

MOTHER INDIA

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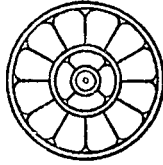
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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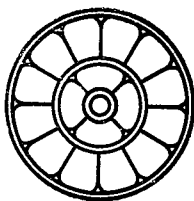
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THE MOTHER ANSWERS QUESTIONS ABOUT 1967

Q. 1/ IN 1967 THE SUPERMIND WILL ENTER THE PHASE OF REALISING POWER .
WHAT DOES REALISING POWER EXACTLY MEAN ?

*acting decisively on the mind
of men and the course of events.*

Q. 2/ WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THE REALISING POWER ON THE MOTHER'S OWN
PHYSICAL BEING AND THEN THE EFFECT UPON OTHERS AND THE WORLD IN GENERAL -
(INCLUDING THE OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD TODAY)?

*We can wait with a little patience
and we shall see*

Q. 3/ DOES THIS DATE - (4-5-67) MARK THE BEGINNING OF WHAT THE MOTHER
AND SRI AUROBINDO HAVE CALLED THE NEW RACE - THE RACE OF SUPERMAN ?

*Since a few months the
children born, amongst our people mostly,
are of a very special kind.*

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS IN SADHANA

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

THERE are certain things that it is absolutely necessary for X to realise in a sincere and straightforward spirit, without self-justification if his sadhana is not to turn about in a constant circle to the end or else fail and fall into pieces.

The aim of this Yoga is an opening to a higher Divine Truth beyond life, mind and body and the transformation of these three things into its image. But that transformation cannot take place, and the Truth itself cannot be known in its own unmistakable spirit, perfect light and real body until the whole of the adhar has been fundamentally and patiently purified, and made plastic and capable of receiving what is beyond the constructions of the mind, the desires of the vital being and the habits of the physical consciousness and physical being.

His most obvious obstacle, one which he has not in the least got rid of up to now, is a strongly rajasic vital ego for which his mind finds justifications and covers. There is nothing more congenial to the vital ego than to put on the cloak of Yoga, and imagine itself free, divinised, spiritualised, siddha, and all the rest of it, or advancing towards that end, when it is really doing nothing of the kind, but is just its old self in new forms. If one does not look at oneself with a constant sincerity, it is impossible to get out of this circle.

Along with the exclusion of self-deceiving vital ego, there must go that which accompanies it, usually in the mental parts, mental arrogance, a false sense of superiority and an ostentation of knowledge. All pretence and all pretensions must be given up; all pretence to oneself or others of being what one is not, or of knowing what one does not know, and all idea of being higher than one's own spiritual stature.

Over against the vital ego there is a great coarseness and heaviness of tamas in the physical being and an absence of psychic and spiritual refinement. That must be eliminated or it will stand always in the way of a true and complete change in the vital being and the mind.

Unless these things are radically changed, merely having experiences or establishing a temporary and precarious calmness in the mental and vital parts will not help in the end. There will be no fundamental change, only a constant going from one state to another, sometimes a return of disturbances and always the same defect persisting to the end of the chapter.

The one condition of getting rid of things is an absolute central sincerity in all the parts of the being, and that means an absolute insistence on the Truth and nothing but the Truth. There will then be a readiness for unsparing self-criticism and vigilant openness to the light, an uneasiness when falsehood comes in, which will finally purify the whole being.

The defects mentioned are more or less common in various degrees in almost every sadhak, though there are some who are not touched by them. They can be got rid of, if the requisite sincerity is there. But if they occupy the central parts of the being and vitiate the attitude, then the sadhak will give a constant open or covert support to them, his mind will always be ready to give disguises and justifications and try to elude the searchlight of the self-critical faculty and protests of the psychic being. That means a failure in the Yoga at least for this existence.

POETRY AND SADHANA

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

It is obvious that poetry cannot be a substitute for sadhana ; it can be an accompaniment only. If there is a feeling (of devotion, surrender etc.), it can express and confirm it ; if there is an experience, it can express and strengthen the force of experience. As reading of books like the Upanishads or Gita or singing of devotional songs can help, especially at one stage or another, so this can help also. Also it opens a passage between the external consciousness and the inner mind or vital. But if one stops at that, then nothing much is gained. Sadhana must be the main thing and sadhana means the purification of the nature, the consecration of the being, the opening of the psychic and the inner mind and vital, the contact and presence of the Divine, the realisation of the Divine in all things, surrender, devotion, the widening of the consciousness into the cosmic Consciousness, the Self one in all, the psychic and the spiritual transformation of the nature. If these things are neglected and only poetry and mental development and social contact occupy all the time, then that is not sadhana. Also the poetry must be written in the true spirit, not for fame or self-satisfaction, but as a means of contact with the Divine through inspiration or of the expression of one's own inner being as it was written formerly by those who left behind them so much devotional and spiritual poetry in India ; it does not help if it is written only in the spirit of the western artist or litterateur. Even works or meditation cannot succeed unless they are done in the right spirit of consecration and spiritual aspiration gathering up the whole being and dominating all else. It is lack of this gathering up of the whole life and nature and turning it towards the one aim, which is the defect in so many here that lowers the atmosphere and stands in the way of what is being done by myself and the Mother.

19-5-1938

THE NATIONS AND THE WORKING OF THE DIVINE TRUTH AND GRACE

SOME ANSWERS BY THE MOTHER

ISRAËL as a nation has the same right to exist as all the other nations. (12-6-1967)

How can you believe that the Grace works for one nation or *against* another? The Grace works for *Truth* and in the present condition of the world, Truth and falsehood are both present everywhere, in all nations. It is the human mind which thinks, this one is right and that one is wrong—right and wrong are present everywhere.

The Truth is above all conflicts and all oppositions. (13-6-1967)

Q : May I have a clarification from you on two points ?

(1) Does not the Grace work for whatever Truth there may be on both sides of a conflict—or does it keep altogether aloof just because either side has falsehood also ?? †*

* Yes.

† No—I said *work*—it is constantly working.

(2) Do present conflicts differ radically from a conflict like World War II, in which the Grace worked definitely and decisively on one side—at least on the whole ?

You are mixing up two things, the working of the Grace and the result which is the inevitable consequence of the triumph of the Truth : they are quite different things on a different level.

The progressive victory of the Truth brings automatically certain results complex and often unexpected by the human mind which always wants clean cuts. It is only a total vision both in time and space that can understand. (14-6-1967)

Those who serve the Truth cannot take one side or another.

Truth is above conflict and opposition.

In Truth, all countries unite in a common effort towards progress and realisation. (8-6-1967)

VISIONS AND VOICES

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

SELF : The Mother's body does not appear to me any longer a physical structure like that of other human beings. It is simply a particularised manifestation of a magnificent light. Is it really so ? Or am I simply exaggerating my experience ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No, that is all right—it so appears to the inner vision. 6-2-1934

Visions are not indispensable—they are a help, that is all, when they are of the right kind. 24-4-1934

There is no plane or state of visions. It is an activity of the inner being.

10-7-1934

SELF : I dreamt of an insect flying from near a lamp, entering my body and illumining it. Has it any meaning ?

SRI AUROBINDO : The insect may symbolise some force of light on a small scale. 10-7-1934

SELF : In my last night's dreams I saw two events. First, I saw that the Mother would come out for her evening walk earlier today, and that I would somehow be present to see her. Second, I saw a new poem of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. Both these predictions have become facts today.

SRI AUROBINDO : One can see beforehand things that happen in the physical. One can see them on the vital plane or on the subtle physical—but the subtle physical foreseeing is usually more exact and sure. 23-8-1934

SELF : The Mother's Force has started working in my ears ! Often it closes them as if with some physical substance. Then I feel quite deaf for the time being.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is through the ears that the thought vibrations usually come from outside.

SELF : During the noon nap there was a dream-vision. I saw your answer to my question about H. You had written, "Yes." The characters of the writing were exactly like yours. Can the hostile forces imitate your handwriting ?

SRI AUROBINDO : They can imitate anything—but why should it have been the hostile forces ? 6-9-1934

SELF : On the same paper you had drawn a sketch of a bottle. It was filled to the brim. Just above it there were two figures of small size, one representing the Mother and the other H. The figures were shown to be pouring something into the bottle. By the bottle you had meant Nagin. How do you explain this ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I suppose it indicates something to be poured into you by her through H's help. These things seem to be mental and may be mental intuitions or mental formations. 6-9-1934

SELF : Yesterday I was sitting before the Mother and receiving something from her. At the same time I began to feel the near presence of H through a particular smell. But H was not at all present in the Hall and wherever I moved the smell also accompanied me. Once you wrote to me that each person has a special subtle smell different from others'. Was the experience something of the kind ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is simply that the subtle physical sense has been developed and you feel H near although he is not physically present—with that comes the smell. 10-9-1934

SELF : At times I feel as if a burning spark enters my forehead. It remains only for a while. What does it indicate ?

SRI AUROBINDO : A spark of the higher dynamic force, I suppose. 7-9-1934

SELF : I had just closed my eyes—but was not asleep. Suddenly I saw a small bird coming down in swiftest flight. It knocked at my forehead, just above the inner mind-centre. I could not quite remember afterwards whether it entered in or fled away.

SRI AUROBINDO : It must have gone in. I suppose the bird indicates a power of ascension. 10-9-1934

SELF : I wonder if what I feel as silence is the true silence. People say that by the silence is usually meant a state in which one hears the Divine's Voice. As yet I have not come across any such voice.

SRI AUROBINDO : Nonsense. The silence does not depend on hearing the Divine's Voice. Hearing voices is not always a very safe thing either unless one is clear first in the vital. 15-12-1934

From NAGIN DOSHI

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 23, 1940

P : Nolini was telling me a story of Charu Dutt's. It's about the Bomb Case. It seems that when you were arrested you wanted to confess to the Police. Subodh Mullick wired to Dutt about it, and Dutt wired back to you, "No theatricals, please!"

SRI AUROBINDO : What is that ? I wanted to confess ?

N : No, the story was like this. I was also present. When you were arrested for the first time, you wanted to plead guilty.

SRI AUROBINDO : Arrested for what ? For the Bomb Case ? For heaven's sake let us make it clear first.

N : He said it was for an article you had written in the *Bandemataram*.

SRI AUROBINDO : There was no article for which I was arrested. It was a reprint from the *Yugantar* that was given in the *Bandemataram*. Then ?

N : Then the Police didn't know who was the editor. You seem to have thought of pleading guilty. So Subodh Mullick sent a wire to Dutt.

SRI AUROBINDO : But where was Subodh Mullick at that time ? I thought he was a detainee somewhere in the North. Then ?

N : He wired to Dutt you were going to be theatrical.

SRI AUROBINDO : Theatrical ? I had common sense enough not to plead guilty.

P : And Dutt wired to you, "No theatricals, please !"

N : No, not to Sri Aurobindo but to Mullick. Dutt himself first thought of going personally and persuading Sri Aurobindo but thought better of it and wired back and sent Barin with instructions.

SRI AUROBINDO : Where was Dutt at that time ? I thought he was at Bombay. It was the editorial staff of the *Bandemataram* who arranged for the defence and gave evidence, which was rather made-up. (*Laughter*)

N : Dutt said there was no evidence that you were the editor.

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*) : There was, but it was erased by the knife.

N : Some other stories about you occur in Dutt's *Reminiscences*. They are about cards and shooting.

SRI AUROBINDO : What has he said ?

N : That you knew only one card-game.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is really going too far.

N : He taught you the game and at once you picked it up and beat them all because you read their hands !

SRI AUROBINDO : All I remember is that it was a game of Bridge which I didn't know and I and Mrs. Dutt were thoroughly beaten by the opposite party. (*Laughter*)

M : And the shooting story ?

N : When Dutt and others were practising shooting, Sri Aurobindo came in and he was asked to try. He didn't know how to handle a gun. He was shown it and every time he fired he hit the target which was the tip of a match-stick.

SRI AUROBINDO : What was actually the case was that I and Barin went somewhere in Midnapur to practise shooting. No doubt, it is true that I didn't know how to handle a gun. (*Laughter*)

C : But Anilbaran says you may not remember these incidents.

P : That is not possible. When circumstances and events are described, one can bring them back to memory.

C : Dutt says that at the Surat Congress Sri Aurobindo was protected by pistols.

M : Was there any chance of personal injury, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Not that I know of. Only Satyen Bose was with me and he had a pistol. He said to me, "I have a pistol with me. Shall I shoot Suren Banerji ?" I said, "For heaven's sake, don't do that." (*Laughter*)

M : But why did he want to shoot him ?

SRI AUROBINDO : He must have got very excited. At any rate there was a pistol, there was Satyen and there was Banerji. (*Laughter*)

N : So why not shoot him ?

M : Is it true, Sir, that the British Government wanted to kidnap you and you were guarded by pistols ?

SRI AUROBINDO : May be.

M : I was also present at the Congress. I didn't know of any row.

N : You might have been one of the protectors of Sri Aurobindo, as our Dr. S was.

S : I was a child at that time. In a volunteer's uniform I was standing far off at a safe distance and saw the procession going.

M : C applied that medicine, Sir. Nothing untoward has happened to him.

N : There was also nothing untoward in him.

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite so.

N : What about P ?

P : There is a little redness that is due to my cloth sticking to the paste. I wanted to pull it out and, as the hairs were also stuck in the paste, the skin got irritated a little.

S : I also applied it. It gets dry in no time.

C : But one can't walk with it.

SRI AUROBINDO : The leg has to be immobile ? It will then be more ankylosed. (*Laughter*)

M : No, it can be applied at night and removed in the morning.

SRI AUROBINDO : But I don't see how a medicine meant to remove pain and swelling can produce flexion.

M : Neither do I, Sir, but the lady said so.

C : Is it because of the Rishi you have the faith ?

M : Yes, but the Rishi is not only a Rishi; he gave it with the blessings of Panduranga who is Sri Krishna himself.

SRI AUROBINDO : To prove its effectiveness it must be tried on P first.

M : Yes, we can apply it on his other knee.

N : Buddhadev Bhattacharya was very happy at your remark.

SRI AUROBINDO : What remark ?

N : You said he was a remarkable man.

SRI AUROBINDO : I see. But why was he happy ?

N : Just because you took his name.

M : Couldn't you say, Sir, whether this lady who gave the medicine had something genuine in her and in her planchette ?

SRI AUROBINDO : There may be something as she goes into a trance, which means that she becomes a medium.

S : She does automatic writing—just like your book, *Yogic Sadhan*.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, in automatic writing one becomes a medium of some power. I don't think that whatever is written in that way is correct or right. At least I haven't seen so.

C : Sometimes other powers come in too in the name of somebody else.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, they take up and come in others' roles. So it will depend on the medium and the nature of the link one has established with the occult worlds. These worlds have their own laws. There are good and bad vital worlds and the results will depend on the connection one has made.

N : All these powers come from the vital worlds ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Of course.

N : It would be good then if one could establish a connection with good vital worlds and cure cases.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why, one can cure by a connection with bad ones also.

S : It is not always safe for the mediums.

SRI AUROBINDO : No. Sometimes they suffer very badly, either deterioration in health or some other trouble.

S : It is not easy, either, to open into those worlds.

N : It is easier than into the intuitive planes.

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes.

N : How can one open then ?

SRI AUROBINDO : By making one's vital pure. There is also an indifferent vital, as there is a good vital and a bad.

S : N thinks he can open simply by asking.

N : There are successful doctors with an impure vital.

Sri Aurobindo : That is a different matter.

M : When a person inwardly calls you, do you hear, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : May or may not. Depends on the nature and the circumstances of the case.

M : When one says one hears your voice, do you know about it ?

N : I also want to know that point. For instance, D said he heard your voice asking him to get up at 4 a.m. Did you know ?

SRI AUROBINDO : You mean whether I have spoken ?

M : Do you know about these voices which they say are yours ?

S : It may be from the Universal that the response comes and they hear you because they have faith.

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite so. It depends on some opening in them, either in the mental, psychic or some larger vital part and they may get responses from these planes. Surely I am not going to bother about such things as D's rising up so early.

M : The Mother or yourself don't hear the calls of people ?

N : Sri Aurobindo says that the Mother hears all prayers from different parts of the world.

C : The Mother narrated in the Stores Room how she heard the call of people from Gujarat during a certain ceremony.

SRI AUROBINDO : The Mother hears. I may or may not. The Mother has developed this power from the earliest age and she used to hear even in her childhood.

M : At what stage, say, of an illness does the response come ?

SRI AUROBINDO : How do you mean ?

M : For instance, I call the Mother during an attack of illness and get no response. Does it mean that the disease has passed the stage when one gets response ?

N : How can that be ? In that case very few people would benefit.

SRI AUROBINDO : It depends on the person. Response can be had at any stage. People have been cured at critical stages, even on deathbed. You know my maternal uncle Krishnakumar Mitra's daughter was saved from her deathbed by simple prayer. The doctors had given up all hope after trying all remedies, even snake-poison. She was a typhoid case—the consciousness would't come back. Then they prayed and soon after the prayer the sign of life returned. Without prayer she would not have been saved.

N : Charu Dutt says the Mother's face is not of a human being but of a goddess though he couldn't look at it at pranam but when he bowed down, he caressed her feet for some time, he was feeling so happy.

SRI AUROBINDO : If he couldn't look at the Mother's face, how could he say it was not of a human being ?

N : He must have looked while waiting for the pranam. He said also that before coming here he had tried to call the Mother's Presence but couldn't succeed except once when he felt her compassionate look.

EVENING

C : Today I told Anilbaran about those stories and what you had said about them.

SRI AUROBINDO : About the cards incident I may not remember everything and in one game I may have been able to tell the others' hands. But the shooting incident I can't forget because that was the first time I was handling a gun.

N : And what about aiming at the tip of the match-stick ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is all fantasy.

S : But do not fantasies become truths ? It is in that way God creates the world probably. Looking at hippopotamuses, zebras and all queer animals I come to that view.

M : Why should God have created the world. Was He unhappy ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Does one create when one is unhappy ? Or do you think like that because N creates poetry with difficulty and struggle ? (*Laughter*)

M : He creates for more joy, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO : That means he is full of joy ?

M : God is always full of joy.

SRI AUROBINDO : I am not talking of God. I am talking of N. (*Laughter*)

S (*to M*) : What is your idea about creation ?

M : Creation is *Swayambhu*, (self-born). It is infinite and so has no beginning nor end.

SRI AUROBINDO : The hippopotamus is also *Swayambhu* ?

M : Why not, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : That is not science. Evolution doesn't say that.

S (*to M*) : According to you, the world was and will be just as it is : everything, space and air compact with the *mgodha* or *jiva* from eternity ? (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : Space is also *Swayambhu* then ?

M : Yes, Sir, the creation is infinite ; it has no beginning, no end, like a tennis ball ! (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO : And self-existent with Eliot and his hippopotamus existing from eternity ? (*Laughter*)

S (*to M*) : If you don't believe God has created this world then God can't help you to liberation. You have to be absolutely on your *Purushartha*.¹

SRI AUROBINDO : Quite so.

S (*seeing M sprinkling on his body the water in which Sri Aurobindo's feet had been washed*) : And why are you doing this ?

¹ Self-effort.

M : I believe in Grace. (*Laughter*) It is Jainism I am talking of. It says each one gets his liberation by his own effort. Even the Tirthankaras¹ don't help.

S : It is better to foist all responsibility on God for all creation good and bad. M objects because of the creation of Rakshasas.

SRI AUROBINDO : Why ? Rakshasas can be interesting.

S : He objects too because of his own bad gall-bladder and heart.

SRI AUROBINDO : That also may be interesting to God. (*Laughter*) I was thinking that if Tirthankaras don't help, of what use are they ?

M : They serve as examples.

SRI AUROBINDO : If one has to rely on one's own effort, examples won't matter. he will have to make an effort in any case.

M : The beings that help are the Sashanadevas who worship the Tirthankaras.

SRI AUROBINDO : Then you can worship them ; why the Tirthankaras ? If devas worship the Tirthankaras, they shouldn't help either, because their ideal is also the attainment of Tirthankar. Why should they help ? Besides, it is a contradiction of the true law of Karma. If Karma brings its reward inevitably, then the help of God is unnecessary. If God helps and intervenes effectively and changes the result of action, the law of Karma is not true.

M : Though Jainism believes in *Purushartha* one can pray for help.

SRI AUROBINDO : Ah, you speak of *Purushartha* as well as of help ? The former means that you do everything by your own effort. How does help come in ? It is illogical.

M : According to Jainism, each one is alone and the Jain prays, "I come alone, I shall go alone." He practises this *ekatvam*² in order to get *Vairagya*.³ But it is not outer *Vairagya*, like putting on the garb of a sadhu or monk.

SRI AUROBINDO : But if one is alone and has to be free by his own effort, how do the Tirthankaras, acharyas, and such an infinite number of siddhas crowded in siddhasila, come in ? Like all religions, it is fantastically illogical. Buddha also said the same thing but the religion said, "I can take refuge in Buddha."

P : There is some similarity between Buddhism and Jainism. Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries, though they don't seem to have met. Mahavira was born in Vaisali.

M : In Jainism each soul is bound by ignorance and there are four lokas represented by the Swastika.

SRI AUROBINDO : Hitler got the Swastika from there then ? (*Laughter*)

S : What is the destiny of the individual according to Jainism ?

M : Mukti.

S : Does one become a Tirthankara ?

¹ Literally, those who have reached the goal.

² singleness.

³ renunciation

M : Nobody can become a Tirthankara. There are only twenty-four Tirthankaras for each cycle and they go on cycle after cycle *ad infinitum*.

SRI AUROBINDO : 24 x Infinity ? Or Infinity x 24 ? (*Laughter*)

N (*to M*) : I am staggered by your knowledge of Jainism and am surprised that you don't understand *The Life Divine* which is no patch on all these complexities. (*Laughter*)

M : Really I don't understand *The Life Divine*. I have tried. What should I do, Sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO : I don't know.

N : Sisir Mitra says X is also thinking of coming for Darshan.

M : How do you decide, Sir, for permission for Darshan ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is the Mother who decides. She consults me only for important cases or when she thinks I should be consulted.

M : Still you can give some idea, Sir. What aspects do you consider ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No aspects.

M : Or whether which case will benefit, which won't.

SRI AUROBINDO : No such consideration. Each case is judged individually. It depends on each case.

NIRODBARAN

SALUTATIONS

FOREWORD

THESE humble prayers of mine to the Divine Mother were written originally in Gujarati in 1954 before I came to the Ashram.

I had not seen the Mother. But inwardly She was guiding me constantly. All that She told me then is now coming *true*.

She has graciously granted my humble prayers...

All the Blessings, Love and Grace I have received and am still receiving from Her, I can never express in words. I am ever grateful to the Mother.

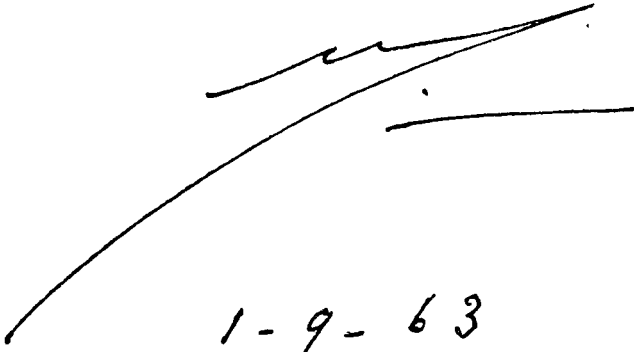
I pray to Her that She may make me more worthy of Her work and the Divine Life.

Here I must not forget to thank Amal Kiran who helped me in the translation.

1-II-66

HUTA

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



1-9-63

I

My sweetest and dearest Mother,

A million salutations at your lotus Feet !

Mother, when shall I behold Your divine Feet which are flower-soft and marble-white and ringed with golden anklets ? I have aspired for ages to behold them.

Here is my humble prayer to You :

Bestow upon me the wonderful *Darshan* of Your divine Feet and then let my soul merge in them.

O Mother, make me worthy to receive You, Your divine Love and Truth.

Destroy all obstacles in my way, whatever hinders me from You.

Frequently I hope that one day You will let me behold Your Real Form, and that in this very birth I shall attain the divine Love and Truth.

Wonderful is Your Grace and Love !

2

BOMBAY

1-2-54

O Compassionate Mother,

It is beyond my capacity to express Your boundless glory.

O Mother of the Universe, Supreme Power, there is not a single atom without You. Neither is there any end to Your existence—and everywhere You stand visible ! Wherever I cast my glance, there You are in the Form of Truth !

You are All-Powerful. Without You the whole universe is a zero.

Mother, I do not know how to pray, nor do I have any precious things to offer at Your Feet.

But, yes ! there is something in the depths of my heart—a tiny drop of true love. So, dear Mother, accept this drop and drown me in the ocean of Your Love. That is all I want.

(To be continued)

ON MEDITATION AND DISCIPLINE

A FEW HINTS

(According to the Teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)

I. ON MEDITATION

Select a quiet and secluded place where you will feel secure and undisturbed for at least $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 hour.

Sit in a chair or an arm chair with the back resting or, if you prefer, cross-legged on a cushion or a carpet. A straight body is preferable but without strain. In fact posture is of little importance. What is important is to feel at ease so that the body can be rapidly forgotten. Recumbent position is not advisable except in case of illness or incapacity as it induces sleep.

Always begin the meditation by an inner call or a prayer, an aspiration towards the Divine.

a) A first method consists in watching the thoughts as they swarm about in the mind. Your mind is like a public place across which thoughts move in and out. A few attract your attention and remain a longer time. Observe their play without identifying yourself with any of them. You will become aware that your consciousness—that is your mental self—stands apart like a “Silent Witness” separate from the movements of the mental nature in you. On one side this “Witness Consciousness”, on the other the mental nature in you.

Because you refuse to identify yourself with the thoughts their motion and insistence gradually weaken. The waves of the mental nature subside and after a time you enter into a state called “quietude” or “quiet mind”. Thoughts still occur but they are subdued and do not disturb inner perceptions.

b) Another method of mental control consists in creating a void in your mind. It is quicker and more radical than the first but also more difficult. You have to banish altogether all thoughts from the mind. As soon as one comes in, push it out or discard it right away, before it has time to settle down. Not only should all reasonings be excluded in this way but all memories and associations too. Your mind enters gradually into the peace of “quietude”.

You should know that such an attempt to forcefully control the mind results at times in an apparent increase of the mental chaotic condition. Don't be disturbed but persevere.

It is possible to bring the mind to a state of complete “silence”. But it is a very arduous task and after all it is not indispensable at least in Sri Aurobindo's “Integral Yoga”, which does not aim at leaving the body in trance, but at reaching the same experiences in a perfectly conscious and wakeful state.

c) Mental control can also be brought about by concentration, that is the fixing of the mind on a single object so strongly that the mind unites, so to say, with the object. From this identification knowledge about the object arises in the mind. The best object of concentration, the most worthy of knowledge, is surely the Divine, the Supreme. It matters little whether it is the Impersonal or the Personal God or, subjectively, the One Self. An idea that will help you is "God in all, all in God and all as God". When the mind wanders away, you have to bring it back to its object quietly but persistently. Here also you dissociate yourself in a way from your mind.

You may also use a word, a significant sentence, a prayer, the silent repetition of which will quieten the most mechanical part of your mind. Such a repetition (the name of the Beloved) is frequently resorted to by those who feel a devotion for the Divine.

It is best to use these three methods concurrently according to the need and as it seems easier at the moment. In any case regular practice is necessary every day, preferably at the same hour.

One day you will become suddenly aware of an inrush of unutterable happiness, a sweetness to which nothing in the world—no human joy or pleasure—can be compared. It is an impersonal state, without an object, and still there is a Presence, invisible but penetrating into the depths of the soul, or perhaps descending from the highest ranges of the Spirit.

All doubts have disappeared, problems vanished. Instead there reigns security, confidence, certitude.

The world, things and beings no longer require to be explained; their very existence is their own justification. They "are"—from all eternity—and they will never cease to be, now or ever. Death has become an absurd impossibility.

Of the wonderful experiences that one reaches in this state a number of descriptions have been given which vary according to the depths that have been reached, the aspects that came forward, the individual conditions and spiritual needs of the time and the accompanying occurrences (such as light, opening to a universal consciousness above the head, etc.). What is spoken of here is not visions—visions are of a quite different nature—but "states of mind" or rather "states of consciousness".

Mystics of all countries who have lived these experiences have given them various names : the Great Peace, the Lord's Peace, the Divine Presence, Discovering the True Self, the Blossoming or Blooming of the Soul, Second Birth, the Repose in Brahman, Entering into the One Reality, Cosmic Consciousness, Illumination, Direct Knowledge, Nirvana.... A New Life is truly beginning. The inner world becomes more real than the outer world.

II. ON DISCIPLINE

The experiences just now described are fugitive! A short time after the meditation is over, they lose their living force and, in spite of all efforts at retaining them,

they fade away. This transiency comes from the composite structure of our being. We are made up of several pieces each pulling in a different direction. Below the highest aspiration and will are the mental and the vital beings, then the material body, and each of these is itself a compound of many parts. All these parts react differently to the solicitations of the outer world. These cross currents blur the memory of spiritual experiences.

The force, peace, light and bliss perceived or received during meditation can only remain alive all through our ordinary engrossing activities, if all the parts of our being are organized harmoniously around our central aspiration and will and accept their guidance. To this end a strict discipline is indispensable; it alone can allow this "unification" of our being and prepare it.

You will soon realize that unification is an arduous task. It goes against all normal habits which consider sense life as the only reality. A long and insistent discipline can however break down all resistance and bring about a transformation of our being, the crowning experience of which is a decisive reversal of our waking consciousness.

Here is an outline of Sri Aurobindo's "Integral Yoga", which perfectly answers this need:

"The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender,—

- an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing—the mind's will, the heart's seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature;
- rejection of the movements of the lower nature—rejection of the mind's ideas, opinions, preferences habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind,—rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being,—rejection of the physical nature's stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, *tamas*¹, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda² may establish itself in a body growing always more divine;
- surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti.³

"In proportion as the surrender and self-consecration progress, the *sadhaka*⁴ becomes conscious of the Divine Shakti doing the *sadhana*,⁵ pouring into him more and more of herself, founding in him the freedom and perfection of the Divine Nature.

¹ inertia.

² Bliss

³ The conscious creative Energy.

⁴ One who follows a yogic discipline

⁵ Yogic discipline

The more this conscious process replaces his own effort, the more rapid and true becomes his progress. But it cannot completely replace the necessity of personal effort until the surrender and consecration are pure and complete from top to bottom."

Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother* II.

The practical means of applying this comprehensive advice is within your reach, which does not mean that it is easy. Here it is :

Offer to the Divine, to the Supreme all events and circumstances big or humble of your daily life, accept them as they come, without any distinction between good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant. If you are sincere in your offering, in your surrender, your life will change utterly. You will discover that an unseen Hand (the Shakti) guides you, and has always guided you throughout the years. A new joy will rise for you every morning.

a) During your meditation you have experienced that your mental self can stand aloof from the mental nature in you and is therefore separate—on one side : you, yourself; on the other : your thoughts, ideas, opinions (are they really yours ?).

b) You can now extend this dissociation to the realm of emotions and feelings. This is better done in the daily life itself. When you feel an emotion—disgust, anger, greed or passion—rising in you, stand aloof and observe. You will at once notice that the emotion or feeling loses its grip on you or even vanishes. This realization brings you the means of controlling your (are they really yours ?) feelings, emotions, cravings—the vital nature in you.

c) Then comes the third realization, the distinction between you and your physical body—the most difficult of the three. Stand aside from your sensations and observe that your self is the same whether they come or go. Dissociate your self alike from the pleasant and the unpleasant or painful. Realize that none of them is able to move you unless you accept it and identify your self with it.

This disjunction between you and your physical reactions is difficult because you have been trained all your life to consider the physical world as the only reality. But once it is achieved, it brings to you an immense gain : the control over the physical nature in you, its obscurity and dullness, its instability and fragility. So long as this disjunction is not there, you are the slave of your body—once achieved you are its master.

The triple dissociation thus established will allow you to accomplish every action, even the most trivial, to the best of your ability, with great concentration, control and efficiency. You will perceive that, as Sri Aurobindo says, the Divine Shakti is pouring into you "more and more of herself", founding in you "the freedom and perfection of the Divine Nature". You will uncover a treasure of concealed Ananda, of which indifference, pain and joy are a triple disguise. She brings thus to you the key to perfection in Yoga and to the transformation of your nature.

It is an excellent habit to include a little reading in your discipline. Take up the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that are available to you (see Note below).

It is not necessary to read much—half an hour a day suffices. Read slowly, read again if need be, then ponder over what you have read and think of it at times during the day. Try to put it into practice, to *live* it. You will thus gradually come in touch with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's great Consciousness (they are one for us) and you will begin to understand the hidden meaning of their writings.

Are you troubled by sexual questions ? Try to build up a temporary harmony, without arbitrary repressions and suppressions. All this will little by little evolve and become clear and you will reach mastery in this domain as in others. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's booklet on Love mentioned here below will show you the place of Love in the Creation and will help you to find out where you yourself stand. There is no uniform rule for all; each man or woman has to discover their own rule.

Go forward, have confidence ! In this way you shall build up the unity of your being, and when this unification is achieved, transformation of your whole nature becomes possible. Years, lives no longer count for you, you have set yourself on the road to divinity.

Remember that the aim of the world's long evolution through minerals, plants and animals, and thereafter through successive human lives and civilizations is to make of men beings fully *awake*, individually and universally, that is to say *conscious* and *master* of all that happens in themselves and in the world around, and free from the age-long bondage to opinions, passions and sensations.

THE MIRACLE OF BIRTH

I saw my soul a traveller through Time;
 From life to life the cosmic ways it trod,
 Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,
 Evolving from the worm into the god.

A spark of the eternal Fire, it came
 To build a house in Matter for the Unborn.
 The inconscient sunless Night received the flame,
 In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn

Life stirred and Thought outlined a gleaming shape
 Till on the stark inanimate earth could move,
 Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep,
 A thinking creature who can hope and love.

Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,
 The Immortal's gradual birth mid mire and stone.

SRI AUROBINDO

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND "THE TIDE OF OFFICIAL OPINION"

FIVE years ago, in a letter addressed to the *Times Literary Supplement* and a couple written to Miss Kathleen Raine¹ I prophesied that the Roman Catholic Church would put Teilhard de Chardin on the *Index*. My prophecy has not come true. But this does not mean that I misread the signs or misjudged Teilhard. The *Times Literary Supplement* itself of November 18, 1965 (p. 1027), reviewing *The Appearance of Man* by Teilhard de Chardin and *The Faith of Teilhard de Chardin* by Henri de Lubac, says: "A place in the *Index* seemed inevitable but the tide of official opinion has turned."

It goes on: "Teilhard...has proved the most convincing advocate of the Catholic faith to a non-Christian world. Last July the new General of the Jesuits—and a Spaniard to boot—hailed him as 'one of the great masters of contemporary thought'; and now there appears in an English translation the work in which a fellow-Jesuit and a fellow-Frenchman, Fr. Henri de Lubac, praises him almost vehemently and passionately."

I hold that by the turn in the tide of official opinion Teilhard has been de-Teilhardianised in order to be fitted into orthodoxy. The *Index* has been avoided by means of a massive act of wishful thinking. And this hits us in the eye the moment we read another passage in the same English weekly:

"There is, however, one deficiency in Teilhard's thought when measured by traditional Catholic theology which Fr. de Lubac is unable, and does not seek, to conceal. This is the relatively small place given to evil and sin. From his point of view, evil is an 'evolutionary by-product' resulting from 'resistances to the spiritual ascent inherent in matter'. This is startlingly different from, say, the centrality of the Fall of Man in such Christian doctors as St. Augustine. Fr. de Lubac admits that Teilhard's thought was incomplete—more so than he seems to have realised. He never attempted a philosophical synthesis outside the points of view which he adopted, dictated by an objective science. If he had done so, he would have been 'obliged to allow more room to the drama of sin, and all that it entails'."

Fr. de Lubac makes an assumption for which there is—to my mind—no basis in Teilhard. Teilhard wrote sufficiently, both by way of unpublished book and private correspondence, to get a chance to elucidate his position on "the drama of sin". Nor was he invariably obliged to confine himself to "an objective science" 's dictation of viewpoints. If he has not subscribed to the Augustinian outlook on evil and sin, it is simply because it would run counter to his own scientific-spiritual thesis. There can be no "spiritual ascent inherent in matter" if the orthodox Christian position on the Fall of Man is made central to his philosophy. Not that with the acceptance of such

¹ See *Teilhard de Chardin* (Some Letters), *Mother India*, April 24, 1963.

an ascent evil has inevitably to be no more than "an evolutionary by-product": we may think of it as also a power from preternatural planes interfering in the field of earth-evolution and taking advantage of the natural "resistances" there to the Divine Spirit progressively rising in matter by the very constitution of material substance as a cosmic emanation and mould of that Spirit. But this graver vision would come not through an Augustinian theology: it would come through another religious understanding of the universe than the Christian, an understanding which would be able to take Teilhardian evolutionism in its stride and not have to boggle at the notion of the material world as the self-concealed Divinity gradually self-revealed. Teilhard could hardly have arrived in an orthodox Christian manner at a more fearful-mooded reckoning with evil without sacrificing his fundamental thesis. The outlook *à la* St. Augustine had to be excluded: its exclusion was organic to that thesis and had nothing to do with the question whether he attempted or not "a philosophical synthesis" of any kind. But this exclusion cuts the ground from under the idea that Teilhard's scientific-spiritual evolutionism can be assimilated into Christian orthodoxy.

Doubtless, Teilhard himself did not want a radical and permanent scission between that orthodoxy and his evolutionism. In the Appendix of 1948 to *The Phenomenon of Man*,¹ he suggested that science not only conceded but offered theology complete liberty to add to the normal evil attendant on human evolution the effect of an extraordinary evil stemming from "some catastrophe or primordial deviation". The reason, however, which he mentions as springing from science is simply a poetic metaphor: "...even in the view of the mere biologist, the human epic resembles nothing so much as a way of the Cross." This is pure evasion, a play of words, an arbitrary smuggling in of a Christian "slant" by means of a loaded image. And Teilhard's actual inability to decide in favour of orthodoxy here is plain when he starts with the admission: "On this question, in all loyalty, I do not feel I am in a position to take a stand..." And the very next phrase gives in anticipation the lie to the later pressing of even "the view of the mere biologist" into service: "in any case, would this be the place to do so?" If biologically the human epic figured forth a way of the Cross, why should the Appendix to a scientific book be an inappropriate place to take a stand on the Fall of Man in orthodox language?

Outside of science, too, we meet the same hesitation, the same ambivalence. The early book, *The Divine Milieu*,² looking back at the end on its foregoing pages, finds them "solely concerned with rising towards the divine Focus and offering ourselves more completely to its rays... Imperfection, sin, evil, the flesh, appeared to us mainly as a retrograde step, a reverse aspect of things, which ceased to exist for us the further we penetrated into God". But "the Gospels tell us" that "the powers of evil are not only a deviation, a minus sign...." The Christian "revelation" makes

¹ *The Phenomenon of Man*, translated by Bernard Wall, with an Introduction by Sir Julian Huxley (Collins, London, 1960), p. 313.

² *The Divine Milieu An Essay on the Interior Life*, translated by Bernard Wall (Harper & Bros., New York, 1960), pp. 128-9.

Teilhard feel "surrounded by dark presences, by evil beings, by malign *things*" : it compels him to believe of "certain conscious elements" that "Evil has become incarnate in them, has been 'substantialised' in them" so they would undergo "damnation" to "eternal uselessness and eternal suffering" in "hell". But Teilhard fights shy of the "hell"-dogma. He is averse to hold "with absolute certainty that a single man has been damned". Although accepting on authority the Christian "hell" he cannot bring himself to credit the dogma of eternal damnation interwoven with that of sin and the Fall of Man.

To the Fall of Man he adopted an attitude which, whatever his desire and his hope to make his world-view essentially Christian, must remain intractable to any final reconciliation. Had he lived longer and written more, he would perhaps have not encouraged further that desire and that hope but realised with a keener sense how impossible the devoutly-wished reconciliation was. The *impasse* which the orthodox exegetists feel *vis-à-vis* "the deficiency in Teilhard's thought" on evil and sin should be to them a red signal against explaining away in Roman Catholic terms what seems markedly heretical in his theology.

I consider Fr. de Lubac quite mistaken in asserting—as another review in the *TLS* (May 19 1966 p. 458 : "To Omega by Language") makes out—that "careful attention to Teilhard's idiom almost always allows of an orthodox interpretation..." Of course, an orthodox interpretation is possible of small sectors of the Teilhardian scheme, but, on the whole, he must baffle his fellow-Christians, divided as he himself was between, on the one hand, his spiritual intuitive experience which became intellectually clarified through his science and on the other his dogmatically trained theology eager to Roman-Catholicise his new vision. There is profound significance in the remark with which the *TLS* reviewer follows up the observation just quoted. He adds :

"but many of his words are dual-purpose and behind his idiom is a sometimes quite unguarded confession : 'C'est au mystique, une fois encore, qu'est réservé la tâche de s'emparer du Monde là où il échappe aux autres et de réaliser la synthèse où échouent et se brisent l'expérience et la philosophie commune.—Il cherchait une substance de Flamme dévorante où localiser le Divin qui de partout l'appelle. La science le lui présente'."¹

We may note here the term "synthesis" which Fr. de Lubac uses when he tells us that Teilhard never attempted "a philosophical synthesis outside the points of view which he adopted, dictated by an objective science". What the passage conveys is not only that Teilhard did envisage a synthesis but also that "an objective science" was simply one factor responsible and hardly the sole dictator : mysticism

¹ The passage is from *Ecrits du temps de la guerre, 1916-1919* (Paris Grasset) and may be translated : "Once again it is to the mystic that is reserved the task of getting hold of the World there where it escapes others, and of realising the synthesis where fail and break down experience and common philosophy. —He was seeking for a substance of devouring Flame in which to localise the Divine who from everywhere calls him Science presents it to him"

was responsible as well and constituted the original force behind. The two combine to disclose what neither day-to-day experience nor philosophising thought as usually employed can grasp or cope with. The rôle of science seems to be to lay bare an objective vision corresponding to the subjective revelation of mysticism. And out of the joint deliverance of both is born the philosophy of Teilhard. When the scientist's systematic observation, giving rise to the hypothesis of a single evolving Without-Within on a universal scale, is brought into *rapprochement* with the mystic's synthesis of "the Divine who from everywhere calls him" there comes into light an intellectual structure in which that synthesis takes a shape which is genuinely philosophical for all the poetic hues and harmonies playing about it. Those hues and harmonies are there because Teilhard's philosophy is illumined and inspired by more than science at the same time that science has lent it a precise physical significance and an orderly interrelation of parts.

But this philosophical synthesis can scarcely please the orthodox mind. For it discloses in terms of a cosmic evolution of consciousness-charged matter the outstanding feature of the mystic's possession of the world such as escapes all other beings—the feature we recognise when Teilhard writes: "A sense of the universe, a sense of the *all*, the nostalgia which seizes us when confronted by nature, beauty, music—these seem to be an expectation and awareness of a Great Presence. The 'mystics' and their commentators apart, how has psychology been able so consistently to ignore the fundamental vibration whose ring can be heard by every practised ear at the basis or rather at the summit of every great emotion? Resonance to the All—the keynote of pure poetry and pure religion."¹

Here—for all the care on Teilhard's part in this particular context, which speaks of love, the instinct of "the severed particle which trembles at the approach of the rest"—we are skirting dangerously the depths of a Pantheos, the One who is All, the All who are One, depths which are anathema to the orthodox Church and even to Teilhard in moments unlike that of the "quite unguarded confession" thrilling with the awareness of the Divine whose call is heard from every side of the very world studied by science.

Such a passage as the *TLS* quotes reveals to us the heart of Teilhardism: it leads us to contradict Fr. de Lubac. The *TLS* says: "The essence of P. de Lubac's commentary on the *œuvre teilhardienne* is a warning not to misunderstand the idiom and to suppose that the synthesis offered is complete and final." The truth of Teilhard can only be reached if we accept the non-Christian implications of his idiom, the mystico-scientific character of his synthesis and the practical completeness and finality which that synthesis attained for him by being mystico-scientific.

After accepting these things we have to inquire what species of religion would accommodate both the heterodox import of his philosophy and the Christian elements which too are certainly there in the *œuvre teilhardienne*. In other words, the endea-

¹ *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 266.

your to save him from the *Index* is along a false line and distorts him, even though we cannot utterly de-Christianise him. When we see him thus, our job would not be to ask how far and in what way he falls short of the full Christian view : it would be to ask what points outside Christianity would serve to fill the gap left by the uneasy partnership he strikes between the Jesuit priest in himself and the mystic-cum-scientist. I should designate the latter as a semi-Aurobindonian, and his proper religious foundation I should look for in the many-visioned India whose modern culmination is Sri Aurobindo rather than in Christian Europe past or present.¹

K. D. SETHNA

¹ See the author's two articles : *Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo* · A Note on Their Meeting-Point, *Mother India*, March 1966, and *The Real Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* A Reading in the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Ancient Vedanta, *Mother India*, December 5, 1966.

LIFE IN SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

(Continued from the May Issue)

“ALL LIFE IS YOGA”

ONE of the greatest teachings of Sri Aurobindo is: “All life is Yoga.”¹ His Ashram is a growing and organised attempt at living out this law of life.

Necessarily, there is no question of “splitting” of the activities as ethical, religious, philanthropic and so on. “All must be taken to a spiritual height and placed upon a spiritual basis ; the presence of an inner spiritual change and an outer transformation must be enforced upon the whole of life...all must be accepted that is helpful towards this change...”²

But how can it be applied to our day-to day life ? Carrying a world of worries, as so many do, how can one hope to think of Yoga ?

While we talk, eat or sleep or work and engage ourselves in all sorts of activities, would it not be deceiving ourselves by thinking we are doing Yoga ?

Has not the Master said, “the only work that spiritually purifies is that which is done...for the sake of the Divine alone and at the command of the Divine”? Then how can all life be Yoga ?³

These are commonplace but baffling questions. The Mother has not left them unanswered. While talking to the children of the Ashram, once she said :

“Whatever you do—study or sports—you must think of the Divine in doing it. It is not a very difficult thing after all. At first you may do it as a kind of preparation to make you capable of receiving the divine force, and then as service to help in the collective work...If you are doing long jump, for example, it should not be merely for the pleasure of doing it, it is with the idea of making your body more perfect in its functioning, as an instrument more fit to receive the divine forces and to manifest them.”⁴

All depends upon the inner attitude and the level of consciousness from which we think or act. For instance, if whatever we do is for the sake of the Divine, if we eat or sleep to keep the body fit to serve the Divine, buy or sell a thing without an eye to profit, then all we do is raised to the level of service to the Divine, all becomes an act of worship, however imperfect.

If one throws off desires, stops saying, “I, I have done this,” and surrenders

¹ *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 167.

³ “Life...is a vast yoga of nature attempting to realise her perfection.” (*The Synthesis of Yoga*) Yoga is a concentrated effort to hasten progress

⁴ Nolini Kanta Gupta, *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part VIII.

oneself to Him, puts the charge of one's life into His hands, life will appear no more a wearisome load. Moreover, if one is sincere in one's efforts, there will grow an inner strength to bear the blows of life. Then will come a time when one will be able to sense that someone is there at one's back to heal the wounds of life.

People are afraid of Yoga. But it is Yoga that can transform the poison of life into nectar.

In India, poverty is unfortunately taken to be a sure sign of spirituality. But that which makes life barren is for us no Yoga. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga does not make of us stocks and stones.

In the forceful words of the Mother : "It is one of greatest weapons of the Asura at work when you are taught to shun beauty. It has been the ruin of India."

It is common knowledge that Art comprising music, painting, architecture, sculpture, has been fostered for ages under the inspiring influence of spirituality. But that science, trade, commerce, agriculture, horticulture, even games and sports, could come under the domain of spirituality on such a large scale is a new departure, a novel adventure in the field of Yoga.

Among the people constituting the body of the Ashram there are those who once were merchants, ministers, writers, scientists, scholars, engineers, government officials and others. They have come here impelled by an inner urge or led by a Light or in quest of the Truth.

Some have, of course, come with the Mother "to share in the work, others she has called, others have come seeking the light."

It is not men of high calibre alone that are chosen for the path. The Master holds :

"One man who earnestly pursues the Yoga is of more value than a thousand well-known men."

Another thing :

They represent not only different walks of life but different natures and characters. To give only one example :

In the course of a casual talk J spoke out: "However furious one may be it would produce no effect on me. It will not provoke my temper, no harsh word will escape my lips."

"Speech," says the Master, "is a thing which in most people is largely automatic and not under their control"¹

J is an example of balanced and measured life. A scholar and a poet, yet so sweet in nature and noble in conduct, he seems like an answer to the Upanishadic prayer:

शरीर मे विचक्षणम् । जिह्वा मे मधुमत्तमा ।

"May my body be swift in action, may my tongue drop pure honey !"

¹ *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Fourth Series, p. 579.

But there is also R, who is so overpowered by anger that he stands helpless. The attack comes so often and so suddenly that he is unable to check himself. Does he not represent a type of humanity ?

If only J is given a chance how can a change come about in R who typifies the majority ?

"Then why are all not accepted in the Ashram ?"

"Why should they be ? Will they sacrifice their all for the sake of the Divine ?

"Does R ?"

"Of course ! Further, he is not satisfied with what he is, what he has (though a man of position). The Ashram shows him the way to his higher possibilities for which is the yearning of his heart and soul." To quote the Master :

"...If only sattwic and cultured men came for Yoga, men without very much of the vital difficulty in them, then, because the difficulty of the vital element in terrestrial nature has not been faced and overcome, it might well be that the endeavour would fail.... Those in the Ashram come from all quarters and are of all kinds; it cannot be otherwise."¹

That way alone can the problems of life be solved in a cosmic way. That is why this Yoga cannot be done by shutting oneself in a Himalayan cave but only in the mids of life as we live it.

Here it must be kept in mind that Sri Aurobindo Ashram is no hermitage nor a peace retreat for deserters from life. Rather it is a nursery of divine life, a place from which the Light of the life divine will radiate. To quote the Mother :

"It is not from disgust for life and people that one must come to Yoga. It is not to run away from difficulties that one must come here. It is not even to find sweetness of love and protection, for the Divine's love and protection is everywhere if one takes the right attitude.

"When one wants to give oneself totally in service to the Divine, to consecrate oneself totally to the Divine's work, simply for the sake of the joy of giving oneself and of serving without asking for anything in exchange, except the possibility of consecration and service, then one is ready to come here and will find the doors wide open."

A question used to haunt a boy's mind : "Why was I born, what is the purpose of life, who created this world and why ? is it all a dream ?"

While turning over the pages of *Alipore Bomb Case* in his brother's office he lighted upon the picture of Sri Aurobindo. The whole of the boy's family had a spiritual bent and were devoted to a yogin who was a great Sanskrit scholar and poet. This yogin had been in touch with the Light of Sri Aurobindo. The boy's brother had known of the Ashram through this scholar-yogin. What the boy heard from the yogin kindled in him a hidden flame and he expressed his desire to enter into the Ashram life.

His brothers, well-placed in life, persuaded him not to be precipitous in his decision. Let his academic career be over, let his decision take root and then he may take

¹ *Letters*, Second Series, pp. 465-6

the leap into the unknown. This took two years. During this period the boy added B. Com. to his B.A. His correspondence with the yogin disciple grounded him well in the teaching of Sri Aurobindo. Now was the time for him to embark upon the journey. His mother, far from raising her voice in opposition, served as a tonic.

The turning of the boy was most natural, as if the soul had purposely come on earth for a realisation. He had to make practically no struggle to loosen the ties of the world. Though he had at his disposal all that the world could give and he could rise high in life and have a beauty of his choice by his side, yet all such prospects held no charm for him.

When eleven, the boy had lost his father who had left him a share in his property. Those were the days when no one would keep anything for his own, for the future after being accepted by the Ashram and the boy not only offered himself but all he had, his soul, his life, his talents and his earthly resources. Here comes to mind the Mother's saying :

"Some give their soul to the Divine, some their life, some offer their work, some their money. A few consecrate all of themselves and all they have—soul, work, wealth; these are the true children of God.

"Others give nothing—these, whatever their position, power and riches, are for the Divine purposes valueless ciphers."

Let us now see how men of different professions, different *swabhavas* and *swadharma*s, natures and capacities, are represented here. In "the ordinary karmayoga the sadhaka chooses his own work but offers it to the Divine".¹ We prefer to offer ourselves into the hands of the Mother leave behind what we want and set in front what She wants. She alone knows our capacities and potentialities and the service the Divine demands of each of us of our individual nature. That is why we see a pleader or a principal of a college sweeping the Ashram premises or a doctor washing vessels in the dining room with alacrity to get rid of their ego-sense. D, though in charge of a number of activities and of the Ashram cash, spends a great part of his energy in dusting and sweeping. Debesh Das, a well-known litterateur and a high official, writes :

"During working hours even graduates take part in all sorts of humble work like the washing of linen..."

Regarding educated men's taking up humble work the Master wrote in reply to a question : "they are content to be of use in the small and obscure work of the Ashram without figuring before the public in something big. What is important now is to get the true consciousness from above, get rid of the ego (which nobody has yet done) and learn to be an instrument of the Divine Force."

Another singular feature of the Ashram is that new capacities develop, of themselves, by the Grace of the Mother. It has been the experience of some that if the

¹ *On Yoga*, II, Tome I, p. 651.

Mother calls upon one to do a certain work unknown to him, she gives him the capacity too.

Formerly, the Ashram clothes were cleaned by a local washerman. Every month his bill rose higher and higher. A young man offered to do the work in the Ashram. There was a time when because of scarcity of soap, oil-stained linen from the kitchen was washed with ash. He knew soap-making as well. So he was asked to take up both laundry work and soap-making. Now every month more than 30,000 pieces are washed in the laundry. Soap-making has been taken over by an experienced chemist.

Another instance. S knew paper-making and dyeing. He started to make paper and to dye the shorts of the J.S.A.S.A. members. When this department had made enough progress he handed it over to his assistant and started making earthenware pots. Thus pottery got a place in the Ashram.

The Ashram no longer depends on the market for the hundreds of jars (kujas) and flower-pots that it needs.

Paper-making has now grown into a well-organised department and goes by the name of Hand-Made Paper Department. A large area called the Industrial Garden has been allotted for this purpose.

There is something interesting about S. He belonged to the Swadeshi days and was one of the co-workers of Sri Aurobindo in his revolutionary activities. On his return from the Andamans he came to see Sri Aurobindo. In his first letter he wrote: "I want freedom (for India) and not God."

When he was permitted to settle down, his youngest son was two and a half years old. Now he is in Germany for studies, where he has successfully completed his training in Physiotherapy.

S, his father, introduced into the Ashram houses the use of the septic tank—a welcome change for all.

Cottage Industries, now a big establishment, has also grown from a very small beginning. A man came seeking for a job. He knew only mat-making. Given some scope he made a mat for a sample. It was found cheaper than what "Prosperity", the organised store to meet the monthly needs of the inmates, had to pay. It served as the nucleus for the growth of other industries now forming The Cottage Industries Department.

In the last week of every month the inmates write their needs on a printed chit and they are supplied on the first of every month by "Prosperity". To meet the needs of dress and footwear, there are tailoring and shoe-making departments. When there was a great demand for shoes, a sadhak set himself to learn how to make them. Now he supplies 800 pairs of leather sandals per year for our use.

Formerly, the Mother used to sign the "Prosperity" chits. They are issued only to those that are accepted as permanent members. Once a sadhak in his very first chit asked for as many as 30 items and all were given to him. As a contrast another sadhak for months together prayed only for blessings and nothing else. And he had them from the Mother in writing every time. He is now the head of several depart-

ments, whereas the former could not stand the discipline of Ashram life for long and left. The Ashram is "a spiritual laboratory" and all sorts of elements are represented here.

To quote Dr. G. Monod-Herzon of the University of Rennes :

"...Almost all professions are represented there : cultivators, smiths, poets, mechanics, musicians and writers, artists and accountants. All is found there, and everyone, as in an ideal republic, pursues his activities with joy. This joy is an essential character. It is so true, so strong that even when one passes a disciple in the street, one may be struck by it. They are happy people.

"...everyone carries out an activity which corresponds to his true nature, to the law of his own being. It is not rare to see a newly arrived disciple change his calling. One who was a singer becomes an accountant, the bourgeois a musician, the professor a poet, the official a peasant.

"These changes are never the result of tests, aptitude examinations, but always the fulfilment of an inner desire, of an urge which is the way of the true being seeking to harmonise its external activities with its own deepest reality....

"This multiplicity of activities poses numerous technical questions, and the Ashram solves them in a manner contrary to what is done normally. For instance, it is the normal way for us first to establish a laundry and then to look for a laundryman but here it is done just the other way round. It is because a disciple shows a pronounced inclination towards an activity that a scope is given to it.

"In this way, the Ashram has started, one after another, workshops for carpentry and furniture-making; for mechanics, a smithy, a bakery, a laundry, a farm, a press. In each and every one of these enterprises the work of management and supervision is entrusted to disciples. It is they also who form a good part of the labour, the rest being taken from workmen from outside."¹

We shall next see the effect of Yoga in art and our day-to-day life.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

¹ *Mother India*, August 15, 1945, p. 11.

THE CULTURE OF THE TAMILS

(Continued from the May issue)

II

WE shall next proceed to examine the language of the Tamils and find out if it gives us any clue to the distinctiveness of the Tamil way of living. It must not be forgotten that a language reflects the character and ability of the people who have forged it. As Milton said, "Show me a language of the people. Without knowing them I can say what they are." Rev. Percival, who was a great student of Tamil, said of Tamil, "Perhaps, no language combines greater force with equal brevity; and it may be asserted that no human speech is more close and philosophic in its expression as an exponent of the mind. The sequence of things—of thought, action and its results—is always maintained inviolate." Dr. Schmid declares, "The mode of collocating its words follows the logical or intellectual order more so than even the Latin or the Greek." Dr. Winslow, in his *Tamil-English Dictionary*, says, "It is not perhaps extravagant to say that in its poetic form the Tamil is more polished and exact than the Greek and, in both dialects, with its borrowed treasures, more copious than the Latin. In its fullness and power it more resembles English and German than any other living language." Rev. Percival, in *The Land of the Veda*, argues that the Tamil language teems with words expressive of different degrees of affinity, and that where, in a European language, a long periphrasis would be required, Tamil presents the thing in its own single term and this fecundity extends to all the ramifications of the family tree. He adds, "If I speak of a sister, I may either take a word that gives the relationship subsisting between us or I may select one that will indicate our relative ages. Measures and divisions of time are equally minute and expressive. The language, thus specific, gives to the mind a readiness and clearness of conception whilst its terseness and philosophic idiom afford equal means of lucid utterance." Dr. G. Slater makes a legitimate attempt to infer from the Tamil language the character of those who have evolved it, and concludes, "The Tamil language is extraordinary in its subtlety and sense of logic. The perfection with which it has been developed into an organ for precise and subtle thought, combined with the fact that it represents a much earlier stage in the evolution of inflectional language than any Indo-Germanic tongue, suggests the priority of the Dravidians in attaining settled order and regular government."

The Western theory of jurisprudence is that the king can do no wrong because he is above the law. But Tamil Jurists have rejected this theory and have always held that the king is as much subject to the law as his citizens. That this theory was translated into practice can be seen from an amazing account given by Marco Polo in his

Travels. He says that in the Pandya country the creditors could attach the person of debtors by drawing a circle around them, which they should not leave until after satisfaction of the debt. If the debtor attempted to escape, he rendered himself liable to punishment. Marco Polo claims to have been an eye-witness of a remarkable example of this custom. He says, "The king owed a sum of money to a certain foreign merchant and, although frequently asked for payment, put him off for a long time with promises. One day, when the King was riding on horse-back, the merchant took the opportunity of describing a circle around him and his horse. As soon as the king saw what had been done, he immediately halted and would ride no further until the demand of the merchant was fully satisfied. The bystanders beheld what happened and marvelled at the king, saying that he was most just, for he himself submitted to the laws of justice." The name of the king has been given by Marco Polo as "Sender-Bundi", presumably, Sundara Pandyan.

One vitiating infirmity of the Tamilian is that despite his early contacts with the Greeks and the Romans he never learnt to record his own history. As Alberuni, a scholar who visited India in the 11th Century A.D., observed, "The Indians of the past, despite their high intellectual attainments, lacked the historical spirit." It is possible that the records of history preserved on palmyra leaves have been lost. The first Tamilian to keep a diary was Anandarangam Pillai who lived at Pondicherry in the 17th century and who must have learnt from the French the art of keeping a diary. The only evidence of historical events kept by the Tamils is in the shape of stone-inscriptions mostly on temple-walls. But even these inscriptions do not possess the objectivity required of the Muse of History.

The capacity of the Tamils to assimilate the best in other cultures and adapt it to the peculiar genius of the Tamil people is remarkable. Some of the brightest periods of Tamil history were brought about by an apparent clash of cultures and the consequent synthesis thereof. The *Kural* and the way of living preached by it were the product of the interaction between old Tamil culture and the culture of the Buddhists and Jains. Perhaps, the golden age of the Tamils, which extended from about the 5th century A.D. to the 13th century A.D., was the result of the influx of Sanskrit culture. It was during this period that the Alvars and the Nayanmars were in full song; Kamban sang the *Ramayanam* and celebrated it with an orchestral fullness that had never before been attained and that has never since been rivalled, in poetry which can rank with the greatest that has been achieved in world literature;¹ and the Chola and Pallava architecture and sculpture acquired a new dimension of depth. It was during this period again that Sankara and Ramanuja, who have been aptly called the Sanskritising Dravidians, preached their great gospels throughout the length and breadth of India. The Tamils began to use

¹ On p 361 of *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (New York, 1953), Sri Aurobindo has spoken of Kamban, along with Tulsidas, as having "arrived at a vividly living recreation of the ancient story and succeeded in producing a supreme masterpiece". He also calls him "the Tamil poet who makes of his subject a great original epic". (Editor)

Sanskrit as their *lingua franca* and propagated the principles of their integrated culture, philosophy and religion not only throughout India, but also in Java, Malaya, Indo-China, China and the Philipines. As Dr. S. K. Chatterjee says, the Tamils modified the Sanskrit language according to their own speech-habit and then by sheer weight of numbers swamped the native speakers of Aryan and forced them, through the influence of new environments, to accept these modifications and innovations. Even the syntactical structure of the Sanskrit language was changed and a number of Tamil words were absorbed and assimilated by Sanskrit in the same way as a number of Sanskrit words were absorbed and assimilated by Tamil. *Agamas*, which were Tamilian in origin, were written in Sanskrit, even as *Nigamas*, which were Aryan in origin, were translated into Tamil. A great intercourse of culture took place during this period and the result was a most magnificent efflorescence in the Tamilian way of living. As Dr. Chatterjee remarks, "What struck me long ago was that in spite of its many obvious and outstanding poems of originality which furnish some of its most pleasing features, there cannot be any doubt that old Tamil literature cannot be dissociated from Sanskrit and other Indian literature, but belongs very much to the orbit of Pan-Indian Hindu literature, taking 'Hindu' in its most comprehensive sense. This is much truer of the compositions of the Saiva Saints, the Nayanamars and the Vaishnava devotees, Alwars, who are the glory of *Tamizhagam* and of India, compositions which, by their profundity and beauty and by their divine and human quality, have enriched the spiritual life and aspirations, not only of Hinduism, but also of the whole of humanity. Some of the deepest things in Hindu religious culture like the practice of *Yoga* certainly go back to the pre-Aryan period...Tamilians have unquestionably made the basic things of Indian culture more profound and more extensive in many departments."¹

As Dr. Pope observes in his Preface to the *Tamil-English Dictionary*, "I have felt sometimes as if there must be a blessing in store for a people that delight so utterly in compositions thus remarkably expressive of a hunger and thirst after righteousness." Sir John Elliot, writing in his *Hinduism and Buddhism* (Volume II, page 271) regarding the literature of the Saiva Siddhanta, affirms, "In no literature with which I am acquainted, has an individual religious life—its struggles and dejections, its hopes and fears, its confidence and its triumph—received a delineation more frank and more profound." It was during this period that the *Thiruvachakam* of Manickavasakar was sung, and the sacred verses of *Thiruppavai* and *Thiruvempavai*, exported from Tamil Nad to Thailand, where, according to Father

¹ Without denying the virtues and achievements of the Tamilian religious spirit we may point out to Dr Chatterjee that he is taking for established fact three popular but as yet unproved hypotheses. (1) the Aryans came to a Dravidian India as invaders from abroad in c. 1500 B.C.; (2) the Harappa Culture, which knew of Yoga was pre-Aryan and essentially non-Aryan, (3) the Aryans and the Dravidians in India are two separate groups and cultures rather than aspects of a single varied people with many cultural strains distinct in some respects and intermingling in others and ultimately having a common essential basis. (Editor)

Thani Nayagam, they are sung even to this day during the coronations of kings. It may also be noted that during this period *Kotravai*, the Goddess of the Tamils, merged with the Aryan Goddess *Durgai*, and *Siva* of the Tamils became identified with *Rudra*.¹ This fusion became more and more intimate and brought to the Tamils a richness and fullness in their way of living, which is comparable only to the contribution made by the British during their imperial rule over India.

During the golden age the temple became the centre of all activity in Tamil Nad ; education, dancing, drama, poetry, sculpture, architecture, philosophy and religion were imparted within its precincts. The heavy veil that usually separates human life from the life of the spirit was lifted and God came to be worshipped as Lover, Beloved, Master, Servant, Friend, Father and Mother ; He ceased to be a distant and hazy cloud in the sky and became a plentiful river flowing intimately through the garden of the spirit, enriching every department of life in Tamil Nad. Somerset Maugham, the celebrated novelist, was shocked, as he went round the corridors of the Madurai Meenakshi temple, that people should be bawling out and talking irreverently in the House of God, but he confesses that by the time he completed the round, through the "irreligious" din and bustle of the temple, a spirit of religious ecstasy stole over him. Evidently, the gay abandon of the devotees, the fragrance of flower and sandal-paste, the brass lamps, the incense and the music, the resounding peals of the temple gong, the slow dance of camphor lights, the uninhibited frenzy of the worshippers and the mystic potency of the idols must have induced in Somerset Maugham a state of heightened awareness. His experience emphasizes what is perhaps most outstanding in Tamil culture, namely, that the Tamils in their intimacy with God occasionally forgot to revere Him.

John Spiers, the English Editor of *Values*, wisely says of the religion of the Tamils, "It is linked with the natural pantheism or hylozoism which recognizes deity in stone, river, tree and animal, as well as in man. The messages of its graven images are profounder and more affective to the naturally contemplative *Coolie-parish* masses than the mere repetition of fixed creeds. Frenzy is still possible and can be indulged in unashamedly (as for instance by the *Kavadi* dancer). The individual man or woman worshipping can enjoy the numinous or divine shivering to find peace of mind." He significantly adds, "Indeed a pinch or even a good dose of this genuine ecstasy infused into the hard sin-coated core of modern Christianity would go a long way in making many people healthy and sane, particularly if they could throw off the heavy weight of guilt, shame and sin. The *Siva* religion is one of joy. The very name of the Deity means 'Auspicious One'...A religion of happiness and joyous abandon encourages the arts of peace and culture."²

¹ That Siva was a Tamil god is a theory much in vogue today, but does it rest on a truly solid foundation? Siva is already present in the Rigveda, and his presence in the Harappa Culture would be non-Aryan only if that civilization were itself proved, as it still certainly is not, to have been pre-Rigvedic (Editor)

² *Values*, Volume II, No. 10, July 1957.

Therottam or the dragging of the temple car round the main streets of a town is an institution which still keeps the religious spirit alive among the Tamils. The bedecked Deity is reverently installed in a massive, stately chariot which is dragged by coir ropes which are about one furlong in length and six inches in diameter. Thousands of devotees put their hands to the ropes and pull the chariot with concentrated devotion, joyously proclaiming the name of the Deity and the car moves inch by inch over twenty or thirty days before reaching its destination. The thrilling roar of "*Arohara*" raised by thousands upon thousands of devotees to the accompaniment of *Nadaswaram* music and the blowing of conches and horns, and the sight of the majestic car rumbling slowly along the street furnish an occasion for active community worship in which the cumulative unconscious of the masses breaks down the barriers of the ego and gives them a glimpse albeit momentary of the Ultimately Real.

Between the 13th Century and the 19th Century, however, there was a decadence of Tamil culture and a deterioration in public morals. Poetasters and arid grammarians and uncreative moralists held away during this period of political chaos, economic instability and religious sterility, and the living faith of the dead became the dead faith of the living.

With the advent of the British, however, a spirit of rationalistic and scientific inquiry influenced the Tamilians as it influenced every other part of India. But, during this period, the Tamil intellectuals lost their moorings and became denatured.

It is only after the advent of freedom that the Tamil-speaking people have begun to rediscover their soul and adapt the blessings of western education to the genius of the soil. They seem ready to absorb the new influences and to contribute their own, as during the golden age, to the composite culture of Bharat.

(Concluded)

S. MAHARAJAN

THE SANKHYA SYSTEM

(This article was written for the All India Radio sometime in 1945 by the late Velury Chandrasekharam who was personally known to Sri Aurobindo and has written several studies of Sri Aurobindo's thought.)

'Darsanas'¹ is the name by which systems of philosophy were known in ancient India; 'Mata', 'Tantra', 'Siddhanta', etc. come later. The name is significant. It implied that what was central to these systems was based upon vision, a direct perception of the truths of existence caught in the depths of our being. There was abstract reasoning and theoretical speculation also, but these helped to grow a body to the soul which was the inner seeing.

But we must note the distinguishing character of the Indian attitude to the mode of apprehending truth. It is not confined, as in certain revealed religions, to a particular occasion in history, to a particular person or event. Whosoever by dint of his spiritual labour opens up his higher nature, attains to this immediate apprehension which is native to it. He is called *Apta*, one who has attained. His testimony is *Aptavachana*. And its validity is unhesitatingly affirmed by most Indian systems.

India began with the Veda. It was the record of a great spiritual exploration and discovery, of a quest for the immortal life. This quest was effected not by means of the intellect but by the energising, focussing and kindling of the Soul's intimate faculties through a regulated external scheme of worship of Fire and other Godheads, who were envisaged as the Soul's spiritual kindred. But, after a great lapse of time, there occurred a severe break in the continuity of this tradition. Perhaps, too, some extraordinary events took place which helped to bring about this break and which very probably are symbolised in the myth of the stealing of the Veda by the Asura. So, in the subsequent period of the *Brahmanas*, so called because they are expositions of *Brahman*, that is the Vedic hymn, we find a strenuous attempt to recapture the lost meaning and significance of the hymns and reconstruct the damaged external forms of the Vedic worship. A great light such as the Veda could not have set without leaving some lingering glow in the overtaking darkness. The *Brahmanas* not infrequently succeed in recapturing the spirit of the Veda, but the *Vedavadins* came whose main preoccupation was the ritual. They elaborated various forms of sacrifice, all with their rigorous order and manifold detail, made the Vedic hymns their accompaniment and exalted this strict ritual code to the status of a self-existent Super-divine power and authority, which the

¹ Anvikshiki recognised as a special study, 6th Century B.C. By the 1st Century B.C. the term is replaced by *Darsana* (see *Maha Bharata Santi*, 10-45—*Bhagavata Purana* 8-14). Radhakrishnan.

forces of the universe were bound to obey. Man's thought and aspiration were made perpetual slaves to a heavy routine of external ceremonial.

This was an extraordinary situation for the human mind. There was vehement reaction on all sides, active, energetic. Innumerable movements of spiritual endeavour and speculative adventure, of doctrines and disciplines appeared on the scene. Now began a wonderful time of splendid and vital creation. Out of one of these movements emerged the *Brahmavadins*, who were the creators of the *Upanishads*. They kept themselves well in the main line of tradition. But, at various distances from it, what later on became the different philosophical systems of India were beginning to take form. The Sankhya system with which we are now concerned and the Yoga—its close ally from the beginning—must have been among these. The Jaina and the Buddhist religious and metaphysical systems which derive their names from their great promulgators who came on later and perhaps even the materialist system which subsequently earned the name of Lokayatika were others which began their career at this time. These latter systems, in their revulsion against the Vedavadins, go definitely outside the Vedic tradition. The Sankhya, too, seems to have roundly condemned the sacrificial ritual of the Vedavadins as an impure way and was perhaps not as accommodating as the Brahmavadins who gave it a qualified approval. And there was such lively interaction between the several schools and systems that it is difficult to say who was the borrower or who the lender.

Some scholars hold that the Sankhya is an amalgam of different ideas that occur here and there in the Upanishads and that it was put into shape after the Mahabharata period. I am unable to see the Sankhya in that light. All indications point to its great antiquity. It is undoubtedly true that we find in the Upanishads various conceptions which might have given rise to the Sankhya doctrines. For instance, the Katha Upanishad indicates the steps of the inner stairway by which we can climb back to our source and these resemble the steps of the evolution which the primal energy of the Sankhya takes in order to manifest the world. And there are various other resemblances not only of main doctrine but even of minor detail. Still it does not look right to derive the Sankhya from the Upanishads. The very manner in which the Svetasvatara Upanishad handles the main essentials of the Sankhya and Yoga themes and attempts to synthesise them in the Brahmavada of the Upanishads strongly implies their existence as somewhat distinct doctrines of the time though we can as yet form no exact picture of the whole system. From the Mahabharata accounts of the Sankhya, which are many and divergent, we can see some precise features—the twenty-four principles which are the result of Nature's evolution, the multiplicity of Purushas and the denial of a Creator or Isvara. The classical statement of the system we owe to Isvarakrishna's Karikas, composed before the 4th Century A.D. on the basis of earlier authorities which are now lost. Sankara uses the Karikas as his authority for the Sankhya doctrine. The Sankhya Sutras are evidently later and neither these nor their expositors can be relied on for the purity of the original doctrine, for their aim is to assimilate it to the Vedanta.

I have said at the outset that the ancient systems are based on an inner vision. Now the basis of the Sankhya is a profound realisation of our self as an individual spiritual Consciousness which is changeless and actionless; it merely experiences the ceaseless activity and change of an unconscious mechanical Force, absolutely separate from itself, which is called Prakriti or Nature. This experience the Sankhya accepts as final, incontrovertible. The Upanishads, too, accept this experience but they accept also another higher status of the spiritual Consciousness, which is cosmic and a still higher one, the highest, which is the transcendent, the Absolute. Thus ensues the great difference between the Upanishads and the Sankhya. On this experience the Sankhya bases its central doctrine, the doctrine of Purusha and Prakriti and from this follows as a natural consequence the rest of the system, which may be comprised under two other doctrines, the doctrine of evolution and the doctrine of the three Gunas. But before we can proceed further we have to see the implication of the doctrine of Purusha and Prakriti.

The Sankhya finds that it cannot reduce Purusha, who is pure consciousness, to Prakriti, or attribute Prakriti, which is multiform activity of an inconscient energy, to Purusha. So it seeks to account for the universe on the basis of these two realities, both unoriginated and self-existent, eternal and all-pervasive. In its primal status Prakriti is non-manifest showing forth no sign to mark it by, *Avyakta*, for the three interacting modes in which its energy works, called *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, counter-balance one another and the result is its perfect equipoise. But with the union of Purusha and Prakriti, the equipoise is disturbed and the three modes are released into play and the world-evolutionary movement begins. Purusha is witness merely; he does nothing. His mere presence sets Prakriti on the move. And Prakriti goes forth into play for the sake of Purusha, so that he may see and enjoy all that there is in her to see and enjoy and in the end go back to the eternal calm of his Absolute Status. Again, inconscient Prakriti can harbour no purpose although all her play is for the sake of Purusha. Prakriti appears as if purposive, as if conscient, only because of the reflection in her of the glow of the conscient Purusha merely looking on. Purusha, too, the non-actor in whom no change or movement is ever possible, he too is deluded by the play into thinking that he is the actor, is subjected to joy and sorrow and dark bewilderment and gets involved in the tremendous drama of birth and death on the various stages of the world.

The play of Prakriti is a real play and no mere make-believe. Prakriti is one through all its manifold manifestations, it is common to all, it is objective. But conscious existence is private, personal. It implies a separate centre, an individuality. So the Sankhya accepts a multiplicity of Purushas on the basis of our experience and regards them all as eternal and pervasive.

From its non-manifest status Prakriti moves into manifestation not because of any outside command but due to the compulsion of its own inner forces. It is an unfolding, an evolution; what already is there within it in potentiality presses forward and expresses itself. There is no Creator, no God who creates out of Himself or out of

nothing. Creation and destruction are impossible ideas. Things come into manifestation or go out of it—that is all.

Some of you may feel a little astonished that an ancient system such as the Sankhya and one also that has continued to be regarded as one of the orthodox systems should have denied the necessity of a Creator. It only shows in what atmosphere of freedom and tolerance thought was allowed to function in its search after truth. Again, the acceptance of Deity or a particular scripture was not a matter of crucial importance. But whether life was held to have some meaning and significance beyond its brief hour was of supreme consequence and on this point, though the Sankhya is non-theistic, its answer is an intense affirmation.

Now the first product of the evolution of Prakriti is *Mahat* or *Buddhi*, that is, the great one or the intelligence-will. From Mahat is evolved the principle of *Ahamkara* or ego or the principle of individuation. Ahamkara gives rise, on the one hand, to the sense-mind with its sense organs, five of perception and five of action, which in their totality function as vital energies also; on the other hand Ahamkara also gives rise to the five Fine Elements called *Tanmatras*, which are respectively the subtle objects of the five sense-perceptions : sound, touch, form, taste and smell. And in the final step of this evolutionary series, out of the Fine Elements are evolved their gross forms, the Five Great Elements or the *Mahabhutas*, called Ether, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. These are not perceived by us in their purity. Various combined, these Mahabhutas make all the objects of our world.

These are the several *Tattvas* or Principles which are generated through the evolution of Nature. These number altogether twenty-four. Purusha forms the twenty-fifth principle. These twenty-five principles constitute, according to the Sankhya, our existence.

Now we may ask, what is it precisely that operates this evolution ? Herein comes the doctrine of the three gunas, called Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva represents the principle of light and harmony, Rajas the principle of activity and passion and Tamas the principle of darkness and inertia.

None of these principles can even exist without the other two; still there is a ceaseless struggle, so to say, among them for power, for the upper hand. It is this struggle that operates the evolution of Prakriti. It is their combination in infinitely varying proportions in their phases of diverse degrees of power, that brings forth the foundational principles from Buddhi onwards and from them the infinite variety of things. We may picture the Sankhya evolution as a graded precipitation of subtle primal energy through mind and life into gross matter; for the series from Mahat to the Mahabhutas evidently comes to this, to use modern language. Or we may think of it as a gradually deepening obscuration. On the level of Buddhi Sattva is predominant; on the level of sense-mind and life it is Rajas that has the upper hand, for Tamas here has gained sufficient strength to counteract Sattva; and finally on the level of matter Tamas is in full domination.

At the commencement of the world cycle arise the *linga sariras*, the subtle bodies.

Each of them is an organisation of the foundational principles, *Buddhi*, *Ahamkara*, sense-mind with sense organs and the Fine Elements or *Tanmatras*, and is built on a basis made up of the subtle forms of the five gross elements. This subtle body attaches itself to a *Purusha* and is thus launched forth on its career of transmigration. It enters a fructified seed-cell, develops a gross body from the elements, Ether, Air, etc., is born and after playing its part on the stage of life goes back through the gates of death. It goes up in the scale of existence by *dharma* or righteousness, falls through *adharma* or unrighteousness; but, by the true knowledge of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, is released entirely and finally from existence and all its sorrows.

This, too briefly, is the *Sankhya* system in its essential features. It is often claimed that it is a system based on rational consideration in preference to revelation or tradition. But I am unable to convince myself that it arrived at the *Purusha-Prakriti* doctrine by making abstractions of the subject-object elements in our knowledge. We have to note here that, in the *Sankhya* dualism, Nature is not something hostile or indifferent to *Purusha*, as in certain modern theories, but, though inconscient, it is there to serve his purposes. This, in a way, mitigates the dualism but how far is the *Sankhya* account of our experience on this dualistic basis satisfactory ?

That it has seized upon a great truth in viewing the processes of Nature as an unfolding or evolution is now quite obvious, especially as a result of the help which Science has rendered to human thought in the last century—though the order of evolution which Modern Science presents is the reverse of the *Sankhya* order. The *Sankhya* order we may take as the order of involution. It is remarkable, too, that the *Sankhya* makes out that the thinking intelligence and will, the sense-mind together with its instruments, along with life are all unconscious formations of the energy of Nature, thus curiously anticipating some recent speculations. Its view is that mind and intelligence, etc. are not conscious on their own account, but become so because of the reflection of *Purusha*, somewhat like the planets appearing to be luminous because they reflect the light that they get from the Sun. Perhaps we have to see in mind and intelligence forms of inconscient energy suitably evolved to receive the consciousness of the all-pervading *Purusha*. In contra-distinction to the modern materialistic theories the *Sankhya* accepts consciousness as an independent reality, but it resembles them closely by making will and intelligence, mind and life only subtler formations of the same inconscient energy of Nature which precipitates itself as matter. It is really remarkable how far the realm of mechanism and the iron rigour of mechanical law or inconscient determinism extends into what we ordinarily consider the free self-determination of consciousness. It is the intense realisation of this fact that commits the *Sankhya* to the violent paradox of will and intelligence and sense-instrumentation as functioning without consciousness. The sense-organs and their objects are correlated formations of one and the same inconscient energy. Because of this, the sense organs are able to act as carriers of the messages of the outside world to the intelligence. And because on the intelligence falls the reflection of the conscient *Purusha*, there arises the phenomenon of conscious existence.

This is how the Sankhya tries to answer the crucial problem of philosophy—the problem of Spirit and Nature. We may marvel at the insight it shows into the process of Nature. We may be impressed by its anxiety to preserve the freedom of Spirit superior to Nature's flux, but, after all, the solution it offers is not a satisfactory solution. Is consciousness an ineffectual glow merely playing on the complex machinery of Nature ? If Nature is a blind force and Purusha a non-acting, non-suffering seeing or awareness only, who is it that suffers joy and sorrow, who is it that strives, who is it that fails and succeeds ? Perhaps no mere philosophy can give a satisfactory solution. The picture that the Sankhya makes of our life, of a lame man on the shoulders of a blind man, both of them lost in a deep forest, is not an encouraging one though it is true to a certain aspect of our existence. But it gives one practical guidance of inestimable value to those who strive for an answer to the problem of life. It says: "Stand back for a while from the play of Nature within you, within your mind, and learn to watch the play as a mere spectator. When you are able to do this perfectly well the truth of Purusha and Prakriti will dawn upon you"—and this guidance has been found acceptable by all schools and systems irrespective of their particular theories of existence.

VELURY CHANDRASEKHARAM

THE SHAKESPEAREAN WORD

AN INDIAN STUDY

THE Vedic rishi says the poet, by his poetic power, brings out forms, beautiful forms in the high heaven.

In this respect, Shakespeare is incomparable. He has through his words painted pictures, glowing living pictures of undying beauty.

Indeed all poets do this, each in his own way. To create beautiful, concrete images that stand vivid before the mind's eye is the natural genius of a poet. Here is a familiar picture, simple and effective, of a material vision :

Cold blows the blast across the moor,
The sleet drives hissing in the wind,
Yon toilsome mountain lies before,
A dreary treeless waste behind.

Or we may take a pictorial presentation of a gorgeous kind from Milton :

High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
Outshon the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Shows on her Kings Barbaric Pearl and Gold,
Satan exalted sat by merit raised
To that bad eminence...

Or take this image drawn by a more delicate and subtle hand—it is Wordsworth—

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Or that wonder-image magically wrought in those famous unforgettable lines :

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

We may turn to an eastern poet to see how he too has gone the same way although in a different tone and temper. Here is a Kalidasian image :

To climb upon his Bull high and snow-white even like mount Kailas
The great Lord graciously presses his holy feet upon this back of mine.
I am his slave, Kumbhodara by name, Nikumbha's comrade.¹

One can go on *ad infinitum*, for in a sense poetry is nothing but images. Still I am tempted to give a last citation from Dante, the superb Dante, in his grand style simple :

Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aer bruno
Toglieva gli animai, che sono in terra
Dalle fatiche loro.²

Characteristically of the poet these lines give an image that is bareness itself, chiselled in stone or modelled in bronze.

All these images, however, or most of them, belong to one category or genre. They are painted pictures, *still life*, on the whole, presented in two dimensions. Kalidasa himself has described the nature or character of this artistic effect. In describing a gesture of Uma he says, 'she moved not, she stopped not' (*na yayau na tathau*); it was, as it were, a movement suddenly arrested and held up on a canvas. The imagery is as though of a petrification. The figures of statuary present themselves to our eyes in this connection—a violent or intense action held at one point and stilled, as, for example, in the Laocoon or the Discobolo.

This is usually what the poets, the great poets, have done. They have presented living and moving bodies as fixed, stable entities, as a procession of statues. But Shakespeare's are not fixed stable pictures but living and moving beings. They do not appear as pictures, even like moving pictures on a screen, a two-dimensional representation. Life in Shakespeare appears, as in life, exactly like a three-dimensional phenomenon. You seem to see forms and figures in the round, not simply in a frontal view. A Shakespearean scene is not only a feast for the eye but is apprehended as though through all the senses.

However, we must not forget Michael Angelo in this connection. He is living, he is energetic, to a supreme degree. If we seek anywhere intense authentic life-movement, it is there at its maximum perhaps. Even his statues are a paean of throbbing pulsating bodies. Still he has planted moving life in immobility and stilled

¹ *Kailāsagaurāṁ vṛsamāruṛukṣoh.*

² Now was the day departing, and the air,
Imbrown'd with shadows, from their toils released
All animals on earth.

rigidity. It is a passing moment stopped as though by magic ; a *mortis rigor* holds in and controls, as it were, a wild vigour spurting out.

We know that almost no paraphernalia are really needed to present a Shakespearean drama on the stage. His magical, all-powerful words are sufficient to do the work of the decorative artist. The magic of the articulate word, the mere sound depicts, not only depicts but carries you and puts you face to face with, the living reality. I will give three examples to show how Shakespeare wields his Prosperian wand. First I take the lines from *Macbeth*, that present before us the castle of Duncan, almost physically—perhaps even a little more than physically with its characteristic setting and atmosphere :

Dun. This castle hath a pleasant seat ; the air
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

Ban. This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve
By his lov'd mansionary that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here ; no jutting, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Has made her pendant bed and procreant cradle.
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
The air is delicate.

.. The next scene is the famous episode in *King Lear* where Gloucester attempts—though vainly—comically, to kill himself. Here is the photograph, rather the cinematograph that defies, surpasses all cinema-artifice. I present it in two parts:

(1)

Glo. When shall I come to th' top of that same hill ?
Edg. You do climb up it now ; look how we labour.
Glo. Methinks the ground is even.
Edg. Horrible steep.
Hark, do you hear the sea ?
Glo. No, truly.
Edg. Why, then your other senses grow imperfect
By your eyes' anguish.
Glo. So may it be indeed.
Methinks thy voice is alter'd and thou speak'st
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.
Edg. You're much deceiv'd ; in nothing am I chang'd
But in my garments.

- Glo. Methinks you're better spoken.
 Edg. Come on, sir ; here's the place. Stand still. How fearful
 And dizzy 't is to cast one's eyes so low !
 The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
 Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
 Hangs one that gathers samphire—dreadful trade !
 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
 The fishermen that walk upon the beach
 Appear like mice ; and yon tall anchoring bark
 Diminish'd to her cock ; her cock, a buoy
 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge
 That on th' unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes
 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more ;
 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
 Topple down headlong.
- Glo. Set me where you stand.
 Edg. Give me your hand. You are now within a foot
 Of th' extreme verge. For all beneath the moon
 Would I not leap upright.
- Glo. Let go my hand.
-
- Edg. Now fare ye well, good sir.
 Glo. With all my heart.
-
- Glo. O you mighty gods !
 This world I do renounce...
 Now, fellow, fare thee well. (*He falls forward.*)
 Edg. Gone, sir ; farewell.

(2)

- Alive or dead ?
 Ho, you sir ! friend ! Hear you, sir ? Speak !

 What are you, sir ?
- Glo. Away, and let me die.
 Edg. Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,
 So many fathom down precipitating,
 Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg ; but thou dost breathe,
 Hast heavy substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art sound.
 Then masts at each make not the altitude

- Which thou hast perpendicularly fell :
 Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.
- Glo. But have I fall'n or no ?
- Edg. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.
 Look up a-height ; the shrill-gorged lark so far
 Cannot be seen or heard : do but look up.
- Glo. Alack, I have no eyes...
- Edg. Upon the crown o' the cliff what thing was that
 Which parted from you ?
-
- Edg. As I stood here below methought his eyes
 Were two full moons ; he had a thousand noses,
 Horns whelk'd and wav'd like the enridged sea : ...
 It was some fiend...
- Glo. 'The fiend, the fiend:' he led me to that place.

The last one is the opening scene of *Hamlet*, an extraordinary scene familiar to the whole world:

(Francisco at his post. Enter to him Bernardo)

- Ber. Who's there ?
- Fran. Nay, answer me ; stand, and unfold yourself.
- Ber. Long live the king !
- Fran. Bernardo ?
- Ber. He.
- Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.
- Ber. 'T is now struck twelve ; get thee to bed, Francisco.
- Fran. For this relief much thanks ; 't is bitter cold,
 And I am sick at heart.
- Ber. Have you had quiet guard ?
- Fran. Not a mouse stirring.
- Ber. Well, good night.
 If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
 The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.
- Fran. I think I hear them. Stand, ho !
 Who's there ?

(Enter Horatio and Marcellus)

- Hor. Friends to this ground.
- Mar. And liegemen to the Dane.

- Fran. Give you good night.
Mar. O ! farewell, honest soldier :
Who hath reliev'd you ?
Fran. Bernardo has my place.
Give you good night.
Mar. Holla ! Bernardo !
Ber. Say,
What ! is Horatio there ?
Hor. A piece of him.
Ber. Welcome, Horatio ; welcome, good Marcellus.
Mar. What ! has this thing appear'd again tonight ?
Ber. I have seen nothing.
Mar. Horatio says 't is but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us :
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night ;
That if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.
Hor. Tush, tush ! 't will not appear.
Ber. Sit down awhile,
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.
Hor. Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
Ber. Last night of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole
Has made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one,—
Mar. Peace ! break thee off ; look, where it comes again !

(Enter Ghost)

- Ber. In the same figure, like the king that's dead.
Mar. Thou art a scholar ; speak to it, Horatio.
Ber. Looks it not like the king ? Mark it, Horatio.
Hor. Most like ; it harrows me with fear and wonder,
Ber. It would be spoke to.
Mar. Question it, Horatio.
Hor. What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,

Together with that fair and war-like form
 In which the majesty of buried Denmark
 Did sometimes march ? By heaven I charge thee, speak.

Mar. It is offended.

Ber. See ! it stalks away.

Hor. Stay ! speak, I charge thee, speak !

(Exit Ghost)

Mar. 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

Ber. How now, Horatio ! you tremble and look pale;
 Is not this something more than fantasy ?
 What think you on't ?

Hor. Before my God, I might not this believe
 Without the sensible and true avouch
 Of mine own eyes.

Mar. Is it not like the king ?

Hor. As thou art to thyself :
 Such was the very armour he had on
 When he the ambitious Norway combated ;
 So frown'd he once, when in an angry parle
 He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.
 'T is strange.

Mar. Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,
 With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

This is not at all a theatrical representation on a stage where personages are acting ; there is no make-up, no decor. It is a real incident hapening before our eyes as it were, that we are invited to attend and contemplate. It is not a story narrated but an event occurring upon earth disclosed to our view.

Such is the magical creative power in the Shakespearean word. It is the evocative force of the articulate sound. In India, we call it *mantra*. Mantra means a certain sum of syllables charged with dynamic force, creative consciousness. It is that which induces life into the body of a clay image, it is that which awakens the Divinity, establishes Him in a dead material form. Shakespeare has, as it were, instilled his life's breath into his words and made them move and live as living creatures, physical beings upon earth.

Borrowing an analogy from modern knowledge, I may say that the Shakespearean word is a particle or wave of life-power. Modern science posits, at the basis of the material creation as its ultimate constituents, these energy-particles. Even so it seems to me that at the basis of all poetic creation there lie what may be called word-particles, and each poet has a characteristic quality or energy of the word-unit. The Shakespearean word, I have said, is a life-energy packet ; and therefore in his elaboration of the Word, living figures, moving creatures leap up to our sight.

Shakespeare himself has said of his hero Romeo, characterising the supreme beauty the hero embodies :

When he shall die
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with Night.

Even so the whole body of Shakespearean utterances may be described as consisting, in the last analysis, of starry vocables, quanta of articulate life-energy.

Yes, Shakespearean syllables are indeed the glorious members cut out of the body as it were of a beautiful vital being transmuted into heavenly luminaries.

In the world of poetry Dante is a veritable *avatar*. His language is a supreme magic. The word-unit in him is a quantum of highly concentrated perceptive energy, Tapas. In Kalidasa the quantum is that of the energy of the light in sensuous beauty. And Homer's voice is a quantum of the luminous music of the spheres.

The word-unit, the language quantum in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a packet of consciousness-force, a concentrated power of Light (instinct with a secret Delight) —listen:

Lone in the silence and to the vastness bared,
Against midnight's dumb abysses piled in front
A columned shaft of fire and light she rose...

O Word, cry out the immortal litany,
Built is the golden Tower, the Flame-child born.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

SOIRS A L'ASHRAM

O ! la Douceur des soirs aux Jardins de l'Ashram
Où, chaque fleur, chaque rayon a une âme
Qui s'exhale et monte en vibration d'amour,
Vers les Maîtres adorés de ce divin séjour.
Dans la chaleur du soir, les grands arbres aux fleurs d'or
Saupoudrent les allées de pétales, encor
Que les oiseaux s'endorment aux creux des branches
Dancent un dernier hymne de joie pure et blanche.

*
**

O ! la beauté des soirs aux jardins de l'Ashram
Où tout se fond en une invisible gamme
Quand, la nuit descendue, tout prie et se recueille.
...Tout T'attend, O Mère, et aussi que Tu veuilles
Apparaître là-haut, sur le fond des cieux noirs,
Nos cœurs sont alors comme de purs ostensoirs
Où le Divin tressaille et balbutie peut-être,
Attendant Ta pression divine, pour naître.

*
**

O ! la splendeur des soirs aux jardins de l'Ashram !
...Dans le Silence, le gong résonne, une flamme
Invisible descend... Joie, Douceur, Bénédiction...
Tu es là maintenant... tout est Adoration !
Si belle et si grande, le front ceint d'étoiles,
Vers nous Tu te penches... au vent flottent tes voiles...
Et soudain, en nous, tout est large, tout est pur...
Vers Toi nos cœurs montent d'un rythme fort et sûr,
Ta Lumière répond, enveloppant nos âmes...
O ! la splendeur des soirs aux jardins de l'Ashram !

SUVRATA (YVONNE R. GAEBELÉ)

6 Septembre 1945
(Ecrit au temps où la Méditation du
soir avait lieu dans les jardins sous
la terrasse où venait Mère.)

ASHRAM EVENINGS

O ! the sweetness of the evenings in the Ashram gardens,
Where each flower, each ray has a soul
That breathes forth, and up in the love-vibrations it climbs
Towards the Masters adored at this abode divine.
In the warmth of the evening the large trees of the golden flowers
Carpet the bypaths with their petals
While the birds go to sleep in the hollow branches
Chirping a last hymn of joy, pure and white.

*
**

O ! the beauty of the evenings in the Ashram gardens
Where all melts in an invisible rhythm,
When the night descends and all is in prayer, indrawn,
...Each, each one awaits Thee, O Mother,
And when Thou dost appear, up above the base of black skies,
Lo, our hearts are like the pure monstrance
Where the divine touch comes softly and He whispers perhaps,
Awaiting Thy divine pressure to be born.

*
**

O ! the splendour of the evenings in the Ashram gardens !
...In the Silence the gong resounds, a flame
Invisible descends... Joy, Sweetness, Benediction...
Thou art there now... all is Adoration!
So beautiful and so mighty, Thy forehead crowned with a belt of stars,
Towards us Thou leanest... Thy silk floats in the air...
And suddenly, in us, all is wide, all is pure...
Towards Thee our hearts rise in a rhythm strong and sure,
Thy Light answers, enveloping our souls...
O ! the splendour of the evenings in the Ashram gardens !

6 September 1945

(Written in those days when the evening meditation used to take place in the Ashram gardens with the Mother on the terrace.)

English rendering by SHYAM SUNDAR

FABULOUS FODDER

A SHORT STORY

I HAD been wondering for some time in which direction to turn my latent talents, when I happened to come across an article in the Poultry Man's Journal. The author expounded the theory, that as hens laid eggs, and eggs hatched out chicks, the cycle was continuous. And if one took into consideration the fact that either chickens, or eggs, or both, had been in great demand ever since man set foot on earth, it stood to reason that from the business point of view this was a fool proof profession. I think it was at this point that I decided to become a chicken farmer.

Now once I set my mind to something, I put my whole heart and soul into it. I bought a large number of books on the subject, and after having browsed through them for a day or two I came to the conclusion that the secret to success lay in the fodder. What I wanted now was experience and, if possible, at top level.

I had heard of a village on the Austrian side of Lake Constance, that was world famous for its poultry and eggs, and I decided to pay this place a visit.

After an uneventful journey I arrived late one evening, and had the good chance to find suitable lodgings within the first half hour. My plan was to present myself as a student, reading up for exams and, by getting on friendly terms with the locals, wheedle out of them the secret of their success. I soon found out that this was not going to be an easy proposition, as apart from certain mercenary interests they really had very little use for foreigners.

I was therefore obliged to adopt the indirect approach, and began by attending all the village dances. For diplomatic reasons I left the younger generation alone, and concentrated on taking a spin with the more staid and portly members of the community.

This hard work slowly began to pay dividends, though it was not until the first of April that the real break through came. On this day, I formally proposed to the mayor's grandmother. This joke seems to have been well appreciated, apparently she never had been married, and from now on I was greeted by one and all.

The first invitation I received was to attend a funeral; one of my dance partners had quietly passed away. Out of respect I stood sobbing at the grave side, until I noticed that I was the only person present shedding any tears at all. The other mourners seemed to have been greatly moved by my efforts and from then on I was invited to all funerals.

They hoped of course that I would repeat my performance, and I can state without blushing that I did not let them down: already as a child I had been renowned for my blubbing.

I considered it wiser not to partake in the funeral feasts that followed. This raised

my popularity still further—to such an extent indeed that I was soon honoured with the post of assistant pall bearer.

Now I cannot claim to have had any previous experience in this branch of activity, and the first coffin I helped carry slipped from my grasp. There was a great rumbling inside, which frightened the wits out of me.

“What was that ?” I exclaimed in horror.

“What was what ?” replied the burly fellow in front of me.

“That noise, that noise inside the coffin ?”

“You’s been ahearing things,” he replied, “they all hears things when they starts in this trade,” and so saying he grinned at the others. I felt rather like the new recruit who drops his rifle on parade, and quickly tried to forget the incident.

Thanks to my important position in the community, I could now risk getting into conversation with these successful poulterers, without raising suspicion. But for some reason, every time I broached my special topic, the people began to grin, and nudge one another, and some even laughed outright. Well, a queer lot, no doubt; still I was determined to get to the bottom of their secret.

The five village pubs, which catered for the five hundred inhabitants, were important centers of information. I have noticed that men under the influence of stimulating beverages are prone to talk in an uninhibited sort of way. And this they did, often to my great embarrassment, on all subjects but fodder.

I fulfilled my duties as pall bearer with great solemnity, and to the satisfaction of everyone. I had by now carried a whole series of coffins and, although I was too ashamed to admit it, I heard some strange rumblings every time the coffin was in any way tilted. But, like my co-carriers, I soon accustomed myself to this phenomenon, and no longer asked silly questions.

One weekend I went off to Zurich, to visit a friend of mine and, among other things, I told him about my activities as pall bearer. Horrified, my Swiss friend jumped to his feet.

“But are you quite sure,” he exclaimed, “that these people you transport are completely dead before they are buried ? To me this seems far from the case. I think the matter should be very officially investigated !”

I tried to calm him with the information that the last burial had taken place ten days ago, so that even if the lady had not been quite dead at the time, she was certain to be so by now. For some reason this did not seem to satisfy my correct Helvetian host. He claimed that the whole business was a public scandal, especially as I had heard these coffin noises on several occasions.

For the first time since the beginning of our friendship we parted with a certain coolness, as I had underestimated the gravity with which he regarded this matter.

By means of a whole series of letters, letters to the press, letters to the authorities in Vienna and elsewhere, he managed at last to get an enquiry opened. With the result that four months later, that is four months after our conversation, a commission of Gendarmes from the nearby town arrived in the village.

Without so much as consulting the priest or the mayor, they started opening up the graves. In the first coffin they found bricks, in the second old pots and pans, in the third stones, in the fourth sand, in the fifth old boots, and so on; but no corpses, dead or alive, not a single one.

The commission carefully remade all the graves and, under the menacing looks of the bereaved relatives, offered their excuses to one and all. They explained that someone had made an official denunciation, claiming that the old people of the village were buried alive. But as this quite obviously was not the case, the matter was now closed. To remove the last vestiges of ill feeling, that might have been caused by this incident, the head of the commission invited all those present to refresh themselves in the nearest pub. I too partook in these festivities. The genuine feeling of equality that reigned between the highest official and the lowest farmhand made me an enthusiastic member of the community.

It was with real regret that I saw the time of my stay drawing to a close. Even if I had failed in my mission, I had been more than compensated by the worldly wisdom I had picked up from these simple people.

As I was doing my farewell round from farm to farm, I came across a freshly filled fodder pan. As luck would have it, it was haying time and there was nobody about, so I took the opportunity and filled my tobacco pouch. The hens protested so violently that a small girl came running out of the house to see what was going on. But on catching sight of me, she just grinned from ear to ear, and led me to her parents in the nearby field.

Without any real hope, I sent this sample of fodder off to be analysed, the moment I got home. The result was disappointing enough :

grains, vegetable remains, bone meal, and a large proportion of finely minced poor quality meat, whose high percentage of congealed blood suggests the use of animal carcasses.

In other words, ground up bodies of dead animals,—just a moment,—ground up what ?

And I've been pondering about the matter ever since.

NEVILLE

MAITHILISHARAN GUPTA

(In the issue of December 5, 1966, we published a short appreciation of this poet.
Here is a more extensive survey of his work, by another author.)

POET Maithilisharan Gupta, born in 1886, is the dream poet of the masses as well as of the elite. Though very Indian in spirit and approach, he stands at an important crossroads in the Hindi literary world. He bridges the old school of saintly and mystic poetry and the new school of social, political, rather all-embracing, poetry. He is one of the pioneers ushering in the era of newly awakened patriotism but he is also old-fashioned enough to give it a religious fervour. Brought up in a small village called Chirgaon in U.P. he has the simple faith of a villager.

Young Gupta came of a devout family. He had a father who shed tears of ecstatic joy on reading the *Ramayana* and whose only purpose in life was to sing the glories of Rama. It was but natural that the son of such a father should inherit Bhakti for the son of Dasharatha. In his great works *Saketa* and *Panchavati* he gives expression to this Rama-bhakti. Both works deal with the legend of Ayodhya's exiled prince.

In *Saketa* he recounts the whole story starting from the fateful evening when Manthara goes to Kaikai to poison her heart against Rama. Against this background he tells us the tale of Urmila, the much neglected wife of Luxmana. This great poem, though almost meeting the demands of an epic, fails to achieve the grandeur and majesty an epic should have. It falls short of epic heights because the poet has been misled in the selection of his heroine. He chose to bring out Urmila's pathos, suffering and nobility but there is no growth in her character. Still, though not perfect, the poem has wonderful word-jewels scattered all over. Thus the poet describes Urmila standing in her palace in the early hours of dawn:

"Clad in the delight of dawn's hues, who is she ? Is she dawn personified ? Her beauty brightens all her surroundings. Wherever she glances, light springs up."

Had he continued in this vein, it would have been fine, but being a devotee of Rama he just could not help talking about him. This is one of his stumbling-stones. He waxes eloquent best while he talks of Rama. Also, his Rama is in some ways a modern edition. Thus talking about His state of mind on the eve of the coronation, the poet says :

"What was Rama thinking ? His heart deep like the sea and noble like the Himalaya was in conflict. The great power he was to inherit seemed a heavy burden and his father's proposed exit into the forest made Him sad. 'Never more shall I enjoy his love or offer him mine.'"

In those far-off days when the *Ramayana* was written it was natural for kings to go into the forest during Vanaprastha and so Rama in the original epic does not express this sentiment at all. Even Tulsi's *Ramayana* is free from it.

Maithilisharan's Sita too is unhappy. She says,

"All the brothers shared everything together. Now this kingship will bring in a change. Do you like this power?"

Some of Maithilisharan's minor characters are like cut diamonds.

Manthara the wicked maid of Kaikai had spoken her poisonous words. Kaikai chided her and drove her away, but the seed had already been sown. The passage on Kaikai's state of mind after Manthara has gone is a masterpiece:

"Even a son like Bharat is doubted. That is why he is not asked to come home for such an occasion. The wind blowing across heavens seemed to repeat 'Even a son like Bharat, even a son like Bharat.'"

The repetition gives an added strength to the poetic expression.

At times Gupta gives fine pictures. Here is a portrayal of the king with Kaikai. "The king was in a terrible, agitated state of mind but Kaikai sat beside him unmoving and inexorable like fate itself."

Hearing Kaikai's wishes Luxmana in royal rage speaks harsh words to his father. In reply the king says,

"Repeat your words, my son! your towering rage pacifies my unhappy heart. I am not a father but you, Luxmana, are a worthy son. Yes, imprison me by force and celebrate the coronation of Rama."

Sumitra too gives vent to righteous rage when she hears of Kaikai's design. She too advises her son to take by force that which was Rama's by right.

The poet returns to Urmila to show her state of mind after Luxmana has left Ayodhya. She says,

"All is lost but hope will not yet give me up. Hope! be ever present with the down-hearted and dejected. You are a small diamond sparkling in the darkness. You destroy, yet you are precious. Though you bring darkness you are bright."

A chariot had been sent to bring back Rama, Sita and Luxmana from exile, It returns empty.

"Even animals were open to love. The fiercest war could not weaken their impatient feet but they now walked as if sore wounded. The empty chariot was too heavy for them and the familiar homeward path an unknown forest."

Kaushalya consoles Bharat with love:

"Come, my son, my empty lap is full again. I know you are innocent, the spotless moon of this sun-dynasty, I have got back my Rama in you. Except that he is older, there is no difference from you. If Kaikai had a preference for you, is it a grave rebellion? Alas, you are late. Look, the king has turned away his face and his heart has changed its course."

Sita is happy in her sylvan kingdom. She says,

"My lord is the king, and my brother-in-law the minister. The munis come and bless us. Money I don't need though there are mines. The lion and deer drink on the same river bank. Queen Sita has gained much by coming here. My cottage

is a royal palace....I don't have to depend on others. I walk and do as I like. These beads of sweat give me fruits of health."

Rama prepares to give Shraddha with roots and fruits of the forest on hearing of his father's death. Kaushalya watching it asks, "Will it not remind him of your exile and will his spirit not grieve?"

Their guru says,

"He is above sorrow now and Bharat's attitude will give him happiness." Bharat, in bitterness, tells Rama when they meet in the forest :

"Is there anything Bharat wants ? Has he not got a kingdom without trouble ? You have got an abode under these trees, what more can I want ? My unhappy father gave up his body in sorrow, what more can I want ? Woe is me ! For this infamous end was I born ! I was destined to be murdered at my mother's hands. My world is torn apart. My house is in ruins. I have turned my face from myself, what more can I want ?"

Rama smiled :

"Into whose charge shall I give you when your own mother failed to understand you ?"

Kaikai was listening to the conversation. As the poet says, "The lioness had turned by miracle into the gentle holy Ganga." She speaks thus : "Yes, though I gave him birth, I don't know Bharat. You agree, my son, and come home. Though guilty I am your mother, Rama. If I lose Bharat as I have lost my Lord, where shall I go ? Wait, don't stop me. If I don't repent a little now after sinning so hard, how shall I live?" Then we read : "The night-sky was dropping beads of dew and the silent assembly wept caressing the heart." Kaikai continued : "Was there ever a son like mine ? Let the universe spit its contempt on me and say whatever it wants but let them not deprive me of my motherhood. Ah Rama, this is my only prayer. So long people said a mother is always a good mother even if the son is a bad son, now they will say a son was good but his mother was bad, unworthy...For centuries people will say, 'There was a wicked queen in the family of Raghus.' Let my soul hear them say in birth after birth : 'Woe unto her ! She was wicked, but blessed was the mother of Bharat.' Alas, even that son have I lost today. I have earned only a stigma. I attacked my paradise, I snatched away your right, to what end ? He, for whom I did all that, feels humiliated and weeps feeling wretched, hunted like a deer. My fiery-spirited boy is broken into numberless splinters. What more punishment can I have than this sight ?... A universal hatred engulfed me. You came to the forest, my Lord left for the other world. I had nothing to do but sit lonely with my heart...Your father's pyre has burnt out but the city still burns. Come and cool its sorrows and fears."

It is a picture to make one sympathise with the wicked queen.

There is a flash-back of Urmila alone in her palace.

"In the temple of her heart, the husband's image was installed and she burned, herself a living *arati*. She had forgotten all pleasures, her eyes were filled with the

beloved image. ...Each moment she was lost in him and she quite forgot herself."

She swings from one mood to another. From utter dejection she rises to hope. Again :

"Yes, my friend, bring what you like—food, fine clothes. I will do all you say. I must live till the period of exile is over. I will be patient, so that I live to touch his feet before I die..."

Urmila in distress tells her friend :

"I know my mother-in-law weeps seeing me in this state, my brother-in-law looks crestfallen, my dear sisters sigh, so tell me, dear friend, where shall I go except into solitude ? Myself, being unhappy, crestfallen and sad, how shall I console them ? I brought cheer and happiness into this home, I dare not go there with my sighs."

Seeing the pet parrot she is reminded of many things :

"Friend, drive away that bird. Listen to him. He says, 'My queen, don't be annoyed.' Say, my bird, 'Where is your teacher ? Has he gone out for hunting ? How did he forget this wounded doe in the palace ?'"

Unable to sleep, she cries out :

"Come gently, you dreams of my beloved. My eyes are waiting impatiently for you. Come, my darling dumb sleep, I will give you the moon for a toy. You will come only when he comes back ? Then you will have only half the moon."

She loses her mind momentarily under the stress of sorrow :

"He has returned yet I hesitate to meet him. He looks so different !...Let me be mad. Let this mirage be for me a reality...My burning senses are cool at last. My husband has arrived. The moon is happy with his beloved and madhavi¹ has found her Ashok.² At last the period of exile is over. What a blessed day it is ! Why do you stand there, my friend, so unhappy and dejected ? Why ? Hurry up, bring the *Arati*. Let me wash his feet, see they are full of dust. Look at his hair, all entangled into knots but his face is full of a gentle smile Today Urmila is proud and happy."

Bharat and his wife too have skilful treatment from this poet. He shows them busy getting difficult beautiful objects for Rama. They had acquired the life-giving plant Sanjeevani as a present for Rama. Bharat happens to look up at the night-sky and, seeing a huge body, shoots his arrow at it. As it falls it utters the name of Luxmana and Seeta. Bharat tries to revive the fallen giant and discovers that his name is Hanuman. Hanuman tells them of Luxmana's need for Sanjeevani and Sita's captivity in Ashokvan. Bharat cannot sit idle while Sita is a prisoner and Rama in great need of help. He wants to go the South to help Rama and the whole population of Ayodhya is ready to start with him. Guru Vashistha intervenes and, giving a divine vision to Bharat, makes him understand that Rama is already victorious.

Rama returns with his family and friends. There is great rejoicing in the city.

¹ a creeper

² a tree

Urmila feels that Luxmana should not be attracted to her by her beauty. She says, "Friend, why should I make myself alluring ? Is it that he loves ? Let him see me as I am and let him love me. You say he will feel sad if he sees my condition ? Then bring my dresses and jewels." The poet maintains the Sanskrit tradition of describing the heroine's condition in all the six seasons. Torn between Rama's exile and Urmila's grief this great work has suffered.

(To be continued)

ANU PURANI

A QUESTION

LIKE a drop of dew
On trembling grass,
I sparkle only for you
In the morning's hush.

Like a brief spark of fire
That rises high,
A fulfilment of your desire,
O Lord, forever am I !

From your vast sea
I heave but to merge
In your Love's Eternity !
I am your tiny surge.

Still, still the dark veil
Between you and me...
Why should my ken fail
When seer and sight are Thee ?

KAMALAKANTO

THE PROBLEM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE

(Continued from the issue of March, 1967)

XVI

THE NATIONAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT (3)

IN the last article of this series, we made mention of the Carlyle Circular issued by the Government of Bengal in October 1905, insisting on the students of schools and colleges in that Province keeping aloof from all manifestation of the new spirit of *Swadeshi*; we also referred to the momentous consequences. Indeed, the birth of *Swadeshi* in education practically begins with the Circular.

But East Bengal was not to lag behind. In fact it was Rangpur, then included in the newly-formed Province of East Bengal and Assam, that had the honour of founding the first National School in 1905. To that story we may turn before continuing with the Carlyle Circular and its aftermath in Calcutta.

On October 31, that is, within days of the issue of the Carlyle Circular, the Headmaster of the Rangpur Zilla School was forced by the District Magistrate, T. Emerson, to issue a Circular very similar in tone. This piece of academic hooliganism deserves to be quoted *in extenso*; it serves to bring out the true spirit of British education in India. "Notice is hereby given," the circular says, "that if any attempt is made by anybody of the Rangpur Zilla School to take any action in connection with boycotting, picketing and other abuses, his case will be reported to the Inspector of Schools, Rajshaye Division, for punishment. Every assistant teacher is requested to explain to the boys that such a practice is absolutely subversive of discipline, and most injurious to their interests and studies. He is also requested to see, both in the school and out of the school, that the boys do not meet together for such purpose, or disturb the peace by taking any part in the boycotting movement. If there be any fear of such disturbance, the names of the boys should be reported to the undersigned."

This implied that the schoolmaster was henceforth to act as spy and help the police in suppressing the "seditious" activities of the students. This was nothing new to anyone acquainted with recent history: Metternich had arranged for this in the petty states of Germany in the 1820's and the Czar Alexander III had "purified" the Russian educational system by similar methods during the last quarter of the 19th century. The only novelty was that it gave a rude shock to those of our countrymen, and they were in the majority, who had implicit faith in British justice.

But the immediate results were going to undermine British prestige. On the

very evening of the day on which the Headmaster promulgated his ukase, the students of his school attended a public meeting in the town-hall, and shouted *Bande Mataram* as they walked back home. The next day, they assembled once again at a public meeting, where they read out the National Manifesto proclaiming the nation's determination to fight the Partition of Bengal. On the following day the Headmaster received an order from the District Magistrate saying that "these boys are fined rupees five each and will not be allowed to attend classes until the fine has been paid" ! The Headmaster was to warn the students that a repetition of the offence was to "endanger the existence of the school," and a copy of the communication was to be sent to the parents and guardians of the boys.

Now it was the turn of the parents and guardians to act; they refused to pay the fines as they could see no fault on the part of their wards. Most of the boys abstained from their classes ; and on November 7, a historic day in the annals of India's fight for freedom, the citizens of Rangpur, led by prominent local lawyers and men of letters, resolved in a public meeting called for the purpose to take the education of the students at Rangpur into their own hands and start a national institution on "national lines". The very next day, the Rangpur National School was started "with the object of imparting education both general and technical." The local notables made voluntary contributions towards the maintenance of this institution, some of the lawyers offered their services as teachers, until other arrangements could be made. Very soon thereafter, a number of bright young graduates from Calcutta came over to Rangpur and took up the burden on themselves. The School began with about three hundred students and had the distinction of keeping on its rolls nearly two-thirds this number till the end.

Meanwhile things were happening in Calcutta.

The morning after the issue of the Carlyle Circular, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* came out with a scathing criticism : "a more mischievous and insulting document could not be conceived." On the very next day (October 24), a public meeting was held in Calcutta, where Shyamsundar Chakravarty, who was destined very soon after to write fiery articles for the *Bande Mataram* daily under the inspiration and direct guidance of Sri Aurobindo, pleaded earnestly for the setting up of an independent system of education for our people. The contagion spread. On October 25, Hemendra Prasad Ghose, another able lieutenant of Sri Aurobindo's on the staff of the *Bande Mataram*, published a letter in an English daily, where he asked : "if we have decided to solve the economic question without Government help, can we not undertake to teach our boys without that help ? can we not found a university of our own ?" "Boycott the Government-managed University and start a university of our own"—this became the order of the day.

In a series of meetings, largely attended by students from the different colleges in Calcutta and addressed by men like Rabindranath Tagore, Bepin Chandra Pal and Krishna Kumar Mitra, the idea of a national university began to take rapid shape. The climax came on November 9 when, at one such meeting, the gift of rupees one

lakh was promised on the spot by Subodh Chandra Mullick for the foundation of a national university; this earned him the title of Raja conferred on him spontaneously by the people. He was later to act as host to Sri Aurobindo when he resigned from his Baroda post and openly took charge of the Swadeshi movement. Brajendra Kishore Roychowdhury of Gauripur promised the gift of five lakhs on the following day. The National University was now becoming a feasible proposition.

Ashutosh Chowdhury issued on November 14 a Manifesto calling on men of "light and leading" to assemble in a public meeting to discuss the situation arising out of the Carlyle Circular. At the meeting held on November 16, it was resolved that "it is desirable and necessary that a National Council of Education should be at once established to organise a system of education—literary, scientific and technical—on national lines and under national control". In pursuance of this resolution, the National Council of Education was formally registered on June 1, 1906. The Bengal National College and School came into existence on the 14th August, under the auspices of the National Council. Sri Aurobindo became the first Principal.

(To be continued)

SANAT K. BANERJI

THE DIAMOND SELF

THE diamond Self—unless it's found
 High on the blue-bliss peak beyond
 What you will find is a torn thing,
 The fainting tune of a forgotten song.
 O dig the self by the golden hush
 Where lie asworn all cries of flesh.
 There within awaits for you
 The miraculous face of the gold and blue,
 The marvellous seed and sap of things,
 The Tree of sheer God-blossomings.

VENKATARANGA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo on the Tantra : Compiled by M. P. Pandit from the Writings of Sri Aurobindo. Publishers : Dipti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 2. Pp. 49. Price : Rs. 2.00

The very name Tantra evokes in the minds of many an uneasy sense of mystery, if not of mystification. And this sense deepens into a mood of utter repugnance whenever one identifies the Tantric discipline with the perverse aberrations of the so-called *vama marga*, "left-hand path".

But at the same time there is an almost universal desire to know the essence of the Tantra, its real content and processes and its ultimate objective, as distinct from the obfuscations and unessential accretions growing around this marvellous psycho-spiritual discipline. It is needless to point out that there can hardly be any better choice than Sri Aurobindo to explain to the modern mind the rationale of the Tantra, to expound its metaphysics or to delineate its spiritual goal. For, the Integral Yoga of Transformation as propounded by Sri Aurobindo, with its stress on the idea of the divine perfectibility of man here upon earth itself, also with its emphasis upon the truth that nothing can be done except through the Shakti of the Divine Mother, bears some close affinity with the Tantric Yoga which too, with its stress on the Mahashakti, the Will-in-Power executive in the universe, seeks to embrace the whole of life in an audacious attempt at the divine enjoyment of the spiritual power, light and joy in the human existence.

Through some well-chosen and well-arranged excerpts compiled from the various writings of Sri Aurobindo, M. P. Pandit has sought to focus the reader's attention on such important topics as : Tantric Yoga, Kundalini, Chakras, Mantra, Japa, Pranapratishtha, Adhikara, Woman in the Tantra, the Tantra and the Integral Yoga, etc.

It is no exaggeration to say that coming as it does from the pen of a Mahayogi like Sri Aurobindo, this slender volume will prove to be a veritable mine of authentic and authoritative knowledge as regards the complex body of psycho-spiritual experiences enshrined in the Tantras.

Pandit deserves the thanks of all lovers of the Tantric lore for bringing out this moderately priced neat and handy compilation.

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Evolution, By V. Madhusudan Reddy. Published by Institute of Human Study, Hyderabad-7, India. Sponsored by Osmania University. Price : Rs. 30.00.

"Of the many persistent problems of philosophy, that of 'Evolution and Human Destiny' is a uniquely intriguing one," says Dr. Reddy in his preface; and as we proceed through the pages of his work we feel convinced that if the theme mentioned above has kept him intrigued for years together, it is indeed to the splendid benefit of his readers. The work under review—an outcome of intense academic inquest—puts forth in a nutshell an account of thoughts around the theme through the ages, and then, in respect of the same, presents the vision of Sri Aurobindo.

The first part of the work, 'First Thoughts', constituted of some of the foremost topics of interest such as *Avatarhood : The Parable of Evolution, Will to Reason, The Philosophy of Change, The Nisus of Evolution*, etc., provides a very wide basis for an affluent development of the four facets of his theme: Omnipresent Reality (*i. Impressions of the Infinite, ii. The Cosmic Illusion, iii. Supermind and the Integral Knowledge, iv. The Ego and the Psychic*), The Evolutionary Process (*i. Involution and Evolution, ii. Modes of Manifestation, iii. The Apocalypse of Aspiration, iv. Evolution: Individual and Cosmic*), The Spiritual Evolution (*i. Man and Evolution, ii. The Purpose and Process of Rebirth, iii. The Triple Transformation, iv. The Flaming Vision*), Human Destiny (*i. The Spiritual Aim, ii. The New Humanity, iii. The Kingdom of Heaven, iv. Sri Aurobindo: The Supramental Avatar*).

Through all his amazing achievements on one hand and through all the manifestations of revolt and restlessness on the other, man is seeking today to get convinced about the justification of his existence. The vacuum he experiences in course of this conscious or unconscious seeking can never be done away with unless he becomes aware of his emerging future and of the certainty of an integral fulfilment of the aspirations inherent in him. Today, "Man's deepest need is to discover something, some being of power...something not himself, greater than himself," says the author, and his finding is corroborated by, among others, a great scientist and thinker of our time. "From all analogy," states Julian Huxley, "the human species is yet near the beginning of its evolutionary career, and man has before him vast tracts of time to set against the vastness of his tasks." In a world where developments were abundant to drive man into stark pessimism, such revelatory assurances could only surge out of some latent splendour of faith in a genuine philosopher of science, though, so far as outward evidence is concerned, "Ultimate truth," points out Dr. Reddy, "even on the physical plane seems to recede as Science advances." Of course, indications today are ample, and Dr. Reddy's book contains quite a number of them, to suggest the rapid disappearance of the hitherto prominent missing link between the scientific evidences and the truth of Spirit. Theories like the *chance* origin of man are discarded, so much so that a biologist like Edwin Conklin can declare : "The possibility of life originating from accident is comparable to the possibility of the unabridged dictionary

resulting from an explosion in a printing shop.” The Evolution as explained and the Future of Man as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo are the most complete and the most marvellous ever. This completeness and this marvellousness can be intellectually better appreciated against a background of all the other prominent thoughts relevant to this theme—a background adequately furnished by the author—and which, with the author’s able arrangement and treatment, serves as a genial support to approach Sri Aurobindo who “envisages a world in which Spirit and Matter, Life and Mind are all essential ingredients and work harmoniously together, and where truth is achieved not by a negation or annulment of any of these, but by a transformation and transmutation of them in the light of the highest” (S. K. Maitra). Man evolves, because, in Sri Aurobindo’s vision, “An eternal Perfection is moulding us into its own image.”

A stress on the intellectual alone, of course, could not be the secret of the success of Dr. Reddy’s work. Intellect, after all, is only one of the faculties with which man cultivates conviction. Dr. Reddy’s work is significant for even that profounder approach, which rests on intellectual as well as on sur-intellectual faculties, and is thus a more human approach, and perhaps in this respect, too, he is a forerunner of the scholars to come.

MANOJ DAS

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

TENTH SEMINAR

19TH FEBRUARY 1967

(Continued from the May issue)

WHY IS THE CHOICE IMPERATIVE ?

I

THE history of mankind is the history of decisions, a history of choices between one side of a crucial issue or the other. In the past the choice has never been so crucial as it is today. Many conflicting powers have gained ascendancy and it is for us to let one of these rule us and to defeat the others by our deliberate choice. This is needed to bring lasting peace to ourselves, our nations and the whole of mankind.

This choice is in fact a turning, an orientation of our conscious being towards certain newly manifesting principles. At present we are driven by impulses both from within and without or else we move with the popular trend or current. We do not pause to gaze deep within, to evaluate the things set before us or choose rightly our course of action. Our vested interests, our innate desires, our caprices, our foolish selfishnesses rule us. We have not learned to regulate our selfish claims. And this is amplified and reproduced in the mass-consciousness of our groups, nations, races and ideologies. This has been going on for centuries and at each crucial phase of history we have only procrastinated and left the issue in cold storage with the result that now we have no way to move except in the direction of self-fulfilment or self-annihilation.

As individuals we have not solved our problems; we have desisted from a final and decisive choice. We have, as men, not examined ourselves deeply or with candour; we have lived on the surface and as generations pass we are growing more and more frivolous, superficial, hypocritical and banal. We shrink from our deeper realities in fear of becoming unsocial or uncultured in the eyes of our fellow beings. Time has come when we must learn that our true source is not society, nor religion, nor science but spirituality. For, by our selfishness and shallowness, by our lowness and hypocrisy we have estranged ourselves from our true being, our essence, our soul. And consequently we choose what is best to our selfish interests—the careers, the comforts, the positions, the things that bring us tangible rewards. We not only disregard

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all higher elements, we even attempt to reach these selfish ends at any cost, at the price of social welfare, national betterment and to the detriment of our own real progress.

Thus, unless we outgrow our ego-centricity, the problems would ever stare us in the face. If we look around, we shall be struck by the moral, religious and spiritual depravity all around us. And these are there because we have allowed them to be there by our own ignorance and self-centredness. If we change ourselves, as the social nucleus, the conditions around too will be altered. All wrongs of our egoistic nature come back to us and at the end it is we who must pay the price of our own unconsciousness, or rather our own nature which has refused to progress.

There are turning points in the eras of human evolution. We now stand at such a critical juncture. The forces of nature, the powers of evolution are pushing ahead to create a new existence. If we, as individuals, refused to move, to change, to accept a greater consciousness as our pivot of existence, as the ruling centre of all we are and aim to be, then we would be eventually eliminated not so much by the gnostic power ruling the human scene, as by our own stupidity and self-centredness. For the next step is the step of the supramental dominion. And we must answer its call and not make the past our inspiration and ideal. The past exhausted itself long ago; if we insist on an obsolete power, the chances are that we too shall become obsolete.

It is no use expressing our choice only superficially and not living according to its demands. For that would be only hypocrisy. We must live the new way we have chosen, and grow into the new consciousness that is here as the true creator.

Mind so far has been the leader in human life. Its inadequacy to rule over the other components of our nature or to master its own creations and self has been amply illustrated in history, ethics, religion, society, science and politics. It has turned the slave of a power which was destined to be its own servitor. It has, by its own abstractions, insufficiencies, limitations, revealed that it can no more claim to be the leader of man as an individual or group or of nations or continents as international units. Our present degeneration is the result of this fundamental defect of mind. Mind in evolution has filled a gap between the rise of life and the descent of a gnostic truth. Its role of organisation, its work of consolidating diverse elements and factors and of bringing coherence into the otherwise disjointed elements had its day. Now the time has come when it must learn to serve a higher power as its guide.

There must be a new turn of the consciousness in the individual. We must learn to forsake old moorings and explore the unexpected, the unimagined and the unknown. This must be reflected not only in our far and vague ideals, but it must be made manifest in our life, our thought, our will, our most trivial actions. In other words, we must now choose the path of the spirit, the path of light and of self-sacrifice.

But this turning of the individual cannot be complete unless there is a new growth of consciousness in the collectivity as well. The collectivity must learn to choose a greater way of life, a higher path of self-fulfilment. But it is equally true that unless we as individuals, the units in this collectivity, change our consciousness, there can be no reorientation of the consciousness of the masses. These masses are

now ignorant, capricious, unpredictable bodies. There must arise some spiritual leaders who have the true vision and the experience. And it is these leaders who must choose rightly and for the benefit of their collectivity without jeopardizing the interests of other collectivities. If not, there may ensue another global war, or an endless series of terrible conflicts as we witness to-day.

Behind these conflicts there is a single cause which we as individuals and as nations must eliminate. The power of the spirit is active amongst us. And if we answered its call, opened ourselves to its transforming action, then we would rise both as men and nations. If not, we must be ready for ceaseless privations both from within and without and, till we were ready, this insistent ordeal would continue.

We have known the utility of nationalism, but now it is barring the way of our progress by its stagnancy and ego-centricity. The role of the empire-builder is now extinct. We cannot repeat the 'opium wars', the Munroe Doctrine, the role of the victorious white man, the imposition of our ideologies on less advanced peoples. We must learn the futility of every such attempt be it of altruistic origin or of vested interests. They lead nowhere except to increase the existing conflicts of ideals, ideologies and interests. Just as the individuals have to realise that individualism is not everything, so too the nations must learn that nationalism is not the supreme ideal and that they cannot survive unless there arises a new consciousness and a new orientation. Just as man and nation are interdependent entities, so also national being and world community need each other for plenitude and perfection and even for survival.

Even larger ideologies—political, economic, racial, religious, cultural—that move continents and are the moving impulse of the vast run of humanity, are not binding enough to create a new spirit. These only pit themselves against other such ideologies and at the end we face the same discord as we find between man and man and nation and nation; only the ground has been extended but the problem remains the same and that too with a greater burning intensity.

This is one side of the picture. On the reverse side we have the power of the spirit which is ever active to create a new humanity, a new national being, a new international or global structure. It is attempting to eradicate barriers, efface limiting conditions and create a ground for the manifestation of a true harmony. But always the ego of man or the race or the nation, or the conflict of ideologies stand in the way and bar the true achievement of this aim. But this does not deter the guiding light. The limitations that surge up are only challenges. Now we have arrived at a juncture when there can be no turning back. History shows us several reversals in the fate and life of men and nations due to the emergence of certain contrary powers. Hence their progress was always chequered and never uninterrupted. But with the birth of a new gnostic consciousness, we must once for all decide not to fall back into the old errors, falsehoods and limitations. For if we accept the truth, the truth of the spirit, we can achieve what so far has remained a dream. We can achieve what the mightiest minds of men have failed to realise. Shall we turn back from

the very gates of supreme consummation due to our sloth, our narrowness, our attachment to the fossilised past ?

We are now living in an era when history and destiny are being overhauled from their very base. For, so long the change in man's consciousness has been more or less superficial and the result too has been of a similar nature. The changes have been more on the surface than in the depths of the being. The advents of a Buddha, a Lao-tse, a Christ or a Krishna have not been so fruitful and deep in their effects, keeping pace with the light they brought with them, the sacrifice they made for mankind. Humanity in its core, in spite of all the modern scientific advancement, has not progressed quick enough or deep enough to meet the pressing need of a greater light. For progress is speed and speed is life and if we must survive, we must progress speedily in all the spheres of human consciousness. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo bring with them this great consummation, the culminating spiritual fulfilment of all that has gone before. If humanity must benefit from their work and sacrifice, it must advance in the true sense and make itself worthy of their colossal divine labour. Let us not sit down and while away our precious time in day-dreaming.

It may be asked : what is the guarantee that this new spirituality will redeem humanity out of its distress and calamity ? May it not perhaps prove to be another of those utopias ? This question arises because a large portion of humanity has no clear notion of spirituality ; to most it is an annex to religion or ethics, or something vague. Many others consider it to be an abstract proposition, having perhaps some philosophical or metaphysical validity. This is because true spirituality is rare and spirituality in its perfect sense has not manifested itself. But with the manifestation of the gnostic Truth true spirituality becomes a concrete, creative and all-embracing reality. It is far from being a utopia and is not ineffective like so many human panaceas. As yet it is working on the inner layers of life and mind and on the subtle physical; what its plenitude of manifestation would be, is as yet unimaginable to man. It is for its full manifestation that the Mother asks us to choose imperatively. And the truth she refers to is this supramental Truth, whose decisive descent in the earth-consciousness is being resisted by such a violent upsurge of evil and falsehood in the world that we who are seekers of the spirit must remain tranquil, unmoved, choosing finally and irrevocably this Truth and its ways.

It is only by a reorientation of the consciousness that we can at present feel the presence and working of this Truth. In its very nature it is divine, and as such we must be very sincere and pure if we wish to feel its presence and listen to its dictates. It would, in the end, tolerate no falsehood, however veiled or latent. We need a great and integral purification in order to be its instruments. And if the world is to become the field of its working, the world must, once for all, decide not to lean to the way of the falsehood. For, our present actions, motivations, and determinations of value are based on a crude admixture of verity and falsity. This we must

get rid of, if we wish to become true instruments of the Truth and take a step forward in the march of evolution.

On the other hand human possibility in the field of science and technology has reached a high state of perfection. But in the hands of unregenerate man, this now either spells uncontrolled destruction or else turns him into a vain creature of comfort and ease. Unless man decides to change himself and his ways, there may be a great destruction, specially with science helping him to bring untold suffering.

Thus the hour has come when we must rise and make a radical choice between the New Truth and the old persisting Falsehood. The supreme victory is now possible if only we consent to participate in it by our decisive choice. Our greatest hopes can become a reality if only we have the heroic courage and the clear light as our guide and a greater power as the true creator of our destiny.

ROMEN

Compiled by KISHOR GANDHI

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

NEWSLETTER

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I: The Ecological Climate of the Classroom

Today, students can reckon to spend ten to fifteen years of their early life in school. Three-fourths of their waking hours will be spent in the classroom. How important do we consider these years of living growth in relation to learning and environment? These are the formative years of a person's life and as such it is quite probable that most of the important mental, vital and physical experiences of consciousness occur within the environment of school life.

It is well known among psychiatrists that it is easiest to recall those experiences of early life in the classroom. These experiences seem to impress themselves so powerfully on the child mind that they can often be vividly remembered at the end of life. Especially is this so, if the experiences are of a nature to upraise the ego or enhance the image of the personality. Old people delight in recalling how they came first in a certain subject, how much they loved a certain teacher, how a certain incident or experience changed the whole course of their lives. Rarely are the recollections of an unpleasant character unless, in the hands of the psychiatrist, the depths of the subconscious are explored and, released from inhibitions and mental blocks, the tragedies of the past are unearthed and Pandora's Box is opened to reveal the complex horrors long buried in the unhappy forgetfulness of early childhood.

As educationists seeking perfection, it is incumbent upon us to see that the human being of the future shall look back with a sense of gratitude and joy on his school life; where learning was first a play, a delight of activity leading to endless vistas of wonder, discovery and creativity; where time went swiftly on the wings of an immense enthusiasm, a love for life. Love for materials: pens, paper, paints and books. Love for people: friends, comrades, teachers and those who help. Love for learning and the opportunity to think. Love for the room, the desk, the reference books, the aids and apparatuses. Love for the all-inclusive joy of physical play and exercise, emotional expression of creativity and intellectual exploration into new realms of thought. Love for the sheer joy and privilege of just being a member of a school community. Surely, such love one would have continue even after school!

Fifty years ago such an ideal was hardly possible. Most students longed for the day when they could leave school; eager to be released from the irksome discipline and confusing atmosphere of the classroom for the unknown adventure and discovery of the great wide world which was less to be feared than the inevitable petty punishments and teacher dominations of the classroom. Today with more

money being spent on education, there are multiple classrooms but many teachers are lacking in imagination on the best use to make of their rooms, for creating an atmosphere conducive to impressionable experience. The higher the class, the less important is considered the atmosphere of the room. Why? Because the teacher, the reader, the lecturer, the professor is more important—what he *says* must create the atmosphere—not what the student does or says or attempts. So long as we think in terms of a “teacher-dominated class” this will remain the state of affairs.

I would, however, suggest that even on the highest levels a classroom could become virtually a work-room, where all the “tools” of the student’s needs are at hand. Where those who want to listen to a particular lecture can do so through the earphones of a tape recorder while the others pursue their various interests in the same subject in writing or reading, discussion groups or a tutorial project with the teacher. In this way, whenever a special or particular problem arises it would be possible to deal with it there and then, not at some future date or in some later period.

The room should attract the student to work, awaken his interest in the subject, challenge his sense of discovery in an atmosphere redolent with ideas. Ideally, it should be a fixed room, given over entirely to the needs of the subject and the progressive demands of the students. It should evolve with the students’ own evolution. So will it grow in stature to the experience of each student and bear the imprint of his passing, creating a legend, a story, a tradition that was lived.

2 : *The object of Education*

It is quite common now for visiting educators to remark when they see the free yet disciplined expression of work and play of our children : “Oh yes, it is all right for students in the Ashram, but we can’t think of an ideal in our schools, only how students shall earn their living.”

Whatever we consider is the object of education, we cannot ignore the fact that it has to be built on a firm foundation. That foundation has to take cognisance of the need to find some basis of identification between what man *is* and what he *does*. In spite of Plato’s declaration that “Man is a creature who at every moment of his existence must examine and scrutinize the conditions of his existence .a being in search of meaning,” we still continue to cram informational knowledge into students and consider this sufficient to equip them for a life in today’s world of cybernetic existentialism challenging a new form of symbiosis where mutually beneficial partnerships could bring about world unity.

The only basis for any education must surely start with the student himself, because all truth and meaning are within. Unless he uncovers the meaning of his existence, equates this with the purpose of his work in life, there will be no progress towards perfection, no evolution towards the manifestation of truth, no claim to the high dignity of man and the heritage of the human race. What then is the value of his existence, if he has worked and laboured never to have lived at all ?

It is because man today has recognised the fact that he must know himself before he can know his world that he continues to learn, study, search for truth to the end of life. Is it not then imperative that he lay the foundation of his learning at school, when the mind is young, plastic, open to new ideas ? A new morality has to take the place of the old. Not of prohibition but of a new creativity—a morality of inner experience which will be recognised as the true authority for all our scientific, artistic and philosophic activity. Education through yoga-sadhana can alone give this authority. Once a student's mind and character have been built on the basis of this authority with the strength and confidence it enjoys, what then will stop him from earning his own living ?

3 : *Thought of the Month*

The Triple Transformation :

I "First there must be the psychic change.

II Then along with that the spiritual change.

III Last there must supervene the supramental transformation, the crown of the movement."

SRI AUROBINDO *The Life Divine* (Amer. Ed), p. 809

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

LAMENT FROM AN OUT-POSTER

(TRYING TO GET INTO *PUNCH*)

A beautiful ode I have written :
Just to break out into print,
But how can I make it ? that darned Ed won't take it,
He just sent it back, with a hint !

I wanted to enter for 'Toby' !¹
Alas ! the date set was too soon.
Why can't he remember, I get in December,
A copy which comes out in June ?

I thought I would try the year's puzzle,
Set up for those overseas,
But again it's my fate to find that the date
Is seven weeks past its demise !

I saw with delight 'First Appearance'—
And thought this was just up my street.
But it came back again, with the same old refrain—
The Ed., he regrets, "Dinna greet."

Well, I wrote him a versified letter,
And thought this would cause him some worry.
Alas and Alack ! it came flying back
And, instead of regretting, he's sorry !

Now listen, you date-setter-upper !
Why don't you give me a break ?
I need far more time to work out a rhyme
With punch, for that *Punch* Ed. to take.

LEENA

¹ *Punch* Competitions