

MOTHER INDIA

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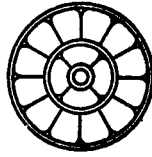
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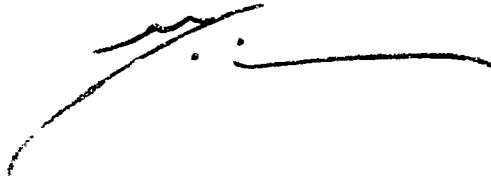


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. XX

No. 5

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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TRUE LOVE

A LETTER OF THE MOTHER

Le vrai Amour, celui qui
comble et illumine, ce
n'est pas l'amour qu'on
reçoit mais celui qu'on donne.

Et le suprême Amour
est un amour sans objet
défini — l'amour
qui aime parce qu'il ne
peut faire autrement que
d'aimer.

TRUE love, that which fulfils and illumines, is not the love one receives but the love one gives.

And the supreme Love is a love without any definite object—the love which loves because it cannot do otherwise.

15 May 1968

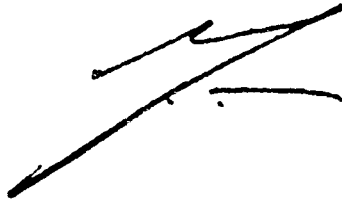
AUROVILLE

A LETTER OF THE MOTHER

Il est certain que pour
vivre à Auroville un grand
progrès de conscience est à
faire.

Mais le moment est venu
où ce progrès est possible.

Avec toute ma tendresse



It is certain that for living at Auroville a great progress of consciousness has to be made.

But the moment has come when this progress is possible.

WHO IS THE MOTHER ?

A REPLY BY SRI AUROBINDO

LA vie divine en voie d'évolution, la conscience divine à l'œuvre dans la matière, voilà, pour ainsi dire, ce que cette existence représente.

LIFE Divine in course of evolution, the Divine Consciousness at work in matter—that, so to speak, is what this existence represents.

SRI AUROBINDO ON HIS EARLY NARRATIVE POEM LOVE AND DEATH

(Some months ago we published a Note of Sri Aurobindo's on the same subject. Here is a longer one recently found among his papers. As the poem concerned dates back to 1899 and it is said here to have been "written a score of years ago", the time of this Note must be about 1919.)

THE story of Ruru and Pramadvura—I have substituted a name [Priyumvada] more manageable to the English tongue—her death in the forest by the snake and restoration at the price of half her husband's life is told in the Mahabharata. It is a companion legend to the story of Savitri but not being told with any poetic skill or beauty has remained generally unknown. I have attempted in this poem to bring it out of its obscurity. For full success, however, it should have had a more faithfully Hindu colouring, but it was written a score of years ago when I had not penetrated to the heart of the Indian idea and its traditions, and the shadow of the Greek underworld and Tartarus with the sentiment of life and love and death which hangs about them has got into the legendary framework of the Indian Patala and hells. The central idea of the narrative alone is in the Mahabharata; the meeting with Kama and the descent into Hell were additions necessitated by the poverty of incident in the original story.

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. Becharlal, 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.)

MARCH 5, 1940

N: Did I understand you to say that A has not used his withdrawal in the right way, for, otherwise he wouldn't have these mental reactions?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, I didn't say that. I simply said that withdrawal is a help, is only a first step. By itself it is not enough. One must destroy the old seeds too. Of course it is not easy—especially in his case.

S: When one has attained to the higher consciousness and is firmly seated in that consciousness, then one can slowly take up any activity without getting disturbed.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so.

N: In the transitional stage till the mind is replaced by the spiritual consciousness, with what attitude should one do work?

SRI AUROBINDO: What work?

N: Say, philosophical or political.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not necessary to do political work. About the philosophical, one has to reject what ought to be rejected from the nature, *e.g.*, habit of disputation, considering one's own idea only as true and not seeing the truth in others' ideas and taking up an idea because one likes it, not because it is true. A has a fighting controversial mind; he requires an opponent; even if he is not there, he makes one. That is the nature of the mind in general.

N: Has he done everything from the mental consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. What did you think?

N: I thought it was from the spiritual consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: But through the mind, isn't it?

S: He means that he has done it as desireless action, Karmayoga.

SRI AUROBINDO: How does Karmayoga come in here?

P: No, he means that it was not from the mental consciousness he was writing but from the spiritual.

SRI AUROBINDO: Wait a minute; even then it was through the mind as the instrument, wasn't it?

N: Yes, but with the spiritual consciousness behind supporting it.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is all right, the Purusha can support all activities of nature but he had not the spiritual insight; the ideas or visions didn't come down from a higher consciousness above. They were mental, reached through reasoning.

(After a pause) In my own case so long as I was in the mind I couldn't understand philosophy at all. I tried to read Kant but couldn't read more than one page. Plato, of course, I read. But it was when I went above the mind that I could understand philosophy and write philosophy. Ideas and thoughts began to flow in, visions, spiritual experiences, and insight and spiritual perception, a sort of revelation built my philosophy. It was not by any process of mental reasoning or argument that I wrote the *Arya*.

N: Then you didn't try by the mind to understand?

SRI AUROBINDO: As I said, I read only one page of Kant and then gave it up, because it wouldn't go in: that is, it didn't become real to me. I was like Manilal grappling with *The Life Divine*. Plato I could read, as he was not merely metaphysical. Nietzsche also because of his powerful ideas. In Indian philosophy I read the Upanishads and the Gita, etc. They are, of course, mainly results of spiritual experience. People think I must be immensely learned and must know all about Hegel, Kant and the others. The fact is that I haven't even read them; and people don't know I have written everything from experience and spiritual perception. Modern philosophers wrap their ideas up in extraordinary phraseology and there is too much gymnastic of the mind—even though they don't seem to have gone deeper than the Greeks in their ideas and theories. I read some of the commentaries of Ramanuja and Shankara, etc. They seemed to me mere words and phrases and at the end Ramanuja says that nobody has experienced Pure Consciousness—a most amazing statement, absurd.

N: In your case it was an opening then like the one to painting.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes; but with painting, it was a sudden moment's opening while this one was a result of spiritual experience.

N: Then I can hope to understand philosophy some day.

S: You want to understand Kant?

N: Oh, no, no!

SRI AUROBINDO: It would be a sheer waste of time for him.

S: Then Sri Aurobindo's philosophy?

N: Yes, and Indian philosophy. Even there it is too much complication; there are so many Purushas and Prakritis.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is only one Prakriti.

N: Para and Apra Prakriti.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is difficult there? Para Prakriti is nature higher than your own.

EVENING

N: Will you now have time to finish *Savitri*?

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, *Savitri* will take a long time. I have to go all over the old ground.

N: How?

SRI AUROBINDO: Every time I find more and more imperfections.

N: Jatin Ball is preparing some notes for you on Einstein's Relativity.

This led to a talk on Relativity between Sri Aurobindo and P. P. brought in Riemann as a famous mathematician.

SRI AUROBINDO: Euclid was bad enough. When Riemann came in, it was time for me to give up mathematics.

MARCH 6, 1940

P brought in a discussion about a man who had once been connected with Sri Aurobindo.

S: He must have achieved something in order to be able to hold so many people together.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. It was by the vital force that he had received from me. And he had some experiences. But he was a small man. He claimed to have gone above his head, but there was no manifestation of it in his expression; there was no mental result. He wanted to go in for Supermind but when the demands were made on him he drifted away.

N: If a man is what you call "small", how can he receive the Force from you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? Do you mean to say that because a man is small he will always remain small? "Small" means that he had no expansion.

N: I should like to know whether he achieved something as a result of development of the spiritual consciousness or by your Force?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was due to his vital opening by the Force I gave him.

N: What about the spiritual opening?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very mixed.

N: You gave him the Force for the vital being, then?

SRI AUROBINDO: I gave it for both.

S: But only his vital being opened.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, it was an opening into a larger consciousness, the Cosmic Vital, the force for action and movement. It was my plan and idea that I gave him and he worked them out.

N: A has forwarded a letter from HR. There is authentic evidence that HR

works miraculous cures. He himself has written about them.

C: When he came for Darshan A asked him to write the letter; it was left with A.

SRI AUROBINDO (*glancing at the envelope as N took up the letter to read*): It is the Mother's letter. It is addressed to her.

N: Yes, but A has sent it to be read to you.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who can decide that? The Mother's letter should go to the Mother.

C: A perhaps considers that it is just the same. The letter was put in A's charge.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, read it then.

N: "Miraculous cures of things like madness and snake-bite were effected with the Mother's Force by just stretching out the right hand and the left."

SRI AUROBINDO: What was done is with the vital force. Many such cases are there. The hand is placed upon the head. Formerly they used to call it passage of the magnetic fluid, etc, into the body.

C: He says it is the Mother's force.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why shouldn't it be so?

N: But you said "vital force".

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the force acting through the vital. The vital force is nearer the physical and so has a powerful effect in these cases. One can cure also by mental power, but that requires more concentration.

P (*smiling*): N wants such force.

SRI AUROBINDO: Stretching out the right hand and the left?

N: My problem is already settled. Sri Aurobindo has said that the vital has to be pure first to get intuition.

P: That is for intuition but this is for cure by the Force and not by medicine.

N: Purity seems to be necessary for both.

SRI AUROBINDO: Without purity you may become egoistic. Otherwise plenty of people cure without purity.

N: That's what I was going to say. Why should it be necessary—

SRI AUROBINDO: To have vital purity? (*Laughter*)

N: No, to have it first to be able to cure. Both can go together.

EVENING

S: Contributions for the war are being sought. I don't see why people should contribute. One doesn't know when the war will end and what results it will bring to people. These people themselves are responsible for the war. Germany is very bitter against England.

SRI AUROBINDO: And yet it is England that, after the last war, set Germany on foot again to play her off against France to prevent France from being the biggest power in Europe. After the present war she will again court Germany.

MARCH 7, 1940

N: A letter from Charu Ghose through Anilbaran. Do you remember he wrote asking your blessings and you inquired, "Who is he?"

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, who is he?

N: Anilbaran too asked him who he was and he replied: "I am an ordinary man, a clerk, aged 51. I have no other relation except my wife. I could get no learning."

SRI AUROBINDO: Ideal condition for Yoga. He is extraordinary in having no learning but ordinary in having no children?

N: Then a question comes: "Is there anything more than what I have understood after reading Sri Aurobindo's books? I want to practise the yoga of surrender by the help of his force and knowledge." So what's the answer.

SRI AUROBINDO: Has he done any Yoga? He speaks of surrender. So he may know something. He can be asked what he has understood from my works.

N: That is a question difficult to answer.

SRI AUROBINDO: I mean what he has understood practically and not philosophically of the Yoga of Self-surrender.

N: While in England I read your book *Yoga and Its Object*. I thought "Why, it is very easy." (*Laughter*)

S: That book is merely a general statement about Yoga. It was only after wards, when the Supermind came in that everything was made difficult. In this Yoga there is a perpetual progression, no fixed goal or end.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is an end at present.

N: What?

SRI AUROBINDO: Supermind.

S (*to N*): How do you find it now?

N: Well, I am paying for that facile thought about Yoga being easy.

S: For me it is still more difficult because I have been accustomed to look at the world as unreal and at Brahman as real. Now I have to accept the world, which the mind refuses to do, having been trained for such a long time in the other principle.

SRI AUROBINDO: For that reason I had to write three volumes of *The Life Divine*. Otherwise, as Nirod says, Yoga would be easy.

N (*to S*): It is no less difficult for us. To you Brahman is real, the world is unreal and for us it is the other way about. (*Laughter*) So the difficulty is the same.

S: No, Sri Aurobindo has said that the denial of the materialist is not so hard to overcome as the refusal of the ascetic.

Since your talk on A in connection with politics, Dr. B has given up reading papers. He reads only the headlines.

C: Is that why S is always putting papers by his side?

SRI AUROBINDO (*laughing*): I didn't mean it for him, but only for A. I myself read newspapers and enjoy whatever is interesting. For instance, Abdulla Haroon says that each ^{the}minority is an independent nation. Of course Muslims first—but

Harijans also are a nation. (*Laughter*)

S: Dr. Alam also seems to be going over to the League. He says now it is a question of distribution.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he says the fight is now not against the Government but between Hindus and Muslims. The cake is there already; the question is how to distribute it.

S: He says all Muslims should join the League to combat the Congress objection that the League is not the only Muslim organisation.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is like the fox which had lost its tail asking others to do the same.

MARCH 8, 1940

N: Nishikanta has passed a distressing night. He says that whatever little faith and devotion he had has left him. Now the physical also, with which he wanted to serve the Divine, is out of gear. So he is getting depressed.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why depression? The thing is to get cured.

N: He doesn't believe he will be cured. He was thinking he would go where his eyes took him.

SRI AUROBINDO: In English they say: "follow your nose." But what is his complaint at present?

N: Pain. Pain is constant though he doesn't feel it. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that? If he doesn't feel how can there be pain?

N: I don't understand either. He says that by any jerks the pain comes.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh, he means that. But one can get spiritual experience in illness too. The illness doesn't stand in the way of getting spiritual experience.

P: Besides, what is there to be depressed about? Punnuswamy had ulceration and he lived only on milk for quite a number of years and yet he has been doing Yoga.

N: Yes, he has faith. Nishikanta has lost faith. His faith comes with a cure and goes with an illness. (*Laughter*)

C: How can permanent faith be established?

SRI AUROBINDO: By having it permanently. (*Laughter*)

C: I mean: does it depend on experience, growth of consciousness and other things, or is it inborn?

SRI AUROBINDO: All that. Some people have full faith from the beginning.

C: How? Acquired from a previous birth?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, or owing to Karma or consciousness. Some have faith at the end. Some go on doubting even after having experiences.

C: All people have faith in that way.

S: If all people had faith, everybody would come to do Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: Or they have faith but they don't feel it—like Nishikanta's pain. That is a splendid statement.

N: Somebody had a vision in meditation. Above his head was projected the cornice of a building and the cornice was covering the sun far high up but the rays of the sun had illuminated the sky on the opposite side of the cornice. Any meaning?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is very simple. The vision is symbolic. The building is the mental construction. The cornice is the roof. The mental building is coming between the mind and the sun of Truth.

P (*pointing from behind Sri Aurobindo at N and laughing*): It is his own vision probably.

SRI AUROBINDO (*to N*): Is the "somebody" yourself?

N: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is very promising.

N: How?

SRI AUROBINDO: It means the crust is going away.

N: But the sun is far, far away. (*Laughter*)

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

SALUTATIONS

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

1-9-63

36

Jinja (Africa), 3-8-1954

Dearest Mother,

What am I hearing? To cut a path to God is arduous. It is like walking through fire and on a razor's edge!

Many stumbles, many ups and downs of doubts, gusts of calumnies, thorns and bushes of adverse forces—all these come in my way and make me despair. But I don't care.

I have seen everything, heard everything. My silly mind hesitates a little but at once I get a start from within and feel whatever is wrong. Only the divine Path is right. All else is momentary and full of pain.

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O save me from all these transient things. Call me soon to Yourself.

37

Jinja (Africa), 3-8-1954

Dear Mother,

Nature is a wonderful thing. Beast and bird and blossom are all Your Presence.

When I heard the gigantic roar of cataracts I got the inspiration that like this mass of water tumbling down and pushing forward with a mighty din, my life is drawn towards You as if to break out of the ego and flow quietly into You.

The moment I forget You, Your sweet Voice sounds in my ear.

Mother, do I not commit a lot of mistakes? Forgive me. Prevent me from going wrong. Free me from the clutches of delusion. Save me. Lead me to You alone. Now I have seen everything—all the changing colours of the world. No doubt, I may slip sometimes—but only for a while. By Your Grace I come back to my old resolution.

Now my only prayer to You is: Make me Yours for ever. Take me with You. I now aspire for Supreme Truth, Love, Light and Bliss. Above all I want my Supreme Father and my Supreme Mother.

Do not ever leave me. You are mine. Accept me and call me as soon as possible. Now I have no desires or ambitions.

Make every one happy and peaceful, give every one good understanding.

38

Jinja (Africa), 9-8-1954

My dear Mother,

Now I am able to understand how many difficulties beset the spiritual path. You have put me in such circumstances that time and again I feel that this alone is the Truth. You have shown me the various momentary colours of the world through one person or another. Doubtless, for a short while my mind may have wavered. I may even have entertained wrong thoughts. But afterwards You have saved me miraculously. Bless Your Sweet Heart!

Mother, I know that You want to teach me various lessons of the world, You want to mould me. When You have moulded me, my mind will become strong and steady. But You must always protect me. Don't leave me, I belong to You alone. Forgive all my faults. Let me always be Yours.

39

Jinja (Africa), 16-8-1954

Dear Divine Mother,

Yesterday was wonderful.

August 15 makes the independence day of India and the Birthday of Sri Aurobindo. What a coincidence! Saturday the 14th, from six to seven in the evening,

there were prayers and meditation. I found in them endless joy and peace. I became concentrated and one-pointed. I felt happy. And at night also there was the same atmosphere.

On August 15, in the morning, I heard a lecture on Sri Aurobindo's life. It was really moving.

Mother, indeed that day passed in sheer bliss. Give me such days always.

40

Miwani (Africa), 19-8-1954

Today my heart's prayer and request are :

You have given me life. Now I have understood what value life has. If I spend this very life in transient pleasure, then I have really betrayed you, I have made You unhappy. I have offered my whole life to You. Do with it as You wish. But I do not believe that You will leave this child of Yours plunged in the world of illusion. I am sure that You will uplift me and set me on the peak of fulfilment.

You alone have given me the inspiration that in the remaining years of my life I should commence such a work that I may do good to all—myself as well as others. Making me Your musical instrument, give it to the world, so that the world may find joy and peace through the melody of that instrument. Even to sacrifice my life for that work I shall never hesitate.

What is wrong in offering You my life when it is all Yours already?

Make me a candle, crown it with the divine Light and place it in the midst of the world's darkness. This alone by Your Grace can make my life worth living. do not care for fame or wealth: You are my All in All. Make me worthy of Your work show me the work, show me the path. Help my soul to carry out whatever work on the earth it has come to do, and fulfil its highest aspiration. Be its Protector and Saviour.

Mother, what more am I to write to You? You know everything. You are mine I am Yours for ever...

(To be continued)

HUT

THE STORY OF THE *ARYA*

ON 1st June 1914 Sri Aurobindo decided to start a philosophical magazine. "It will be the intellectual side of my work for the world," he wrote to a disciple. The first issue of this magazine, the *Arya*, appeared on the 15th August 1914 in Pondicherry.

Sri Aurobindo announced the object of the *Arya* in these words:

"Its object is to feel out for the thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past.

"The earth is a world of Life and Matter, but man is not a vegetable nor an animal, he is a spiritual and thinking being who is set here to shape and use the animal mould for higher purposes, by higher motives, with a more divine instrumentation.

"The problem of thought is to find out the right idea and the right way of harmony; to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of Self so that it shall embrace, permeate and dominate the mental and physical life; to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion of its own riches, power and complexity; and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society and his institutions may mould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity.

"This is our ideal and our search in the *Arya*.

"Philosophy is the intellectual search for the fundamental truth of things, religion is the attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man. They are essential to each other.

"Our first preoccupation in the *Arya* has therefore been with the deepest thought that we could command on the philosophical foundations of the problem; and we have been so profoundly convinced that without this basis nothing we could say would have any real, solid and permanent value that we have perhaps given too great a space to difficult and abstruse thought..."

The advertisement on the cover-page announced a twofold aim :

- "1. A systematic study of the highest problems of existence;
- "2. The formation of a vast synthesis of knowledge, harmonising the diverse religious traditions of humanity, occidental as well as oriental. Its method will be that of a realism, at once rational and transcendental, a realism consisting in the unification of intellectual and scientific disciplines with those of intuitive experience."

A French publication called *Revue de la Grande Synthèse* was simultaneously published, but due to the intervention of the first World War it was discontinued after even issues only. The *Arya* continued up to 1921.

The *Arya* was a philosophical monthly, written for the intellect from above the

intellect and it could move obviously amidst the elite only. Yet it was a financial success and paid its way with a large surplus. It made in fact history in the journalistic field of its subject just as Sri Aurobindo's own earlier *Bandemataram* and *Karmayogin* of Calcutta had done in theirs.

What is, one may ask, according to Sri Aurobindo the meaning of the word *Arya* itself? He says in *Views and Reviews*, where notes from the *Arya* are collected

"Intrinsically, in its most fundamental sense, *Arya* means an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The Aryan is he who strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed to the human advance. Self-conquest is the first law of his nature.... For in everything he seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom.

"Self-perfection is the aim of his self-conquest. Therefore what he conquers he does not destroy, but ennobles and fulfils... always the Aryan is a worker and warrior. He spares himself no labour of mind or body, whether to seek the Highest or to serve it. He avoids no difficulty, he accepts no cessation from fatigue. Always he fights for the coming of that kingdom within himself and in the world."

Then Sri Aurobindo mentions the three stages of existence: individual, universal, transcendent. And he goes on to say that the perfected Aryan, the Arhat, is he, "who is able to live simultaneously in all these three apparent stages of existence, elevates the lower into the higher, receives the higher into the lower, so that he may represent perfectly in the symbols of the world that with which he is identified in all parts of his being,—the triple and triune Brahman."

The *Arya* saw the whole of the First World War through. Although it was mainly a philosophical journal, Sri Aurobindo gave in it his survey of world-events. In December 1918 he wrote under the heading, 'At the End of the War':

"It is the wrath of Rudra that has swept over the earth and the track of his footprints can be seen in these ruins. There has come as a result upon the race the sense of having lived in many falsehoods and the need of building according to an ideal. Therefore we have now to meet the question of the Master of Truth. Two great works of the divine Truth have forced themselves insistently on our minds through the crash of the ruin and the breath of the tempest and are now the leading words of the hoped-for reconstruction—freedom and unity."

The League of Nations was born. But the Seer looked into the future and wrote in August 1920:

"The war that was fought to end war has been only the parent of fresh armed conflict and civil discord and it is the exhaustion that followed it which alone prevents as yet another vast and sanguinary struggle. The new fair and peaceful world order that was promised us has gone far away into the land of chimeras. The League of Nations that was to have embodied it hardly even exists or exists only as a mockery and a byword. It is an ornamental, a quite helpless and otiose appendage to the Supreme Council, at present only a lank promise dangled before the vague and futile idealism of those who are still faithful to its sterile formula, a League on paper and

ith little chance, even if it becomes more apparently active, of being anything more than a transparent cover or a passive support for the domination of the earth by a close oligarchy of powerful governments or, it may seem, of two allied and imperialistic nations."

In the *Arya* month after month Sri Aurobindo continued to give to its readers a veral series of giant thought-structures reared on the foundation of spiritual experience and high intuition beautified by a magnificent prose style. It is hard to choose a leaf from what appeared in the *Arya*, yet, five mighty edifices stand apart like blossoms. These major sequences were *The Life Divine*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Psychology of Social Development* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. All these are now fortunately available in bookform with revisions. *The Psychology of Social Development* has appeared under a changed name, *The Human Cycle*, the other volumes bear the same titles.

What Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Arya* was not a mental knowledge nor was it a creation of the mind. He had long ago silenced his mind. Now he just sat down to type; all that he had to write came down to him from above, from the higher regions, to be recorded as his fingers moved on the typewriter. It was thus that he wrote the whole of the *Arya* with its 64 printed pages every month. Else, with the mental support alone, the labour would have been impossible.

SHYAM SUNDAR

HEART BEAT

THE day and night are beats of my heart in time,
The cyclic voices of a gleaming solitude
Where moods are streams and toil the sculpture hands
Shaping my earth to the image of white Fire;
Where the darkness is the index of the unseen
Boundless with multitudinous pregnant dreams
And glad with the nebula's whispering in space
And rapture-calm moments with luminous core
Preparing for the storm-break of a greater day.

ROMEN

THE JAVANESE DANCE AND THE MYSTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN AN AUSTRIAN SCHOLAR AND THE EDITOR

Pondicherry
January 14th 1956

Dear Professor Sethna,

Having received back the manuscript of my article "Javanese Dance" with your letter dated 25 December 1955, I must inform you to my regret that I could not become convinced of the advisability of the additions which you propose.

I motivate my decision as follows:

You suggest (2nd paragraph): "It would be fine if you could bring in something about the Dance of Shiva. Dr. Coomaraswamy has a whole book on it."

Answer: As the Javanese Dance (Wajang-Wong) has attained its definite form as I accentuated, in a centuries-old community of fate and style with the Javanese play with leather puppets (Wajang-Kulit), I consider the symbolism of the dancer's having to be like a puppet in the hand of the highest Dalang, God, "nearer", more concrete and *ad rem*, than "something about the Dance of Shiva"—the more so, as that symbolism connects, as I also accentuated, Eastern with European Culture. Just because I studied thoroughly the essay "The Dance of Shiva" by Coomaraswamy—not a book but an essay of 13 pages, not a "whole book", as you write; the book, entitled *The Dance of Shiva*, is a collection of 14 essays, of which 13 are on other topics, and contain 196 pages—and just because I know that the Dance of Shiva is capable of many interpretations, I refrain from bringing in "something" about it. Moreover, the Javanese and also the four Javanese rulers in Central-Java, at whose Courts the Wajang-Wong and Wajang-Kulit reached their definite form, have been for many centuries Mohammedans. For this reason my article contains "nothing...about Temple dancing in Java" (your "by the way" remark at the end of your letter).

I am grateful for your advice to read the book *The Significance of Indian Art* by Sri Aurobindo, but could find only two passages on "Dancing as a spiritual symbol in India". As both are referring to the cosmic Dance of Shiva, they are not *ad rem* of the subject of my article.

In the 3rd paragraph you consider Havelock Ellis as "not qualified to speak of spiritual life" and therefore you hold that a quotation from him with "an emphatic expression like this" (used as motto of my article) "does not seem fitting at the very head of an article meant for *Mother India*".

Answer: Is it not, without an intimate knowledge of the person in question, extremely difficult to disqualify a man in this manner? In Catholic mysticism "cardi-

gnosis" is considered to be a rare charism, presupposing a high degree of spirituality. This disqualification means not less than the denial to Havelock Ellis of "the dispositions in respect of God, of man and of conduct of life", which the great Christian Saint and mystic Ruysbroeck in his work *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage* calls the "three outstanding moral dispositions" of the "true man or woman of Spirit":¹

"(1) An attitude of reverent love, of adoration, towards all that is holy, beautiful or true. (2) An attitude towards other men, governed by those qualities which are the essence of courtesy: patience, gentleness, kindness and sympathy. These keep us both supple and generous in our responses to our social environment. Last (3) our creative energies are transfigured by an energetic love, an inward eagerness for every kind of work, which makes impossible all slackness and dullness of heart, and will compel us to live to the utmost the active life of service for which we are born."

You may have a divergent opinion as to the dispositions of the "true man of Spirit". Havelock Ellis, however, has the right, as a born Christian, to be judged according to the Christian standard, which, moreover, is in basic accordance with the great traditional religions. Hence it follows that Havelock cannot be disqualified as done by you, unless it can be demonstrated that he does not possess those "three outstanding dispositions". But even if this could indeed be proved, I should not see any necessity to refrain from the use of his terse words as a motto, for why should he not have had as deep an intuitive insight as anyone, when moved by the Spirit? For "the Spirit blows where It lists".

In the 4th paragraph you suggest "symbolises" for "realises" in the sentence: "It can enable the spectator to feel in what degree the dancer realises the high human ideal, seen by Plato..."; you try to comment upon your proposal by writing: "The dancer would realise, if he were a spiritual adept. Ordinarily he is not even an aspirant—he is only an artist influenced by a religious convention or tradition. (The same, of course, applies to most ritual singers, Zen-archers, etc.)"

Answer: In the essay "The Dance of Shiva" Coomaraswamy says: "Moreover, if we understand even the dances of human dancers [not only those of Shiva: A.B.] rightly, we shall see that they too lead to freedom."² Thus, even the dances of "those who seek to please the eyes of mortals"³ lead to freedom. Exactly! *A fortiori* this applies to the Javanese Dance, the "marionette-character" of which is particularly apt to lead the dancer to freedom from the ego by self-forgetfulness and self-effacement. A dancer who submits himself to its rigorous training is, indeed, a "spiritual aspirant", who, up to the measure of his capacity to get free from his ego, can become, like the Zen-archer, a "spiritual adept", a "Master". And—particularly important *in casu*—he can, just like the Zen-archer, "demonstrate" his mastery, his being breathed and

¹ Bk. I, Chaps. 12-24, quoted from E. Underhill, *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of Today*, p. 202.

² A. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1948), p. 92, lines 13-15.

³ A. Coomaraswamy, *loc. cit.*, lines 10-11.

danced by the Absolute, *ad oculos*, objectively. Therefore I consider the word "realises" right.

In order to finish this letter: In this 4th paragraph you use the word "conventional" in the same depreciating way as the word "dogmatic" in the letter with which you returned to me the book about the conversion of Bergson. It would not be fair, not polite if I should leave you in doubt about my opinion. You have a right to know my answer to your remark. Well, then, I give it to you by quoting C.G. Jung: "Whatever else DOGMA may be, for the psychological observer it is—comparable to the dream—a product of the spontaneous and autonomous activity of the psyche. But the steady concentration on it, through many centuries, has purged it of what is bizarre, incongruous and contradictory. DOGMAS are pneumatic structures of a brilliant beauty...The more differentiated the dogmas the better. They protect man against the experiences which menace to overwhelm him from out the Unconscious....You will now perhaps accept my opinion that dogmas are important methods of psychic hygiene..."¹

With the kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

A. BAUDISCH

Pondicherry

16-1-1956

Dear Dr. Baudisch,

Thanks for your explanatory letter. I can understand your standpoint with respect to the Dance of Shiva. To bring it in somewhere may not perhaps be quite impossible but that will most probably involve a good deal of recasting of the form of your essay and I can appreciate your unwillingness to set Shiva dancing in the midst of Wajang-Wong.

As regards Havelock Ellis, I should like to assure you that I have always been an admirer of his. The man's fine character, the grand impersonality of his mind, the varied knowledge which he presents with a combination of liveliness and poise, the attitude of *nihil humani alienum*, the toleration and understanding even of standpoints different from his own—all these things have greatly appealed to me when reading his books. Also, I know that at an early age when he was struggling within himself for a satisfying vision of things, his heart felt the touch of some universal harmony and ever since then he had an emotional sense of an underlying pattern in the cosmos. This made him see that there is some truth in mysticism. But he does not seem to have seen in mysticism anything beyond such a sense highly intensified. So even with his sympathetic approach to matters spiritual he cannot, to my mind, be regarded as sufficiently qualified to make so sweeping and emphatic a statement about the spiritual life as with

¹ In "Die Weltwoche", dated 1 April 1955, p. 7 (Interview of Dr. C. G. Jung by Georg Gerster)

find in the quotation at the head of your article. Even his intellectual study of the facts of spiritual experience strikes me as inadequate. I can accept him—in spite of protest by Freudians and perhaps even Jungians—as some sort of authority on the psychology of sex and I can concede to him the right to speak with some authority on certain aspects of the “psychosomatics” of genius. But I find it difficult to understand how you could have before you the insights of Teresa or Loyala or John of the Cross or Dionysius the Areopagite or Plotinus or the great oriental masters of the spiritual life and still regard Havelock Ellis as any kind of authority on the truths of spirituality.

I may remark, *en passant*, that Ellis, though “born” in Christianity, was not a Christian in a credal or institutional sense. Neither, for that matter, is Jung. Both of them have considerable sympathy with religion, but this sympathy does not make them Christians, much less adherents to Roman Catholicism. Would a Roman Catholic have, as Ellis had, an enthusiasm for Rousseau? Would he say, as Ellis has said: “The most revolutionary figure in the religious western world since Jesus has been Jean Jacques Rousseau, each taking the place of God”?

With what Ruysbroeck has said about the “true man or woman of Spirit” Ellis would have most probably agreed, but such agreement would only show me an inadequacy in his understanding of things of the Spirit. Not that Ruysbroeck’s statement is crude: it is an admirable statement as far as it goes and a complete view of the spiritual life would scarcely exclude it, but it does not go far enough. I doubt even if Ruysbroeck rested content with it. It seems to me only one half of what he must have said. If Evelyn Underhill quoted him in support of her own position he must have said several other things closer to the heart of spirituality. For, Underhill herself goes beyond this conception of the true man or woman of Spirit. Let me make a few citations from her book *Concerning the Inner Life*.

Talking of the worker for God, she writes on p. 35: “A gradual and steady growth is demanded of him: and this growth must be in two directions—in depth, and in expansive love. He is called to an ever-deepening, more awe-struck and realistic adoration of God, which shall be the true measure of his spiritual status. He is also called to an ever-widening and more generous outflow of loving interest towards his fellowmen. It was Ruysbroeck, one of the greatest of contemplatives, who declared the result of a perfected life of prayer to be ‘a wide-spreading love of all in common.’ But it is only in so far as he succeeds in achieving the deepness, that man can hope to win and maintain that expansiveness.”

We can note here a piercing through religion into its inmost heart which is spirituality. Mark again what Underhill says on p. 31: “People talk about mysticism as if it were something quite separate from practical religion; whereas, as a matter of fact, it is the intense heart of all practical religion, and no-one without some touch of it is contagious and able to win souls. What is mysticism? It is in its widest sense the reaching out of the soul to contact with those eternal realities which are the subject matter of religion. And the mystical life is the complete life of love and prayer which

transmutes those objects of belief into living realities: love and prayer directed to God for God Himself.....All our external religious activities—services, communions, formal devotions, good works—these are either the expressions or the support of this inward life of loving adherence.”

Read now a passage on p.24: “I feel more and more convinced that only a spirituality which thus puts the whole emphasis on the Reality of God, perpetually turning to Him, losing itself in Him, refusing to allow even the most pressing work or practical problems, even sin and failure, to distract from God, only this is a safe foundation for spiritual work.” Then there are the words on p.11: “Neither a hard and fast liturgic scheme, nor the most carefully planned theological reading, nor any sort of dreamy devotionism, is going to be of use to you. The primary thing, I believe, that will be of use is a conception, as clear and rich and deep as you are able to get it, first of the Splendour of God; and next of your own soul over against that Splendour of God; and last of the sort of interior life which your election of His service demands. God—the soul—its election of Him—the three fundamental realities of religion.”

To be fundamentally religious is, in Underhill’s eyes, to make the practice and the experience of mysticism one’s constant and basic preoccupation. This preoccupation alone renders one a true man or woman of Spirit. Surely you can’t attribute to Havelock Ellis such a preoccupation?

There is a tendency today to forget this and to equate spirituality with mere religiousness or with moral practice. Underhill, however, never falls a prey to that tendency. Always her stress is on mystical experience, the direct enrichment of one’s sense of God. On p.12 she writes: “That enrichment of the sense of God is surely the crying need of our current Christianity. A shallow religiousness, the tendency to be content with a bright ethical piety wrongly called practical Christianity, a nice, brightly varnished this-world faith, seems to me to be one of the ruling defects of institutional religion at the present time. We are drifting towards a religion which consciously or unconsciously keeps its eye on humanity rather than on Deity—which lays all the stress on service, and hardly any of the stress on awe: and that is a type of religion which in practice does not wear well.”

You may say that in the statement of Ruysbroeck, which you have quoted, the primary “disposition” is “an attitude of reverent love, of adoration, towards all that is holy, beautiful or true”. But I don’t feel that you mean what Underhill means or what Ruysbroeck himself must have meant in the complete context of his spiritual outlook. For Underhill means a mystic or Yogi or at least somebody who aspires and tries to be one. She does not mean a person, fine though he may be, like Havelock Ellis. If I diverge from your opinion about the qualification of Ellis to pronounce with such authoritative emphasis on things of spiritual life, it is because I am of the same opinion as Underhill.

Of course, one may argue that the Spirit bloweth where it listeth and that even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings truth may get spoken, but that would be a pretty desperate argument—wouldn’t it?—in our present universe of discourse. Here

it would imply the banking on a very small probability indeed, an infinitesimal probability which would hardly justify giving Ellis's sweeping pronouncement the pride of place you have accorded it.

May I quote to you what seems to me the clearest expression of the truth Underhill has been repeating in the five excerpts I have made from her? "Spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life; they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution,—the beginning of a spiritual realisation, experience, change is not yet there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, pp. 762-3—American Edition)

I think that what I have written so far will make it unnecessary for me to argue further on the point about the Javanese dancer not "realising" but only "symbolising" the act of being a plaything in the hands of God. A rare dancer (or ritual singer or Zen-archer) may "realise" the ideal mentioned by Plato, but a generalisation such as yours appears to me untenable in the light of what essential Christianity, in accordance with all essential religion, declares. If this is so, then *a fortiori* what Coomaraswamy says about "the dances of those who seek to please the eyes of mortals" becomes highly fanciful.

Now a word about Dogma. I have nothing against Dogma—in its own proper place. It can be all that Jung claims for it and "religious convention" can be very good for a certain kind of work, but there is something greater and more valuable—namely, direct and concrete mystical and spiritual experience and realisation. This is all that I mean—and I think my meaning is at least implicit if not explicit in the excerpts I have given from Underhill.

Perhaps the best general statement on this point is the following: "There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and

rigid moral code, on some religio-political system. Not that these things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that spiritual religion need disdain the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualised, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, a form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infrarational being, a set moral code by man's vital nature in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light. Such as they are, they have to be offered to man and used by him, but not to be imposed on him as his sole law by a forced and inflexible domination. In the use of them toleration and free permission of variation is the first rule which should be observed. The spiritual essence of religion is alone the one thing supremely needful, the thing to which we have always to hold and subordinate to it every other element or motive." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 221—Indian Edition)

Please, Dr. Baudisch, I request you to believe that I have no pleasure in merely debating my points. Argumentative victory or defeat is not my aim. And if my criticism of your article has hurt you in any way, kindly forgive me. Don't overlook my admiration of many things in the article and many things in yourself. What I have dared to criticise, and to justify my criticism of, is what I felt to be some stress on things that are secondary as if they were primary. If I have misjudged in any way, I stand prepared to be corrected.

With the kindest thoughts,

Yours sincerely,

K. D. SETHNA

GIFTS OF GRACE

WHAT we have received at the Feet of the Mother not words but our life, our acts must tell. Each of us is likely to have a fund of anecdotes as to how the Grace has lavished its gifts. And each alone can say what has led to the development of his inner consciousness. A little is told here of what has come my own way.

We not only aspire to reach the Infinite but call upon the Infinite to unfold Itself in the finite and transform life. Though all is yet in an experimental stage, a true foundation has been laid; only time is needed for the thing to come into view. But whether the experiment succeeds soon or late is another question, the attempt itself is a Himalayan task and is full of adventure. My capacity is tragically inadequate to undertake the mighty task. Our Rishis sang:

Lead us from the Unreal to the Real,
From Darkness to Light,
From Death to Immortality.

The prayer still remains unfulfilled.

We believe the Supreme Mother Herself has come to the earth in human form to see this aspiration of the ages realised. Even from Her common action overflows Her divinity. Only a gifted eye can see it. To death-bound man She is the message of immortality. She is the Guru of the Age in which we are born.

Spirituality is popularly associated with miracles. And there is reason for it. For, at times, things happen with such a lightning speed that one is taken aback. But it must be taken for granted that they do happen, due to the action of the Supreme Grace.

A man of God will not do anything to exhibit his power. If any miracle happened, surely it had His sanction or was impelled by His Will. No one can say when and how His Will or Grace will act, hence when it does, say, at an unexpected moment, it appears to the common eye as a miracle.

But at times the Grace works in such a natural way that happenings of far-reaching consequences do not attract our notice and we see no miracle in them. How the Ashram is conducted without any permanent source of income is by itself a miracle of miracles. In this respect, the Mother herself is a miracle.

We have been taught not to run after power but concentrate our whole energy upon the change of consciousness, change of nature and grow divine. The present work is a simple account of our battle with the Night for Light with her visible or invisible assistance and the evolution of our sadhana under her protective wings. Much of this aspect of the Ashram is still an unwritten chapter on which we shall seek to throw some light.

It would be foolhardy to claim that I have understood the Mother. Her work is always done on higher levels. Mysterious are her ways for us. I only put on paper how the words that flow from her pen, the spiritual current that is generated from her Presence, the subtle vibrations that radiate from her atmosphere assist our sadhana. I repeat, I describe only my feeling, my impression and whatever has revealed itself to me. One is quite free to accept or reject them.

Further, what I write will interest only those who have some aspiration for the Higher Life, who strive to get control over their unruly mind and rebellious vital being or have some experience of spiritual life. They, I hope, will better understand what I have felt and said.

Ultimately, the writing is done in order to express my gratitude for all that the Mother and the Master have done and are doing for us. After attaining the highest *siddhis* till then known, they again entered into a life of *Tapasyā* and a very rigorous one, too, shutting themselves in for years and years to "turn our frail mud-engine to heaven-use".

It is necessary to give the background of what I was before I came in touch with the Mother's Feet; then only can one visualise the changes that came upon me by the Mother's Grace. The account will follow in the next chapter.

(To be continued)

A DISCIPLE

A DIALOGUE

AND what shall my guerdon be,
When this race has been run?
—A new road to tread freely
And overhead a new sun!

When the sands of Time are out,
And Death garners me as grain?
—A New Birth will put Death to rout,
And wash away all stain.

When my Life's roses have furled
All their motley-coloured flags?
—Son, you will be in a New World
Where Beauty never lags.

KAMALAKANTO

THE SUPREME DISCOVERY

A PERSONAL RECORD

OME of the greatest and most important discoveries have been made through sheer accident, for example Columbus's discovery of America and Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation. The supreme discovery of my life has also been the result of a mere chance.

It so happened that in December 1939, my esteemed and valued friend Dr. Indra Sen and myself decided to undertake *Bharat yatra*, not so much to see the different provinces and places as to make a study of the diverse cultures of our people. Our combination was rather curious—Dr. Indra Sen, a man of great learning and erudition (he was then the Professor of Philosophy and Psychology at the Hindu College, Delhi) and I a businessman with a penchant for politics.

When my wife came to know of our venture, she insisted on our taking Anil, who was then only 9, and also a servant to look after Anil.

So we made all the necessary arrangements and purchased zonal tickets which with the route map printed in colour looked more like passports describing in detail and with great beauty the whole route—Delhi, Mathura, Agra, Aligarh, Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, Calcutta, Puri, Bhubaneswar, Vizagapatnam, Vizwada, Madras, Bangalore, Mysore, Hyderabad, Sholapur, Poona, Bombay, Surat, Varoda, Ahmedabad, Ajmer, Jaipur and back to Delhi. Believe it or not, that ticket cost only Rs. 36/8 and is still with me.

The journey was naturally eventful. Though our train was not a "Pilgrims' special" yet we did not have to spend even an anna on our lodging anywhere. We had so planned our schedule that we spent the days in seeing and visiting places and the nights in the trains. Out of the train, we always lodged under some thick and big tree near the railway station. The servant looked after the luggage and cooked food and after taking our meals, we would go to the town, city, village, temple or a historical spot, as the case might be, returning to our 'lodge' late in the evening with sufficient time to have our dinner and board the train for our next destination. Sometimes we managed to cook even in the compartment. That was possible in those days when people were not so crazy for travelling and there used to be enough space in the trains even to use them as play-grounds.

Needless to say that economy was an overriding factor with us. Apart from the above-mentioned measures, we avoided the use of any transport, as far as possible, as in those days legs used to be certainly stronger, more mobile and quicker than they are today. Again we never spent anything on coolies because the heavier load was carried by the servant and the rest by Dr. Indra Sen and myself. Anil was responsible for carrying the baskets. And can you imagine the result of all that? Even we did not

have any exact idea of it at the time. But after the conclusion of this over-a-month long tour of almost the whole sub-continent, when we made the final account of the total expense, including the cost of both the zonal railway tickets, worked out to be 'fantastic' figure—Rupees Seventy-five & Annas Twelve Per Head All Told.

About 10 days after the commencement of our journey, we reached Madras. The surging waves of the sea seemed to be welcoming us. Seeing the sea, I thought we had reached the last post of our Indian tour. But to my great surprise, we were told that the South extended far beyond and further south of Madras. I had thought we had paid for the tour of the whole of India and therefore this information came as a 'shock'. I further learnt that throughout the South ran a 'baby railway' operated by some other company. And when I went to see the 'baby railway', I found that its track, bogies and engine, etc. were really very small. What is more, even its guard ticket collectors and other officials were short in height though they appeared quite impressive, almost like members of a marriage party, in their attractive dresses which with green turbans lined with gold-thread were so different from the Western-style dresses worn by the officials of the railways in our part of the country.

The officials of the 'baby railway' turned out to be a very generous lot. They offered us the 'Travel As You Please' tickets which were indeed more artistic and beautiful than those we already possessed. With those tickets we could have a merry go-round covering the whole of the South for 15 days. And all that one ticket cost was Rs. 15/- which meant just one rupee a day.

The journey down and across the South was both pleasing and revealing. We greatly enjoyed and relished the breath-taking but calm and lingering beauty of the East and the West coasts. We visited Travancore, Cochin and Alleppy and viewed with wonder and admiration the craftsmanship and ancient art embodied in the colossal and intricately built temples of Madras, Trichinopoly, Mahableshwaram, Sri Ranganatha and Rameshwaram, etc. We touched the southernmost point of the Indian sub-continent at Cape Comorin where we had a full and panoramic view of the two seas—the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, joining each other. We also paid our homage at the library built there in the memory of Swami Vivekananda.

However, I am here concerned more with telling the readers about the unusual generosity of the Southern Railway than describing the beauty or topography of the places we saw. The facilities and concessions allowed in those days are simply unthinkable in the context of present-day travelling conditions. Take for instance the way we spent our nights.

We naturally did not like to be stranded on platforms at night or reach the next town during the night hours. Now the various towns and cities which we wanted to visit were quite near to each other and the 'Travel As You Please' ticket permitted us to undertake any number of journeys on any of the routes covered by the Southern Railway. Thus, instead of spending nights on platforms, we would board the train at night which returned the following morning from the terminus to the station where we wanted to reach next.

But the large-heartedness and helpful attitude of the Southern Railway people went far beyond. Once while in the train, we ran short of fuel and we wanted to cook food. So when the train halted at a wayside station, we picked up some soft coke from the cinder, i.e. refuse, of the railway engine. It so happened that in spite of our best efforts, this coal would not burn in the *angeethi* and the train was running. The *ngeethi* started emitting smoke in profusion which invaded all the rear compartments and forced the guard to pull the alarm chain and bring the train to an immediate halt. Within a few seconds a crowd of railway officials and others swarmed into our compartment thinking the train had caught fire.

As the alarmed crowd rushed in the guard fired at us: "What are you doing?" Just trying to make fire in order to cook our food," was my simple and straightforward reply which made him frown and fret with resentment. "Cooking your food in the train! Don't you know that you can't do such a thing and can even be prosecuted for it?" said the guard in a threatening tone. "But we hold the ticket for it." "Ticket for cooking food! Man, what are you talking about?" the guard said irritably. But you can see it for yourself." "See what? Anyway let me see," demanded the guard brusquely. "Here you are," I said thrusting the ticket before the guard's eyes. Doesn't it say, 'Travel As You Please'? And that being so, we can certainly do whatever we like," I explained confidently. And that worked wonderfully because after a brief surprised pause the pulled-up faces suddenly relaxed and the guard had a hearty laugh. Good-humouredly he gave back the ticket to me and smilingly blew the whistle.

When we reached Rameshwaram on the Eastern Coast, we came to know that only a few miles down was the station from where people embarked for Ceylon which was only 40 miles beyond the sea. It was obviously too big a temptation to resist. Hence we sailed for our Lanka *yatra* through the same route by which Sri Rama had crossed the sea with Hanuman *Sena* to attack Lanka and vanquish Ravana. We were even shown the remnants of the bridge which had been built by Hanuman and his *Banar Sena*. We were happy at our decision because our visit to Ceylon, besides being very rewarding and revealing, had been full of many pleasant incidents and experiences.

On our way back from Ceylon, somebody told us that on the offside railway line lay Pondicherry where there was an Ashram of an Indian Yogi. The lure of visiting yet another foreign territory and an Ashram in that far-flung corner of our sub-continent proved too strong. Moreover, I thought that by visiting Pondicherry I could tell my friends back home that I was 'foreign-returned', having been to two foreign lands including a part of that fascinating country called France. Thus we took train for Pondicherry where we hoped to spend just an evening and the night.

My first surprise after passing through the streets of Pondicherry was that it was anything but a foreign or French territory. Almost in every way and every inch, it was like any other town of Madras State —the same people, of the same stature and complexion, wearing the same dresses and speaking the same Tamil language.

Surprise was again my immediate reaction on first seeing the Ashram building.

It appeared as one of the many buildings that dotted the area—we saw no such distinctive feature in the design and architecture of the building which could even faintly suggest that it was an Ashram. When we got into the building we saw a number of people, all in simple and neat dresses, and some even in pants and coats, but no *sannyasis* or *sannyasis*, no monks or *mahants*, no shaven heads or *jatta dharis*, no bare-bodied *bhaktas* or saffron-robed *sadhus*, no *tilak dharis* or *kan phatas*. Neither did we see any temple, *moortis* or *granthas*.

However, our enquiries elicited for us the information that Sri Aurobindo, the Yogi, the Master of the Ashram, had his abode on the first floor of the building. To be precise, I heard to my great amazement that Sri Aurobindo had never stirred out of his room for the past 13 years. However, I was disappointed to know that not only we but in fact virtually nobody could see Sri Aurobindo and that only four times in a year—on Darshan Days—people could see him. And seeing meant just having a fleeting glimpse from a distance—no talks, discussions or conversations.

All this sounded most intriguing to me. But that was not the end of it. I was further told that there was also the Mother in the Ashram, a French lady. A French lady and the Mother of the Ashram founded by an Indian Yogi! It only further accentuated the atmosphere of surprise and suspense—though these peculiar revelations had naturally heightened my curiosity and keenness to unravel this mystery which was deepening and becoming more and more fascinating with every new bit of information.

What then was to be done? What for had we gone there? We could not see the Sage, we could not interview the Mother, there was no *kirtan* or *katha*, no preaching or prayers, no *sikhsha* or sermons, no *bhajans* or *artis*, no discourses or discussions, no *havans* or *yagnas*, no *asanas* or *pranayam*, no *mantras* or meetings! Then what sort of an Ashram was this? It was so bewildering. At last someone told us that meditation was held in the evening and we could join in it.

As directed, we reached the Meditation Hall at about 7 p.m. A few score of men and women were already seated there with their eyes closed, lips virtually sealed and heads bowed. All the lights had been put out. There was just the evening glimmer. It was so quiet and calm. The atmosphere of meditation was infectious and I felt strongly prompted to join in and close my eyes. But I wanted to see what was to happen, hence I kept watching intently.

Now there was a complete hush. But lo! my eyes suddenly caught sight of something which looked utterly superb but so dream-like. A slender lady, draped in a sari and wearing a gold *mukut* on the forehead, was lightly stepping down the heavily carpeted curved staircase. In her gait there was majesty, in her face a glowing grace and her eyes flashed gleams that pierced the darkness below and around. My gaze was fixed at that fairy-like figure whose calm and beautiful face was radiating light and making the whole atmosphere so supernatural that she looked every inch an angel descending from Heaven.

She now stopped and stood a little below the bend of the staircase, her wide-open

es surveying the scene from one end of the hall to the other. In a few moments, she went into a trance which made her look even more rapturous. While she stood there statue-like, I felt as if she was suddenly soaring above. Though her eyelids were now shut, yet I almost saw them passing sweet messages and exchanging glances with something or somebody that was not perceptible. All her limbs seemed blended in harmony and her entire figure was wrapped in ecstasy. The halo of serenity and divinity around her was like a circular rainbow, in the multicolour of which my eyes received visionary images and indications.

And now suddenly a smile dawned on her lips and with the speed of lightning it gleamed across her cheeks, eyes, the whole face. The smile blossomed into a flower and then the petals of blessings and grace showered down on the entranced devotees. So, in deep gratitude, uplifted their eyes, only to behold that she suddenly turned to look back to her abode. Her departure was as blissful and mysterious as her advent and her racing gaze in a few moments lost the heavenly track on which trod that divine figure. As the congregation dispersed, we learnt that she was the Mother—that each lady.

That night as I lay asleep, I underwent strange but sweet experiences. A train of dreams ran on the rails of my mind. That majestic personification of grace and beauty, of love and life appeared on the screen of my mind like a continuously running film. I woke up extremely light in body as if I had lost some part of it and yet the loss seemed so sweet and exhilarating. There were some peculiar sensations brewing within my heart which I could not fathom. Something had happened though I knew not what it was.

When we left the town the morning after that fateful and momentous evening, I could clearly see that my destiny had been decided and that the die had been cast. I knew that I was leaving only to return and return again and again. As the train rolled out homewards, I felt as if I had found my real home. I was sad to leave but so happy—happy over my luck because the fleeting glance of a few moments had brought to me privileges which the toil of a whole life often fails to achieve.

This was then the supreme discovery of my life, the miracle of Pondicherry where I lost my heart and won the real life.

SURENDRANATH JAUHAR

SRI AUROBINDO'S *LOVE AND DEATH*

A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

THE poem *Love and Death* is *Savitri* in its theme, only its working out is on the human level. Savitri and Satyavan are Avatar-Souls born for each other; Ruru and Priyuvada are earthly beings uplifted by the mutual love of their hearts. In her "bre carrying God's deathless light," Savitri conquers Death and brings back the soul of her beloved Satyavan; carrying close to his bosom the Rose of Love, Ruru compels Death to give back the life of his sweetheart Priyuvada. The former triumph achieved by an occult and spiritual force, the latter by a romantic intensity of passion.

Love and Death may be called an immortal poem of an immortal love. Ruru, the central figure, is a 'spirit born divine': he experiences not merely the joy of a perfect love but also the joy of sacrifice—an experience bestowed on rare and noble souls.

...Love has joys for spirits born divine
More bleeding-lovely than his thornless rose.

His young bride Priyuvada is a 'cup fit for love's nectar wine.'¹ She shares Ruru's joy of love but ever remains for him an inspirer, especially during the struggle between him and the God of Death.

If Urvashi is the most beautiful of all the heavenly Apsaras and if on her face Infinity broods, Priyuvada is the sweetest of all earthly creatures on whose face human beauty glows. In physical charm she is a nonpareil. Her body is a 'sculptured soul' and no mortal can equal her. This the poet epitomises in a single sentence: her body is

An empire for the glory of a God.

Such is

Fresh-cheeked and dew-eyed white Priyuvada
who
Opened her budded heart of crimson bloom
To love, to Ruru...

Her lips breathed warm immortality into Ruru and

Her eyes like deep and infinite wells
Lured his attracted soul, and her touch thrilled

¹ *Savitri*, Book I, Canto II.

Not lightly, though so light; the joy prolonged
 And sweetness of the lingering of her lips
 Was every time a nectar of surprise
 To her lover...

With a wonderful delicacy Sri Aurobindo has described the celestial beauty of this earthly being. There seem to be two levels of beauty in her features. By the adjective 'deep' the poet suggests the human aspects of her eyes and by the adjective 'infinite' he immediately transmutes their beauty into something supraterrrestrial—they become the eternal source of a boundless love. Similarly in the next line the poet writes, 'Lured his attracted soul', by which he directly brings in the sense of a communion of souls; the silent gaze of Priyumnada seems to communicate with the invisible soul of Ruru. But the next clause, 'her touch thrilled' carries in it the streak of human love and thus draws again the reader's attention to the physical beauty of Priyumnada. This way the poet constantly travels between the psychic world and the physical world, supporting the earthly by the heavenly!

These doubly-hued powers of love find a compeer in Ruru:

Ruru, a happy flood
 Of passion round a lotus dancing thrilled,
 Blinded with his soul's waves Priyumnada.

They are two souls lost in an ecstatic love. Yet this love never turns lascivious. We may find lines full of love's passion, such as,

her cheeks
 Soft to his lips and dangerous happy breasts
 That vanquished all his strength with their desire,

but there is not in them the blind lust such as we find in some lines of Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*. Ruru is never a prisoner led in a rose-red chain. He desires the image of beautiful Priyumnada for the sake of the Godhead within her. His love is a pure white passion wherein one finds a freshness, a surrender and a fulfilment. In him, it is a creative and transforming power of consciousness; it is to him 'A glory from eternity's sphere.'² For this 'gift of the Gods' Ruru's heart overflows with humble and happy gratitude. The outer tumult of his stainless love is pictured by the poet with a beautiful simile:

As a bright bird comes flying
 From airy extravagance to his own home,

² *Savitri*, Book V, Canto II.

And breasts his mate, and feels her all his goal,
 So from boon sunlight and the fresh chill wave
 Which swirled and lapped between the slumbering fields,
 From forest pools and wanderings mid leaves,
 Through emerald ever-new discoveries,
 Mysterious hillsides ranged and buoyant-swift
 Races with our wild brothers in the meads,
 Came Ruru back to the white-bosomed girl,
 Strong-winged to pleasure.

This no doubt is the poetry of youth—youth that has strongly imbibed the spirit of Romanticism. A boy of 17 years had received powerful impressions of Stephen Phillips' *Marpessa* and *Christ in Hades*, which lasted until they were worked out in this epic-themed poem *Love and Death*. 'Epic-themed' because it deals with the theme of love and death which is as old as man himself, as wide as the universe itself, as everlasting as the Gods themselves. "Here not only is the whole intricate truth of love siezed in idea but the force of it is thrilled to in every shade of passion."¹ But "there is nothing either callow or crude about it. It has a rich impetuosity saved by a keen psychological sense from becoming mere excess. And how exquisitely significant is each excited image of love."²

As a young horse upon the pastures glad
 Feels greensward and the wind along his mane
 And arches as he goes his neck, so went
 In an immense delight of youth the boy
 And shook his locks, joy-crested.

The careless beauty and the immense delight of the youth could not be hit off more vividly than in these lines. And mark the felicity of :

Then will her face be like a sudden dawn
 And flower compelled into reluctant smiles.

"Love's leaping and engulfing joy" is not the sole thing in this poem: "Sri Aurobindo has an equally skilful hand in depicting love's large desolation."³

Orpheus and Eurydice could not forever live in their sweet music and in their young love. The gods were jealous of Orpheus with his alluring lyre. A coiling creature hissed death on Eurydice while she in her own "bloom of pure repose"⁴ was

¹ *The Poetic Genus of Sri Aurobindo* by K. D. Sethna (1947), p. 14. The words refer in particular to the speech of Madan the Love-God.

² *Ibid.*, p. 19. The reference here is to a passage in *Urvashi*, but can be adapted to our theme.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴ *Marpessa* by Stephen Phillips.

"tearing a jasmine bloom". Similar was the fate of the newly-wedded Priyumvada. Ruru saw

a brilliant flash of coils evade
The sunlight, and with hateful gorgeous hood
Darted into green safety, hissing, death....
Slower her voice came now, and over her cheeks
Death paused.....

Priyumvada was snatched away by the silent orders of Death, and Ruru was left alone, all alone amid the foisoning fields and the rich solitary forests. For a while the whole earth seemed to be indifferent to him and

Long months he travelled between grief and grief,
Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,
Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.

The gloomy future mocked at him whenever he remembered that face that was now in other worlds. He could no longer bear the immense pain of solitude. A resolution grew in him that he would not accept defeat: the lover in him vowed that he would pursue Priyumvada even to the unearthly distances where she was kept in silent torture.

"...Who'er thou art,
O thou bright enemy of Death, descend
And lead me to that portal dim..."

Such was the desperate cry of Ruru which echoed and re-echoed among the deep-thoughted woods and the lofty mountains. Who else could come to this lover's re-pining call if not the God of Love himself?

"Mortal I am he;
I am that Madan who inform the stars
With lustre and on life's wide canvas fill
Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,
Make ordinary moments wonderful
And common speech a charm: knit life to life
With interfusions of opposing souls
And sudden meetings and slow sorceries;
Wing the boy bridegroom to that panting breast,
Smite Gods with mortal faces, dreadfully
Among great beautiful kings and watched by eyes

That burn, force on the virgin's fainting limbs
And drive her to the one face never seen,
The one breast meant eternally for her..."

This speech of Madan, over 43 lines in all, written by a budding poet, makes one of the grandest passages in English literature. We cannot better comment than with what the poet has himself said in a private letter to a disciple: "I do not think I have elsewhere surpassed this speech in power of language, passion and truth of feeling and nobility and felicity of rhythm all fused together into a perfect whole. And I think I have succeeded in expressing the truth of the godhead of Kama, the godhead of vital love with a certain completeness of poetic sight and perfection of poetic power, which puts it on one of the peaks—even if not the highest possible peak—of achievement..."¹

To be back to our yearning lover: Madan takes pity upon him and tells him:

"...Yet, O fair youth,
If thou must needs go down, and thou art strong
In passion and in constancy, nor easy
The soul to slay that has survived such grief,
Steel then thyself to venture, armed by Love."

But the Gods do not so very easily grant boons to human beings, they too demand something from them:

"...A sole thing the Gods
Demand from all men living, sacrifice;
Nor without this shall any crown be grasped."

And what sort of sacrifice was it that the God of Love asked from Ruru? It was:

"...with half thy life
Thou mayst protract the thread too early cut
Of that delightful spirit—half sweet life."

Ruru gladly accepts the condition and is impatient to go to his beloved:

"...O wing me rather
To her, my eloquent princess of the spring,
In whatsoever wintry shores she roam"...
"Go then, O thou dear youth, and bear this flower

¹ *Life-Literature-Yoga*. Some Letters of Sri Aurobindo (Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1967), p. 117.

In thy hand warily. For thou shalt come
 To that high meeting of the Ganges pure
 With vague and violent Ocean. There arise
 And loudly appeal my brother, the wild sea."

Thus begins the perilous journey of Ruru through Patala:

...then with a prone wide sound
 All ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,
 Curving with monstrous menace over him.

Sri Aurobindo builds up, with his own creative imagination, an underworld that is dreadful. He describes, during the descent,

The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
 A million mystic breasts suddenly bare—

the cries that were not meant for living ears and

the writhed forms,
 Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues
 Coiling in a half darkness—

strong men, grieving mothers, early beauties and sad children who naked

paced with falling hair and gaze
 Drooping upon their bosoms, weak as flowers
 That die for want of rain un murmuring...

This horrible Hell frightens us. It chills even Ruru, but

terrible strong love
 Was like a fiery finger in his breast
 Pointing him on...

"Thus with agony of soul" and after an aeon of sufferings he faces Yama and demands his Priyuvada. Yama with a compelling persuasion tries to make Ruru withdraw his sacrifice:

"Not as a tedious evil nor to be
 Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,

But tranquil, but august, but making easy
The steep ascent to God."

And Yama shows Ruru the things that he would renounce:

There Ruru saw himself divine with age,
A Rishi to whom infinity is close....

But all temptation was of no avail.

Then with a sudden fury gathering
His soul he hurled out of it half its life,
And fell like lightning, prone.

The sacrifice was made, Death was conquered and Priyuvada regained:

Hell
Shuddered with bliss: resentful, overborne,
The world-besetting Terror faded back...

And Ruru tastes success:

Hesitating he kissed her eyelids. Sighing
With a slight sob she woke and earthly large
Her eyes looked upward into his. She stretched
Her arms up, yearning, and their souls embraced.

This consummate beauty of inspiration and art, of vision and style, of human love and human sacrifice was but a creation of 14 days only—"days of continuous writing" that passed in "a white heat of inspiration." About its creation Sri Aurobindo says, "It just came, from my reading about the story of Ruru in the Mahabharata; I thought, 'Well, here's a subject,' and the rest burst out of itself.... Evolution of style and verse? Well, it evolved, I suppose—I assure you I didn't build it."¹

This quotation is interesting also in its latter portion. The style of this masterpiece is everywhere excellent, it is a blend of different kinds: the amplitude and the intensity function on more than one psychological level. A level of charming simplicity is attained in the lines:

Men live like stars that see each other in heaven,
But one knows not the pleasure and the grief
The others feel—

which express a universal truth. There is a vast grandeur in a homely image:

And the young mother's passionate deep look,
Earth's high similitude of One not earth.

Slow rhythm and sweet felicitous phrases create an immense mysterious atmosphere:

In a thin soft eve
Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,
A glimmering restlessness with voices large,
And from the forests of that half-seen bank
A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,
With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale.

But it is not these outstanding types of style alone that distinguish the poem. There are other styles which are plain, simple and embodying nothing new:

the husband's hungry arms and use
Unwearying of old tender words and ways,
Joy of her hair, and silent pleasure felt
Of nearness to one dear familiar shape.

And again,

but pale
As jasmines fading on a girl's sweet breast
Her cheek was, and forgot its perfect rose.

And yet there is a beauty in the simplicity—the beauty of an effortless art—an art that is hardly perceived, but is present everywhere: now focussing a particularity, as in “hungry arms” and “joy of hair”, now sprinkling a general phrase such as “forgot its perfect rose”. An almost casual word here and there, like “bright” or “lonely” in the lines,

He felt the bright indifference of earth
And all the lonely uselessness of pain,

creates the final and felicitous effect.

This varying rich style is bathed in a music that perturbs our inner being. Especially the passage of the voice of Hades:

“Therefore must Time.
Still batter down the glory and form of youth

And animal magnificent strong ease,
 To warn the earthward man that he is spirit
 Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends,
 Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,
 But called unborn into the unborn skies.
 For body fades with the increasing soul
 And wideness of its limit grown intolerant
 Replaces life's impetuous joys by peace"—

especially this passage has the thrill of an inspired consciousness which touches the chords of our deeper being. With a sustained exquisiteness of the *mot juste* the whole poem rises again and again to the same pitch and maintains the same tone.

Had not there been such a music permeating the entire poem, it would have failed to appeal to us as strongly as it does now. This is so because it is a poem written in blank verse: "Blank verse is the hardest to infuse with poetic life: the inspiration has to balance the lack of the grace of rhyme by deft consonances and assonances, suggestive designs of stress and changing positions of the pause: a vital energy of most sensitive sound has to be at work in it if it is to pass that crucial test of poetry—exquisite enchantment or delightful disturbance by word-music."¹

Verily, the beauty of art, of music, of vision, of situation, of truth here disturb the fields of our inner being. We feel a joy on reading the words and phrases that are animated with exact sight; on seeing the word-pictures that are there as if "on a canvas before us or rather in three-dimensional Nature."² The mind of young Sri Aurobindo was rich with the beauties of Nature and with a concreteness of utterance, ever ready with contour and colour, image and symbol. *Love and Death* is "created out of a mind vibrant with an idealistic sensuousness," a Platonic idea of Love and Beauty, "in which the body and soul mingle their fervours, a high-toned passion based on the urgent tangibilities of the flesh without the crude and the cramped which ordinarily go with flesh-impulses. This super-love is set in an atmosphere in contact with Super-Nature: spirits and entities, both good and evil, pervade Sri Aurobindo's outer world, wearing shape and moulding movement.... The authentic mystical or spiritual vision shines out only on very rare occasions and then too it seldom does so in its own right: either traditional mythology serves as a medium or else love between man and woman interprets it through a self-transcending extremism that seeks to leap beyond the limits of the earth."³

This wonderful vision of Sri Aurobindo and his apt and rich style and rhythm combine into a white harmony and make the poem a *chef-d'œuvre* of his younger days. A passionate lover of Sri Aurobindo's poetry goes to the extent of declaring, "...if

¹ *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

all the verse of the world were to perish, one could regard *Love and Death* as a pointer to, or rather à quintessence of, almost the whole poetic wealth of the past...all the sweetness, sublimity, swiftness, 'slow sorcery' of style one finds in Virgil, Dante, Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats one finds here."¹

This high praise may sound effusive and rhapsodic, but the vision and the truth in *Love and Death* are surely equal if not higher than those of Keats or Milton. The vision is of a "struggle against mortality and the fate which circumscribes mundane life," and the victory is of man over Death. "Pururavus scales an Overworld to clasp the vanished Urvastie; Ruru descends into an Underworld" to regain his lost 'paradise'. "Earth's heart storming beyond earth to gain fulfilment, either by attaining the supra-terrestrial and remaining in its light or by invading the infra-terrestrial and reclaiming from its darkness what it has snatched and submerged"²—such is the psychological motive behind Sri Aurobindo's vision in *Love and Death*. This striking mass of poetic achievement in blank-verse during his early life is but a pointer to a greater and a more permanent achievement of mantric poetry which embodies a mystical legend and symbol—*Savitri*.

V. ANANDA REDDY

¹ Letter quoted in *Life-Literature-Yoga*, p. 121. ² *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, p. 31.

HERE IN THE DEEPS

HERE in the deeps of silver solitude
No shadow of mournfulness can cross my shore.
Mortality stands stripped all bare and nude,
Ravished by a distant wind of wide desire.

A sense-engulfing immeasurable stride
Upbears the heart on a gold-winged godlike mood
To brilliant fields of listening silences
Where the mirror of self reveals a face of bliss.

The being made whole in the hushed honey-core
Is thronged by a million worlds of dream-struck sapphire,
A paradise kindles to a lotus light
With a moon-grip and sun-throb of the Infinite.

A diamond sense of the One now feeds my earth,
Each mote of dust cries out for the New Birth.

VENKATARANGA

CAN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BE PROVED?

(Continued from the issue of May)

(This is a discussion between three philosophers: (1) an Anselmian (A) who believes that the existence of God can be rationally and strictly demonstrated; (2) a Kantian (K) who holds that all arguments that claim to demonstrate God's existence are fallacious; and (3) a Critical Philosopher (C) who agrees with K, but at the same time holds that the proposition 'God exists' is self-evident to the wise.)

- K. A's argument for the existence of God is truly *multum in parvo*. Deceptively simple and stated in a few sentences it has, on examination, revealed a whole nest of tangled issues! And it seems we are still far from exhausting its richness and subtlety. When we met last A was confident that he could defend the argument against what I thought were conclusive criticisms brought against it by C. But before A takes up the argument for the defence it would be better if C stated briefly the two charges which he levelled against the argument.
- C. A presented the argument in two forms. One was that in the case of God both contingent non-existence and contingent existence must be ruled out, the former because it implies the possibility only of God's contingent existence and the latter because necessary existence is a superior manner of existence. I called this the Superiority Premise. My criticism of this form of the argument was that, since ontological modality is determined through logical modality, we cannot talk of God as necessarily existing without first proving that He necessarily exists. This makes it impossible for us to use the Superiority Premise to prove the existence of God.

The second form of the argument was that of the two concepts, God as existing contingently and God as existing necessarily, we must reject the first as it is the concept of God possessing an inferior mode of existence. My criticism of this form of the argument was that we cannot have a concept of God (or anything) as existing (contingently or necessarily), since such a concept is really a disguised assertion that God exists (contingently or necessarily). And this because existence cannot be treated as a quality and so cannot be part of a concept.

- A. C has stated the issues fairly and clearly.
- K. Excuse me a minute. I said last time that I wasn't happy about the notion of ontological modality. Is there such a thing really? And if there is, might not A give a very simple reply to C's first objection? A might reply that if C grants that necessary existence is a superior mode of existence then the mere definition of God as the Unsurpassable Being is sufficient to show that God enjoys necessary

existence. I think A did suggest this simple way of proceeding to his conclusion and it is not clear to me what C's answer to this was.

1. It is a difficult point. Let me try to clarify it. My point is that we cannot attribute ontological modality to a thing except through its logical correlate, so that even if we say that God, by definition, has a superior mode of existence, it won't help the argument unless we show that superior existence is necessary existence. Now my point is that when we say something has necessary existence we can only say this if we show that *logically* its non-existence is inconceivable.
2. But why? The argument claims to deduce the *ontological* necessary character of God's existence directly from the notion of God as the Unsurpassable.
1. True, but what is this ontological characteristic? If we can refer to it directly and not only as the objective correlate of what is logically necessary we should be able to specify this characteristic as we can specify other characteristics of God, such as Wisdom, Power and Love.
2. In that case why not apply Occam's razor and say there is no such thing as ontological modality? That, as you yourself saw, would make your objection much stronger.
1. I am not merely granting for argument's sake that there are two correlated modalities. If we say, 'X necessarily exists', there cannot but be something in the nature of X which makes its non-existence inconceivable. If not, our logical truths would not be grounded in the nature of things.
2. So your point is that though we cannot deny this 'something' in the nature of X, we can only speak of it intelligibly as the objective correlate of the logical truth?
1. Exactly. Our reference to it is always and necessarily oblique and hence the argument based on the Superiority Premise is invalid. Either the Premise cannot be used or its use simply begs the question.
2. Yes, I think this explanation has greatly clarified your point.
1. I confess that it has also clarified it for me!
2. But not for me! I am unaffected by C's objection because I think a direct reference to ontological modality is possible as I shall presently try to show.
2. Well, now let A have the floor.
1. C said in his objection to the first form of the argument that the Superiority Premise cannot be used to prove the existence of God. To circumvent his objection I suggested that of the two concepts—the concept of God as existing contingently and the concept of God as existing necessarily—the former concept is self-contradictory. C objected to this also on the grounds that the so-called concept of God as existing (contingently or necessarily) is really an assertion that God exists (contingently or necessarily)—and this because existence is not a quality. I shall presently consider this time-honoured dogma that existence is not a quality and show that it is true within limits and does not apply to the existence of God. My argument, however, remains the same if, for the concept of God as existing (contingently or necessarily), I substitute the assertion that God exists (contingently or

necessarily). Let me restate the argument. We can make two possible assertions (1) God does not exist or (2) God exists. Each of these assertions could be regarded either as contingent or as necessary. Now my contention is that (1) cannot be regarded as a necessary proposition since 'God' is a genuine concept and so is a possible existent. Again (1) as a contingent proposition is ruled out since it would imply the possibility of (2) but only as a contingent proposition. And this is ruled out since contingent existence is an inferior mode of existence and so cannot be ascribed to God. Hence we are left only with (2) as a necessary proposition. I still fail to see what is wrong with the argument.

- C. I am objecting to your statement that contingent existence is an inferior mode of existence.
- A. But that is the Superiority Premise which you said you would provisionally grant.
- C. Perhaps I did not make myself sufficiently clear. I should have said that I provisionally grant the proposition that necessary existence is superior existence, but do not, even provisionally, grant it as a *premise*. What I mean is you cannot use this proposition as a premise to establish your conclusion.
- A. Could you show why it cannot be so used, with reference to the argument I have just stated?
- C. I think I have already made that clear. When one says, 'contingent existence is inferior' one really means that something has an inferior mode of existence if concerning it we are led to say that though it exists, it may not exist. And, similarly when one says, 'necessary existence is superior', one can only mean that something has a superior mode of existence if concerning it we are led to say, on logical grounds, that it not only exists but its non-existence is inconceivable. If, on the other hand, you say you are not comparing two assertions—God exists contingently and God exists necessarily—but merely two concepts—God as existing contingently and God as existing necessarily—then my objection holds that the so-called concept of God as existing (contingently or necessarily) is a pseudo-concept or a disguised assertion.
- A. In that case I think it is time we examined this alleged sacrosanct principle that existence is not a quality, on which your objection is based.
- C. If I may anticipate an objection, it occurs to me that even if you succeed in showing that God's existence is so related to God that it can legitimately form part of the concept God, while the existence of nothing else can ever form part of the concept of that thing, you will first have to prove that God exists, in which case, for your purpose, it will be superfluous to try to show that God's existence is a quality of God or that 'existence' can be used as a predicative expression in the case of God.
- K. Exactly! A can only try to show that God's existence can form part of the concept of God because it is a unique kind of existence, *i.e.*, necessary existence; but in that case he has first to show that God necessarily exists!
- A. Perhaps it would be better if we first examine the view that 'existence' is not a pre-

dicating to find out what exactly it means, instead of anticipating what I shall say and how I shall try to show that it is not universally true. But I shall keep your objection in mind.

C. We are well rebuked! Please go on.

A. First, to say existence is not a predicate could mean that in defining a concept we cannot include 'existence' as part of the defining characteristics.

C. This means, as K would put it, that 'X exists' can never be an analytic proposition.

A. And I would agree. Now in my argument I have nowhere defined 'God' in such a way as to state or even imply that 'existence' is part of what we mean by God. I have defined God as a being than which none greater can be conceived. It would, I think, be puerile to object to my argument on the ground that 'God exists' cannot be necessarily true since we are not permitted to define God as an existing being.

C. I agree that this objection is puerile, and, I think, so would K.¹

K. Yes, certainly; but I would like to ask A a question. If you take the proposition 'God exists' as synthetic it means that the subject and predicate concepts fall outside each other. In that case how can these concepts be connected in a proposition? According to me the mediating link can only be provided by intuition or sense-experience. But if so, the proposition 'X exists' would always be contingent, as sense-experience can never give us necessary truth.

A. I do not think that for a synthesis of concepts any mediation is required *ab extra*. Thought by its very nature is synthetic and does not seek for a connection of elements which are given in isolation. Thought is not only discursive but also intuitive, and intellectual intuition, unlike sense-experience, can give us necessary truth.²

C. I fully agree with A. Thought is never either purely analytic or purely synthetic. It analyses and synthesizes its content in one and the same indivisible act.

C. The point is that one has to show that the connection of the two concepts, God and existence, is a necessary one. But I am interrupting A's attempt to explore the view that existence is not a predicate. Please go on.

A. Another sense in which we may understand the principle that existence is not a quality is that 'existence' cannot be added to a concept to extend or enrich it in any way. Or, to put it differently, our knowledge of a thing increases when we attribute qualities to it which it in fact possesses, but we do not understand a thing better if we are merely told that it exists.

C. That's right. Grass is defined as a kind of herbage. If we say 'grass is green' we understand the nature of grass better. It gives us more information about the thing called grass, but we do not come to know anything more about the nature of grass if we are told that grass exist.

A. This means that the proposition 'grass exists' does not in any way extend the concept of grass, but merely asserts that the concept, however defined and extended,

is exemplified in actual fact.

- C. And this is the reason why we cannot have a concept of something as existing.
- A. I must remind you that your example is about finite objects, *i.e.*, objects which are not self-existent or in which essence and existence are not inseparable. I would agree that 'God exists' is not like 'grass is green', if we take the predicate in the latter proposition as extending the concept of the subject. I think, however, that when we come to God or the Perfect Being we must adopt a totally different logic of propositions. We must not be too ready to apply to theological statements whose direct or ultimate subject is God the same analysis that we found valid in the case of statements about the world of finite things.
- C. I think that is a very important point you have made. In recent times S. Aurobindo has warned us against the indiscriminating application to the Infinite of modes of thinking which are appropriate only to finite existence. He has urged the recognition of what he calls 'the Logic of the Infinite'.
- K. You must, however, take care to see that you do not make the Infinite an excuse for convenient violations of well-established logical rules.
- A. We shall avoid that danger if we show that any logical innovations that we suggest are consistent with the concept of God and their rejection inconsistent with it. Among one of the principles which are appropriate to what I may call secular logic and which need to be revised or even discarded in the logic of religious discourse at its highest is, I suggest, the principle that 'existence' cannot be a predicative expression!
- C. I appreciate your view that the propositions 'God exists' and 'the Yeti exists' are not logically of the same order. And you will no doubt show the relevance of this distinction to the question whether or not existence can be treated as a predicative expression.
- A. Consider the proposition, 'God exists'. Neither of the two senses I mentioned in which 'existence' may be regarded as a predicate is applicable here. 'Existence' is not a part of the definition of God if this means that we cannot understand 'God' except as an existing being of some kind. Nor does 'existence' extend the concept of God, as 'green' extends the concept of grass. 'God exists' is a unique proposition and cannot be understood in terms of any existential or attributive proposition concerning a finite object.
- K. If 'God exists' is not an analytic proposition and the predicate does not add to the concept of the subject, what alternative is left which would allow us to treat 'existence' as a predicate?
- A. I would say 'God exists' is a definition, but at a deeper level of thought than a definition which records conventional usage and is treated as an analytic proposition. The first thing we must understand clearly is that there is nothing we can ascribe to God which is distinct from His essence, and this applies to the ascription of 'existence' also.
- C. Watch out, K! Here comes the argument in a new form: In the case of God

essence and existence are one, so God necessarily exists!

- ζ. We won't be caught napping. But let A explain more fully how, according to him, God and His existence are related.
- λ. All statements about God are definitions in the sense that they reveal His essence. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish two levels of definition, a preliminary or surface or formal definition which merely indicates the essence we wish to understand and definition in depth which expresses the essence at a deeper level of philosophical thought.
- ζ. This distinction would, I take it, apply to all essences and not only to the Divine essence?
- λ. Certainly, but—and this is the whole point of my argument—it is only in the case of the Divine essence that the ascription of existence is a deeper penetration of essence itself. That is to say, the proposition 'God exists' reveals to us the essence of God in a way in which 'the Yeti exists' does not reveal the essence of the Yeti. The latter proposition tells us nothing more about the nature of the Yeti. It is in this sense that in the case of 'God exists' existence functions as a predicative expression.
- ζ. But what is your reason for saying that the proposition 'God exists' differs from every other existential proposition in this respect that in its case alone 'existence' defines the essence of the subject term? Is it because it is a unique kind of existence, *i.e.*, necessary existence? But in that case your argument runs into the objection which C anticipated, namely, that you are already taking for granted that God necessarily exists or that His mode of existence is necessary existence.
- λ. The being of God is unique in many ways. His being alone is necessary being; all other beings are contingent. But it is not this aspect of His being which I am referring to when I say that in the case of God existence is one with essence and hence in 'God exists' 'existence' is a predicative expression. God is also the self-existent. I suppose you would admit that the concept of God as non-self-existent or as dependent being is self-contradictory?
- ζ. Nothing can be clearer than that.
- ζ. I agree, though I should add that 'self-existent' means simply that God's existence is not dependent on or caused by anything whatsoever. We should remember that this does not mean that God exists.
- λ. Well, if God is self-existent it follows that in Him essence and existence are inseparable. This means that to say 'God exists' is to bring out the depth of God's essence and not merely to say that a given essence is exemplified in actual fact.
- ζ. I think A has made an important point which I am inclined to accept. It is an old saying that in the case of God alone essence and existence are one, and I think A is right in interpreting this in terms of the notion of self-existence and not in terms of the notion of necessary existence. But if on this ground we are led to admit that in the case of God 'existence' is a quality in the sense that it is part of or one with and determines essence, what bearing has this on the question

whether God in fact exists or not?

K. If A will excuse my saying so, I find that there is a subtle verbal manoeuvring in his explanation of the notion of self-existence, and, if we are not careful, before we know where we are, we shall find that we have admitted the existence of God. For instance, A said that from the notion of God as self-existent it follows that in Him essence and existence are inseparable. This statement, if true, requires careful analysis. Otherwise it may seem to provide a very short step to the conclusion 'God exists'. A may point out that if we say God does not, or even may not, exist we are separating God's essence from His existence which we have agreed not to do!

C. Yes, I had overlooked this possibility. How would you analyze the inseparable relation of essence and existence in God without admitting that God necessarily exists?

K. I would say that it must be understood to mean that *if God exists*, His existence is one with His essence.

C. And if God does not exist?

K. Then in that case God's essence remains without existence; and this involves no contradiction, since it does not make God non-self-existent. If God does not exist the question whether His existence is independent or dependent on another does not arise.

C. '*If God exists*, His existence is one with his essence.' You have resurrected the modal hypothetical!

K. How so?

C. If essence and existence are one in God He cannot conceivably fail to exist. But you add, this is true *if He exists*!

A. I appeal to K to consider this point: Is it possible to predicate Y of X contingently and at the same time to say that if X is Y, X cannot but be Y?

K. My answer is, it is not only possible, but that is what we must say in the case of God's existence.

A. K is incorrigible!

C. I would like to urge a different consideration which may perhaps show that K's obstinacy in sticking to the troublesome modal hypothetical is not without justification. A said, and I agree with him, that whatever we can truly ascribe to God is part of His essence. That is, in God there are no accidents and no properties which merely follow from His essence without forming part of it.

A. I didn't mention anything about properties distinct from essence, but I think C is right. There can be nothing in the Divine Nature which is not fully Divine and so part of His essence.

C. Very well. Now would A go so far as to say that from the formal definition of God as 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived', not only God's existence but all the qualities in God's essence can be logically deduced?

A. No. that would be an intolerable presumption on the part of the intellect. I agree

with Spinoza that God has infinite attributes and whether we know only two of these, as he thought, or more, there are others we know nothing of.

- C. I wasn't thinking of unknown attributes but those attributes which theists generally ascribe to God. For instance, Love. Would you say that 'God is Love' is a necessary truth?
- A. That is a difficult question. I had not thought about it. But suppose I say that the proposition is not necessary.... Oh, I see the point you propose to make against me. You want to say that 'God is Love', if true, is contingently true, but, if true, 'Love' would necessarily be a part of God's essence, and so 'God is Love' would be necessarily true. A very ingenious argument!
- K. And to me very welcome. It means that we not only can, but must, say, '*If God is Love then He is necessarily Love.*'
- C. I do not care for these modal terms, necessary and contingent. I would put it this way: If God is Love, then the proposition 'God may not have been Love' is totally inadmissible. But for our purposes it comes to the same thing as what K has said.³
- A. Let us meet again and resume this interesting discussion.

(*To be continued*)

J. N. CHUBB

NOTES

1. I think Kant's refutation of the Ontological Argument does assume this puerile form, at least as he states it. He takes for granted that 'God exists' can be necessarily true only if it is an analytic proposition, i.e., if 'existence' is included in the concept of God, and then triumphantly points out that 'existence' can never be a predicate, i.e., part of the defining characteristics of an object!
2. This is another strange view of Kant that the concepts of a synthetic proposition require a principle of mediation. In the case of mathematical propositions the mediation is made possible through a 'construction'. Propositions of transcendent metaphysics are rejected as there is nothing which can mediate between the subject and predicate concepts. Kant's view is self-refuting as it is arrived at by a reasoning process which is synthetic *a priori*, but itself has no principle of mediation.
3. It might be said that in God all perfections must be formally contained in a super-eminent degree, and hence 'God is Love' must express a necessary truth. This argument, however, whether valid or not, presupposes that God is a Person. I believe that the proposition 'the Perfect Being is a Person', though it may be true, is not a truth of logic.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

A Marvel of Cultural Fellowship: By *Sisirkumar Mitra*. Published by Lalvan Publishing House, Bombay-1. Pages 139.

IN this second half of the 20th century the group-psychology of man has almost everywhere taken a deplorable turn. While, on the one hand, advances made in the technological field have broken all the geographical barriers dividing men from other groups of men and mankind in its entirety has been made to feel its species-oneness thanks to the facilities offered by space-age communication, the psychology of the race has not been able to progress in step with its external achievements. The unhappy result is that 'man's inhumanity to man', to borrow the apposite phrase used by J. W. Krutch, has reached in our age what seems almost unparalleled proportions. The recent utterance of President Johnson,¹ made in the context of the contemporary American scene, figures as well the mood and malady of most of the cultures in today's world: "There is a degree of intolerance and almost totalitarian vehemence that says, 'Either see it my way or you will be sorry'."

India too has fallen a victim to the virulence of this global disease. Forgetting the age-old maxim of their forefathers to 'mingle in one vessel the waters of the seven seas', Indians of our day have fervidly taken to parochialism, regional chauvinism and cultural isolationism. Aggressively divisive forces and tendencies are rampant throughout the land and the goal of national integration and fellowship remains an ineffectual dream if not already an exploded myth. Scanning the national scene, one almost feels like despairing of the destiny of our nation.

Now, in this prevailing atmosphere of suffocating intolerance and all-round disharmony, this slender volume from the pen of Professor Mitra comes to the reader almost as a waft of soothing zephyr that brings with it a heart-warming message of cheer and optimism. He has convincingly shown that the present with its gloomy interlude should not be allowed to dampen our spirit or cloud our vision. For after all this is but a passing phase preparing the birth of the luminous dawn of the future. Mitra is no Utopian dreamer carried away by the excess of his own enthusiasm. A profound student of History, he directs our attention to the past of our land, and with the pinpoint precision and meticulous perspicacity of a social scientist he has marshalled in the book under review an almost encyclopaedic array of attested facts gleaned from the ancient and medieval history of India to prove his thesis. According to him, the urge for cultural diffusion and synthesis, the passion for unity and solidarity with others (*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*) and the catholic mood of acceptance and

¹ Vide *The Hindu*, May 23, 1968; p. 5.

assimilation of all that is good in other cultures, are intrinsic to our national consciousness. Although it is unfortunately true that "the ideals for which India has stood through the ages... appear today to be dimmed, if not covered over by extrinsic influences",¹ "nevertheless, the broad days of our past are a promise of her broader and brighter future".²

Professor Mitra has in particular chosen to delve deep into the past history of Bengal, a limb of Mother India, to substantiate his thesis. But this restriction does in no way detract from the universal appeal of his book to all Indians. For Bengal in his work is only incidental; the incessant striving for cultural interfusion and fellowship and solidarity with others around is the principal theme of this book. The historical validity of this theme could have been equally corroborated by the study of the history of other peoples of India. Indeed, as the learned author has pointed out:

"India, in her vastness and variety, is more than a country. 'She is a compact sub-continent and her history must be an organic and integral whole made up of her rich regional diversities. Geographically and culturally, India is one and indivisible. And the core of her culture centres round the ever-evolving truth of her soul. How this culture has been evolving and enriching itself and taking on its individual character from region to region is a subject of engrossing research and study. If a devoted band of competent and high-souled scholars all over the land take up the work and act as a cooperative body on all-India basis, many an unexplored field will yield its secrets, and the cultural gaps in our country's history will be massively filled up.'"³

Prof. Mitra has sought to do some pioneering work in this field and he has chosen 'the Bengal of the ages'⁴ as the subject of his study. The book under review is the outcome of this effort. And what an outcome this is! Almost every page of it is packed with so much wealth of revealing information that one cannot but wonder at the painstaking labour and research that have gone to the production of this volume. And what is all the more commendable is the fact that Mitra's book, replete with an imposing array of historical facts, has not degenerated into a ponderous monograph meant for the specialists alone. And this is in a great measure due to its beautifully cadenced prose that seems to glide from cover to cover with the ease of a gurgling stream, carrying the reader's heart and attention along with its graceful flow.

All in all, this book merits careful study by the pilgrims of the spirit and lovers of India. No praise can be too high for the Publisher's courage of conviction to bring out such a precious volume in these days of rank commercialism. The printing and get-up are very good indeed; the cover too is well-designed. We heartily commend this volume to the attention of all those who are interested in the cultural history and the future destiny of the land.

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

¹ p. 125.

² p. 93.

³ p. 47.

⁴ p. 48.

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

THIRTEENTH SEMINAR

26TH NOVEMBER 1967

THE NEW OUTLOOK ON EDUCATION

(Continued from the May issue)

II

THE ultimate aim of our education here is the acquisition and expression of the Supreme Knowledge. The invaluable aids that our Centre of Education could give to the students in realising this object are:

1. To indicate the possibility and means of developing higher faculties of knowledge.

2. To prepare in the student an adequate instrument of expression of knowledge.

In formulating any system of education, we must clearly seize these two aspects of education—developing superior methods of acquiring knowledge and developing a capacity of expression. Till the present day our entire concentration was focussed on the second aspect. But strangely enough we did not realise that a capacity of eloquent expression is sadly impoverished without an access to true knowledge. Now it is an urgent need that we give equal importance to both of these aspects. We can no longer afford to neglect the development of higher faculties of knowledge, since that alone can truly distinguish our institution from so many thousands in the world, and not merely the abolition of tests, degrees and diplomas and other such differences. To bring forth this significant trait in our educational system what is of primary importance is to effect a radical change in the psychological attitude of the student towards studies. And here is the crux of the problem of education. Whether or not we change the external system of education is of secondary importance, but if a change is to be effected it must be done with the sole purpose of furthering our capacity to refine and develop the higher faculties of knowledge. Let me hasten to tell you that here I do not intend to formulate a new system of education. My main purpose is to suggest a better way of teaching and to make clear the role of a teacher.

A close examination of the prevalent unsatisfactory conditions immediately shows

hat the teacher is greatly responsible for failing to bring about among the students the right attitude towards studies. Time and again the Mother has said that the teacher must be a yogi. It is a fact that all the teachers are not yogis—to this they will themselves agree—and there is no point in insisting again and again on this shortcoming of the teachers and leaving it at that. Many of us have a tendency to view our shortcomings as insurmountable and to leave matters as they stand. I for one believe that in spite of the serious handicap of the teachers, a lot can be done. What is needed is a new beginning, a new orientation. At this initial stage a great spiritual achievement is not immediately demanded but only a basic sincerity to attain to the goal we have set before us.

Now and again the teacher should remind the students of the aim of our education. All the actions of the teacher should be in conformity with this ideal—his way of dealing with the students, his way of correcting their notebooks, etc. Each subject—poetry, history, mathematics—is trying to express and embody an aspect of a single truth. This deeper reality the teacher should try to seize, and instill in the students too an urge to get at that deeper truth. It is imperative that a striving towards such an aim becomes a most important preoccupation of the teacher. At present, inadvertently perhaps, we make watertight compartments between subjects. In teaching a subject the teacher often gets caught and limited by the subject-matter. In our institution specially, the subject-matter should not be all-important. It is necessary for the teacher to stand back from the subject and see in the light of the teachings of our Master the inner truth and significance behind the subjects. This is something to be taught to the students also; this will bring about automatically a profounder and more integral understanding of the subjects. For example, while teaching science the teacher can often step back and show to his students what a tremendous order and harmony reigns over the apparent chaos and disorder of the physical world. From purely scientific grounds the student is thus led to the discovery of a secret unity which is the bedrock of manifestation. If the students are mature enough the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother describing the process of manifestation could be read. If such a system of teaching is taken up, I am sure it will gradually result in a radical change in the attitude of the student *vis-à-vis* the studies. But it goes without saying that this way of teaching should not be made into an excuse for slackness on the part of the teacher, *i.e.*, the teacher must be well prepared to teach the subject proper and the introduction of the new element must not hamper this teaching.

I would have certainly loved to go through such a system of education. Now looking back in retrospect at my former days, when I was in the secondary classes, I see a student coming to attend classes quite regularly but without any particular aim in view—he comes because his friends come and he has nothing else to do. In the system described earlier, the student-life acquires a profound significance—it is not merely a to-and-fro motion from home to class and back and the acquisition of some information in the process. The student-life becomes a constant quest for the Truth, a sustained seeking after the great principles that unite the appalling vastness of Time and Space.

All that I have said till now will help to usher a new atmosphere in our centre of education. It will change the attitude both of the teacher and of the student towards studies. Let us now turn to the central problem—the development of higher faculties of knowledge. Repeatedly the Mother has insisted that *the method* of acquiring knowledge is through a silent mind. If to be able to think is a quality of the mind, to be capable of not thinking is a much superior mental quality. The mind with its army of thoughts is not an instrument of knowledge. Not until very recently have we started giving due importance to the development of this unique mental faculty. To begin with, it is necessary that all teachers should endeavour to acquire a certain quietude of the mind. A complete mental silence cannot immediately be demanded of the teachers. But what can and must be done by the teacher is to indicate to his students the full value of mental silence. It matters little if a student fails to do a good homework or solve a problem; but the teacher should precisely avail himself of this opportunity to show to his students how a quiet mind could have helped him to do a better work. In these matters a constant insistence will prove a great help. One must be very careful not to introduce this topic in class as something very abstruse and philosophical but as something concrete, interesting, and above all of urgent necessity.

At the beginning a regular concentration in the class might not prove very fruitful. Awake the students to the stark necessity of achieving mental silence and leave them free to practise it by themselves, at home, while walking on the street, while waiting for a class to begin. I say this because it must be made clear to the students that mental silence is not only a way of acquiring knowledge but must also be a way of living. Awakening them to this necessity is the greatest contribution a teacher can make to the life of the students. If even a single student is made to realise the true importance of mental silence the teacher is greatly successful. Another point naturally comes in as complementary to mental silence and that is being conscious of all the movements of one's being. The student must be made conscious that he is in the midst of a flux of mental, vital and physical movements and that it is indispensable to come out of it. Regarding this subject it will be best to bring the students into direct contact with the writings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Here, we can take immense help from the Mother's recorded Talks. These Talks must be made to fit very naturally into our educational framework.

A system of education which proceeds on these lines will produce not only brilliant students but "living souls", children of the Mother who are "straightforward, frank, upright and honourable human beings ready to develop into divine nature".

SWADESH CHATTERJEE

A DREAM THAT CAME TRUE

A SHORT STORY

PREM was in the final grade when first he had the dream. And so real an experience it seemed to him, that even after waking up he still felt he was elsewhere, and dreaming. And what a beautiful dream it had been! If he could have had his way, he would have liked to run away to his favourite corner in the garden, far from his noisy brothers and sister, and from his shouting servants and, lying down on his broken bench, go over his dream in detail. But where was the time for that? He rose slowly and went to the bathroom and, after brushing his teeth, commenced his ablution.

"Now let me see," he said to himself. "How did my dream commence? I was in a room full of flowers, and at the further end..."

"Prem, hurry up." He heard his mother calling outside.

"All right, mamma. I won't be a minute," he replied, soaping himself quickly. "Yes," he ruminated, "at the further end of the room I saw a beautiful lady all in white." And his hands automatically stopped their work at this thought, and he sat down on the wooden stool and smiled. For, at the very thought of the lady of his dream, his whole being seemed to get filled with a strange happiness...

"Prem," shouted his mother, giving the bathroom door a good shake at the same time. "What on earth are you doing so long inside! Your father is already at the breakfast table and is calling you."

"Coming, Ma," said he as quietly as he could. For really he was getting fed up with his father's impatience. But he knew his temper too, so he hurriedly emptied the bucket of hot water over his head, wiped himself perfunctorily, got into his school clothes, and was out within minutes. He rushed to the breakfast table where his two brothers and little sister were eating their porridge. But no sooner did he enter the room than his father shouted, "How dare you come here without combing your hair and with water running down your neck! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, coming before your elders in this untidy condition!"

So back he went to his room, wiped his head dry, combed his hair, and returned to his breakfast. His father was not there, which was a mercy, he thought, and he went straight to his place and finished his porridge in a hurry. Grandpa came limping into the room, and tap-tapping with his stick, for he could not see very well.

"Where are you, Prem?" he asked jovially. "And why is that electric light kept burning today so late? Or is it the sun? These eyes play all sorts of tricks on me."

Grandpa Chunibhai was always a "steadily contented man", as he called it, who kept the balance in the family by adding his weight to the pan that most needed it.

"By the way, I heard your father shouting a little while ago and I guessed it must have been at you."

"Yes, grandpa," Prem replied, getting up and helping his grandfather to find his seat.

"What was it this time? You had forgotten to tie your shoe-laces or what?"

No, grandpa, I had forgotten to pass a comb through my hair."

Honk! Honk! sounded a horn outside in the portico; so Prem hurried away, giving an affectionate hug to his grandparent, the only member of the family who understood and defended him. There was Mamma too, but she was weak and afraid of his father.

His brothers were already in the car with the servant, so Prem jumped in quickly, gathering his books on the way. He slumped into his seat and closed his eyes. "Always this rush and hurry! When will it stop, and where will it lead to?" He asked himself. Then his thoughts turned to his lessons and school.

"Dash it all, man! today is my history-test and I clean forgot about it," he said to his brother Jagdish sitting beside him.

"You mean you have not revised anything?" Jagdish asked, surprised.

"I did revise it last night, but then I had such a wonderful dream I clean forgot about it till now."

"You had better stop dreaming and attend more to your studies," put in Raju, his second brother, "or Daddy will be very cross."

Prem took out his history-book from his pile and commenced to go through the pages. But soon after that the car came to a halt, for they had reached their school, and the boys jumped out and, collecting their books, ran inside.

Thank God they were just in time, sighed Prem, or his teacher would have once again told him that he would be late even for his own funeral.

The day dragged on endlessly, or so it seemed to Prem, but at last school was over and he was home again. He went straight to his room, and his mother followed him with his tea. "How did you fare in your test?" was the first question she asked, setting down the tea-things on the table.

"Fairly well, I think, Mamma. At first my brain seemed all in a muddle. But then I started thinking of the wonderful dream I had seen last night, and the flowers I had found in a room, and the beautiful lady who had seemed to smile at me. And then I set to work on my paper, and it all came back to me. I mean all that I had read last night. And I hope to pass with flying colours."

"Of course you will," said Shantaben, Prem's mother. "For you know, son, it's not that you have no brains, for you can be quite clever when you want to but you are fanciful, and fond of day-dreaming, and wasting your time doing pictures, when you ought to be studying seriously. You are well aware how keen your father is to get you into his business, as soon as you have graduated. He is a self-made man, and he has worked so hard to build up this business of electrical appliances, and now he looks forward..."

"Enough, Mamma," said Prem, rising from his chair angrily. "You promised to let me join the School of Arts after I passed my S.S.C. and here you go again, talking

about father's business for which I have neither liking nor aptitude. I will make a mess of it. I will land the whole family in trouble. I am not made for it. Don't you understand? I want to be an artist. My heart is all in painting. I go into ecstasy at the sight of flowers, birds, trees, rivers, mountains, and I detest handling wires, and switches, and what-not of the electrical workshop."

"But, my dear son," remonstrated the mother, "your poor father will be heart-broken if you persist in following your fancy. Besides, you know very well how little the artists earn. For who has the money to buy pictures now-a-days? And how are you going to support yourself? You saw the artist of the footpath the other day. He too was the son of a rich man, and you saw where he landed himself by taking to art against his father's wishes!"

"But he looked quite happy. For he was doing what he loved to do, and not sitting in some stuffy room in an office like his father and grandfather before him. And I shall be happy too if I become an artist, no matter if I starve. And why should father be heart-broken? He has Jagdish and Raju to attend to his business, who are both fond of the workshop, whereas I shall be miserable if you insist on my going to father's office and minding his business. And finally I shall leave home... You understand, Mamma, that I shall leave home for good..."

"Who is talking of leaving home?" said an angry voice outside, which Prem recognized as that of his father. The door flew open and there stood his father, his hair dishevelled, his eyes bulging, and his face red with anger.

"You can leave right now," he said, pointing to the door. "And don't return. I have had enough of your nonsense..."

"Oh, no!" cried his mother, and burst into tears.

Prem's mind was in a whirl. What a cruel father he had! Or would this prove a blessing in disguise? He pulled out his suitcase from under his bed and commenced to throw in things haphazardly. Where would he go? What would he do? These were the questions crossing his mind. Then in the menacing silence they heard the soft tap-tap of grandpa's stick, and his father Dinesh turned round to look.

"What's going on here?" his grandfather asked softly, entering the room and closing the door after him.

"Prem is threatening to leave us, so I told him to leave right now," explained his father.

"A good idea," said the grandfather to everybody's surprise, "and I shall go with him. There is no peace in this house, so we might as well seek it elsewhere."

"But, father, you are not strong enough. You can hardly see. And where will you go?" asked Dineshbabu.

"Where will Prem go? Wherever he goes, there I shall go. Live as we like, sleep under the stars, and perhaps beg for our food," replied the grandfather quietly.

"Don't talk nonsense, father!" said Dineshbabu. "What will the world say?"

"The world! What do I care what the world thinks or says! The world will always twist things, and probably say that you have driven out your old father and eldest

son into the streets, as you could not support them any more."

"No, no, father. Your going is unthinkable! I wanted to teach this young upstart a lesson. What he deserves is a few hard knocks, and that's what life will give him, once he is thrown on his own. But you and his mother are responsible for spoiling him."

"If I had thrown you out when you had wanted to start this electrical business, instead of joining my respectable firm of accountants, where would you have been today?...Leave the boy alone, as I left you alone," said the grandfather, walking out of the room as quietly as he had come.

So the storm blew over, and the household settled down once again to its hum-drum routine.

2

Days passed and became weeks, and weeks became months, and Prem forgot all about his dream. The grandfather had promised him that if he worked hard and passed his S.S.C. he would take it upon himself to get him entered into the Arts School. So he worked seriously at his studies. But during week-ends both he and his grandfather would be off to some beauty spot, where Prem could paint to his heart's content. And it was during one of these excursions, when he was lying down under a tree, after sketching the surrounding landscape, that he fell into a doze, and found himself in a lovely garden, and there was the same beautiful lady standing there and smiling at him. But this time something from his heart seemed to fly to her. That was all that he could remember, for just then a leaf from the tree overhead fell on his face and he woke up with a start. He wanted to make a sketch of what he had seen, but it wasn't easy. And what he produced was so poor when compared to what he had seen in his dream, that he tore it up later on. And he spoke to none about it.

Now he was in the final year, and studying seriously, whilst his grandpa was busy arranging for his entry into the School of Arts, for he was certain his grandson would not let him down. His father, however, was still wanting him to join his business, and trying various ways to get him interested in it.

Then on the night before the exam, when least he expected or thought of it, once again he saw the same beautiful lady in his dream. And this time he was quite close to her, and she gave him a flower and said something to him. But he could not recollect her words. For he was once again rudely awakened by his servant, this time telling him to get up and read. For it was the day of the exam. And he knew that it must have been his father who had instructed him to do so.

Though Prem had studied very hard, his mind at times seemed in a daze, specially when faced with some difficult question. But he had learnt to keep quiet and slip back to his dream and, as if some mysterious help were coming from far away, his mind would clear and he would be able to write the correct answer.

Discussing it with his grandfather later, he asked him what could be the mean-

ng of it. And who could be this beautiful lady who seemed to help him when he was in trouble?

"A Fairy Princess, probably," the grandfather joked.

"No," said Prem, quite seriously. "She is much more like a Goddess. Do you think she could be real? I mean, do you think she is somebody in flesh and blood? And do you think I will meet her some day?"

"That is difficult to say, my dear boy, for a Goddess does not walk this earth of ours in this Kaliyuga. But why don't you ask her? If she is what you think her to be, she may be able to tell you. And even help you to find her, if she really exists."

So from that day onwards Prem not only prayed to her, but also sought her in every place he went. But it was impossible to find anybody even distantly approaching her.

A few days later, a school-friend of his grandfather dropped in to see the old man before he returned to Pondicherry where he was living permanently in Sri Aurobindo's Ashram, and reminded the grandfather of his promise to accompany him for the next Darshan. The grandfather was nonplussed for a moment, because he knew this was no time to leave Prem alone with his father, and he was not sure whether the boy would consent to accompany him, so he said in his same old quiet way, "I am quite willing to come, provided Prem comes along with me, for what with my weak health and bad eyes I can hardly go anywhere without him."

Prem was delighted to hear this, though he could not analyse his own feelings. And he thought it would give him a chance of seeing a little of his country, of which he knew so little. So it was fixed that as soon as the permission was obtained of the Mother who guided the Ashram, they would set off together. And within a fortnight everything was done.

His father was not at all pleased with the idea, for he had hoped to influence his son yet, but the grandfather was adamant. So one fine morning they set off, the two old men and the young boy, who unknown to himself was only fulfilling his destiny.

Needless to say, no sooner did he enter the Ashram gate than he recognized the garden of his dream, the flowers he had seen, and then when the Divine Mother came to give Her darshan, his heart almost jumped out of him, and he nearly shouted, "This is the beautiful lady I have been seeing, and who was helping me."

He never returned from the place, and slowly his whole family realized that they did not have an ordinary boy for their son, but someone of whom they were proud ever after.

LALITA

EYE EDUCATION

Q: My son often gets a headache when reading; the doctor has prescribed glasses +0.25 to correct his astigmatism. I want to know what is astigmatism. Is it curable by your treatment?

A: The cornea of the eye is circular like a watch-glass. It has two principal meridians—one horizontal and one vertical each at a right angle to the other. When one meridian is flatter or more convex than the other, the eye develops astigmatism. Astigmatism is curable like other errors of refraction by eye education and mental relaxation exercises. Reading fine print is extremely helpful in such cases.

Q: What is mixed astigmatism. Is it also curable?

A: In mixed astigmatism one meridian is flatter than the normal, while the other meridian is more convex than the normal. The result is that the eye needs plus and minus lenses in the same eye. To make the subject interesting I give here the story of a patient—a report written by her father,

REPORT

My daughter Kavita is about 8 years old. I think it was her fifth birthday party when she appeared before her tiny friends, in a very serious mood, wearing an elderly look. She had not put on her grandma's specs, they were her own. How funny! How silly! and they were designed to be her life-long companion. No medical practitioner, no eye specialist grants divorce with spectacles, once you get along with them. There is only one person, an old inmate of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who recommends such divorces. I shall tell you the story of my daughter.

At a young age, specially when she started her K.G., she had complained several times of headaches. Further, she was getting a cold and cough every two months. We took her first to an E.N.T. (Ear, Nose, Throat) Specialist. He found nothing was wrong. We were also in touch with the Dentist. He had also nothing to say. Then we went to the well-known Eye Specialist of our Bangalore city. My daughter could hardly read the test chart half-way. The child of 5 was then taken to a dark-room. The doctor went on saying, "See here, see there, see over my head, etc". Next day he tried several glasses, asking her, "This better or that? Now which is better?" and so on. The doctor managed to prescribe compound glasses with the following power

R.E. —1.5 sph. \bigcirc +3.0 cyl. axis 90

L.E. —0.5 sph. \bigcirc +2.5 cyl. axis 90

We were puzzled to see the numbers where one axis is plus, the other minus. The doctor said that the eyes were very weak, and she could never think of getting rid of glasses. He asked us to go to him every year for a check-up.

So in October 1966, the doctor again examined my daughter's eyes and prescribed higher glasses:

R.E. -2.0 sph. $\bigcirc +4.0$ cyl. axis 90

L.E. -1.0 sph. $\bigcirc +3.5$ cyl. axis 90

Then one fine day we went to Pondicherry in connection with the school of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. We also took the opportunity to meet Dr. R. S. Agarwal, of whom we had heard sometime back. He examined my daughter's eyes very carefully and said her eyesight could become normal. He was confident in his words. Further, his elderly disposition and loving tone gave us full hope. He asked us to come one month in advance before the school opened at Pondicherry.

And thus we again came to Pondicherry about 3 weeks before the school reopened. We went to Dr. Agarwal. He advised us to bring a set of colour pencils, one ruled note book, one blank note book, one dot pen, one pencil. Wonderful prescription! My daughter loved to have all that. Then daily in the morning we went to the Doctor. My daughter could easily spend one and a half hours in his eye clinic. She was given a ball to play with. But all these were exercises for eyes. Playing with a ball gave her the correct way of blinking; like that all other things were important. Further, daily she was going to a dark-room, but with a candle burning. She was asked to read a small book with fine print in it. This too was interesting. The doctor used to make a group of 4-5 children and give them different games of eyesight to play in sequence. Every morning was a delightful morning.

Now I shall tell you the results. On the first day when we went to Dr. Agarwal, she was not able to read the last four lines on his chart from a particular distance without or with glasses. After 15 days of treatment she was able to read 3 further lines on his chart. What a wonderful result! Is it not like magic? My daughter was so happy when she learnt that no more spectacles would be needed in her whole life. And all these results were achieved in 15 days! Even when we go to a surgeon for any operation, he will take more than 15 days. And here her eyes were cured with a set of colour pencils, a note book and a candle!

20 December 1967

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

NEWSLETTER

No 6

JUNE 1968

1. *Research in Reading*

Research is a word which needs defining every time it is used. Today the word is bandied about among various groups of educationalists ranging from those dealing with teaching techniques and methods of approach, to those engaged in postgraduate studies, to scientists and technicians working in the field of pure science and industry.

Educational research must, necessarily, deal with education in practice rather than with theoretical aspects of learning which pose a problem. There is, however, no more complicated, controversial or poorly defined subject than the teaching of reading. And, according to reports from America, Britain, France and Germany, nor has any subject been more researched. Yet still the question faces us: how can we best help children to deal with this fundamental problem which for many remains a physical and a psychological ordeal which can have subconscious repercussions lasting all through life?

Out of all the books specialising in reading and its problems and all the sophisticated reports from various countries and their methods of dealing with the problem one thing stands out clearly. Very little has been done on motivating children *to want to read* and guiding their reading towards a *growing comprehension* of what they have read.

If anyone doubts this, let him ask himself the question: how many of his adult acquaintances could give a comprehensive account of the satire contained in, say: Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, or *L'ile des pingouins* of Anatole France? Comprehension is, after all, what reading is all about. And, comprehension is learning, and yet this is the part of the teaching of reading about which least is known. We hear a lot about elaborate methods of decoding techniques but the majority seem to shy away from trying to find an answer to better comprehension.

Psychologically perhaps we have to go back to the earliest times when so much importance was given to learning by "heart". Which, of course, nine times out of ten, was not by heart (by love) at all, but only by rote (by repetition). The murk of the SMOG (sensorial and mental outer grasp) set in then from the very beginning and has been pushed down into the subconscious part of learning tradition and has remained there ever since. It now needs to be exorcised.

If a child truly learns through love, where identity, self-discovery and experience are the climate of ecology, there is no failure in comprehension, no forget-

ting, no mental or emotional *lacunae*—a child who has ridden a cycle never forgets nor does a boy or girl who has once learnt to swim ever forget the experience. But if we exaggerate the climate of learning of these two skills towards a negative environment—where, say, in learning to cycle the child has a frightening accident or in learning to swim was almost drowned—then we see that the memory of such a tragic experience may make the child hate cycling or swimming for the rest of its life. In teaching both these skills we are most careful to find patient and sympathetic teachers who can communicate confidence and certitude. But do we take the same care with children embarking on their first adventure of decoding the complicated script we have devised for them?

The most important area in the teaching of reading is the conditions for learning that are present. If a child is not conditioned to learn, nothing you do, no skill, no method, no device, is going to cause learning to take place. The conditions have to be right before your methodology is going to be effective.

A really good teacher would be able to recognise something of the emotional conditions of the child, the class, and so respond to them. But it is usually possible to create, with a little thought, the emotional and environmental conditions most conducive to learning.

The teacher must get the student involved in learning. It is no good to ask the student such questions about the text as: "When did Daniel enter the lion's den?" but rather, "How do you think Daniel felt when he entered the lion's den?" The more we understand the reasons for our feelings, the causes and effects of our behaviour, the greater will be the involvement, interest and sincerity in learning. It has been found that the more you can get a child to hypothesize what he thinks he is going to find in a picture or in a story, the greater his receptivity to learning. Once a child commits himself to an answer—it does not matter if it is right or wrong—there comes a moment of attention when he wishes to find the answer. That is the moment when true teaching begins. Research tells us that there are sixteen ways a child can show comprehension of a word; you can imagine therefore how many ways there are to demonstrate comprehension of a sentence. It is here, in demonstration of comprehension, where the teacher is usually most lax. There is usually not enough planned required responses created by the teacher. The teacher who is most successful in this area, the most important in conditioned learning, is the teacher who makes his own worksheets for a given subject and for selected groups of students—or who creates his own programme series for special students and their particular requirements.

One organisation that is engaged in bringing the work of experimental psychologists closer to the classroom is the Educational Research Council of America. The ERCA is best known for its work: "The Greater Cleveland Math Program." The head of this organisation is Mr. Robert Willford who has prepared the criteria for comprehension of a word.

The following criteria are offered as measures of observable success of compre-

hension. The same criteria are not adequate to measure such achievements as sentence, paragraph or story comprehension, nor are all of the measures applicable to all words. (For example, some words cannot be dramatized because they represent abstract ideas.)

1. Point to it, frame it, pick it up, and match it when it is presented by itself.
2. Point to it, frame it, pick it up, and match it when it is presented in the presence of a distractor.
3. Name it when it is presented with a picture clue.
4. Name it when it is presented without a picture clue.
5. Write it when verbally given its name.
6. Place the word in its proper context when given the word, a distractor, and the context.
7. Verbally apply the word to appropriate situations that it names.
8. Verbally supply the first common definition.
9. Write the word into a complete sentence.
10. Verbally and motorically classify the word under two or more categories.
11. Verbally use the word appropriately in a simple and complex sentence.
12. Verbally and motorically supply one or more synonyms and antonyms for the word.
13. Verbally supply two or more definitions for the word.
14. Verbally describe the word's origin and history or its evolution of usage.
15. Motorically illustrate the word.
16. Dramatize one or more meanings of the word.

If a child can do all 16 things for a single word then it can be inferred—because one can only infer—that he comprehends the word. If a child can only do eight of these things then that means he has 50% comprehension.

When enough thought is given to this subject of comprehension it becomes quite obvious that it is a subject which has received very little attention in schools, colleges or universities. It has always been shelved without truly being scientifically analysed. The failure of a teacher reaching the student is a failure of (a) communication—he may be heard but not understood; he may be heard and understood but not remembered; (b) involvement—he fails to involve the student in the work to the point of interest; and (c) comprehension—he fails to create the ecology, the climate of environment, in which comprehension can more easily come about.

2. *Thought of the Month*

The only work that spiritually purifies is that which is done without personal motives, without desire for fame or public recognition or worldly greatness, without insistence on one's own mental motives or vital lusts and demands or physical preferences, without vanity or crude self-assertion or claim for position or prestige, done for the sake of the Divine alone and at the command of the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo, *Lights on Yoga*
NORMAN C. DOWSETT