divine*, except a sentence that declares that it is "the Son of Man who is supremely capable of incarnating God". This Son of Man, however, is the Manu, the Purusha, "the soul in mind of the ancient sages".² So the technical terms "Son of Man" and "Incarnation" are here simple illustrations of ancient Hindu doctrine. There may be more than this, in the use which *The Life Divine* makes of the concept of personality and the love of God, but we shall return to this.

It is in the two series of the *Essays on the Gita*, as might be expected, that references to Christ are most frequent. For it would be hard to expound this great treatise on the divine Avatar without referring to similar beliefs in other religions. The idea

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p. 77 ; *The Life Divine*, pp. 61, 136, 300.

² *The Life Divine*, p. 56.

of divine descent is central to Hinduism. "India has from ancient times held strongly to a belief in the reality of the Avatar, the descent into form, the revelation of the Godhead in humanity." In the West, declared Sri Aurobindo, "this belief has never really stamped itself upon the mind because it has been presented through exoteric Christianity as a theological dogma without any roots in the reason and general consciousness and attitude towards life. But in India it has grown up and persisted as a logical outcome of the Vedantic view of life and taken firm root in the consciousness of the race."¹

Christian thinkers have distinguished their idea of Incarnation from others by insisting on the historical character of the incarnate being. But Sri Aurobindo, like Mahatma Gandhi, seems, at first sight, to have regarded this as a minor matter. He says : "The external aspect has only a secondary importance. Such controversies as the one that has raged in Europe over the historicity of Christ, would seem to a spiritually-minded Indian largely a waste of time ; he would concede to it a considerable historical, but hardly any religious importance....If the Christ, God made man, lives within our spiritual being, it would seem to matter little whether or not a son of Mary physically lived and suffered and died in Judea."²

Probably Christian writers today would be less ready than in the past to insist on the literal historicity of some of the Gospel stories. With the "higher criticism" and the "de-mythologizing" efforts of modern scholars, more stress might be put on the meaning and spirituality of the Christ-story. To run after vulgar miracles, says the orthodox theologian Emil Brunner, is to destroy the divine Fact of the Incarnation. Yet the fact is there. Jesus lived as a real man, not as a shadow or an illusion. No serious secular historian doubts the existence of Jesus, and his death as a man, whatever he may think of the faith in his resurrection. The words of Christ are recorded in various forms, but such a deep impression do they make on the mind that it is clear that a great religious genius uttered them, and so they witness to his significance. That Christ is believed to "live within our spiritual being" is because we have seen him to be of such a character that our spirits respond to the divinity in him.

Sri Aurobindo goes on to discuss the historicity of Krishna. "The historical Krishna, no doubt, existed... perhaps the human Krishna was the founder, restorer or at the least one of the early teachers of this school.... But all this, though of considerable historical importance, has none whatever for our present purpose.... It is the eternal Avatar, this God in man, the divine Consciousness always present in the human being who, manifested in a visible form, speaks to the human soul in the Gita." Though the stories of the life of Krishna are very diverse, and no doubt contradictory, yet there may be some human life behind the story; but also in the faith in him there is the conviction of his existence among men. This is even more clear in the story of Rama.

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p. 15.

² *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

And since the Buddha himself is often taken as an Avatar of Vishnu, then his undoubted historicity is a further element in the picture of historical Avatars. Indeed this would seem to be essential to the doctrine of Avatars set out in the Bhagavad Gita : "Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bharata, then I send forth myself."¹ The "sending-forth" is not the same as the indwelling in all beings, it is a special manifestation, a "coming down", an "incarnation".

That Sri Aurobindo recognized this may be suggested in the way in which he used fully Christian language on occasion, and of course he was well aware of its implications. He spoke of "a descent, a birth of God in humanity, the Godhead manifesting itself in the human form and nature". And again, "the Avatar stands in the centre as the gate, he makes through himself the way men shall follow. That is why each Incarnation holds before men his own example and declares of himself that he is the way and the gate; he declares too the oneness of his humanity with the divine being, declares that the Son of Man and the Father above from whom he has descended are one."²

In a later passage Sri Aurobindo showed the importance of a true Incarnation, rather than a mere appearance. "The object of the Avatar's descent...is precisely to show that the human birth with all its limitations can be made such a means and instrument of the divine birth and divine works....If the Avatar were to act in an entirely supernormal fashion, this object would not be fulfilled. A merely supernormal or miraculous Avatar would be a meaningless absurdity; not that there need be an entire absence of the use of supernormal powers, such as Christ's so-called miracles of healing, for the use of supernormal powers is quite a possibility of human nature." But, he continued, "the Avatar does not come as a thaumaturgic magician, but as the divine leader of humanity and the exemplar of a divine humanity. Even human sorrow and physical suffering he must assume and use so as to show, first, how that suffering may be a means of redemption,—as did Christ,—secondly, to show how, having been assumed by the divine soul in the human nature, it can also be overcome in the same nature."³

The whole conception of Incarnation or Avatar may appear absurd to the rationalist, and in the suffering of the divine he finds the height and proof of absurdity. But this is where he is most clearly wrong, as Sri Aurobindo insists : "The rationalist who would have cried to Christ, 'If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross', or points out sagely that the Avatar was not divine because he died too by disease,—as a dog dieth,—knows not what he is saying : for he has missed the root of the whole matter. Even, the Avatar of sorrow and suffering must come before there can be the Avatar of divine joy; the human limitation must be assumed in order to

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p. 19 f. ; Bhagavad Gita 4, 7.

² *Essays on the Gita*, p. 200.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

show how it can be overcome.... It must not be done by a non-human miracle."¹

Of course there is a notable difference between the traditional Christian conception of one Incarnation, "once for all", and the characteristic Hindu belief in multiple Avatars which Sri Aurobindo accepted without question, firmly including the Buddha as an Avatar. Many of his sentences speak of "the Avatar, the divinely-born Man", the "secret Godhead", the "divine manifestation of a Christ, Krishna, Buddha". It may be that there is an unbridgeable gulf in this matter between Christian and Hindu thought. Yet some reservations may be made. The first is that the Bible puts the Christ in a succession of divinely sent envoys : "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Secondly, although Christ came "once for all" for this present world era, yet the traditional faith is that he will come again and perhaps he will be as difficult to recognize then as he was the last time.

Sri Aurobindo does not mention these points, but he does indicate differences between Avatars. The mythical stories of the early Avatars of Vishnu were mainly concerned to destroy some great evil. But, he says, "if this outward utility were all, we should have to exclude Buddha and Christ whose mission was not at all to destroy evil-doers and deliver the good, but to bring to all men a new spiritual message and a new law of divine growth and spiritual realization.... Always his work leads, after he has finished his earthly manifestation, to a profound and powerful change not only in the ethical, but in the social and outward life and ideals of the race."²

Sri Aurobindo makes a further defence of the concept of the Avatar, recognizing that to many people, in India as in Europe, this may appear to be opposed to the purest ideas of God, and even a degeneration from them. This is indeed, said our seer, "to the heathen a foolishness and to the Greeks a stumbling-block". For "to the modern mind Avatarhood is one of the most difficult to accept or understand". At its best it may be regarded as a mere figure of speech for some special manifestation of human character, some outstanding genius, some great moral achievement; and at its worst it may look like superstition. The materialist dismisses the very idea of Incarnation, because he does not believe in God or any divine activity. While the rationalist or Deist "objects that if God exists, he is extra-cosmic or super-cosmic and does not intervene in the affairs of the world, but allows them to be governed by a fixed machinery of law,—he is, in fact, a sort of far-off constitutional monarch or spiritual King Log". Or if God is not a remote monarch, he is thought of as pure Spirit which cannot put on a body, or an Infinite which has nothing to do with the finitude of a human body, or an Unborn who cannot essentially be linked with a creature born into this world. And the dualist, who sees God as "Wholly Other", makes the divine nature utterly different and separate from that of mankind. These objections, says Sri Aurobindo, "must have been present to the mind of the Teacher in

¹ *ibid.*, p. 222.

² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

the Gita when he says that although the Divine is unborn, imperishable in his self-existence, the Lord of all beings, yet he assumes birth by a supreme resort to the action of his Nature and force of his self-Maya; that he whom the deluded despise because lodged in a human body, is verily in his supreme being the Lord of all.... And the Gita is able to meet all these oppositions and to reconcile all these contraries because it starts from the Vedantic view of existence, of God and the universe.”¹

2

The doctrine of Incarnation or Avatar is basic, and it makes an essential difference to the conception we have of the nature and activity of God. We must now examine this idea of God further, and look briefly at some of the important lines of argument. In *The Life Divine* the notion of an utter separation of God and man was strongly attacked. “The error is to make an unbridgeable gulf between God and man, Brahman and the world. That error elevates an actual and practical differentiation in being, consciousness and force into an essential division.” One consequence of this separation is to raise the problem of evil in an acute form. “God is a conscious being who is the author of existence; how then can God have created a world in which he inflicts suffering on his creatures, sanctions pain, permits evil? God being All-Good, who created pain and evil? If we say that pain is a trial and an ordeal, we do not solve the moral problem, we arrive at an immoral or non-moral God,—an excellent world-machinist perhaps, a cunning psychologist, but not a God of good and of love whom we can worship.” How then can the problem of the relationship of suffering to God be solved? Sri Aurobindo said that to escape the moral difficulty by claiming that pain is a natural punishment of moral evil will not square with the facts of life unless we admit the theory of Karma and rebirth; but he continued that even then “the inexorable law of Karma is irreconcilable with a supreme moral and personal Deity, and therefore the clear logic of Buddha denied the existence of any free and all-governing personal God; all personality he declared to be a creation of ignorance and subject to Karma.”

Sri Aurobindo himself did not accept this non-theistic solution, but he saw the answer to lie in the nature of God. “In truth, the difficulty thus sharply presented arises only if we assume the existence of an *extra-cosmic* personal God, not Himself the universe, one who has created good and evil, pain and suffering for his creatures, but Himself stands above and unaffected by them.” But on the view of God as Immanent and Incarnate, the problem of suffering changes its aspect, if it does not disappear. “If then evil and suffering exist, it is He that bears the evil and suffering in the creature in whom He has embodied Himself. The problem then changes entirely. The question is no longer how God came to create for His creatures a suffering and evil of which He Himself is incapable and therefore immune.”²

¹ *ibid.*, p. 203.

² *The Life Divine*, pp. 112 ff. *My italics*.

This is a fascinating and important subject, which deserves much fuller study and exposition than can be given to it now, but we cannot let it detain us. It is mentioned because it illustrates how important is the belief in the involvement of God in the world, as Immanent and Avatar, to Hindu thought. But this leads us on to consider other aspects of belief in God.

To a monotheist in the Semitic or Western tradition the name God bears within itself its own definition. "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." "I bear witness that there is no God but God." When this monotheist hears talk of other gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, and the like, he is shocked. And when in the stories of the Buddha he reads of Indra or Brahma coming to ask questions of the Enlightened One, he is puzzled. For how can any man advise a God who, by definition, is super-human? Even an Avatar could not presume to instruct the Almighty. And although in popular Christian teaching Christology or Mariolatry have tended at times to take a more prominent place than theology, the doctrine of God, yet this is not orthodox. That God the Father suffered, rather than the incarnate Son, was early declared to be a heresy. Of Praxeas who put out this theory it was said that "he put to flight the Comforter and crucified the Father".

Sri Aurobindo wrote constantly of God, using this English word fully aware of its strong Jewish-Christian associations, yet applying it freely to Indian religion. In the *Essays on the Gita* he recognized the attempt that the Gita made not only to reconcile the Yoga doctrine of liberation by works with the Sankhya doctrine of liberation by knowledge, but also to reconcile differing views of deity. "The Purusha, Deva, Ishwara,—supreme Soul, God, Lord,—of the Upanishads all became merged in the one all-swallowing concept of the immutable Brahman; and it has to bring out again from its overshadowing by that concept, but not with any denial of it, the Yoga idea of the Lord or Ishwara." And a few pages later he said that "we may take it that the orthodox Vedanta was, at any rate in its main tendencies, pantheistic at the basis, monistic at the summit. It knew of the Brahman, one without a second; it knew of the Gods, Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma and the rest, who all resolve themselves into the Brahman; but the one supreme Brahman as the one Ishwara, Purusha, Deva, words often applied to it in the Upanishads..., was an idea that had fallen from its pride of place". So the Gita proposed "not only to restore the original equality of these names", but "to go a step further". So "the Brahman in its supreme and not in any lower aspect has to be presented as the Purusha". And beyond this "the Gita is going to represent the Ishwara, the Purushottama, as higher even than the still and immutable Brahman".¹ And later he said that "the Godhead is even more and greater than the Immutable". This certainly is much closer to what the Western mind at its best could regard as God, rather than some other elements in Hinduism.

Sri Aurobindo continued his commentary by emphasizing the synthesis by which the Gita tackled the problem of polytheism. "The Gita resolves this opposition by

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, pp. 119-124, 397

insisting that the Devas are only forms of the one Deva, the Ishwara, the Lord of all Yoga and worship and sacrifice and austerity.... For the Lord and the immutable Brahman are not two different beings, but one and the same Being, and whoever strives towards either, is striving towards that one divine Existence." And again, "this is the supreme Divine, God, who possesses both the infinite and the finite, and in whom the personal and the impersonal, the one Self and the many existences... meet, are united, are possessed together and in each other. In God all things find their secret truth and their absolute reconciliation."¹

The concept of the personal God, the Ishwara, leads direct to the affirmation of personal relationships with him. This is the devotion to God in which "there is always the element, the foundation even of personality, since its motive-power is the love and adoration of the individual soul, the Jiva, turned towards the supreme and universal Being". It is of course the Gita that "assigns to bhakti, to the love of God, to the adoration of the Highest, the inmost spirit and motive of the supreme action and the crown and core of the supreme knowledge". This great teaching comes from the personal Lord. "It is a Master of our works, a Friend and Lover of our soul, an intimate Spirit of our life, an indwelling and overdwelling Lord of all our personal and impersonal self and nature who alone can utter to us this near and moving message."²

It is not only in the *Essays on the Gita* that we find, as could hardly be avoided, an emphasis on the personal relationships of man and God. It is a theme running through the classic *Life Divine*, and it is expressed in the term "God-lover" for the human relationship to God. The love-relationship, the bhakti, is both a descent (avatara) of God towards man, and also an ascent of the beloved to God. So Sri Aurobindo said that "each successive level in the descent of the Divine is to man a stage in an ascension; each veil that hides the unknown God becomes for the God-lover and God-seeker an instrument of his unveiling". Unity and oneness with God, he said, "will not preclude relations of the divine soul with God, with its supreme Self, founded on the joy of difference separating itself from unity to enjoy that unity otherwise; it will not annul the possibility of any of those exquisite forms of God-enjoyment which are the highest rapture of the God-lover in the clasp of the Divine."³

This is the theme of many mystics, and Sri Aurobindo both recognized the validity of the mystical approach to and communion with God, and also the dangers of emotionalism and isolation that beset the mystic way. In the materialist view the mystic "is the man who turns aside into the unreal, into occult regions of a self-constructed land of chimeras and loses his way there". And indeed "the ascetic or other-worldly tendency of the mystic is an extreme affirmation of his refusal to accept the limitations imposed by material nature". And in a footnote Sri Aurobindo

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p. 169.

² *ibid.*, pp. 379, 735.

³ *The Life Divine*, pp. 53, 188.

referred to the Buddhist and Christian emphasis on compassion and love which gave a dynamic transformation to the mystical way.¹

The relationship of love between man and God is not merely a human emotion induced by the contemplation of the divine attributes, it must depend upon the original motion of grace and love of God to man. The religions of grace have stressed this and made "the love of God" central to their teaching. There is little of this in the Upanishads, but it comes out in the closing verses of the Gita. Sri Aurobindo just mentioned this in his commentary. "This supreme word of the Gita is, we find, first the explicit and unmistakable declaration that the highest worship and highest knowledge of the Eternal are the knowledge and the adoration of him as the supreme and divine Origin of all that is in existence.... It is, secondly, the declaration of a unified knowledge and bhakti as the supreme Yoga.... For this delight of the heart in God is the whole constituent and essence of true bhakti." And again, the supreme word of the Gita, the most secret truth of all, the secret of secrets, is that the bhakta "is the chosen and beloved soul, *iṣṭa*. For evidently, as had already been declared by the Upanishad, it is only the rare soul chosen by the Spirit for the revelation of his very body, *tanum svām*, who can be admitted to this mystery, because he alone is near enough in heart and mind to the Godhead to respond truly to it in all his being and to make it a living practice". It may be remarked that the Gita itself declared that its way of devotion was open to all : "those who take refuge in me, though they are lowly born, women, Vaisyas, as well as Sudras, they also attain to the highest goal."²

It is in this sense that Sri Aurobindo could use the phrase "God is love". Not as an abstract qualification, but as personal. In *The Life Divine* he said, "we can say that God is Love, God is Wisdom, God is Truth or Righteousness : but he is not himself an impersonal state or abstract of states or qualities; he is the Being, at once absolute, universal and individual. If we look at it from this basis, there is, very clearly, no opposition, no incompatibility, no impossibility of a co-existence or one-existence of the Impersonal and the Person; they are each other, live in one another, melt into each other, and yet in a way can appear as if different ends, sides, obverse and reverse of the same Reality."³

If we have stressed in this essay the personal relationships between man and God it is because they are essential to theistic religion, and we have supported this view by quotations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo. But this writer took proper care to see that attribution of personality to God did not imply any limitation of God to a concrete person, a God "up there" or an "old man in the sky", in the terms of current controversy. Some kind of personal relationships there must be, if man is to understand God at all. These are made easier for man by the revelation of God in Incarnation or Avatar, wherein both the nature and the works of God are shown. But that

¹ *ibid.*, p. 1051 f.

² *Essays on the Gita*, pp. 465, 755. *Bhagavad-Gita* 9 32

³ *The Life Divine*, p. 1182.

God is both beyond and greater than his revelation is fundamental to a proper attempt at understanding him. He both uses the personal medium of communication, and he far transcends it.

Sri Aurobindo expounded this viewpoint in his application of both personal and impersonal terms to God. "This is the supreme Divine, God, who possesses both the infinite and the finite, and in whom the personal and the impersonal, the one Self and the many existences, being and becoming, the world-action and the supracosmic peace, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, meet, are united, are possessed together and in each other. In God all things find their secret truth and their absolute reconciliation."¹

God is not limited to the personal, but he far surpasses it. "This Godhead is not the limited personal God of so many exoteric religions... This Godhead is not a particularised name and form of Divinity, *iṣṭa-devatā*, constructed by the intelligence or embodying the special aspirations of the worshipper. All such names and forms are only powers and faces of the one Deva who is the universal Lord of all worshippers and all religions : but this is that universal Deity, *deva-deva*. This Ishwara is not a reflection of the impersonal and indeterminable Brahman in illusive Maya : for from beyond the cosmos as well as within it he rules and is the Lord of the worlds and their creatures."²

Likewise God is not to be identified with the universe. "The world is only a partial manifestation of the Godhead, it is not itself that Divinity. The Godhead is infinitely greater than any natural manifestation can be ...Therefore beyond cosmos the eye of the liberated spirit will see the utter Divine." And yet the true meaning of the visible world is in that Divine, and the liberated spirit perceives it. "Looking at each of these things and beyond it, he will find in the Divinity its spiritual significance."³

As in God personal and impersonal are reconciled, so it is in man who seeks union with God. "Losing our lower individual personality in the Impersonal, we arrive finally at union with that supreme personality who is not separate and individual, but yet assumes all personalities." And Sri Aurobindo ended his second series of the *Essays on the Gita* with an assurance that whoever lives in the Divine Presence will find the inmost secret of reality. "Whatever your way of life and mode of action, you will be consciously living, acting and moving in him and the Divine Power will act through you in your every inner and outer motion. This is the supreme way because it is the highest secret and mystery and yet an inner movement progressively realisable by all. This is the deepest [and most intimate truth of your real, your spiritual existence."⁴

E. G. PARRINDER

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, p. 169.

² *ibid.*, p. 462.

³ *ibid.*, p. 181, 809.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 497.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLISATION IN ART

This profound essay is by a German poet-psychologist, a lifelong student of the works of Rilke and at one time a resident of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and always thereafter an Aurobindonian at heart.

I

THE creative act is an act of symbolisation. The world in which we live is a symbol of that hidden Being and Existence, that Consciousness, Power and Supreme Joy, which created it, which supports and develops it and without which it would lose its reality and shrink to less than form and name. With the rise of a creative knowledge out of the highest Truth of indefinable Transcendence which is conscious of the meaning and aim of its creation, and its creative Will which works at the execution of this meaning and at the fulfilment of this aim—with the projection of a divine Determination out of the Absolute, with the partial and rapid unfolding of the possibilities inherent in it into less and less absolute, more and more relative realities during the process of cosmic Involution and a slow and more and more embracing development and manifestation of these possibilities into more and more absolute, less and less relative, realities during the process of universal Evolution, the Divine becomes a symbol of Itself. Each expression, each structure and form, each condition in which a quality represents itself, each cosmic configuration is a symbol for its own higher and highest truth inherent in it, a representative of its spiritual and divine being. The lower nature of the earthly, its mental, vital, and physical manifestations are, even if imperfect, symbols of a supreme divine Nature and all becoming of this world is nothing but the process in which the cosmic Symbol unveils its content, in which Nature works at the perfection of the expression of its Soul and in which the Being arrives at the highest possible relation with its own Becoming.

God is the supreme Artist, symbolising Himself in the earthly. All existence is the revealing or concealing expression of the power of His grace by which He manifests realities and possibilities of His own existence as worlds and beings. He recognises Himself in all, even in the resistance of the imperfections, sees in each form the power of its universal soul which supports the existence and, there where the doors to the Truth are closed to our senses, His consciousness blissfully enters and leaves. But we grow and our insight will widen until we too experience the symbolic character of the things surrounding us, until we too experience grace in each form which it creates and supports, until we too recognise God in the worm.

Within the small world of our symbols builds the creative man. Each work which he lifts out of the inwardness of his soul into space becomes one of those

building-stones which will join in the true revealing structure of the world. In his creations the artist finds living centres of influence upon Nature for the psychic force. For the blessing of grace does not exhaust itself in the expression. Each formation manifested transmits its presence as influence upon the world of its existence. The work of art is one of those active centres from which grace wells forth. It is as if it would radiate the power of the soul of the artist absorbed by it without interruption, as if in it the mysterious spring of a pure and exalted efficacy were created which serves to purify the surrounding existence. Or it holds itself out as an opening, as a vista which makes possible for us the insight, the knowledge, the feeling into that region, that form of existence, those "destinations" out of which it works, which support it, out of which it evolved and which it now forms. We experience in it a deeper reality, the unveiling of a purer, nobler, more blissful power than we meet in the forms of every day. Something speaks to us, we are touched, an intimate inward relation reveals itself. We experience the deeps of the creating one in ourselves. A wall has fallen in. We know ourselves in the work of the other.

Such experience of our luminous inside is joy, redeeming, deeply vibrating joy. It is the discovery of a state in us which, untouched by outer occurrences, preserves itself around the blissful centre of divine presence in us. We experience something of the meaning of our own psychic power in its effect upon us. And it is this effect only which determines for us the value of a work of art, our admiration, veneration, love and gratitude by which we are accustomed to measure it. What we experience in us is the hidden or open delight of our own soul in the brother force revealed in the work of art, the recognition of our most secret heart in the heart of the creation and the joy in its perfect form. The direct touch we experience does not emanate from the form, nor from the meaning which finds its expression in it, but from our soul which thrills our heart and mind. For it is the pure, loving, ready, receiving one, it is the felicitously seeing one in front of whom the work unveils itself in all its elements. Therefore we must be silent. Therefore mind and will must be quieted so that its stream may wholly seize us. Only the listener hears the tone. To be present ever more inly is the secret of the reception of grace in the works of art.

Every true work of art is the symbol of an inner truth as perceived by the soul of the creator and manifested through his nature by its force of grace. In the creative process matter is used to unveil those greater realities inherent in the earthly which unerringly move towards the fulfilment of its meaning. It is the natural formation of grace for which the artist strives, the expression of a spiritual reality by means of an imperfect nature. He creates the tone that speaks of grace, he places the word into its spiritual relation and in the tone unveils the depth of its reality up to the edge of silence out of which it rose and which supports it. And thus the work becomes a vessel, the vehicle of a force which does not correspond to its natural constitution but surpasses it into the region of its inward being. Thus it becomes the revealing witness of a world to which ours belongs only like the images of a phantasmagoria and the divine voices of which resound but in an unclear echo from the narrow walls of our

limitations. By him something has come into being which guarantees a supernatural to us, a power that supports, witnesses and redeems. We hold the proof in hand of a hidden source of pure, high joy, the origin of our aspiration for surrender, liberation and fulfilment. We experience in it the touch of the soul, the sign of its indescribably inward presence and its call to identification.

For the blessing which in the symbol becomes ours is more than the offering of an unexpected inner wealth. It is the demand of grace upon our readiness to surrender to its will. The symbol is the sign of a reality which calls us towards its manifestation. In this lies its whole significance for us. The experience of a work of art would be meaningless if we did not even for one single step move towards that which found expression in it, if that which was realised in it did not gain reality in us too. Grace must become feelable and conscious, must as a continuous stream direct our will. Into each cell of our body, into our most ordinary actions we must open the way for it. This is the call of art in the manifold voices of its works through the ages. This is the meaning which it serves beyond itself, this is its significance in the outward space of the world and its time, this the demand with which it confronts us, the great holy obligation of which we must be conscious if the work of art is to unfold its whole power of perfection in us. Always it is the receiver's task to serve and realise.

2

What we with our senses perceive as a work of art is its appearance only, an image of its reality projecting itself into the world of material manifestations. It is the figure which we would not understand if in the memory of our mentality there were not to be found an equivalent with which we could confront and compare it and which would seem to justify our judgement. The sense-perception is accompanied by a subliminal perception of the natural qualities of the object by an inner consciousness in us and brings about in our nature a reaction whose effect often reaches our outwardly directed consciousness.

But all this does not suffice to touch us inly, to convince us that in this work art has been formed, grace revealed. The experience of the soul, the psychic perception of the truth and essence of the object which we have perceived with our senses and which has been registered and responded to by our subliminal nature, the perception of its idea which represents its meaning on a lower level and to which the artist, even if only as something latent, has given expression in the nature of his work, is all-important. The psychic experience of grace, the inmost force of one's own heart in the work of art of the other, is momentous. For only this experience and the realisation of it in our consciousness can guarantee the value of the work to us. By way of this experience only are we sure of its being a manifestation of art. The blissful, unrestricted consent of our soul which recognises its own reality in the object and insists upon bearing witness of this to the nature and its consciousness, even if they may be limited and hindered by want of readiness, by unwillingness and closure, is our pure and

true relation to the work of the artist. No sensuous joy, no mental comprehension, no vital feeling-into can ever replace this psychic identification with the form and its grace.

At the touch of the essence of the object and in the vision of the truth of its idea, a call for acceptance and veneration, for love and gratitude for the creative power breaks out of the inmost core of our existence. This is the true experience of art that proceeds from the soul, from its nameless joy in creation, in which it recognises itself, from its surrender to the pure force, which supports the work, from its knowing feeling for the meaning of the form. However little our superficial consciousness mostly is ready to receive out of this inmost inwardness of our being, however much we are inclined to trust our senses, our reason and its aesthetic qualities and our vital emotion which veils more than reveals to us, the significance which a work has for us is decided only there where under the light of two forces meeting and absorbing each other, the limiting appearances vanish and our own soul is reflected in the latence of manifested grace.

But such felicitous experience of grace in the work of art as it streams forth from the soul is but one aspect of the relation which binds us to it. To the passive reception and its reaction, wholly happening in the subjective, corresponds the introjection of our own awakened psychic force into the spiritual centre of the object. It is, as if with this introjection the receiver himself would become the creator as he accomplishes this most essential part of the creative act—the manifestation of grace in the outward. This only distinguishes him from the real artist, that he, instead of forming, uses the expression of another as a means for revelation. Only by performing once more and wholly for himself this re-creation and, in the outstretched hands of his soul, offering himself to the work—only by this act does he find the confirmation of his own being in the work of the creator. And what a felicity lies in this act, in the possibility to live what one has experienced as true in oneself and to carry it outside, to place it in front of oneself and the world so that one may find it confirmed again and again! Does not the joy of the artist resurrect in the heart of each of us when we softly, almost unconsciously and still with the great security of one led from within with a secret finger, glide along the vibrations and courses, the intensities and concentrations of the work as if each reality of its structure should be confirmed individually? We know that only thus, only by way of this active receiving and comprehending, can it become wholly our own. For we possess but that with which the soul in us has identified itself.

The act of the manifestation of grace is executed in us in all details. The elements of our nature which surrender their own will-force to the power of the soul become its instruments in the work of its realisation. It seeks in its nature for an equivalent to the idea of its truth as recognised in the object and, in the process of introjection, transmits it into the nature of the work. And, because everything that submits to it becomes purified, we are able to know and experience the purity in the object of art. For again it is our own being, elements of our own existence, which we meet in

what confronts us. That stands like a mirror before our essence and we fill its form with our own content. What is transmittable into its nature upon the stream of grace animates the expression too and makes it significant for us.

But its inner value, the power of its spiritual meaning, comes forth to meet us only if our own psychic force experiences itself in the work. There we suddenly find dense veils falling off our eyes and everything which we hitherto saw and experienced appears as shadows of this reality that reveals itself like a mystery. Miraculously and apparently without our interference, before our eyes the work begins to unfold itself from within and only now its true form reveals itself, only now it becomes ours in its whole truth. We experience it as the active symbol of its own spiritual reality by means of which we are in communion with it. What we apparently lost in the act of mere receiving, what delighted our soul without reaching our consciousness—all this, here preserved and collected, luminously comes out of the inexhaustible fountain to meet us as a new manifestation of grace. That is the thanksoffering of our soul in which blissfully and freely its force surrenders to the reality of its vision, the confession of the human heart to the purity and truth from the Eternal. That is the act which saves the transitory, confirms the faith, possesses the renounced and alone leads to realisation and perfection.

3

The circle of relation between the work of art and the receiver is closed in re-receiving what has been transmitted into the object. But now everything is illumined, clear and interwoven into different aspects of the one reality. The experience of the senses is no longer confined to the superficial lower mentality and even surpasses by far our aesthetic faculty. A light, a feeling consciousness is inherent in it and makes it the lightning spark to the latent flame of our heart. Out of the region of the work, now purified for us too, its nature elements pass subliminally into us and meet us pure and exalted in our consciousness. And they too shine forth in the light of grace that carries them, and receive their true significance out of the depth of our soul. We experience how the work grows in us and how we mature by it, how knowledge, will and feeling fuse into one single vibration, which begins in the self of our being. Here only, at the centre of our existence, there is nothing which would need change, nothing which would need purification, deepening or realisation. The supreme joy in the truth of the work, the immutable readiness to give and to receive grace in inner identification which makes but possible our experience of art and its works, are the eternal signs of the soul. Beyond subject and object, grace as an incessant stream of divine Power unites us with the creation. Beyond the senses and their consciousness art as an incessant stream of psychic force unites us with its work.

For not only that is art which manifests itself through the creator. What in the act of recreation, introjection and symbolisation we transmit as most essential sub-

stance into the work and what thereafter we receive back as its experienceable influence bears this form of grace too. We, the apparently mere receivers, the passive accepting ones, in reality are taken in also into the living process of art. What began in the artist has not come to an end in the work but passes over to us, takes possession of us and receives in each of us its new confirmation which but secures it its earthly continuance. The creating man does not form into empty space in which the work finally stands free and detached, without relation and meaningless in regard to the world. To what he gave birth and what he carried outside has, if it is true, in the integrality of the world its place and its definite relatedness. From this place, as from all existence, its influence goes forth. We, who expose ourselves to it, who, ready to act, seize the force offered in order to work with it at ourselves, we are its meaning in the world, we end the revealing movement, we fulfil what began itself in the formateur.

If we know this as our obligation, as the demand that for us grows out of each encounter with art, then there depends upon it much more than the fate of the work only or even our own development, our growth, our realisation. We know that not only does art correspond to the group in which it manifests but that the group too labours to correspond to its art, the models of its soul, to justify by its existential attitude and to strive, where it is able to do so, towards an ever wider realisation of its truth. But such a realisation by means of which a human society works at its fulfilment will always have to be done by the individual of this society and will depend upon the relation with art he is able to create for himself. [By his willingness and standing-up for it to correspond to the demand which is laid on him by this form of grace he becomes one of those centres which not only approve of an ideal but are prepared, in the frame and for the benefit of the society in which they live, to serve it and to work at its realisation.

Thus not only is the formateur responsible for the work but the receiver too. The possibility it meant for the one it remains for the other. With the same necessity with which art urged the creator towards its realisation it urges each of us towards the ever new execution of its reality in our being. The unity, into which art takes up the formateur and his work and the receiver, and through which it creates that spiritual directness we experience on our being with our entrance into the holy circle, is a dynamic, active unity. As grace is meaningless if it does not operate, so too the art in which it manifests loses its significance in a torpid and inactive state.

In such deeper unity the work is the vibrating centre, the living revelation of grace in the outward to which the artist rose when he created, which he empowered with the spiritual force of his soul and which now radiates this force into us so that with its help we too may rise. This is the growing by the work which is so familiar to the artist and which for us too must become a conscious experience. Not only to delight, to favour, to bless us is the purpose of art. For the consciousness inherent in the force of grace knows that this delight, this happiness will remain transitorily present as long as man has not found his soul nor learned to live in it with all the elements of

his nature. Therefore its pressing demand to raise ourselves into it, to mature by it and to know the power of our self behind it, the acting presence of the true man in us. Therefore, its untiring activity throughout the millenniums in which there were men who consciously or unconsciously worked at their own perfection, at the perfection of their tribe, their people, their race. In art God summons us. We must not hesitate.

JOBST MÜHLING

DUST, SUN AND LOVE

You ask me to speak of India,
For your heart a picture to paint ?
To share with you my glorious days,
Accept my love then, as I relate...

The land is favoured, this much I say,
And it binds you with a spell.
The dust and the sun are two halves of one,
And all that lives between these two
Is created with heavenly care.
Never have I known such brothers,
Or seen such eyes as the Indian,
Nor beheld such grace as when they move ;
If there are Gods, they looked at me there,
And tried my love as they shone.

Much have I seen of dirt-roads and mud,
Beggars as many as flies.
Patience of black buffaloes matched
With brown lean bodies and white cloth
Against the sun.
Children that are so beautiful,
Leaping in water and on land,
How will I show for you to see
The tiny maidens in bright coloured gowns ?
The diamond eyes lined to make you burn more,
And soft long hair with flowers decked ;
Their naked brothers, darling boys, brown,
Looking and glowing like lamps in my soul.

Will I ever be able to tell
Of the graceful women in saris so bright,
The weeping blues and the saffrons laughing ?
Crescendo colours crushing my heart,
Yellows, emeralds and reds, like blood for love ;
Of golden silks that soft-brown bodies kiss,
And the sun that makes a tiara on raven hair,
Then studs it with hyacinth.

Could I but sing of dancing hands and eyes
 That are like birds in their flight ;
 Of tiny bells from silver made,
 Making sound for the feet ;
 Of men who make the vina weep,
 And the sitar to sigh a sob ;
 Drums gently beat the rhythm strong,
 Like your veins throbbing,
 That, that is life, and you are at one
 With all the days and all the nights to come.

There are no words for mountains or rivers,
 For who would dare to speak of their mights
 Such as these are for one's sight?
 Attempt, shall I, to tell of trees
 And precious blooms to match my tale ?
 Oh friend, my friend, could I but say
 What colour they're like, and what fragrance possess !
 And would then be left words to describe
 The flying creatures and the animals of land ?
 Who would then of palms speak,
 And of women sweeping the blooms with small
 Reed brooms, from the walking path,
 Arching their backs toward the ground,
 As worshippers in temples do ?
 And when noon comes and the sun is high,
 Sweet weighty sleep settles on all,
 They squat, or they stretch, some in fine beds,
 And some on God's floor.
 But sleep is Mother to all children alike,
 So well sleep the pig and the cow,
 The birds, beasts and we ; poverty rests
 From pain, and so do the rich from care.

Later in day the street comes alive
 With beggars, cripples, thinkers and saints.
 People squat on, and patiently stare,
 Not asking for changes, just sitting
 With multi-garlands of flowers and seeds.
 Some around temples laze, and bathe
 With sacred milk stone divinities.
 They wait, just wait...for the holy man

To come, down from lofty mounts,
Give them love, and the means
To bear their burdens, and to show
The way that only the few follow.

Oh, holy mounts of India,
Send your blessed peace down ;
Let your love through the Ganges flow
Into the thirsty valleys and plains.
Let my soul bathe with all thirsty kin,
Blessed be Thee and They.

GEORGETTE COTY

THE TRANSCENDENTAL TRAVELLER

Field peace, through white flowers
To a window, and I looked in
And marvelled most strangely
At the new wonders
Which vanished into feathered sense
Shy, to what the taste of my
Hungered world-enamoured eye.
My heart had hung on beaten gold
But now came into equipoise—
Poised and subtly folded through
This mystic glass of any hue.
In that pause was pregnancy
The possible—mute, implicit, free—
Two faces that gazed in this glass
Now seemed to look more searchingly
To catch the franking eye of truth.
For one sky-moment of the free
I gave, unmade humanity.
And probe this unknown hemisphere
With lumination's diamond spear
And gaze into the awesome space
Tentative at crystal lace
Affirm the truth that giving lends
To hold the power that now descends
I send a ghost ascending high
And presences are loving nigh.
All pauses, at where the faces meet
And the lulled barque sails
Into peace abandon. Here waiting
Is tinged with sweetness...
The yearning flower-mouth
Struck with prayer...
And mute implicit bells
Are poised...
In the evening air.

STANLEY W. COWIE

THE SLEEP

A SHORT STORY

"I WOULD like to finish my lecture today, on superstitions in the Far East, with an anecdote, which I think will serve to illustrate, just to what degree these people are prepared to believe in the supernatural."

Monsieur Balraux cleared his throat and continued.

"It was while on a visit to Pnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, that I met a well known local painter, who during his student days in Paris had made the acquaintance of a young French lady. They got on so well together that they vowed never to leave each other, but of course the girl's parents forbade the match under any circumstances, and so the young painter was obliged to return to Cambodia alone.

"Eight months later, the beginning of September 1954 to be exact, the young French lady, without previous announcement, arrived in Pnom Penh. They got married almost immediately, and were soon delighted with the prospect of expecting their first child.

"The young painter, who told me the whole story himself, only wondered why his wife never received any letters from home, nor for that matter wrote any herself. If ever he suggested their visiting France, she would categorically turn down the idea. There was also another point that worried him. His wife, from the day of her arrival in Pnom Penh, had shown an extraordinary need for sleep. But even more surprising was the regularity with which the young woman fell asleep at six in the evening and woke equally regularly at six in the morning, no sooner, no later. This peculiarity had continued for five years now.

"That alone is strange enough, but now comes the wonder, or at least what the people out there quite happily accept as a wonder, without question."

Balraux now smiled knowingly at his expectant audience.

"After a perfectly normal pregnancy, and this fact has been confirmed in my presence by a European doctor, the young lady gave birth without any trace of a child. Nor did she suffer any pains or other characteristics of childbirth. This happened in the night from the tenth to the eleventh of June 1955, in the presence of her servant, who, in contrast to her mistress claims to have sat up all night awake.

"Both wife and servant denied any conspiracy on their part to hide a miscarriage, or smuggle the child out of the house, and after careful searching of the building and grounds, no such evidence could be found.

"There was therefore only one other possibility, a hysterical pregnancy. The wife willingly agreed to have a thorough medical examination, and the doctor ascertained that she showed every sign of recently having given birth.

"At the end of his wits, the young painter decided, together with his wife, to visit a local Sage, a man who was renowned for his wisdom. The Sage explained the phenomenon as follows :

'The painter should thank God for the favour of being allowed to have his wife by him. They should not continue to search for the child. It is not there, because it does not belong there. All things have their justice, and they should be happy with circumstances as they are. There is no doubt about the wife's honesty, and he should never try and prevent her taking her long hours of sleep, otherwise he will run the risk of losing his wife for ever.'

"The pair of them were satisfied with this explanation, and so were the painter's parents and all his friends and relations.

"Well, here at home, thank God, things like that just couldn't happen, because we are not prepared to accept facts at their face value without question. Just imagine what one could get away with if one's fellow citizens were also superstitious."

The laughter, that Balraux had expected, now filled the hall. He collected his papers together and, bowing again and again in response to his audience's applause, stepped down from the podium, wearing a smile of self-content.

Just as Balraux was leaving the building by a side door, he was accosted by a man, who had been desperately pushing his way through the crowd to get to him.

"Monsieur Balraux, I would very much appreciate a word with you. It's in connection with the strange story you told us at the end of your lecture. Do you have a few minutes to spare ?" asked the man breathlessly.

Balraux looked around impatiently, but seeing no way out he agreed to hear what the man had to say.

"At the moment I'm afraid I have no time," he replied, "but if you come to the Café des Deux Magots tomorrow at about five o'clock, you'll find me there."

Next day Depres was already waiting at the Café well before five, nervously lighting one cigarette after another. At last Balraux arrived and, shaking hands with Depres, sat down at the table.

"It's in connection with my wife," began Depres hastily, "she has, peculiar as it may seem, the same need for sleep as the lady in Cambodia, the one you were telling about yesterday evening. My wife also sleeps twelve hours, with the same astonishing regularity. Irrespective of where she is, she falls into a deep sleep at eleven o'clock in the evening, and does not wake up again until twelve hours later, and taking the time zone..."

"How interesting," interrupted Balraux, "a very unusual coincidence. By the way, have you ever checked if your wife takes sleeping pills, without your knowledge of course. You know, many women do so these days for their beauty, though I agree in this case it seems rather exaggerated; but still it probably has excellent results. After all," added Balraux, noticing a frown appear on Depres' face, "that would be a possible and very simple explanation of the whole matter."

"But no, M. Balraux, I assure you that can't apply in our case," replied Depres.

"I know for certain my wife does not take any narcotics. And anyway the most extraordinary thing I haven't told you yet. My wife's need of sleep also began at the beginning of September 1954, the same time as you mentioned. The times of day also coincide. My wife falls asleep exactly when the other awakes and *vice versa*, if one takes into account the difference of the time zones."

"Well indeed," agreed Balraux, "that really is most extraordinary; we should try and find some explanation to these phenomena some time. Well, I really must thank you for showing such interest in my lecture. Oh, by the way, I will be speaking again in three weeks' time, and hope you will do me the honour of attending. I'm very sorry to rush off now, but I have an appointment to keep."

Balraux arose, and greeting people left and right, as he steered his way among the tables, he left the Café.

Depres remained sitting. He was definitely dissatisfied with this very short interview. Nervously he lit another cigarette.

An elderly gentleman arose from a nearby table and, making his way across to Depres, asked if he might be permitted to occupy the empty place. Depres nodded.

"I hope you will excuse me for approaching you so informally," began the old man, "but I was an unwilling witness to your conversation with M. Balraux. He has an unfortunately loud voice. You see, I have always taken a particular interest in such cases, and would like, if you would allow me, to add something to his explanation. I hope you will not consider my intrusion inopportune."

Depres waved his hand in consent, at the same time stubbing out his cigarette in the ashtray, and immediately lighting another one.

"Please, please, Monsieur—er—well, yes, so you heard our conversation; I really don't know if there is anything I can add," said Depres irritably.

"Hervé is my name, and I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to your wife, if you would permit me. I feel such a talk might give me a few definite clues, which could serve to unravel the truth of the matter. To be quite frank with you, I think M. Balraux's theory of sleeping pills ridiculous."

Depres looked up with interest. "Hervé—Hervé, your name seems familiar to me. Oh, maybe you're related to Professor Hervé?"

"I am he," replied the old man bowing. "You see, I've witnessed a great many strange phenomena in my time, and nearly all are explicable from some point of view. I believe that there is in fact some relation between your wife and the lady in Cambodia, and would really be very happy if you would allow me to obtain a clearer picture of the situation. But unfortunately I can see no other way than to speak to your wife in person."

"But certainly, of course you may," replied Depres eagerly, "the pleasure would be mine. Shall we say next weekend? I suggest you come to our place; what time would suit you best?"

On the following Sunday, at the agreed hour, Hervé visited the Depres'. They discussed the new Government, the coming holidays, the insoluble problem of

Parisian traffic, and other odd topics. Depres was beginning to wonder if the Professor had forgotten the real purpose of his visit, when the subject changed to art and painting. Madame Depres, who up till then had only been joining in the conversation spasmodically, suddenly became animated and began to talk with enthusiasm.

Hervé turned to her in surprise. "Your knowledge of the subject seems very great," he said, "are you by some chance connected with the world of art, or maybe you have been an art student?"

"No, no, not exactly," replied Madame Depres, colouring slightly, "only at one time I did interest myself in the subject, and even took pride in never missing a single exhibition. I find one can learn a great deal from such visits. Unfortunately my parents did not approve of my inclinations to art and artists." Suddenly she fell silent, and sat looking at her hands, seemingly embarrassed.

Quickly, and with skill, Hervé changed the subject, and began explaining about his work at the museum.

As Depres left the room for a few moments to fetch drinks, Hervé turned to Madame Depres and asked, "Did you ever meet a certain painter from Cambodia here in Paris?"

"Why do you ask?" she cried, "do you know him? Please tell me, have you also met him, or maybe you've been in Cambodia."

But at that moment her husband returned, so Hervé just gave her an understanding smile, though he noticed that she had great difficulty in regaining her composure. For the rest of the evening she remained very silent, and at the first opportunity excused herself and retired to her room.

Hervé took this opportunity to ask M. Depres one or two questions.

"Please do tell me how and when you met your wife, that is insofar as you don't find it embarrassing to talk to me about it."

"Why should I find it embarrassing?" replied Depres, "It was quite straightforward. We were married on the 8th August 1954, after a very short engagement. One could practically call it a marriage agreement, for it was arranged between our two families. My wife was suffering from a severe mental depression at the time, and her family was probably keen to protect her from doing something drastic. I never really enquired; why should I? You see, I am very reserved by nature and, although I was already a qualified architect, my parents were afraid I was too shy ever to find myself a wife. When we were introduced, I at once fell in love, everything about her pleased me, and I really thought I could help her overcome her states of melancholy. Well, I think time has proved me right, maybe it was just late development troubles I really don't know.

"Anyway, four to six weeks after our marriage, her depressions suddenly vanished. My wife, in her own quiet way, seemed quite happy. But as if in compensation for her depressions, she began to have this terrific need of sleep. At the time we thought it was the result of her pregnancy. Our doctor said we shouldn't worry but wait and see how things developed after the birth. It would probably vanish of

its own accord. Well, our daughter was born, but her requirement of sleep continued. Our daughter is five now, and still my wife sleeps twelve hours a day."

"Have you ever tried any remedies?" asked Hervé.

"Oh yes," replied Depres, "her family insisted. We even tried to get my wife to visit a psychiatrist, but she absolutely refused."

"Really, and what were her reasons?"

"Oh, she said it would be pointless, she didn't even want to speak to any, irrespective of how celebrated was the specialist we offered. That is to say, until I even suggested taking her to Prof. Altli in Zurich. Then, to my surprise, she suddenly agreed."

"Well, well, well," remarked Hervé, "so your wife has been to see my old friend Altli; yes, and what was the result?"

"Nothing!"

"What, nothing? You mean to tell me that after having been examined by Prof. Altli, he just shook his white locks and sent her home again?" exclaimed Hervé in bewilderment, at which both of them laughed.

"No, of course not as simple as that," continued Depres. "I accompanied my wife to Zurich, where Prof. Altli put her into his clinic for a couple of days under observation. Then he asked me to come and see him at his home. I remember the details of this visit particularly well, because of the peculiar light. It was late on a grey and drizzly afternoon. Prof. Altli explained, as he led me into his study, that he had specially invited me to his private house, because he wanted me to meet a guest of his. I was shown into a medium sized room, on the ground floor and, although I could not see any light switched on, it looked much brighter indoors than outside. I looked around, but could not for the life of me ascertain the source of this illumination."

"Very interesting," interrupted Hervé, "and who was this guest of Prof. Altli's?"

"Some Asian colleague of his. He looked like a Chinaman, or something, to me. His name, as far as I can remember, was Wo Than Ho, and I noticed that Prof. Altli treated him with great reverence, so I suppose he must have been someone of importance in his own country."

"Wo Than Ho, Wo Than Ho," murmured Hervé to himself. "Where have I come across that name before?"

"Prof. Altli explained that we were specially fortunate that Mr. Wo Than Ho should be passing through Zurich at that moment, for he was the only man who had experience in such cases. Then Mr. Wo Than Ho turned to me and addressed me, in effect, as follows;

"'You should have patience and let things continue as they are, for your wife's condition will normalise itself at the latest by 1961, unless some unforeseen shock puts her life in danger.'"

"He explained that my wife had a particularly sensitive nervous system, which by means of this sleep managed to keep itself in balance. The exact words, of course, I cannot remember; but that was their meaning as I understood him."

"I see ; so if I have followed you rightly, Wo Than Ho said that this extra sleep was necessary to hold her personality in balance," summarised Hervé. "Very enlightening, if one takes into consideration your idea, that she swapped her nervous depression for extra sleep. Well, have you now managed to organise your life to fit in with your wife's sleeping times ?"

"Of course," replied Depres, lighting himself a cigarette and exhaling slowly. "Even our friends and relations have accepted the fact, so we no longer have difficulties from the social point of view."

Hervé sat for a few minutes, pressing the fingers of his hands together, lost in thought, and then continued. "I now understand why Monsieur Balraux's lecture had such an effect on you, and will try to get more details for you about the lady in Cambodia. It should not be so difficult, for we have an archaeological team from our museum working at Angkor at present."

For the rest of the evening Prof. Hervé described the work going on in Angkor, that fabulous town of the Khmer, lost in the jungle and first rediscovered in 1850.

Just as Hervé was leaving, he turned to Depres and asked, "Oh, by the way, when exactly did you say your daughter was born ?"

Rather surprised, Depres replied, "On the evening of the 10th June 1955."

*
**

Some time later Prof. Hervé met M. Balraux at a reception given for the opening of an exhibition of oriental art.

"Do you remember," said Hervé, "the man who spoke to you after your public lecture on superstitions of the orient ? The one whose wife..."

"Quite right," replied Balraux, "a M. Depres, if I remember rightly, whose wife needed a ludicrous amount of sleep. Why, has he also spoken to you about it ?"

"He has not, but I have spoken to him about it."

"You, but why you of all people ?"

"Because his case is of special interest to me," replied Hervé simply. "I have come across many things during the course of my profession, that we, disciples of the western school of thought, would consider inadmissible. You see, there really is a link between Madam Depres and the lady in Cambodia. From the first I took the matter seriously. I checked dates and compared information, and I found my hypothesis was fully supported by the facts. It is without doubt a rare case of double identity."

"Double identity ! What are you telling me ?" exclaimed Balraux in astonishment. "That sounds extraordinarily interesting, something new for a change, one has..."

"New it isn't, at least not there," replied Hervé quietly.

"Well, it is to me, never heard of such a thing before," cried Balraux excitedly, "Please do explain the principles to me, my dear Professor," and taking Hervé by

the arm, he led him into an anteroom, where they could converse undisturbed.

Hervé tried to give a brief outline of the case, with place names and dates, while Balraux kept on interrupting with ejaculations of "fantastic," "unbelievable", etc., and at last asked, "Have you ever spoken to the Depres couple about the results of your investigations?"

"No, not exactly," answered Hervé, "it's really very difficult. I've been considering it, but then one never knows how Madame Depres would..."

Here the Professor was interrupted. They had been searching for him everywhere, as he was expected to make the opening speech at the exhibition.

After Hervé had gone, Balraux remained in the anteroom lost in thought. Suddenly he jumped up and made his way to the nearest telephone box. He searched in the directory: "Depres Henry, decorator; Depres Martin, green-grocer; Depres Paul, journalist; Depres Rachel, no; Depres René, Architect, yes that must be him, let's try, VER—63-04." Balraux picked up the receiver and dialled.

Soon a voice at the other end answered, "Depres here."

"Hallo, good evening, Monsieur Depres, Balraux speaking."

"Oh, Monsieur Balraux, that is a surprise, I thought you were in the Far East, so you're back in Paris again."

"Aha," thought Balraux, "that sounds like the right fellow.—Yes, I returned a few days ago. I have some very interesting information for you, could I come over? Yes—straight away—of course I can, I'll take a taxi, good bye."

"Good bye," said Depres, and put the receiver down. Then he hesitated, and taking it up again dialled VER 41-14.

"Doctor, Depres here, my wife is not feeling too well—yes—since about an hour—she seems to be in a terrible state of nerves—yes, yes—she is already lying down—no, she doesn't want the room darkened, it increases her anxiety—when can you come?—not this evening?—no, well all right—I'll expect you then. Good bye, Doctor."

M. Depres slowly went up the stairs and quietly opened his wife's door. She immediately switched off the music that was playing, and turned towards him. It was her favourite record! she had been listening to. He asked her how she felt, and told her that the Doctor could not come until eleven next morning. Then after a slight pause he mentioned that Balraux was expected in a short while.

"Balraux, Balraux," repeated Mme Depres, "isn't that the traveller-cum-politician, who publishes all sorts of exotic books? Please offer my excuses, I really don't feel up to facing anyone this evening." She lay back on her bed, and her husband noticed, as he bent over her, that her breathing had become short and irregular. She tried to smile at him reassuringly, but still he saw a look of anxiety in her eyes. Depres regarded his wife tenderly, and explained that he hardly knew Balraux, but had once attended one of his lectures, and had been specially interested in a short story Balraux had told.

Their conversation was interrupted by the doorbell. Depres kissed his wife on the forehead, and, leaving her, went down to let his guest in.

"Good evening, M. Balraux, how good of you to pay us a visit. Since when exactly are you back ? Only a few days ago I read one of your articles. Weren't you in Saigon this time ?"

"Yes, among other places," replied Balraux, not without a tone of pride in his voice and, leaving his hat and coat in the hall, he followed Depres into the drawing room.

"But now I am back I didn't want to lose any time letting you know the fantastic discoveries I have made."

"Yes, you said on the phone you had some extraordinary news for me, does it concern my wife ?" asked Depres, letting his voice drop.

"Quite right, where is she ?" asked Balraux looking around. "Might I have the pleasure of meeting her ?"

"My wife isn't feeling too well at the moment and asks to be excused, I've already called the Doctor," replied Depres defensively.

"Good God, is she ill then ?"

"No, not really ill, at least I hope it's nothing serious."

"That is a real shame," sighed Balraux, showing his obvious disappointment. "I was so looking forward to meeting her. No, really, what a pity ! I would so have liked to tell her what I have found out about her."

"Yes, I'm terribly sorry. Well, if you really think it's so important, I'll ask my wife if it isn't perhaps possible for her to come down for a couple of minutes," suggested Depres.

He went upstairs and knocked at the bedroom door. But there was no reply. Slowly he turned the handle and entered. His wife was lying half asleep, with the record player on. Again he heard the same music, Mme Depres' favourite, which for some unknown reason he could not stand. It had a peculiar tonality. His wife used to listen to this record very seldom, and then only when she was alone. He had once asked what the record was, and where it had come from. But this question had obviously not been welcome, she had not even replied, so he had tactfully let the subject drop.

For a few seconds he stood there, watching his wife's drawn face. He had not the heart to disturb her, and turned to go, when she called his name. He stepped forward and bent over her. She looked at him questioningly, and he told her that Balraux seemed to lay great stress on seeing her personally. She nodded and smiled. But in that smile he saw such sadness that it shocked him deeply.

"No, stay here," he said, "don't bother to move. Balraux can come some other time, please don't stir."

"I really don't know if I want to see him some other time," she replied, raising herself. "I suppose he won't leave us in peace otherwise. It doesn't matter, I'll come down. You go on and I'll follow in a minute."

Unwillingly Depres straightened himself up and left the room. He had suddenly lost all desire to hear Balraux' news. He would have preferred his guest to leave straight away.

As the door opened and Mme Depres entered, Balraux jumped to his feet and ran forward to meet her. But the next moment he stopped dead, and now stared at her in fascination.

"Unbelievable, quite extraordinary, that is much more than similarity, it is identity," stammered Balraux.

Mme Depres looked in astonishment from one to the other.

"You are the first case of double identity I've come across, Madame. You are in fact identical with the other lady in the Far East, probably without being aware of the fact in the slightest."

"Double identity? What woman? What does M. Balraux mean exactly?" she asked, turning to her husband.

"Monsieur Balraux, my wife knows nothing about the other lady. I've never mentioned a word to her as regards your lecture," explained Depres.

"But it's quite simple, dear lady, as soon as you fall asleep here, you wake up in Pnom Penh, and live there as the wife of a Cambodian painter. Of course you know nothing about it....But what is the matter, is something wrong?"

Mme Depres had collapsed, her husband was already trying to lift her. Together with Balraux he carried her back to her room, and laid her on the bed. The last part of the record was still playing as they entered, and then switched itself off automatically. Balraux looked around in wonder.

"Well I never," he exclaimed, "where does that record come from? It's Siamese, no, no, I mean Cambodian temple music."

Depres did not answer.

"You know I'm terribly sorry—after all I couldn't know my words would have such an effect—perhaps I was not careful enough in explaining myself—but probably she had such a strong reaction because she wasn't feeling well—I'm really extremely..."

Depres still did not answer, but just glared at Balraux out of the corner of his eyes, and continued looking after his wife.

At last Balraux got the hint that his presence was no longer welcome and, excusing himself awkwardly, he quickly left.

*
**

Mme Depres did not wake up, as was her habit, at eleven o'clock on the following morning.

In order to be there for the Doctor's visit, her husband had returned an hour earlier than usual from the office. As he entered the flat he could hear that the nursemaid was having difficulties keeping his daughter quiet.

"But I know your mother has not left, she's in her room, yes, of course I'm sure."

"She's gone, she's gone," sobbed the child.

"What nonsense, your mother is still asleep, please stop this crying now."

Depres called his daughter and, taking her by the hand, led the way upstairs. He knocked, and, without waiting, cautiously opened the door. His wife lay in bed, motionless.

The sound of a car drawing up could be heard.

"That's probably the Doctor," whispered Depres to the girl, "please show him up at once."

The consternation that flickered across the Doctor's face for an instant, as he bent down over Mme Depres, did not escape her husband's notice. The Doctor listened to the heart, took the pulse, lifted the eyelids, and then gave his patient an injection.

"Your wife is in an unnatural state of deep sleep, I've just given her something for the heart. At the moment there is nothing else I can do. Please let me know at once if there's any change in her condition. I would advise you to get a nurse."

"What exactly do you mean by deep sleep? Is my wife in a coma?" asked Depres anxiously.

"Monsieur Depres, you must not jump to conclusions, there is no immediate danger. I'll look in again this afternoon." And, taking up his case, the Doctor left.

But even on the following day, there was no change. Depres stayed at home and took it in turns with the nurse to sit by his wife.

Towards the evening he rang Prof. Hervé and told him of Balraux's visit, the sensational revelations, and their terrible effect.

Hervé was horrified. He found some words of consolation, and promised to visit Depres in the very near future. As he put the receiver down, Hervé reproached himself bitterly for ever having mentioned the matter to Balraux. After a while he quieted down, took up a sheet of airmail paper, and wrote to his colleagues in Cambodia. He asked if there had been any change noticeable lately in the life of the painter's French wife.

Exactly ten days later he received a reply. There had in fact been a sudden change in her condition. It had begun on the 3rd September and since then she had awakened and slept quite normally again. That is, although she still lay down at six o'clock in the evening as she was used to, she could no longer fall asleep.

"Third of September," muttered Herve, looking through his diary, "second of September was the opening of the exhibition, the day I spoke to Bairaoux."

Herve at once telephoned the Depres, to arrange for a meeting. To his surprise a strange voice answered. It was the maid, and from her he learned that Mme Depres had just died, after lying in a coma for over a week.

*
**

Prof Hervé was at his desk in the museum, when Depres' call reached him. Depres asked for a rendezvous. Herve was delighted to have the chance to meet

him again, it had been nearly two years since Mme Depres's decease. He called back to memory the circumstances that had led up to that tragic death and all the witty comments of his colleagues in Cambodia regarding his unusual interest in the life and well-being of the French wife of a Cambodian painter.

As the porter announced M. Depres, Hervé jumped up and, picking up his hat, went downstairs to meet him. After greeting one another, they went to a nearby café. First they talked about the holidays that had just come to an end, and Hervé told of his stay in Norway, his cruise in a sailing boat among the fjords, and the beautiful little wooden church he had come across.

Depres in turn described his stay in Bayonne, with his small daughter, the wonderful beaches, and how she had learned to swim. He also mentioned a sudden change he had noticed in his daughter. She had always been a quiet and melancholy child, especially since the death of her mother, with rather delicate health and small appetite. But their stay at Bayonne had evidently done her a world of good. She had enjoyed her meals, looked healthier, and seemed much happier. She had also developed a great interest in travelling.

"If it is really so good for her, as it seems to be," said Depres, "I would gladly take another ten days' holiday, and travel around a bit with her. But there is just one point that worries me about my daughter. Since about the middle of August, she is always talking about her mother, and even says she has her mother near her every evening when she falls asleep. Of course I have nothing against her having dreams of this sort, but she insists that it is not a dream, that her mother actually comes and sits on her bed, strokes her hair, and even talks to her. I'm only afraid she might be becoming hysterical, and wonder if I shouldn't take her to a psychiatrist?"

Prof. Harvé, who had been listening with interest, now cried out, earnestly and warmly, "No, for God's sake no, Monsieur Depres, your daughter is only just seven, as far as I know. She was probably very attached to your wife, and was too young at the time to fully comprehend the loss. She's making up for it now in this beautiful and natural way. Children have certain inclinations, at least most of them, that we as grown-ups have lost. There are thousands of children who make their dolls their best friends and have long conversations with them. Please protect your daughter from our modern mental technicians, let her be a child, and don't try to talk her out of her evening rendezvous with her mother." Then Hervé added, "It would really please me to have a chat with the young lady."

They continued their conversation and in the end agreed to meet again next day, when M. Depres would bring his daughter along. In between times Hervé again wrote to Pnom Penh, and asked for information regarding the painter and his wife.

Hervé was already sitting in the café, when Depres arrived and formally presented his daughter. With great seriousness she took the Professor in.

"We're going to Cairo for a few days," said the girl suddenly.

"We're flying, to be more exact," added her father.

"Yes, in a real aeroplane. Have you ever flown, I haven't, yes only once, when

I came from heaven, but that so long ago that I can't quite remember, you can't remember either I suppose, for you must have dropped from heaven much longer ago."

"So you're flying to Cairo with your daughter, wonderful, but why exactly did you pick on Cairo?" asked Hervé with interest.

"That's my daughter's idea, and as a special favour I wanted to fulfill her wish. Already last August in Bayonne she began to speak about Cairo. She must have come across the word somewhere. The only thing that surprised me was that she managed to find it without hesitation on the map. Since then the idea has captured me completely. Why not take a look at Cairo?—I've never been out of Europe, you know. Well, so I took part in an architectural contest for a project in Cairo, and won the award. A bit of luck if ever there was one."

"Congratulations, providence certainly seems on your side, I must say," added Hervé. "Pity I haven't anything to do in Cairo at the moment, I would have considered it a special honour to have acted as the young lady's guide there."

During the conversation, Hervé had come to the conclusion that the child was quite normal, in no way hysterically inclined. He wondered if the answer from Pnom Penh would throw some light on the girl's unusual dreams.

Some time later, the long expected letter from Cambodia arrived. In it was stated that it had been rather difficult to get the required information this time. About the middle of August the painter had been killed in an accident, and his wife had left for some unknown destination. The marriage had apparently been going badly for the last two years, that is, since the wife's sleeping habits had become normal. She had begun to suffer from severe depressions, which, it was thought, were due to a childless marriage. All enquiries from air companies and shipping offices, had been fruitless...

Professor Hervé let the letter sink. "Everything agrees," he thought, "and yet it hardly seems possible."

A fortnight later Prof. Hervé opened his morning paper and to his astonishment read that M. Balraux had been appointed minister in the new Government, which reminded him that he hadn't heard from Depres since their departure.

He wondered what a seven-year-old girl would find most attractive in Cairo, what would impress the child's mind most. He knew the town well. He thought with pleasure of the fairy-tale-like lanes and alleys that criss-crossed between the Boulevard Mehemed Ali and the Hakim Mosque. He remembered the Souks with their indescribable mixture of colours, odours, and noises. He hoped Depres would not just remain in the European quarter with his daughter.

Another three weeks passed before Hervé saw a letter from Cairo lying on his desk.

"It must be some very big and important project," thought Hervé, "that has kept Depres there so long." Slowly and with expectation, he slit open the envelope, and drawing out the letter began to read :

"....as you remarked, providence seems to be favouring me. My daughter likes Cairo very much. She has been greatly impressed by all she has seen, and shows a lively interest in exploring the town. That's how we came across the Esbekijeh Garden, to which she has taken a special fancy. Some ten days ago, as we were visiting this garden for the umpteenth time, my daughter suddenly broke away from me, and ran up to a lady sitting on a bench. This woman, I must admit, has an extraordinary resemblance to my dead wife. Anyway, in between times my daughter has got permission to call the lady 'Maman', and I would like to announce to you our engagement. We will be married in spring.

"The likeness is so exact in every detail, that I would have begun to doubt my own eyes, if I had not myself seen my wife put into her coffin and laid in the grave.

"My future wife, who is also French, has been living abroad for some years, and is a widow since August. She lost her husband in an accident...."

NEVILLE

THE LOOSE TONGUE

SRI Aurobindo and the Mother have emphasised times without number the importance of silence. To keep the tongue under control is one of the chief necessities of sadhana. One of the rules of meditation is that he who chatters, *i.e.*, one with a loose tongue, cannot meditate. One does not know how much energy is wasted by a loose tongue. One does not know to how many Hostile Forces he extends his invitation. One does not know that a loose tongue serves as a cut-throat to all good qualities. A sadhaka had been sick. The Mother inquired after his health. In elated tones the fact of improvement of the sadhaka was told to the Mother. The Mother at once said :

“When will you learn to tie up your tongue ? You should not express good news in such a rejoicing open fashion. There are always around us certain small entities and other occult forces which, as soon as they hear things like ‘A is improving very much in health’, start laughing. And they say, ‘Oh, there is a great improvement? We shall see about it !’ And then they spoil everything.

“I observe their action everywhere. So it is better to be restrained. By looking at you I can at once know whether there is improvement or not. Of course, when I ask you for news, you must give it. But, when it is good news, express it without much demonstration. Speak it out casually, in a neutral tone. This will not draw unfriendly action.”¹

We all accept the fact that one should keep the tongue under control, but the least cause and we begin to chatter at once. We pass unnecessary remarks, we criticise, we speak things unworthy of a human being. The rule is observed in the breach. Let us illustrate the point.

In ancient times there was a king. The king was very pious. The king loved his subjects and the subjects loved the king. He and his people were happy in all respects but one. The king had no son. Astrologers, priests, sadhus, fakirs were consulted and everything was done to propitiate the gods, so that the king might have an heir. But all to no purpose.

Now it happened that a Jain Guru came with a disciple sadhu to the city, The disciple went to the palace—of course not knowing that it was a palace—for *gochari* (the act of taking food from different houses by a sadhu). The queen had never seen such an ascetic, so she was very glad and gave food to him with full devotion. The sadhu was much pleased by the devotion of the queen and said: “May you be blessed with a son.”

On hearing the blessings unexpectedly, the queen was very happy. The sadhu realised his mistake, but it was too late. He came back and related the whole incident to the Guru. The Guru had the power of vision and he saw that the

¹ *Mother India*, January 1961. p. 2.

king would have no son for seven births to come. There was no way except one. The Guru reprimanded the disciple for uttering words unnecessarily and told him that the king could have no son for seven births to come. Then the question arose as to what was to be done. A Jain sadhu's words, much less blessings, should not prove to be false. The Guru told the disciple that there was only one way and that way was that the disciple should give up his life and take birth at the king's palace. The disciple said that he would forget everything in the luxuries provided by the king's riches and his ultimate aim of realising the soul would be forgotten. The Guru promised that he would come to him at the time of his birth and remind him of his previous birth.

The Guru taught the disciple the art of giving up the body. Accordingly, the disciple ended his life and entered the womb of the queen. When the fact was known that the queen had conceived, there were great rejoicings. Nine months and seven days passed and the queen gave birth to a very handsome boy. There were celebrations throughout the city. The king gave away much riches in alms and everyone was happy at the event. The Guru also remembered that it was time for the disciple's birth. So he came to the city.

The king was duly informed of the arrival of the Jain Guru. As the heir was born to the king, because of the blessings of a Jain sadhu, the king brought the Guru to the Court, with full respect and asked blessings of him. The Guru said that he was also pleased to hear of the birth of an heir apparent and that he would like to give his blessings to the infant. Accordingly the Guru was taken to the room where the infant was kept. After entering the room the Guru asked all present to leave it. When he was alone with the infant, he placed his right hand on its head and by his Yogic Shakti made it aware of the cause of its present birth. On realising the cause, the infant resolved to keep silence throughout, *i.e.*, play the part of a mute. The Guru departed.

The infant prince grew apace. But he would not speak. So again all ways and means were tried to make him speak, but to no purpose. In this way 16 years passed. The prince grew up to be a fine flower of youth. Anyone who saw him was pleased with his charming personality and sober countenance, but when the onlooker learnt that the prince was mute, he felt extremely sorry for him.

The prince was allotted a separate palace to live in. One day he was sitting on the balcony and it was evening time. Darkness had set in. Nearby there was a big tree. A parrot was perched midst the branches. It uttered some words. Now it happened that a hunter who was able to shoot without seeing the thing, merely by hearing the sound, was standing beneath the tree. On hearing the parrot, he took his aim and shot an arrow in the direction of the parrot. The arrow struck the bird and it fell down and expired.

On seeing this the prince could not control himself and said, "Parrot, why did you speak?" The next moment he realised his mistake, but the damage had been done. The servant, who had been standing by the prince, had heard the prince speak. He was overjoyed and ran to the king to break the good news, with the hope of a good reward.

At first the king and the others who heard the servant were not prepared to believe the news, but the servant insisted and so the king and the courtiers came to the palace of the prince and tried to make the prince speak. But meanwhile the prince had resolved not to speak again. He did not want to repeat the mistake. So, however much they tried to make him speak, he kept silent. The king got infuriated and punished the servant for such a cruel joke. The king and the courtiers went back.

After they had gone the servant prayed to the prince : "Well, sir, did you not speak ?" Said the prince "I uttered the words, but why did *you* speak ? If you had kept your mouth shut, you would not have undergone this kind of treatment." And the matter ended there.

The Guru remembered that 16 years had elapsed and thought that it was high time the prince should be brought back to the fold. So the Guru came to the city. The king was duly informed of his arrival. The Guru was taken to the Court with full pomp and pageantry. The prince was sitting by the king. The king related the story of the prince's birth and about his muteness and prayed to the Guru to make him speak, if it was possible. The Guru closed his eyes for some time and then said in a sober tone : "There is only one way and one alone by which the prince can be made to speak."

The king said : "I am ready to pay any price—whatever it be—if the prince can be made to speak." Then said the Guru : "If the prince is allowed to embrace *dīkṣā*—to become a sadhu—then and then only will he speak." At first the king was amazed to hear such a price, but after some deliberation he agreed. So the Guru placed his right hand on the head of the prince and said : "*Bachcha, bolo* (Child, speak)." And lo ! the prince spoke. The prince remained with the king for three days and on the fourth day embraced *dīkṣā*, amidst great rejoicings.

The disciple had to pay a price of 16 years for his loose tongue.

VALLABH SHETH

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

(Continued from the October issue)

CHAPTER II

THE INELUCTABLE GUEST

"I am a timeless Nothingness carrying all,
I am the Illimitable, the mute Alone.
I, Death, am He; there is no other God.
All from my depths are born, they live by death;
All to my depths return and are no more."

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

De quel nom te nommer, o fatale puissance ?
Qu'on t'appelle Destin, Nature, Providence,
Inconcevable loi,
Qu'on tremble sous ta main, ou bien qu'on te blasphème,
Soumis ou révolté, qu'on te craigne ou qu'on t'aime,
Toujours, c'est toujours toi !

LAMARTINE, *Medit. poetic.*, Le Désespoir.

WE have seen in our introductory chapter that age-long has been the aspiration of man to discover the elixir of immortality or any other means, magical, alchemic or scientific, to conquer physically his body's death. But, alas, all his efforts have so far invariably ended in failure. Now for the first time in the long history of the race, the Supramental Yoga of Sri Aurobindo comes with the assurance of a physical conquest of death, the attainment of an earthly immortality.

But for the earth-bound mind and reason of man, does it not seem to be too heavenly a prospect to be at all true or endowed with any sense ? In this essay, we propose to justify on metaphysical grounds the possibility of this victory over death and indicate the conditions—by no means intrinsically unrealizable by man—which would make this victory certain. We shall incidentally seek to find out—in however meagre and suggestive a measure—any corroborative evidence gleaned from the field of biological evolution; for, after all, "evolution, being...continuous, must have at any given moment a past with its fundamental results still in evidence, a present in which the results it is labouring over are in process of becoming, a future in which still unevolved powers and forms of being must appear till there is the full and perfect

manifestation."¹ And so Nature, the Great Mother of all, must have left her clues of approach even in the earlier phases of her grandiose World-Becoming that is being worked out through this process of organic evolution.

But before we consider the problem of the conquest of death, we have first of all to determine what its physiognomy is, what its character and form.

We may state at the outset that physiologically speaking there are three categories of death : (a) the *apparent death*, in which the organism does not show the least sign of the obvert manifestation of any of the essential vital functions although through proper procedures it may be resuscitated and brought back to active life; (b) the *relative death* or *clinical death* involving a complete and prolonged suspension of circulation; and finally (c) the *absolute death*, when any further possibility of the restoration of the vital functions becomes altogether abrogated.

From another point of view, we have to distinguish between what have been termed 'cellular death' and 'somatic death'. As a matter of fact, there is a continual change proceeding in every cell of any living organism and the cells are continually dying throughout the life-history of the living body. This cellular death may be either *due to causes external to the organism or provoked by changes inherent in the cells themselves*. In the second case the phenomenon is called *necrobiosis* or 'physiological death' of the cells while in the former this has been termed *necrosis* or 'pathological death'. The wholeness and viability of the body of the organism is not in the least affected by necrobiosis while necrosis may or may not affect the integrity of the body as a whole. Finally, death may involve the organism as a whole (*somatic death*) bringing to a permanent and irrevocable halt all metabolic activity in the entirety of the body which then degenerates into a lump of raw and inanimate matter governed from then onwards by the physico-chemical laws of the inorganic realm.

Now, from the biological point of view, this somatic death may be timely (*Kāla-maraṇa*) or untimely and premature (*akāla-mṛtyu* or *antarāmṛtyu*). Death may occur *naturally* as the final term of the gradual senile decay of the body or *unnaturally* as a consequence of the derangements and lesions of the vital organs caused by some disease or injury. In fact, the great majority of persons die prematurely, due to either some malady or some violence done to the body, and it may very well be, as Metchnikoff has suggested, that the universal dread of death felt by mankind is in a great measure occasioned by the fact that death intervenes mostly before its biologically appointed hour.

Be that as it may, we may thus distinguish three different kinds of somatic death :

(i) accidental violent death, when some external influence or agent, physical or chemical, shatters the organism ;

(ii) microbic death, when some intruding micro-organisms manage to settle themselves in the body of an organism and bring about in the course of time the termination of the life of the host by causing some irreparable lesions or by producing fatal toxins ;

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (American edition), pp. 630-31.

(iii) natural death, which inexorably results, even when the body is not afflicted with any malady, through some invariable physiological breakdown in the correlation of vital processes, arising out of an "accumulation of physiological arrears which eventually implies physiological insolvency".¹

In our present discussion we are primarily concerned with the inevitability or otherwise of this last category of death, the absolute and natural somatic death, which is indeed the most fundamental of the three. But what is the nature of this somatic death considered as a universally valid biological phenomenon for all multi-cellular organisms ?

The life-cycle of an individual organism is typically divisible into five biologically differentiated phases as follows :

(a) the formation of the zygote, produced by the union of an ovum and a spermatozoön in the process called fertilization (the life-history of the individual, as a distinct and biological entity, begins with this event) :

(b) the period of development and growth, which has two sub-phases ; embryonic or foetal, and post-embryonic or post-natal ; this phase is succeeded by

(c) the phase of adult stability, in which no marked changes are observable either in the direction of growth or degeneration ; after this sooner or later the individual can be observed to have definitely passed into the next phase of life-cycle.

(d) the period of senescence, characterized by a progressive waning in the intensity of the vital processes, accompanied by regressive and degenerative changes in the structure of the body . Ultimately, the life of the individual as such comes to an end with the terminal event of the cycle :

(e) death, the cessation of all vital metabolism.²

Such, then, is death, the universal godhead, whose voice cries forth in ringing notes of awe :

"My force is Nature that creates and slays...
I have made man her instrument and slave,
His body I made my banquet, his life my food...
I am the Immobile in which all things move,
I am the nude Inane in which they cease."³

But *when* is this sombre messenger, the event of *natural* somatic death, apprehended to make its inevitable appearance ? Cannot its visit be postponed, if not for all time, at least indefinitely ? Or, is it rather fixed in the scale of time for man as well as for any other species ?

¹ J.A. Thomson, "Life and Death" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (ed. Hastings), Vol. 8, p. 4.

² This statement of the phases of the life-cycle of an individual multicellular organism is an adaptation from *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 7, p. 110.

³ *Savitri*, Book IX, Canto II.

As a result of investigations in the special field of general biology, certain significant generalisations are now available. The more important of these from the point of view of our present discussion are as follows :

(1) For the members of a given species there exists a *characteristic* biologically determined life span or maximum age limit which appears to be absolutely binding on the species concerned. Thus, for man, the development of medical science and the widespread institution of hygienic measures have for their limited though highly laudable aim the increase in the *average* life-expectancy ; but they cannot in any way push back what the French would call *durée-limite*. As Dr. Maurice Verner has pointed out :

"If more and more men are nowadays becoming old, that does not imply that the extreme limit has changed at all. We cannot repeat it too much that for a given species the limiting time-interval of life is an invariable constant."¹

(2) This maximum possible of the entire individual life-cycle varies enormously with the different forms of life, species, genera, families, etc. As a matter of information we append below tables² showing the life-spans of some biological organisms.

Longevity of mammals

Elephant	...	...	150-200 years	Ram	...	...	15 years
Horse	...	...	40-50 "	Goat	...	...	15 "
Ass	...	...	40-50 "	Cat	...	...	15 "
Bear	...	...	40-50 "	Wolf	...	...	15 "
Rhinoceros	...	...	40-50 "	Fox	...	...	15 "
Camel	...	...	40-50 "	Porcupine	...	...	15 "
Hippopotamus	...	...	40 "	Squirrel	...	...	12 "
Lion	...	...	35 "	Hare	...	...	10 "
Cow	...	...	30 "	Rabbit	...	...	8 "
Wild sheep	...	...	30 "	Mouse	...	...	6 "
Wild boar	...	...	25 "	Guinea-pig	...	...	6 "
Zebra	...	...	25 "				
Dog	...	...	20 "				
Tiger	...	...	20 "				

Longevity of birds

Vulture	...	...	120 years	Pigeon	...	...	40-50 years
Eagle	...	...	114 "	Gull	...	...	40-50 "
Falcon	...	...	100 "	Crane	...	...	40-50 "

¹ M. Vernet, *La Vie et la Mort* (Flammarion), p. 221.

² Vide Ed. Retterer, *De la durée des êtres vivants*, p. 119.

Owl	...	...	100	"	Cuckoo	...	...	32	"
Crow	...	...	100	"	Ostrich	...	...	30	"
Swan	...	...	100	"	Cock	...	...	15	"
Parrot	...	...	100	"	Canary	...	...	15	"
Goose	...	...	80	"	Blackbird	...	...	13	"
Stork	...	...	70	"	Nightingale	...	...	8	"

Longevity of Reptiles, etc.

Tortoise	...	...	200	years	Crayfish	...	20	years
Carp	...	...	100	"	Salamander	...	11	"
Crocodile	...	...	50	"	Earthworm	...	10	"
Toad	...	...	30	"	Oyster	...	7	"

(3) These differences in characteristic life-spans of different species seem not to be related to any other so far recognisable factor of variability in their structure or life-history. Though many attempts have been made to establish such relationships (longevity correlated with the size, with the period of development towards maturity, the fecundity, the rate of physiological functioning, etc., of the animal), each one so far suggested has been contradicted by well-attested facts of natural history.¹

But whatever the underlying determining factor, the fact remains that all multi-cellular organisms possess an ageing mechanism embedded in the profundities of their physiological functionings, which automatically brings life to a gradual end when the biologically useful period is over. In the words of Dr. J. A. V. Butler, this ageing mechanism is 'built in' to the cells as an essential feature of their construction, a kind of biological clock with a time scale which is characteristic of each species."²

Biologically considered, such then is the ineluctability of natural death and in our attempt at seeking for the physical conquest of death, we have to contend with the stark fact that however favourable the conditions of living, however immune from any foreign invasion, a man's body as constituted *at present* cannot remain viable beyond the fixed limit of a hundred and fifty years or so.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ *Vide* Ed. Rettere, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-122. S. Metelnikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-168.

² J. A. V. Butler, *op. cit.*; p. 153.

ESSAYS ON SAVITRI AND PARADISE LOST

(Continued from the September issue)

THE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS (continued)

LOVE occupies a major place in *Savitri*. Here we see it as a positive and creative power and it has infinite possibilities and is a divine manifestation. The problem that arises is not due to wrong interpretation as in Milton, but due to the hindrances that come across it. These hindrances are Fate and Death. But Savitri, by her spirit and soul-power, overcomes both after a great and heroic battle.

This love seems causeless and irrational at first. But later on we discover the true cause of its being there. A mere bond between woman and man is generally based on an emotional tie, a physical appeal and a sexual relationship. Such a love vanishes with age, and dwindles with circumstances and even turns into hate when denied of its satisfaction. Love that we see in Savitri is not based on these, and it is not by caprice that Savitri chooses Satyavan as her mate at the first sight. It is based on the soul's recognition of its counterpart in another soul and of its prevision of its role in this particular human existence. In Milton the love of Eve and Adam is the love of automata and a little psychological change is enough to overturn its pristine purity. In Sri Aurobindo Savitri and Satyavan are living beings capable of manifesting the true nature of love. No circumstances change, no change occurs due to Death or Fate. Even Death has to stand aside before its plenipotent power. A living instrument can embody a living puissance. Automata can at most manifest a little spark of the overwhelming might. We feel as if they were created to fall, their love could not withstand the reverses of fortune, and senility seemed to be there from the very outset. This senility debars the fruition of love and this came from the mental cynicism of Milton. In *Savitri* freshness of youth pursues us throughout the length of the poem and it is this freshness that is capable of manifesting the divine fire. The soul does not age in the manner of mind or the crude and animal body. It keeps its youthfulness and it is the soul that is capable of manifesting the true essence of love.

The whole outlook of Milton ran against the true manifestation of love : his sagacity, his mental piety, his ethical outlook gave a senile turn which made the fresh and vibrant outpouring of love impossible. By "fresh" or "vibrant" we do not mean flippant, outward or without any depth. Freshness comes from the newness of vision, the creative spontaneity and the light of soul that makes all the character and nature rich with innate youthfulness. This is there in abundant measure in *Savitri* and is sadly deficient in *Paradise Lost*.

There is no background of the Hellenic concept of love as Eros in *Savitri*. And Milton is conscious of this interpretation as likely for his concept of love ; hence

he refrained from all aesthetic and supramoral allusions. *Savitri* escapes this concept thanks to Sri Aurobindo's very approach and because he has experienced Love as a vast and universal power and presence, his experience enables him to lift himself above this romantic notion. After all, like all concepts, the Hellenic concept of love too was a mental one. Christianity opposed it for its lascivious interpretation and Sri Aurobindo opposes it as a half-truth of Ignorance. Further, the rational trend of Milton opposes the romantic approach for whose advent Europe had to wait for another one and a half centuries. Sri Aurobindo saw Romanticism as a dead force and he had no intention to revive a dead concept, for his whole approach was living and veridical. The Romantic twilight or the false noon of ethical splendour was not for him. So he escapes the clutches of both these doctrines in the light of soul, and here Love is an eternal presence, of whom all Romanticism or ethical sense of altruism are false shadows. His Savitri is not only the Divine incarnation, she is also the incarnation of a power and love, like Christ's, that alone can save the world. The message of Christ came to an unprepared race; he came as the inaugurator of love's fulfilment and love as a power of God. But Savitri comes as the full manifestation of love. She brushes aside all hindrances, even the most stupendous—that of Ignorance—and makes Life Divine a reality. Because Christianity sees in Christ the supreme saviour, problems arise. The love that he brought was the first glimpse of a fuller manifestation yet to come. Hence Christianity reverts to Ethics, altruism, the puritan cult of freewill and all these only take humanity further away from verity. Hate comes to reign in place of Love and vain seems the sacrifice of Christ. But Savitri cannot accept such a defeat of love. The presence of a problem means there is something wrong in the scheme or in the understanding or in the play of forces. Savitri sees this and, instead of attempting to change by sermons, she goes to the core of the question and fights out a battle by the vehemence of the Spirit and resolves the problem.

We may be challenged that while Christ represents a historical personality Savitri is merely a mythical figure and hence their comparison is inapt. We are not attempting to evaluate the historical validity of both. Both represent some spiritual realities and these we are comparing so that the stand of Sri Aurobindo and that of the Christian may best be judged. Moreover, Savitri is a symbol of some great spiritual Truth that is yet at work in the scheme of the world. Hence such a light can surely be compared effectively with the light of Christ.

Christianity, because it puts its sole reliance on freewill, does not believe in fate as a mathematical power that recurs or in the law of Karma. But we ask: "Can freewill alone dissolve the power of fate, are we so awake and strong as to build our own destiny, especially those of us who are puritanical and rely on ethics as a sole guide?" It was destined that man should fall: could his freewill stop this disastrous end? If God expected the human being to overcome fate, He expected that which was not in the capacity of man, half evolved that he was. Such expectations can come only as a cruel caprice or joke from an entity who did not aid man,

but stood in judgment and was ready to inflict punishment on him. This ethical turn that has been given to the deeper law of human existence falsifies man's nature and thereby ethics treads on a ground that is no longer its own and on which it cannot stand up and judge. The question of human freewill is a psychological truth with a spiritual implication ; its value is suprarational and hence ethics being rational cannot judge or even pass sentence on it. But Christianity sees with the eyes of morality, its orbit is narrow, it erects its demands on this narrowness, without waiting to delve into the mystery of fate. In consequence, man is baffled with the enormity of the load of responsibility that is laid on him. He miscalculates all actions and the harsh verdict of moral sin seems to await him at every turn. He detaches himself from the cosmic will, the large and omniscient consciousness, sets himself to the task of building his own future, taking all vicissitudes to be moral hurdles he must surpass in order to attain an ethical perfection. Thus he cannot account for the many ills that visit him ; he has not learned to see the deeper fathoms of his being and takes the false and exterior moral canons to be his guide. This in fact misleads him more and more and he has before him two alternative paths : that of revolt and that of an annihilation of all his laws of existence into a resigned torpor. If he rises up and questions the issue of things, he is excommunicated as a heretic. If he stoops down he becomes the hunted animal of destiny. Thus he is lost. Where then is the place of freewill which is given so much precedence by Christianity ? If you exert your freewill, you cease to be a Christian, and yet Christianity advocated freewill as the sole maker of man's destiny. In other words, it wants you to be meek and submissive together with right and independent choice. Milton reveals this revolt in *Paradise Lost*. He is out to speak ill of this revolt but his force and stress seem to be on the side of that resurgence and he seems to advocate open rebellion against the fixed dogmatic rule of Ethics. Torn by the burning riddle, he is in no position to solve the question of fate.

Fate seems illogical if we conceive human existence as limited to a single birth. There are circumstances which visit us, for which we cannot account except as a caprice of a testing Godhead. Ethics should be rational and, when it is rational, there is no place for irrational caprice. Even the will of God should stand on reason, and not on intuition. As we cannot understand either the caprice of God or the working of fate, we are forced to the conclusion that our actions have links with other actions prior to those of this existence. This immediately makes wider the field of search. Otherwise, we merely continue with a fanciful building up of impossible theories that have no bearing on facts or reason. We then have to answer one serious objection : Adam had no previous birth, hence his fate was determined by himself alone. His beginning was in God, so the cause of his action was in God and hence the seed of human fall was laid by God in man when he created him. Otherwise, born free and unfallen by nature, *Apāpaviddha* as the Gita says, he would and could not succumb to temptation, however great. As an alternative theory we suggest that God was not perfect in the ethical sense, hence this imperfection that visits man,

the creation that came from God, translated as an ethical imperfection. A perfect cause creates a perfect result, but an imperfect cause generates imperfection, as a logical consequence. But we cannot conceive of a perfect Godhead causing the birth of an imperfect man. Yet, as Christianity asserts such an impossibility, we have to put aside all this illogical presupposition and start our search on a new ground, with a new premise. Christian ethics has failed us.

The world, as we see it, is not a single unqualified entity and, just like links in a chain, there are causes to which there are results. All actions are dependent after-effects of other previous actions. The primal or causal action that started this great series of chain reactions was the splitting of the Absolute, negating its principle of truth and bliss. This caused the birth of cosmic Ignorance and as the individual is closely linked with the cosmic whole he too shares this principle of chain reaction. This is termed Karma in Indian thought. There are large volumes of metaphysical thinking written on this subject : hence we are not going to deliberate on it, except to say that this principle certainly throws some light on the question to which Christianity has given us a blank reply. Karma is a wide term, signifying the whole of human existence as a unit as well as each isolated action in its detail. It embraces all spheres of consciousness and is not restricted to the physical alone. Generally, misconceptions lie in limiting it to the outer and objective act and excluding it from psychological spheres.

"All is Karma," declares Krishna in the Gita, "even this fact of Being." He also attempts to give us a clue to the avoidance of Karma : rising above Ignorance, the great universal power. Buddha conceives Nirvana as the sole path to outdo Karma. This path is only a negative one and not a positive solution. Sankhya conceives the repose in Purusha away from Prakriti as the sole solution. But whatever be the solution, nearly all schools of Indian philosophy give a great place to Karma.

There is, however, a fundamental sameness from which both the Indian and the Christian doctrines emerge. Both conceive of a mechanical universe, where one gets back what one yields, the difference being that the latter shows arbitrary narrowness while the former is more consistent and profound. But both forget one essential element : the concept of a free spirit behind this seemingly mechanical universe. Christianity's putting God at the source of creation does not do away with the factor. What comes is only the exclusive stress on one's freedom of choice in Christianity and the less rigorous aspect of moral cause and effect in the Indian thinking system. India also recognises the escape from fate by *puruṣakāra*, the intense personal effort, or by the direct intervention of *daivya*, the celestial grace. This factor seems totally absent from Christianity.

To Sri Aurobindo Fate as a notion is derived from Ignorance. The petty vital mind, busy with the energising aspect of the creation, sees all as a manifestation of rules, codes, ordinances. The pure reason is free from this rigid concept. It attempts to see all with less dogmatic insistence. But it cannot escape the load of Karmic doctrine. In the material sphere this law is insuperable and, estimating this,

mind tries to formulate a law of retribution, justice linking not only acts but thinking, willing, feeling and all other psychological activities. Alone the soul is free from this hard conceptual error, for it does not see the world as a mechanic existence, but as a creation of the Spirit, a place of adventure, growth, where each act was an occasion of progress. A secret will guides this universe and an ignorance that is there at the base of life makes out a world of mechanical chance, just the opposite of what the world is in its verity. The truth is : it is the purusha, the psychic entity, which is the *Anumantā*, the giver of the sanction which determines the conditions and makes an opportunity of the oppositions to develop itself. The secret will behind creates these conditions as decided upon by the soul. The outer appearance is the Karmic power which is in fact the tool of the secret spiritual will and is not in itself the supreme independent factor. The ways of the spirit are complex and one can fix them arbitrarily as mechanical dogmas. How and why Spirit acts in one way and not in another cannot be seized by the groping intellect which wants to see all in its limited way of vision and explain all in the light of its own uncertain logic.

Fate thus is a condition that is made by exterior or physical conditions, but is determined by the deeper law of the spirit. The outer manifestation that takes place assumes the semblance of a mechanical power of action and reaction. This power is very fixed in the material domain but as one ascends the scale of consciousness greater and greater liberty makes itself felt. And the mechanical aspect gives way to a power that acts according to needs of the soul whose choice creates the required environment. Thus Savitri, who has risen above the play of arbitrary and mechanical factors of fate, can undertake to change the Karma not only of her own soul but also of the soul she loves. She accepts no aspect of the Karmic force either as a physical power or as an occult puissance. And when she comes face to face with its reality, and sees all its aspects, her soul is not terrified. She proves the invalidity of Karma, because she bases her existence and all her experience on the realisation that this cosmos is not a dead and mechanical one and, in spite of Death's repeated assertions to the contrary, she holds on to her luminous faith.

But Adam on the contrary stoops down to the blow of fate, the fate created by his own act and as decreed by the ethical God of justice. He is a physical man, not even an awakened soul—individual of nature near to nature, but a mere exterior person who adores all things physical. For him fate has a deep significance—no matter if Christianity accepts or rejects this fact. He has not found the deeper self in himself. So too with Eve. She is a toy of human caprice, the very personification of the Christian idea of human failing. Her role, as Milton asserts again and again, is to procreate. Hence her role is purely and objectively utilitarian. She has no deeper psychological aspect. She is below Adam in status, hence a subphysical entity. For her, fate has no meaning except the discomforts due to expulsion from Paradise or, more concretely, her estrangement from Adam. She is the reverse of Savitri in all her aspects—nature, personality and capacity. Such an image could be drawn only by an ethical poet.

Eve is the instrument of the evil fate that is awaiting Adam. This is by her frailty, her vanity, and her disregard for authority, because she is yet a submoral and subrational personality.

Satan is the instrument of Fate. In *Savitri* Death becomes the personification of doom. While the power of Fate moves cautiously, the doom in *Savitri* sweeps down and strikes like a titan. Doom in *Savitri* assumes terrible dimensions, diabolical, grotesque, and terrifying aspects. But the doom that strikes in *Paradise Lost* comes not from Satan but from God Himself, due to Satan's machinations. Yet singularly Christianity refuses to accept Fate as a reality, because this Fate is driven by God's will owing to the behaviour of man. Thus in a way the Christian God of Justice is the God of Fate.

The problem of Fate exists for the rational and the physical man. It is absent for the soul. The problems are created by the emergence of contrary aspects of our being, each taking one standpoint and the other parts looking at the question from a different angle. These differences in viewpoint create a difference in judgment which is the cause of riddles. In its wake our emotional being suffers, our rationality is baffled, our faith is shaken.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

HUGO—POET OF THE FAMILY REUNION

A TALK

WE all know Hugo as a giant among men of letters. I have not read his greater and more ambitious works. I have read only some of his lyrics¹ addressed mostly to children, mostly his own children and grandchildren. I liked them all immensely. So here I have chosen a few such poems which bring into light a different aspect of Hugo, Hugo as a poet of the family reunion, Hugo as a passionate and loving father.

Of all his children Hugo loved most his eldest daughter, Leopoldine. He loved her madly.

Before we come to the poems, I should like to quote a touching little letter of his addressed to her which shows us how he adored her.

I have read your two sweet letters, my Didine,²—and they have given me great joy. All that I see, the lovely sky, the beautiful mountains—all these are nothing to me, you see. My chimney, my blue couch and all of you on my knees—these are far better than the Alps and the Mediterranean. I feel it deeply in this moment when I am alone, reading your dear little letters with tears in my eyes.

In a fortnight I shall see you again, I shall embrace you, we shall have plenty of time to be together, and I shall be very happy.

Continue to be good and sweet and to give me joy; be all attention and tenderness to your excellent mother. She loves you so much and is so worthy of being loved.

Every night I gaze at the stars as we used to do in the evening from the balcony of the "place Royale", and I think of you, my Didine. I am happy to see that you love and understand Nature.

Your good little father

VICTOR HUGO.³

But happiness is not of this world. The gods would not have us drink enough of it. So it was with Hugo. Most unfortunately, Leopoldine got drowned in the prime of her youth—when she was only 19—along with her newly-wed husband, Charles Vacquerie. It was in 1843 in Villequier, a borough of the Lower-Seine. In the course of a pleasure-trip on the river, the canoe, caught in an eddy, capsized.

¹ These beautiful lyrics are in such great profusion that it will be impossible to do full justice to them within the compass of a few pages. In fact, apart from these lyrics there is a booklet by Hugo called, "The Art of Being a Grandfather."

² Pet-name by which he used to call her.

³ NOTE: All quotations here are translated by the author.

And the young husband, not having been able to save his wife, perished with her. This was only seven months after their marriage.

Her death came to Hugo as a "coup du ciel"¹. He lost all hope in life and work, his heart was broken—I was going to say, he was worse than dead. His faith in God was shattered. Henceforth his attitude towards Him was one of *abhimān*. He couldn't and wouldn't forgive Him for a long time, and for a long time he kept a fierce despair. In the poem, "Trois Ans Après" (Three Years After), Hugo says :

You know that I despair,
That my force in vain defends itself,
And that I suffer as a father,
I who suffered so much when a child !

The humble child that God has snatched away from me
Knew not how to help except by loving me ;
It was my joy of life
To see her eyes see me.

If this God did not want to stop
The work which He made me commence,
If He wanted that I should still work,
He needed only to leave her with me !²

In the poem, "A Villequier" (To Villequier), composed on 4 September 1844, for the first anniversary of the cruel blow, Hugo endeavours to settle the account of his *abhimān* with God. It is quite a big poem, but a very beautiful one. It deals with one single theme : Having been wildly unhappy with Providence for depriving him of his dear daughter, Hugo now is conscience-stricken and realises his folly and blindness. "Life in tears has slowly corrected me."³ He addresses himself thus to God :

Consider that when one doubts, O my God, when one suffers,
When the eye which weeps too much ends with blindness,
When a being whose mourning plunges him into the most black despair,
When he does not see any more, he cannot contemplate you.³

As this poem shows, there is no doubt that in his mind of minds Hugo understands how wrong of him it was to have been sullen with God and to have revolted against His ways.

¹ Providential blow.

² Victor Hugo, *Les contemplations*, Classique Larousse, 13^e Edition, p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, "A Villequier", pp. 62 ; 64-5.

I know that the bird loses its plume, the flower its perfume ;
That creation is a big wheel
Which cannot turn without crushing someone ;...

I know that you have many other things to attend to
Than to pity us all,
And that a child who dies,—despair of her mother,—
Means nothing to you !

(Needless to say, the above stanzas indicate that Hugo is still not very happy with such—shall we say, cruel ? —ways of God.¹ "...big wheel which cannot turn without crushing someone," "...a child who dies, ...Means nothing to you !").

However, Hugo knows very well that his attachment to his child is too great, that he is being too sentimental, and that God is not very happy either with his sulky and angry attitude. Hence his touching appeal to God—not to be so hard upon him :

Do not be irritated that I should behave so,
O my God, this wound has bled for a long time !
Anguish in my soul was always most strong,
And my heart is submissive, but not resigned.

When one has seen, sixteen years, this one's other self
Grow into an amiable beauty and into sweet reason,
When one has known that this child whom one loves
Makes day in our soul and in our home,

That it is the only joy here-below which persists
Of all that one has dreamed of,—
Consider that it is a very afflicting thing,
To see her go away .²

He is in fact quite afraid of God and even terror-stricken. Hence his supplication to Him to look into his soul which he thinks is pure and without bad intention :

I supplicate to you, O God ! to look upon my soul,
And to consider
That humble like a child and sweet like a woman
I come to adore you.³

¹ In fact, in the above stanza, thought Hugo knows he has to submit to almighty God, yet the tone of his submission betrays, in spite of him, a depth of irony and an irreducible revolt against such ways.

² "A Villequier", pp. 64-5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 62 ;

However, the shock was too rude, too great, to bear. Hence Hugo explains and justifies at great length his human weakness. But what is remarkable in this, is the tone in which he addresses God. It is as though he were having a tête-à-tête with God, as though he were making a clean breast of it to his old intimate friend, so that the latter does not misunderstand him and forgives his frailty. The beauty of the whole poem lies precisely in this rare tone of intimacy.

Consider also that I have from dawn
Worked, fought, thought, walked, struggled,
Explaining Nature to man who ignores her,
Clarifying all things with your clarity ;

That I have, confronting hatred and anger,
Done my work here-below,
That I could not expect this reward,
That I could not

Foresee you too, on my head which bows,
Would increase the weight with your triumphant hand,
And that you who saw how little joy I had,
Would take away so soon from me my child !

That a soul thus struck has reason to complain,
That I could blaspheme,
And throw at you my cries like a child who throws
A stone into the sea.¹

Indeed, Hugo realises his folly. But, struck as he is to the most sensitive in him, his heart of hearts cannot yet accept so easily that wisdom. Hence "...my heart is submissive, but not resigned."² Hence the justification of the ways of Man to God ! Hence too his prayer :

Alas ! let the tears flow from my eyes
Since you made man for that !
Let me bend over this cold stone
And say to my child : Do you feel I am here ?³

We must not, however, forget that at the very beginning of the poem tranquillity enters the poet's spirit, and a sort of serenity appeases his crushed soul. To see this we need only take a few first stanzas :

Now that from mourning, which made my soul obscure,
I emerge, pale and victorious,

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

And that I feel the peace of vast Nature,
Which enters my heart ;

Seeing my smallness and seeing your miracles
I take my reason before immensity ;

I come to you, O Lord, father in whom one must believe,
I bring to you, appeased,
Filled with your glory, the pieces of this heart
Which you have broken,¹

Now that he is calmer, he sees the great design of God, His wisdom, His might, His love and—I think we should not be very wrong, if we say, His Grace too.

I no more resist whatever comes
From your will,²...

Because these things are, it is that they must be so ;
I admit, I admit !³

Then Hugo suddently rises above his ego-self and sees things with the eyes of a true visionary, the inspired Seer that he is.

Our destinies are under great laws
Which nothing disconcerts, and nothing softens.
You cannot have sudden clemencies
Which would derange the world, O God, calm Spirit !⁴

II

Another exquisite poem of Hugo's. I shall not give the whole of it. I shall give only that portion which I have liked most.

O reminiscences ! Springtime ! Dawn !
Sweet rays, sad and re-warming !
—While she was still a child,
And her sister just a baby...—

Do you know on the hill,
Which joins Montlignon to Saint-Leu,
A terrace that slopes down
Between a sombre wood and the blue sky ?

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

², ³ *Ibid.*, p. 61 .

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

It was there we lived.—My heart
Plunges back into that charming past !—
I used to hear her in the morning gently play
Beneath my window.

She would run on the dew,
Without noise, lest she should awaken me;
I would not open my casement,
Lest she should run away.

Her brothers laughed...—Pure dawn !
All sang under these freshening cradles,
My family with Nature,
And my children with the birds !

I would cough. They would become good children :
She would, then, climb the stairs with soft steps,
And say to me with a very grave air :
I have kept the little ones downstairs.

Whether her hair was well or badly done,
Whether my heart was sad or gay,
I admired her. She was my fairy
And the sweet star of my eyes.¹

Villequier, 4 September 1846

A word on the above poem.

At the very outset Hugo reveals himself a supreme artist. Like the Impressionists, he paints the setting with only three evocative and suggestive images, "O reminiscences! Springtime! Dawn !" Nothing more. They are enough to create a world of beauty, freshness and youth, though a bit tinged with the sad sweetness of the days that are no more. He then gives a masterful touch : it is animated and bathed by *sweet rays, sad and re-warming*. Sweet, because his daughter was beautiful; sad, because she is no more; re-warming, because she and all the memories associated with her were and are still to him all that is lovely, inspiring and life-giving. Then the poet plunges straight into the heart of his subject : the Evocation of the wonderful past that has vanished like the glory and the freshness of a dream.

Needless to say, all through, the poem breathes simplicity and straightforwardness, even as children do. And it is by the intensity of feeling that Hugo raises this simplicity into sheer poetry.

¹ Victor Hugo, *Poésie Choisie*, "O souvenir ! Printemps ! aurore !", Librairie Hachette, 1950, pp. 52-5.

III

Hugo's beauty of expression in simplicity seems to be at its best when he writes anything on children. He is then so direct, so full of tenderness, so full of love, and so colloquial and, therefore, so intimate; and yet the language has such beauty that one has no doubt whatsoever that it is a pure flow straight from the heart and therefore touches us immediately and deeply. As a result, his art is effortless, impeccable—because it is the innate Perfection in us singing out, as it were, its perfect song, sweet or sad, according as the circumstance inspires. As for example, when he writes on the occasion of Leopoldine's marriage with Charles Vacquerie, which took place on 15 February 1843, and was celebrated at the Church Saint-Paul :

Here, one wants to retain you; there, one desires you.
Daughter, wife, angel, child, do your double task.
Give us a regret, give them hope,
Go with a tear ! enter with a smile.¹

Or again, in the poem, "Demain, des l'aube,..." (Tomorrow, from Dawn,...), the poet expresses himself with such a simplicity of diction and with so direct a tone of intimacy that we forget what he is saying ; we only see him already do what he will be doing tomorrow.

Tomorrow, from dawn, at the hour when the fields become white,
I shall set out. You see, I know that you are waiting for me.
I shall go by the forest, I shall go by the mountain.
I cannot stay any longer far from you.²

I shall walk, the eyes fixed on to my thoughts,
Without seeing anything outside, without hearing any noise,
Alone, unknown, the back crouched, the hands crossed,
Sad, and the day shall be for me like the night.

I shall see neither the gold of the evening that falls,
Nor the distant darkness that descends upon Harfleur,³
And, when I shall have come, I shall put on your tomb
A bouquet of green holly and of heath in flower.⁴

BIBHASH MUTSUDDI

¹ Victor Hugo, *Les contemplations*, "15 fevrier 1843," p. 52.

² In another poem, "Veni, Vidi, Vixi," Hugo says :

O my daughter ! I aspire for darkness where you repose,

Because my heart is dead, I have lived quite enough. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³ Small town, three kilometres away from Havre. These two lines evoke in short the splendour of the panorama to which he will remain insensible.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Earthman by Maggi Lüdchi : Published by Victor Gollancz. London, 1967.
Price 25s.

*A pity beyond all telling
is hid in the heart of Love.*

THIS is an extraordinary novel. We may be allowed to make an unusual review by giving the word as often as possible to the author herself. Let me start with a long quotation, from the very end of the book. It recounts a dream :

He was free...He could breathe normally again...He ran easily now through fluted columns, touching the ground once in every few steps.

He was under the sky. The ceilings had gone. All he had to do was to get beyond the beautiful frescoed walls. For a moment he was tempted to slow down and examine the rich historic decorations which nobody else had seen. But he was desperately curious to discover what lay beyond.

He came out in a clearing. For a dazzled moment he missed the protection of the walls. Then he got used to the light. It was itself a protection, teeming with minute gold particles that moved so quickly they cheated their own density and made the air lighter, more numinous than he had ever known it.

He stopped running and began breathing deeply, greedy to fill his lungs with this rare substance. His lungs had themselves found it and were already drinking. He knew they had been making a terrible effort for him all his life. For the first time they had found an air which required no pumping, and they could do without his co-operation...

He saw that where the particles were denser there were forms, beings engaged in activities, movements which would only be understood in relation to those of the other forms. There was no apparent co-ordination between any of them, nothing planned or worked out. They simply fell into the general choreography at the moment of execution.

Christopher stood alone, an invisible witness, longing to penetrate the group. His thought was immediately picked up. One of the beings turned towards him. He did not smile with his mouth, but Christopher knew he was being smiled at because all the scintillas of his body warmed so that Christopher could feel radiance reflecting off him. They stood facing each other, but it was not an exclusive exchange. It affected the figures closest to them, burnishing them a fraction of a shade deeper as though Christopher's arrival had imperceptibly enriched the tone. The corners of the clearing, which had been in darkness, receded, and he saw that there were not the few figures he had first apprehended but many hundreds of them, for the most part working individually, paying

so little attention to each other that it was impossible to see how they could achieve their common goal. There was a certain disorder implicit in the distribution, yet it was completely annulled by the lack of agitation. It was all a giant laboratory in which nobody knew specifically what anybody else was doing without this factor in any way interfering with the accomplishment of the project...

He came to a figure sitting still, apparently doing nothing but looking down. Christopher bent over to see what was being looked at. At first he could find nothing but a blur. Then shapes disengaged themselves. It was like looking down a stair-well with sheets of varying transparencies cutting horizontally across each storey. Through the top pane shone a structure of light arches of much the same substance as the beings around him, but beyond that, through the next transparency, these same structures had become vibrantly coloured, their clean lines melted into throbbing unstable contours....The bottom of the stair-well was something like the reversal of a kaleidoscope. It shook into a little city that people were building near the sea. It was a heap of coloured paper. Yet it was the end-product of the first luminous structure up here. And what effort ! There they were shoring sands and shifting earth, all very pleased with their half-finished effect. Yet when you forgot the initial conception and got used to the vulgarity inherent in the grainy matter it wasn't at all bad. It was an ingenious little city gleaming like a jewel in the reflection thrown by the sea. He followed the people in their libraries and workshops and schools. It came to him with a shock that these were the counterparts, no, the very people around him. This is what they were doing. This was the cradle they were building....

He knew where he had to go now.

Christopher's quest, unconscious yet, had started in Pairs :

He was suspect to himself as he stood in this mediaeval cathedral: reduced to trying to insert his inexpedient concepts into a mediaeval doctrine ; reduced to finding a niche for himself...

As though the crucifixion's bleeding wounds had flourished like great red flowers, blotting off the birth and the revival. His drunkenness attacked him in waves. He emerged from it to see gothic-pale faces staring ahead.

He knew he could not stay tomorrow. Not even tonight...

It was in *Notre Dame*, during midnight mass, on the eve of Christmas. He remembered that he was in danger. What danger ? Of being saved, of being made to desert the earth.... He swung around, brushing shoulders and hats, and found himself pushing into a solid mass of people....Make way for an earthist, he called out in a polite but ringing tone. He had meant to say atheist but found, to his relief, that earthist served just as well...

Somehow his passage to Ceylon got booked—"You like islands. What's wrong with Ceylon?"

And there :

He was literally drinking himself to death. And there was nobody to stop him. The interference that Christopher had always resented and pushed aside was completely absent. There was nobody but himself....There was only one protest left to him. It was to stop drinking.

As he did so, he was brought to a place where Buddhist monks took in people who needed rest. They sent him after some days to a village, where *Ayrishswami* had agreed to take him.

"Who are you?" asked the Irishman...Christopher explained. He spoke for five hours....Finally he muttered in the unsure tone he had started with, "I think that's about it."

The red-haired man lifted his head and looked at Christopher. "Who are you?" he asked in exactly the same casual, matter-of-fact way he had done hours earlier...

This Irish Swami is a fascinating personality, very learned, but living the simple traditional life of Tamil village-people.

"You see", he said, "You're always looking for trouble that doesn't come. Look at that." Irish Swami held out the white inside of his forearm. Christopher had already noticed the dark tattoo of two small curly-script words...*'Summa iru...simply be....'* "—What's that, you ask? It doesn't even ring a bell in you because your mind is always on the go.... If you can stop your mind and simply be you'll have no problems. Just sit quietly here, simply be when you're waiting for your shirt, to begin with. Do one thing at a time and do it properly. Sit properly, eat properly. Be properly.... Know where you are and be there."

Christopher tries hard. Irishguru is indefatigable. A tremendously interesting relationship! I am reminded of Vivekananda's words¹: "Let none regret that they were difficult to convince! I fought my Master for six long years with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!"

After some months, rebellious Christopher is sent to South India to find out the lost secret of a 4th-century fresco. *Apsarās* : Heavenly delegates whose mission it is to help men find God. Or to distract men absorbed in heavenly aspiration.

He was sure you could only get the whole thing by projecting yourself beyond the picture.

¹ Sister Nivedita : *The Master as I Saw Him*.

He seeks, struggles, tries—and finally finds :

He saw her. She was all the Apsaras with all their aspects, all their enchantments together. She herself was in the spaces between them and beyond them and existed in the joy that bound them all. His Apsara was not free but inextricably bound to an overlord...and her love depended on Christopher's being led to the very centre of joy...

And even as he looked she began to shape, a statue in the boulders. She was the only boulder carved at all. She was no smoother than the others but her bulging maternal breasts rested on a swell of stomach. Her head was not much different in shape and there was little neck. But she was undeniably there. He had found her, not an overlord at all but the Mother, roughly carved in the rock.

If you looked carelessly she might be just a pyramid of boulders. She was a waiting world of patience, prepared, if necessary, to be confounded with neighbouring stones until the end of time. She bore the world within her, held teeming matter in all her fertile contours, held without possessing. All beginnings sprang from this stone...She was the Shakti, the primordial power, who procreates and shakes her issue, while standing unostentatiously above in her maternal solicitude. She looked beyond Christopher. She saw him as he had seen himself...

It was She who had found him.

Later, after much travelling and various experiences of Indian life, suffering and God-love, he meets in Usha, a young woman-doctor, a living, modern Apsara—one of the most touching persons of this rich book. She says :

“Any life that was just a stamped-out version of a collective desire is—would be for me—a death. You must know better than I that even when the aim is equilibrium what we usually manage is stagnation. We can only move forward from one uncertainty to another...

“Any method I could evolve would be worthless. Christopher, the age of methods is over ; only we don't know it yet. They're all relics. They don't work except to bring you to a starting-point. I'm convinced of that, though I'm always looking for them myself. The only thing that can be done is not to let anything come between oneself and whatever it is that works. You gave me the clue when you said I was in touch with something. I'm not. It sometimes gets in touch with me...

“I think the difficulties of people like us arise because we are adapted to deal with environments that haven't manifested yet, or at least that we haven't found. Perhaps they belong to the future....That's what you'll really be looking for on your way to the Himalayas. I wonder what you'll find. Perhaps it doesn't matter. Perhaps the important thing for the moment is to go on looking. If

enough people refuse to adapt perhaps that's enough to start something to draw the right conditions."

I need not add much to this: the quotations speak for themselves. Here the richly equipped vessel which the novel from Flaubert to Proust has become is crossing the ocean towards the rising sun. There is beauty of rhythm and image, oneness of language and contents, the inner and the outer, idea and action—heaven and earth. Krishna Das, a wonderful Bhakti-saint, has said to Christopher :

"Christopher, everybody is there without knowing it. Sometimes this one catches sight of the golden bird, but he goes on eating and singing as before because he does not know it is really himself. One day he looks up and understands where he is. Then there is only one."

"But that's just it," blurted Christopher. "You see, I think that one's been up there long enough. I don't want to go up there. I want it to come down to me and I must go. I must find a way of doing it."

This *Earthman* : a brother of that other seeker of Earth's Gold : *L'orpailleur* ¹ (The Gold-digger). The Poetic Mother of the dawning age—*Savitri*—is not she their Mother ?

A darkness carrying morning in its breast
Looked for the eternal wide returning gleam,
Waiting the advent of a larger ray
And rescue of the lost herds of the Sun.
In a splendid extravagance of the waste of God
Dropped carelessly in creation's spendthrift work,
Left in the chantiers of the bottomless world
And stolen by the robbers of the Deep,
The golden shekels of the Eternal lie,
Hoarded from touch and view and thought's desire,
Locked in blind antres of the ignorant flood
Lest men should find them and be even as Gods...
The treasure was found of a supernal Day.

Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, I, 3)

PETER STEIGER

¹ Satprem : *L'orpailleur*, roman, aux Editions du Seuil, 1960.

Gita-Pradeep, By *Keshava Deva Acharya*. Publishers : Divya Jivan Sahitya Prakashan. Pondicherry-2. pp. 200—Price Rs. 4.00

This prose translation of the verses of the Gita in Hindi will remove a long-felt want. Not that there is any dearth of Hindi translations, but an authentic Hindi translation on the lines of Sri Aurobindo's original and synthetic interpretation of the Gita is, indeed, a new venture and a welcome contribution to the philosophical literature in Hindi. Keshava Deva Shastry has tried his best to keep close not only to the sense but to the very wording of Sri Aurobindo's rendering of the Sanskrit verses in English, which can be compiled from his masterly exposition of the Gita's teaching in his *Essays on the Gita*.

The book will prove useful to lovers of the Gita and students of Indian philosophy and Yoga.¹

RISHABHCHAND

¹ Editor's Note : We have requested the publisher to sell the book on a special concession basis to Gita-lovers who wish to distribute freely at least 50-100 copies. They may correspond with the publisher. The offer will remain open till February 21, 1968, the 90th birthday of the Mother.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Mother India is bringing out its first book by February 21, 1968 :

THE VISION AND WORK OF 'SRI AUROBINDO

| by

K. D. SETHNA

It is a selection of articles covering about 200 pages and dealing with various issues and problems connected with Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.

We offer a pre-publication special concession of 20%, with postage free, to all the subscribers of **Mother India**, as well as of the other Ashram periodicals, and all the members of the Sri Aurobindo Society, who will register their names with **Mother India** by January 31, 1968.