

MOTHER INDIA

September 1968

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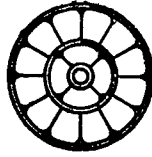
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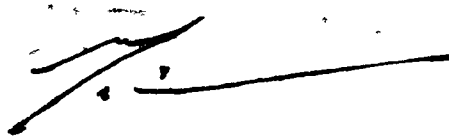


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. 8

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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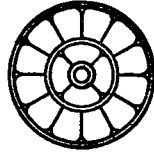
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WORDS OF THE MOTHER



Auroville is meant
not for the satisfaction
of desires
but for the growth of
the true consciousness.



PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS

A REPLY BY THE MOTHER

Q. At least one lac Americans have had experiences with LSD and Mescaline—experiences called “psychedelic”, which means “consciousness-expanding”. These drugs may become legalised in America, and a nation-wide campaign is afoot. Here is a copy of the Psychedelic Review (No. 7, 1966), with an article claiming a high Yogic state achieved with Mescaline.

I HAVE read the passage marked in the magazine.

One thing is sure—

These experiences are not spiritual and to give them that name is a proof of complete ignorance of what is really a spiritual experience.

The effect of the drug must be either an erratic wandering in the vital or the waking up of some subconscious notation gone asleep in the subconscious part of the being.

No time to say any more on such a futile subject.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE NEW WORLD

ANSWERS BY THE MOTHER

Q. What is the role of the United States with regard to the building of the new world?

The work of the U.S.A. is to provide the financial help needed to prepare the earth for the new creation.

Q. What must the people of the United States do in order to begin to be able to fulfill this role?

Become aware of those, individual or organisation, capable of bringing about this transformation and give them the necessary money.

June 9, 1968.

INNER AND OUTER PROCESSES

SOME LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Self: I feel that some lower being or force has already settled down in me and makes the vital and physical dance according to its will. Is it this that prevents me from receiving the Mother's light?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a mental formation—there is no such lower being. You should reject at once these formations. (28-3-1934)

Why do you attach importance to such things? What power of what high post? A. and M. cannot do anything by their own power—for every detail they have to take the Mother's sanction. People criticise and blame the head workers (D.C.A. etc.) because they do not do what people want, why should they do what people want?—they have to consider only what the Mother wants. (5-3-1934)

I meant no rational cause [for jealousy]. A psychological cause there always is like the sense of exclusive claim, possession, personal demand etc. etc. etc. (7-3-1934)

Why did you feel jealousy? If there is no claim or sense of possession, or desire of possession there can be no ground for jealousy. (7-3-1934)

It is very rare [in sadhana] to go on uninterruptedly. The movement is usually backwards and forwards.

...there are fertile periods and unfertile periods.

Self: The other night I could not get sleep till three o'clock! In the morning the body was aching and I looked like a sick man without any illness! Had not this state some inner cause?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is rather an outside influence. Do not open so much to those you mix with. (26-3-1934)

Self: How does "an outside influence" affect my physical and deprive me of necessary sleep?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why should it not? what is there to prevent it from doing that? An outside influence can bring depression, disturbance, doubts, everything else. It can affect the health, the sleep, anything.

There are people you mix with who have doubts, suggestions, depressions, jealousies, dissatisfaction with the Mother's action. They can easily throw that on you without intending it. These influences are all around in the atmosphere, so it is

not sufficient to avoid this or that person. You have to be on guard and self-contained. (26-3-1934)

Self: You said yesterday, "You have not yet a sufficiently quiet and even basis for sadhana." What do the underlined words mean?

SRI AUROBINDO: A quiet and even basis means a condition of the sadhana in which there is no tossing about between eager bursts of experience and a depressed inert or half inert condition, but whether in progress or in difficulty there is always a quiet consciousness behind turned in confidence and faith towards the Divine.

(5-4-1934)

From NAGIN DOSHI

GREATNESS IN POETRY

SOME LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

OF course you must understand that the greatness of the poetry as poetry does not necessarily depend on the level from which it is written. Shelley has more access to the inner Mind and through it to greater things than Milton, but he is not the greater poet.

When I say that a line comes from a higher or overhead plane or has the Overmind touch I do not mean that it is superior in pure poetic excellence to others from lower planes—that Amal's lines outshine Shakespeare or Homer for instance.

If I have given high praise to a passage, it does not follow that it is from the Overmind; the poetic (aesthetic) value or perfection of a line, passage or poem does not depend on the plane from which it comes, but on the purity and authenticity and power with which it transcribes an intense vision and inspiration from whatever source. Shakespeare is a poet of the vital inspiration, Homer of the subtle physical; but there are no greater poets in any literature.

When I said there were no greater poets than Homer and Shakespeare, I was thinking of their essential force and beauty—not of the scope of their work as a whole; for there are poets greater in their range.... But as poets—masters of rhythm and language and the expression of poetic beauty—Vyasa and Valmiki, though not inferior, are not greater than either the English or the Greek poet.

No doubt, if we can get a continuous inspiration from the Overmind, that would mean a greater, sustained height of perfection and spiritual quality in poetry than has yet been achieved; but we are discussing here short passages and lines.

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 11, 1940

S: Jayantilal was asking if a glossary was going to be prepared for *The Life Divine*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Glossary for what? Sanskrit terms?

S: He didn't tell me exactly. It may be the new Yogic terms also. Perhaps he wants it more for himself than for others. He finds it difficult, for instance, to catch the distinction between extra-terrestrial and extra-cosmic.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is for Sanskrit terms I can understand. You can't write of Yoga without using Sanskrit terms.

There followed a short talk on R. P showed Sri Aurobindo a poem of his in answer to Yeats' on the Rose in the depths of the heart.

SRI AUROBINDO (*after reading the poem*): These people write now and then very fine lines. Here's an example: "Embrace the malice in the dragon's fold." It is a really fine line.

P: Here are four lines of J's, as if in answer to R.

SRI AUROBINDO (*on reading them*): There is a poetic competition between Yeats, R and J! When R was sending me his poems, I found some fine lines amidst a mass of nonsense. With his wonderful vital energy he could have succeeded in any line he took up, but his vital being was rather undisciplined.

P: When he showed me his poems I told him to try to improve his form and advised him to see Amal's poems. He saw them and said, "That chip of a boy—what does he know of poetry?"

SRI AUROBINDO: That chip of a boy knows how to write and R doesn't.

After this, N read out two letters. One was from Buddhadev Bhattacharya. Buddhadev had written that he had talked about Sri Aurobindo in his class.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do I come into a class of Botany?

S: Perhaps as an example of evolution?

SRI AUROBINDO: From the red lotus known as "aurobindo"? (*Laughter*)

Then everybody enjoyed Charu Dutt's letter in which he said that he would very soon let loose a flood of stories about Pondicherry. This was just what S had predicted before Dutt's departure.

EVENING

S: I hear that the glossary to *The Life Divine* is going to be prepared by Sisir Mitra. I don't know what precisely he intends doing. Perhaps he will give a definition of every term.

P: It can't be a definition. For the meaning of a term will vary in different contexts.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the meaning has to be taken by reference to the context. A definition ties down the meaning.

S: The other philosophers have well-defined terms of their own.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is why their philosophies are so rigid. One can give only an indication. In spiritual subjects, one can't give anything more.

S: There will be so many commentaries on *The Life Divine* in the future.

P: There won't be much room for them. There is a sufficient body of mental reasoning in the book for everyone to be able to understand. If the book had been like *Sutras*, there would have been room.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even so, I suppose different interpretations will be made, just as there are Hegelians and Neo-Hegelians. Shankara wrote a brief commentary on the Gita and therefore there were many commentaries on his commentary. But in *The Life Divine* some of the chapters run to 60 or 70 pages of exposition.

MARCH 12, 1940

N: The Yuvaraja of Mysore is dead.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. He had double pneumonia. We had a wire two days back. He had been suffering from high blood-pressure for a long time. There seems no chance now of our getting the goat we had been promised. Krishnalal will be disappointed. Who will succeed the Yuvaraja?

P: His son.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh then the son may fulfil the father's promise.

C: They will send the goat all right since they have given the promise.

SRI AUROBINDO: There seems to be a strain of weakness in these Yuvarajas. Sukul who wanted to bring the late Yuvaraja here appears to be an unlucky fellow. He had wanted to bring one of the Rockefellers but the man died. And now that he

wanted to bring the Yuvaraja he too is dead. The present Maharaja is said to be a pious person.

S: Yes, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: In what way?

S: He has no vices, observes religious ceremonies, etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: A moral man?

S: Yes.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is he really an able man or is the credit for the well-organised State due to one of the Dewans? Sir Albion Banerji was the Dewan, wasn't he? He was a very able man.

P: Shivaswami Ayer also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh then he has a succession of able Dewans.

S: During the recent Mysore University Centenary Celebrations, one of their boasts was that they had supplied many Dewans to Mysore.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see.

S: Somebody has disputed the date of the centenary. He says that it has been held 13 years too early.

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that? He must have been an archaeologist and has perhaps unearthed an inscription?

P: Mysore is a highly developed industrial State.

SRI AUROBINDO: Are there any private industries?

P: Yes, some are State-aided and some are run by the State.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the private industries that make for the prosperity of the State. The State can only show the way.

P (*after a while*): Belisha is crying himself hoarse!

N: P's raising this topic is rather strange, because I was just thinking of asking you about the same thing. Hore-Belisha is pleading strongly for allied intervention in favour of Finland.

SRI AUROBINDO: The situation is risky from all standpoints. If they intervene, Russia will send military aid to Germany. Hitherto it has not done so. Only an economic agreement has been made. But if the Allies don't intervene, then after taking Finland Russia will wait for an advantageous moment to strike at the Allies.

P: Besides, one does not know what Italy will do.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, Italy's position is still uncertain.

P: It may decide to join Russia and Germany.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so. But if Italy joins them, the stalemate in the Siegfried Line will come to an end. France will be able to launch a direct attack through Italy. Italian defence is well known to be defective.

N: But Germany and Russia seem to have a common understanding.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably. Even then, if the Allies intervene, they will have to face an attack in the Near East. Russia may attack Turkey and send forces to India. The Allies, though they have some armies there, are not quite abounding. Of course,

they can also attack Russia through Asia Minor. In any case it is a very risky game.

N: Russia won't stop at Finland. It may next try Sweden.

SRI AUROBINDO: No—the Balkans more likely. If it had any intentions against Sweden it would not leave the Finland-struggle half-finished.

N: People say that Hore-Belisha may have resigned on Finnish Policy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Possibly, though they were said to have had entire agreement there.

MARCH 13, 1940.

S brought some photographs of Brahmananda, Balananda and Purnananda.

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at Brahmananda's picture*): He was not so haggard when I saw him. (*About Balananda's*) He was young when I saw him. In this photo he looks very jolly. (*About another of his*) Yes, this is more like him. Who is Purnananda?

S: His disciple perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: Oh yes, I seem to have heard his name.

S: Balananda had his Ashram in Deoghar. So Anilkumar and Jayantilal were asking if you knew him and what you thought of him.

SRI AUROBINDO: I saw him only once. He was doing much tapasya.

S: Our Keshav Shastri has taken a vow of silence, and Madangopal's friend has broken his. Ravindra gives me all these stories. When our sugar was being rationed, Ravindra said to me, "Take from Shastri's tin. He is silent, he can't protest." (*Laughter*)

P: He can write, and write strongly, I can tell you.

SRI AUROBINDO: He will consider the sugar-taking an outrage on his silence, but the vow of silence should include writing. Why speech only? Plenty of people don't speak, but they write. Gandhi is one, isn't he ?

S: Yes, Sir. Meherbaba too.

SRI AUROBINDO: You can tell Shastri that sugar is not necessary for a life of silence but only for calorific speech.

S: Radhananda also observed silence.

C: But he talks with particular people.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Sarala¹ used to talk a lot with him during their French lessons, till they quarrelled over Communism.

C: Radhanand said Sarala was a newspaper.

SRI AUROBINDO: But not a very reliable one. (*Laughter*)

P: She quarrelled with Kanai also.

SRI AUROBINDO: She quarrelled with everybody.

P: She seems to be staying in a Protestant Home in France.

¹ The Ashram name of an old French lady.

S: I had heard she was staying with a friend.

SRI AUROBINDO: She was, but they started beating each other. So she went to the Home where she can talk of Communism and plot against Daladier.

N: She departed from India, it seems, because she was afraid of dying here.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

N: And if she died here she would be reborn here.

SRI AUROBINDO: Do all Europeans who die here get reborn in India?

N: She wanted to die in a free country.

SRI AUROBINDO: I understand living in a free country—but dying?

P: She was a great eater.

SRI AUROBINDO: Both Suchi¹ and Sarala were great eaters.

N: They say the French usually are.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not like the Germans. The Germans eat three times more. They are fond of good food. Plenty of French people are abstemious and temperate. The Nordic races are good eaters while the Latins are temperate.

P: The English also are good eaters.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but not so much as the Germans. True, they eat four times a day, but each meal is not large.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

¹ The Ashram name of Sarala's husband.

I WENT TO SRI AUROBINDO

I WENT to Sri Aurobindo not because I wanted anything from him.

I went to him charmed by him, attracted by him, almost helplessly.

And he helped me fully, indelibly.

"Indelibly" means:

I may have many more births and many more deaths yet. But his help even the Lord of Death shall not dream of touching, of blotting out.

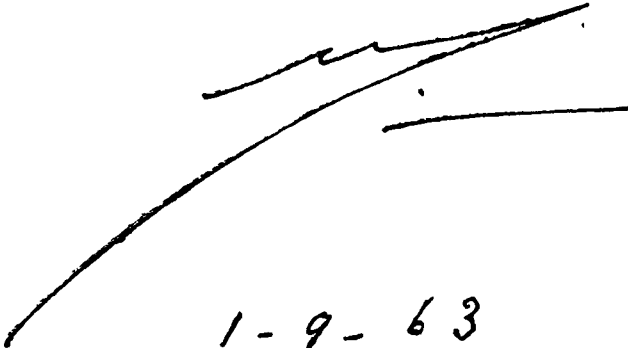
Of this I am certain.

GIRDHARLAL

SALUTATIONS

(Continued from the issue of August 15)

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



1-9-63

51

MIWANI (Africa), 17-9-1954

Dear Mother,

Today my mamma has told me a dream she had in the early morning :

"I dreamt that you have put on the jewels belonging to your father and a red sari and you are preparing to vanish from the ordinary world. You are sitting cross-legged in full pomp. A dip pit is being dug for you. And all of us are trying to persuade you not to take this step. But now it is impossible to stop you.

597

"Then suddenly I woke up and came to your bed: you were fast asleep. Seeing this, I was relieved. I went to the main door of the house. As soon as I opened it, I found one of your nephews standing there with beautiful roses in his hands..."

Hearing the account, I laughed. Poor mamma hardly knew that I had already made up my mind to come to You and lead the spiritual life.

Mother, mamma's dream was a wonderful symbol—it was an auspicious thing. Will not this dream come true? Is it not a prophecy of my future? My heart keeps saying yes and yes.

52

MIWANI (Africa), 17-9-1954

My extremely beloved Mother,

Innumerable prayers and salutations!

What happened to me yesterday again? Various adverse suggestions took possession of my mind, and I felt afraid that the circumstances in which I had been put would prevent me from coming to You—and then what if my life's aim remained unfulfilled? How then would my life be spent? In spite of having faith in You my mind starts wavering at times. Adverse suggestions may set up barriers to our meeting and what if we do not meet at all? How if I should remain without Your *Darshan*? Oh these thoughts simply wring my heart!

But what did You tell me during my meditation?

"My dear little child, I have read your heart. I am always with you. You shall come here, and you shall have the things you love. This is my promise to you. Do not lose hope."

And at once I grew calm. My tears dried up and I began to remember You constantly. The whole night I spent in remembrance of You. I don't even know when at last I fell asleep.

Mother, day follows day in this manner. Do call me to You soon. For, more and more my heart is drawn to You. And I cannot now dissuade my heart. You can hear my heart's cry.

Driving away all the obstacles put up by adverse forces, making me steady in my life's aim, giving me Your help, lead me to the spiritual path with Your Love. I am Your child. Do not forget me. And it is my only prayer that I may *never* forget You.

Do as You wish...

53

MIWANI (Africa), 21-9-1954

My own Mother,

I feel today that there are so many things to tell You. Your child is aching to come to You and to merge in Your Divinity. You too are shaping my life accordingly. Today I have understood what self-surrender means.

I should know that whatever I do is really done by You. Selfhood I must forget. It is essential that I should act according to Your inspiration and Your command.

Now my whole being is at Your disposal.

From the learned and religious books I read, I get knowledge of various things. But You know what I have to do henceforth. By Your wonderful inspiration my thoughts are becoming intenser and stronger. And what is more, by Your Grace my soul gains strength.

I see with certainty many changes taking place in my life. So I feel sure that I have won Your support. You have accepted me and will make me reach the peak of Truth. In all this there is only Your Grace. Without Your blessings, is there anything I can do? You alone show me the way. May Your Will for the whole world be fulfilled. Victory to You!

54

MIWANI (Africa), 24-9-1954

Dear Mother,

These days, every afternoon, at about 3.30, there is such a downpour that it seems everything would turn upside down.

The thunder of the sky, the deep rhythmic roar of the rain, no matter how loud these noises of Nature, I yet love them very much, instead of the spite, venom, quarrel and shouting of the world.

The python of the worldly life has now coiled in such a way that I feel almost strangled and suffocated. This You know.

Worldly life has always been so and will remain so. Its problems, therefore, do not bother me—and I do not even think very long about them. Still, I feel that I shall have to face and fight the python and it is difficult to tell through how many ordeals I shall have to pass.

Mother, man can either sacrifice himself and please the world or sacrifice his life to the Lord and become God-dedicated and love-luminous.

Money, family, children, prosperity, pleasure—can divine Peace and Happiness ever come from them? You tell me! All these are mere gropings in empty air and vain flutterings to and fro. That is why I always pray to You: "O keep me away from the illusive net of transient desire and attachment."

All that I possess of the world, I offer to You. Even more than that, I offer You the immortal love of my soul. Will You not accept it?

Free me soon from the present situation, break down all obstacles, lead me to the divine Path and give me everlasting peace and happiness at Your Feet.

Mother, when I come and stay near You, do give me whatever work is suitable for me and give me the power and strength to do that very work, for without You, without Your Grace, without Your Love and Blessings, what can I ever do in this world of confusion?

I have found out that the worldly life is pointless, all craving for earthly objects, all love of earthly beings—all this, O Mother, is painful, false, hypocritical and momentary. Mother, O Mother, I do not want any of these useless things. You alone are all I want. Everlasting Peace and immortal—Love that is all I want.

This too I know that in this life of mine I shall have to rebel a lot. Everybody will turn against me. They will slander me, they will scorn me, they will hate me. And I shall hardly escape what is called calamity and suffering. But it does not matter. I have the confidence that I have Your protection, so much that no harm can come to me.

Let mountains of misfortune fall upon me, let the deadly poison of a hostile world be my drink. Even so shall I not gain at last the Divine Love?

May You triumph!

(To be continued)

HUTA

YOU

Oh Mother of my deepest heart!
My palms are open, my vexed mind free,
In an all-offering gesture,
For I have handed You my legacy.

Oh Divine Alchemist who can bestow
A glorious future from a cruel present,
A well-destined voyage from a rudderless ship—
A grim sky made bright with a miraculous crescent!

My burdened being is no more bent,
My tortured thoughts no longer race
Through dark dense tunnels—
For cherished hopes now nest within Your Grace.

You, who can turn lead into gold,
Utter darkness into blessed Light—
Hopeless deserts into flowering Aspiration—
Crushed lowlands into a glorious Height!

MINNIE N. CANTEENWALLA

BEYOND NIRVANA

VERY evidently, Nirvana could not be the objective of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Nirvana indeed came to Sri Aurobindo, but without his seeking, and the Yogi crossed ahead. In one of his poems Sri Aurobindo pens his experience of Nirvana:

All is abolished but the mute Alone.

The mind from thought released, the heart from grief

Grow inexistent now beyond belief;

There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.

The city, a shadow picture without tone,

Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief

Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef

Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent

Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still

Replaces all,—what once was I, in It

A silent unnamed emptiness content

Either to fade in the Unknowable

Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

Nor also can the attainment of the state of trance or samadhi, of which no consciousness remains on awakening, be for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the objective. The Mother says.

“In ancient times this was considered as a very high condition. It was even thought that it was the sign of a great realisation—people who wanted to do yoga or sadhana always tried to enter into a state like this. People have said all kinds of marvellous things about this state. You can say anything you like, because you just do not remember and those who have entered into it are not able to say what happened to them.

“I have read in all kinds of so-called spiritual literature marvellous things about this state of trance or samadhi; and it happened that I never had it. I did not know if it was a sign of inferiority. And when I arrived here, one of my first questions to Sri Aurobindo was, ‘What do you think of Samadhi, this state of trance which one does not remember? One enters into a condition which seems to be blissful, but when one comes out of it one never knows what happened.’ He looked at me, he saw what I meant and told me, ‘It is unconsciousness.’ I asked him for an explanation. I exclaimed ‘What!’ He answered, ‘Yes, you enter into what is called Samadhi when you come out of your conscious being and enter into a part of your being which is completely unconscious or rather into a domain where you have no corresponding consciousness—you go beyond the field of your consciousness and enter into a region where you have no more consciousness. You are in the impersonal state. That is to

say, a state in which you are unconscious; that is why naturally you remember nothing, because you have not been conscious of anything.' That reassured me and I told him, 'Well, the thing never happened to me.' He replied, 'To me also it did not!'

"From that moment when people speak of Samadhi, I tell them, 'Well, try to develop your inner individuality and you can enter into these very regions in full consciousness, with the delight of communion with the highest regions without losing consciousness for that and returning with a zero instead of an experience.' "

What is meant by the development of inner individuality here can be better understood in the context of the following remark by the Mother:

"There are people who enter into domains where they have a consciousness, but between this conscious state and their normal wakeful consciousness there is a gap; their individuality does not exist between the waking state and the deeper state; then in the passage they forget. They cannot carry the consciousness they had there into the consciousness here because there is a gap between the two. There is even an occult discipline which consists in building the intermediary fields, so that one may be able to remember things."

Rather it is the work of the transformation of the whole personality, the whole nature, the divinisation and perfection of the being which is undertaken in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

It is like what the Arctic Seer says to the king in Sri Aurobindo's poem *Rishi*:

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set
In the huge press
Of many worlds, to build a mighty state
For man's success,
Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,
Perfect the race.

As the Mother says in *Words of Long Ago*:

"When you are one with the Divinity within you, you are one with all things in their depths. And it is through It and by It that you must enter into relation with them. Then, having neither sympathy nor antipathy, you are near to whatever is near to It and far from whatever is far.

"Thus we know that we should be in the midst of others, always and more and more, the divine example of an integral activity, physical as well as intellectual and spiritual, the occasion presented to them to understand and enter upon the path of the Life Divine."

And the pre-condition for the divine life is a spiritual change. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"A Divine Life upon earth, the ideal we have placed before us, can only come about by a spiritual change of our being and a radical and fundamental change, an evolution or 'revolution' of our nature."

HER BURDEN AND OUR LOVE

At the risk of venturing beyond my depth, I must share with my sisters and brothers of this divine family a growing and sacred concern. If I dare to do so it is partly because of an experience with our Mother Divine nearly a decade ago.

She had approved my going to hospital for the removal of a growth in my right breast. After the operation I was told that laboratory examination indicated that it had been removed just in time, that the growth might soon have turned malignant.

Upon my return home, when I was receiving Prasad from the Mother, She gave me a special Touch and Look and quietly said, "Now we must keep the invader out."

After some weeks, what seemed to be the twin of that previous growth began to develop in my other breast. When I wrote the Mother about it, She simply gave me, with the Prasad that night, the light of that divine Touch and Look. Still it grew, again I reported it, and again the same treatment.

Then, on a Meditation night, at Playground—by which time my growth had become about the size and hardness and sensitivity of the previous one that had sent me to hospital, the Divine Mother, in the course of Her answer to a question, intimated to us something of how the burden of our errors and our ills falls upon Her, such is the nature of the Divine Love.

This struck me to the quick, and I exclaimed within myself, "Then I *will* have faith; Her Force *will* be effective; this must not fall on Her"—and soon the growth had vanished, never to return, by Grace.

This has come back to me with poignant force in recent days. The Mother, in the course of Her epic sadhana for the world unique even in occult history, must be undergoing currently a divine struggle of heroic dimensions, reminiscent of Her own description of the divine labour on the Master's Samadhi:

"Who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much."

This has necessitated Her withdrawal for the sustained concentration required by this epic labour of pioneering, even for the utter transformation of the body, in the course of world transformation. Unless we are spiritually vigilant and responsible, we may easily be weakened by not compensating inwardly for missing the daily lift which the Mother's daily face-to-face Presence used to give us.

And with our lowered spiritual vitality, we may be unconsciously allowing to fall on Her our ills and errors and anti-sadhana attitudes, to add to Her already super-human load.

Cannot our fresh awakening to the realities of this historic spiritual situation inspire us all to make a Love Offering of a new high level of dedication, a new depth of faithful sadhana, a new outpouring of our quickened gratitude that may even facilitate the Mother's sadhana for the New Humanity?

So when we henceforth see that Samadhi inscription, Her portrayal of the Divine's

Struggle and Self-offering, we shall see it as describing not only Him but Her, and with a quickened living faith let us draw upon the All-Strength for a sustained high level of Life and Love.

GURUBHAI

THE ENDLESS JOURNEYS

WRAPPED in our carnal dimensions
How often we have passed
Through these endless corridors
Of Time, and
How often we have basked
Under the Sun of Divinity
In this courtyard of Universe,
Always seeking to encompass
Its orb'd surface with our hands of dust.
Every time we were prone
To start with the arrears
And restrain our foci
On the credit page, where
The passions of the anatomy
Squeezed our attention.
We were always tutored
By the pains of a futile quest
And always illusions took the best
Of us, we slept in the morphyic
Relief of our own pursuits.
Every time regrets rose,
And we waited for another occasion,
When the flesh would be
Guided by Thy Light
And these hands of dust
Rise in salutation to Thee
And move in benevolence.

KAILASH C. KOHLI

A STUDY OF SIMILES IN SAVITRI

This is one of the contributions to the M. P. Pandit 50th Birthday Celebration Volume published on June 14 this year, under the editorship of Professor A. V. Sastri, M.A., of Arts & Science College, Jamkhandi (Mysore State). The Editor says about the author of the article which we are reproducing with the kind permission of the Publisher, Keshavmurti: "Professor Ravindra Khanna has two loves in life: the Divine and English Literature. A long-standing sadhaka of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, he teaches English Literature at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. In this paper he gives a brilliant account and analysis of the similes used by Sri Aurobindo in his epic Savitri." The author says about his own article: "This is my loving contribution on Sri M. P. Pandit's 50th birthday as a token of a long and intimate friendship in which I have always been the recipient of unstinted love and generosity. May this serve as an act of reciprocation from my side—a theme which is equally dear to both of us!"

I

EVERY great poet or artist is an explorer who discovers new lands and oceans in his imaginative vision, reveals new truths and beauties and hidden routes and pathways quite unfamiliar and unknown to the workaday humanity, and his word acts as

the leaven
That, spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
(KEATS)

Thus Mayakovsky, the modern Russian poet, who was "bombarding with verses the horror of every day" and "everything ossifying and assifying living", observed:

One must snatch gladness from the days that are
In this life it's not difficult to die
To make life is more difficult by far.

And to this humanity aimlessly pursuing a daily humdrum existence which T. S. Eliot describes in his poem "Wasteland"—

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many—

are addressed these terse but powerful lines of Mayakovsky:

The word of a poet—is your resurrection
Your immortality—citizen clerk!

How does the poet achieve this miraculous power? Is it not by revealing heaven in earth and earth in heaven, the inner world of the soul in the brute, blind and senseless world of objective reality, that he makes us live and breathe in a purer and finer air? I have said, a great poet is an explorer who either discloses to us some new realm of experience on a higher plane or reveals a new splendour in something that custom has made stale and void of savour. Newton absorbed in his arid mathematical problems must have been a sight without any colour and beauty but in Wordsworth's imagination he is transformed into a sailor

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.

A similar experience of perusing a book has again been transformed by Keats in his famous sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer". Here a book becomes a realm of gold, a state and kingdom

Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

Spelling his way through this dusty and musty volume, he felt the exhilaration of breathing in "pure serene of a wide expanse" and the two magnificent similes in the sestet of his sonnet have superbly articulated the thrill that possesses us when we follow the trail blazed by the poet:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

We are transported from a poet's study to the majesty of the star-strewn sky, the endless stretch of the watery wastes by the heavenly chariot of the poet's imagination. Sri Aurobindo has himself described this transporting power in these lines:

Imagination called her shining squads
 That venture into undiscovered scenes
 Where all the marvels lurk none yet has known.

(*Savitri*, Book II, Canto IX)

In Keats's sonnet Cortez and his followers perfectly symbolize the great poet and his readers or other lesser geniuses who follow in his footsteps and body forth with often even more minute care and detailed perfection what he has revealed in a wide sweep. Herein perhaps lies the difference between a poet and a versifier, an artist and a craftsman—a Shakespeare and a Dryden.

It would be, perhaps, more correct to say that the poet is a revealer of greater but hidden splendours than that he is a creator of new things. His creative imagination only shadows out what has flashed on his inner sight. Now this work of transcription calls forth the faculty of the formative imagination. He has to render the unknown in terms of the known as the classical poet does, or the known in terms of the unknown as the visionary romantic poet alone does, making

...sense a road to reach the intangible.

(*Savitri*)

He has, in a way, to be like the skylark of Wordsworth:

Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam—
 True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

If he lives only in the visionary world and has no contact with the earth, he will be like Arnold's Shelley beating his wings in the void. And if he is of the earth earthy, then he will not be able to

add the gleam,
 The Light that never was on sea or land,
 The consecration and the poet's dream,—

and thus shall fail to achieve the one great end of poetry "to make this much loved earth more lovely" so that we see it

Apparelled in celestial light,
 The glory and the freshness of a dream.

The essence of poetry then is "the fusion of observation and imagination, of sight and insight."

The poet turns out to be a discoverer in another sense. By his keen observation and awakened sensibility he is able to reveal to us invisible connections and relations

existing between events of the inner world and material objects. All of us have passed long spells of anguish and passed by a ringing bell but only Shakespeare could through observe that

Sorrow's like a heavy-hanging bell
Once set on ringing with his own weight goes...

Hounds relentlessly chasing a quarry, unfoiled by its dodges, is a well-known spectacle amusing and revolting—especially the sight of the terror-stricken hunted beast seeking shelter in bush and thicket, ultimately succumbing to its inevitable Fate. Yet it was to Francis Thompson alone that the privilege was vouchsafed to see in it the whole enigma of human life with its agonies and torments seeking refuge in temporary joys and supports, ultimately recognizing the Divine pursuer in the fearsome mask of the eternal Hound of Heaven. We suffer because we flee

From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
“All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.”

This one metaphor sustained with vigour and unflagging imaginative flight reveals to us the whole meaning of the chequered drama of human life—

Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears...

and the reason for the failure of all our frantic efforts to protect ourselves against “this tremendous lover.”

2

Simile and metaphor have often been considered as serving a decorative and ornamental function in poetry though often they are quite burdensome and dispensable accessories. But their true purpose is illustrative and revelatory, they aim at communicating the poet's experience in all its power and glory. We can see the difference in the above quoted sonnet of Keats, on reading Chapman's Homer. Keats first wrote:

Yet could I never judge what men could mean
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

but then changed the first line to

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene.

And we can see the vividness and freshness with which the experience comes home to us. Thus we find that metaphors and similes are inherent in the poet's work of exploration of experience and its interpretation. Poets with their wide and universal power of love and sympathy are able to detect those subtle gossamer-like links lurking between the hidden and the visible reality which make the subjective and objective universe a continuous, a delicately woven web and they also see the universal spirit of love and beauty that animates and informs even those creatures and objects which appear grotesque and bizarre to the ordinary sight. Shelley the pantheist saw everywhere

that sustaining love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst.

When Shakespeare tells us that

Love's feeling is more soft and sensible
Than are the tender horns of cockled snail,

we are not only made aware of the delicate sensitivity of the lover's feelings but also made to see a verminous creature enhaloed by the warm radiance of love. After this we can no longer look disdainfully at that slowly creeping worm. The ennobling and enhaloing of the earth by a wide spiritual love is the essence of the poetic image so that watching a bird we ring out in ecstacy like Blake:

Arise you little flashing wings and sing your infant joy!
Arise and drink your bliss, for everyting that lives is holy.

And we have not to

ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there.

Because

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!

The drift of pinions would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

(FRANCIS THOMPSON)

Thus in Yeats's vision, "the sudden thunder of the mounting swan" is

Another emblem there! that stormy white
But seems a concentration of the sky;
And, like the soul, it sails into the sight
And in the morning's gone, no man knows why;
And is so lovely that it sets to right
What knowledge or its lack had set awry,
So arrogantly pure, a child might think
It can be murdered with a spot of ink.

Thus "To one who has been long in City pent" a day spent in the open country might seem to have glided by

E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

(KEATS)

In summing up we can say that the function of simile is not merely to illustrate and explain the subject but to ennoble and enrich it and make it more impressive and vivid and also to reveal the hidden correspondences and kinships that exist between earth and heaven so that even though

...all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil,

yet we feel thrilled by the truth that

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

(HOPKINS)

To put otherwise: "The poetry of earth is ceasing never", and in summer

a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead,
That is the Grasshopper's

and

On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stone there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

(KEATS)

3

Sri Aurobindo, who was a poet first and then the divine master of Integral Yoga, is therefore not only an explorer and a discoverer but a conquistador and

A colonist from immortality

(*Savitri*, BK. I, CANTO 3)

and his spiritual poetry, especially the epic *Savitri*, is charged with mantric power which at every step overwhelms us with

Sunbelts of knowledge, moonbelts of delight

(*Ibid.*, BK. I, C.5)

revealing ever

Homelands of beauty shut to human eyes

(*Ibid.*)

and telling us earth-bound mortals that

Our souls can visit in great lonely hours
Still regions of imperishable Light,
All-seeing eagle-peaks of silent Power
And moon-flame oceans of swift fathomless Bliss
And calm immensities of spirit Space.

(*Ibid.*, BK. I, CANTO 4)

In another poem, "The Life Heavens", he describes his ascent:

Dissolving the kingdoms of happy ease
 Rocked and split and faded their dream-chime.
 All vanished; ungrasped eternities
 Sole survived and Timelessness seized Time.

Earth's heart was felt beating below me still,
 Veiled, immense, unthinkable above
 My consciousness climbed like a topless hill,
 Crossed seas of Light to epiphanies of Love.

(*Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. II, p. 284)

Who would not feel a wistful longing kindled in his imagination on reading the following description of the ascent of Thought?

Sun-realms of supernal seeing,
 Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss
 Drew its vague heart-yearnings with voices sweet...
 Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
 Climbing high far ethers eternal sunned...

("Thought the Paraclete," *Collected Poems and Plays*, Vol. II. p. 300)

It will be seen from the few lines quoted above how spiritual experiences have been rendered vivid, concrete and intimate by the imagery employed by Sri Aurobindo so that our souls run of themselves like his Aswapathy:

As one drawn to his lost spiritual home
 Feels now the closeness of a waiting love,
 Into a passage dim and tremulous
 That clasped him in from day and night's pursuit
 He travelled led by a mysterious sound.

(*Savitri*, Bk. II, CANTO 14)

For we hardly feel the sense of strain and labour when we are drawn by the charm of something supremely beautiful. Thus he has

Made sense a road to reach the intangible.

(*Savitri*, Bk. II, CANTO 9)

Now, we can launch on the subject of similes and metaphors in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. An epic is a narrative poem with a wide sweep dealing with high and noble actions. Therefore, it demands from the poet an equally noble and elevated treatment. Sri Aurobindo also takes up very commonplace events and happenings and by the device of simile invests them with a spiritual glory. I will now pick out two instances of an identical event—a chariot speeding towards its goal. The first instance is from his epic *Ilion* written in majestic, rolling, melodious hexameters. Talthibius is the messenger chosen by Achilles to carry his peace offer to the Trojans. "Worn with his decades," "one and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals", driving the car of the errand. This is the scene as it must have appeared to the ordinary passers-by. But who knows that this shrunken man is

Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.

Not only that but this rider in the chariot is the focal point which will let "loose vast agencies" radiating through the millenniums down to the present day. Troy will turn down the offer, Achilles will join the fray, reduce the city to rack and ruin, Aeneas, the man of destiny, will set sail from Troy to found Latium and the Latin race and thus lay the foundations of the Roman empire and the modern European civilization. All this chain of events will be touched off by this charioteer. And this is how Sri Aurobindo presents it:

Even as fleets on a chariot divine through the gold streets of ether,
Swiftly when life fleets, invisibly changing the arc of the soul-drift,
And, with the choice that has chanced or the fate man has called and now
suffers

Weighted the moment travels driving the past towards the future.
Only its face and its feet are seen, not the burden it carries.
Weight of the event and its surface we bear, but the meaning is hidden.

Thus, a chariot hurtling down earthly pathways serves as a ringing echo of the divine chariots speeding down gold streets of ether unretarded by any friction of matter. Notice how in the fourth line, *driving* as a metaphor is invigorated by the fact that a chariot is actually being driven.

The second instance comes from *Savitri*. Savitri the heroine has set out in quest of her companion soul after a night's rest:

But morn broke in reminding her of her quest
And from low rustic couch or mat she rose
And went impelled on her unfinished way
And followed the fateful orbit of her life.

How?

Like a desire that questions silent gods,
Then passes starlike to some bright Beyond.

(*Ibid.*, BOOK IV, CANTO 4)

What an infinite vista of suggestions breaks upon our speculative imagination! What can be the nature of that desire which leaves the high gods dumb and speechless? Is it the same boon about which Sri Aurobindo has elsewhere hinted:

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

(*The Hour of God*, p. 23)

We make this conjecture because of the image of the star in the last line. The star-image makes it clear that this desire is not just a dim, muddy phosphorescence on the surface of life but something luminous, following its orbit in the unmapped immensities of the soul.

The star-image recalls to the mind another magnificent simile. The point to be illustrated is that the great are strongest when they are alone:

As a star uncompanioned, moves in heaven
Unastonished by the immensities of space,
Travelling infinity by its own light,
The great are strongest when they stand alone.

(*Savitri*, BOOK VI, CANTO 2)

A host of unspoken things are suggested by this simple image. A great man is directed to his goal by his own light and not by the pressures of time and environment; he is not deterred by the vast Time-barrier that has to be traversed before he reaches his ideal and he is strongest when alone because then he is most sustained by his inner divinity. The same idea is expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his sonnet "The Divine Worker" with greater austerity and less picturesqueness:

In this rude combat with the fate of man
Thy smile within my heart makes all my strength;
Thy Force in me labours at its grandiose plan,
Indifferent to the Time-snake's crawling length.

(*Last Poems*, p. 24)

Keats once wrote of poetry and its reader: "The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the sun come natural to him—shine over him and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight." Nowhere does this apply with such appositeness as in many passages of *Savitri*. Here are two instances. Aswapathy is shown ascending from plane to plane in the second book, "The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds." Coming out of "The World of Falsehood, The Mother of Evil and the Sons of Darkness" he enters "The Paradise of the Life-Gods".

Apart stood high Elysian nameless hills,
Burning like sunsets in a trance of eve.

(*Savitri*, BOOK II, CANTO 9)

In the same Canto his passage is further described:

A memory soft as grass and faint as sleep
The beauty and call receding sank behind
Like a sweet song heard fading far away
Upon the long high road to Timelessness.

(*Ibid.*, Book II, Canto 9)

In the Book of Love, Satyavan is telling Savitri how the visionary power began to grow in him:

As if to a deeper country of the soul
Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,
Through an inner seeing and sense awakening came,
A visioned spell pursued by boyhood's hours
All things the eye had caught in coloured lines
Were seen anew through the interpreting mind
And in the shape it sought to seize the soul.

(*Ibid.*, Book V, Canto 3)

And then follows a concrete instance of this transmuting power:

...trooping spotted deer
Against the vesper sky became a song
Of evening to the silence of the soul.

(*Ibid.*, Book V, Canto 3)

Trooping spotted deer against the vesper sky is a visual image but the alchemic touch of the poet's imagination has transformed it into an auditory image—a song of evening to the silence of the soul.

In the very opening Canto of the epic, in which is described in sublime symbolism the passage from night to twilight and from twilight to daybreak, we meet this simile:

The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a God.

(*Ibid.*, Book I, Canto 1)

For a while we shut the book and unleash our imagination to soar in the celestial worlds where gods are seen reclining draped in cloaks of some ethereal fabric which with a swish slips from the body and dazzles us with the vision of a radiant form. But there are vestures and vestures of divinity. In the second Canto a different epiphany meets us. Till the approach of the hour of Satyavan's death fated to strike one year after their marriage Savitri had not tasted the bitter cup of grief. A soul of universal love and sunlike purity how could she know of the thousand torments that afflict this "Forcecompelled, Fate-driven earth-born race" of

...petty adventurers in an infinite world
And prisoners of a dwarf humanity...?

(*Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto 3)

How had her childhood and early youth flowed on?

A glowing orbit was her early term,
Years like gold raiment of the gods that pass.

(*Ibid.*, Book I. Canto 2)

And from now on we know that gods flash past the seer's vision draped in gold raiment leaving him in an ecstasy tranquil and calm and the impression of those timeless moments of unalloyed bliss and happiness. And we have confirmation of this in Book IV Canto 1 where all the seasons of the year have been described with a supreme graphic freshness and visionary power. Monsoon is

A traveller from unquiet neighbouring seas

bringing

A surge and hiss and onset of huge rain
The long straight sleet-drift, clamours of winged storm charge,
Throngs of wind-faces, rushing of wind-feet
Hurrying swept through the prone afflicted earth.

But this is a titanic onslaught, not the way of the divine beings. They come gently and bring peace and calm and bliss and warm sunshine. So we await the mellowing touch of autumn:

Earth's mood now changed; she lay in lulled repose,
 The hours went by with slow contented tread:
 A wide and tranquil air remembered peace,
 Earth was the comrade of a happy sun.
 A calmness neared as of the approach of God,
 A light of musing trance lit soil and sky,
 And an identity and ecstasy
 Filled meditation's solitary heart.

(*Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto 1)

In this passage of rare verbal music echoing the harmony of autumn we are again shown the hidden passages that make "sense a road to reach the intangible." This earth with its beauty appealing to our physical senses is no longer a snare to lure us away from heaven but a pathway to

...luminous tracts and heavens serene
 And Eldorados of splendour and ecstasy...

(*Ibid.*, Book I, Canto 2)

Later in the year follows Spring, the season of joy and festivity when everywhere there is freshness and bloom and flowers splash their colours against the brown earth. Here is a description packed with sensuous richness:

Then Spring, an ardent lover, leaped through leaves
 And caught the earth-bride in his eager clasp;
 His advent was a fire of irised hues,
 His arms were a circle of the arrival of joy.

But this Springtime is neither a harbinger of the merry ring time, nor is that "ardent lover" a waker of our dormant passions. On the contrary his is a clarion call to arise and awake and set forth on the upward journey:

His voice was a call to the Transcendent's sphere
 Whose secret touch upon our mortal lives
 Keeps ever new the thrill that made the world,
 Remoulds an ancient sweetness to new shapes
 And guards intact unchanged by death and Time
 The answer of our hearts to Nature's charm
 And keeps for ever new, yet still the same,
 The throb that ever wakes to the old delight
 And beauty and rapture and the joy to live.

(*Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto 1)

The Spring, too, gives us a faint foretaste of the rapture that seizes the human soul when it meets the divine beings:

His grasp was a young god's upon earth's limbs,
 Changed by the passion of his divine outbreak
 He made her body beautiful with his kiss.

(*Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto 1)

And

The sunlight was a great god's golden smile...

(*Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto 1)

For a short while heaven and earth met together and

Immortal movements touched the fleeting hours

(*Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto 1)

4

Savitri with its 23,813 lines is a vast epic, unique in its sustained grandeur and sublimity revealing to us plane after plane of spiritual illumination and each plane a tier-terraced mountain:

The unfallen planes, the thought-created worlds
 Where knowledge is the leader of the act
 And Matter is of thinking substance made,
 Feeling, a heaven-bird poised on dreaming wings,
 Answers Truth's call as to a parent's voice,
 Form luminous leaps from the all-shaping beam
 And Will is a conscious chariot of the Gods,
 And Life, a splendour-stream of musing Force,
 Carries the voices of the mystic Suns.

(*Ibid.*, Book II, Canto 11)

And yet this is only a description of "The Kingdoms and Godheads of the Greater Mind." The great vistas of the overmind and still higher regions

Await discovery in our summit selves.

(*Ibid.*, Book I, Canto 4)

But the road is narrow, precipitous and full of perils. Sri Aurobindo has himself hinted at its ruggedness in a simile in the poem "The Bird of Fire." The Bird in the poem "is the symbol of an inner Power that rises from the *sacrifice*, i. e., the Yoga...

it has the power of going beyond mind and life to that which is beyond mind and life... It reaches the Eternal and brings back to the material world that which is beyond mind and life." And here is a description of its red breast:

Rich and red is thy breast, O bird, like the blood of a soul climbing the hard
crag-teeth world, wounded and nude.

Such is the nature of the path but there is one solace and that springs from the fact that these pilgrim feet are so much loved by the Gods that even they might offer their bodies for being trodden upon. Here is a passage describing "The Heavens of the Ideal":

At each pace of the journey marvellous
A new degree of wonder and of bliss,
A new rung formed in Being's mighty stair,
A great wide step trembling with jewelled fire
As if a burning spirit quivered there
Upholding with his flame the immortal hope,
As if a radiant God had given his soul
That he might feel the tread of pilgrim feet
Mounting in haste to the Eternal's house.

(*Ibid.*, Book II, Canto 12)

Such is *Savitri*—

Invested with a rhythm of higher spheres
The word was used as a hieratic means
For the release of the imprisoned spirit
Into communion with its comrade gods.

(*Ibid.*, BK. IV, Canto 2)

This is the meaning of that time-hallowed word mantra, of which *Savitri* is

An endless fountain of immortal drink
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

(KEATS)

But how to derive the fullest benefit from this nectar? He has himself spelled out in a long, elaborate simile the whole process by which the mantra opens for us the flood-gates of the spiritual Ganges:

As when the mantra sinks in Yoga's ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain

And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
 The hearer understands a form of words
 And musing on the index thought it holds,
 He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
 But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
 Then falling silent in himself to know
 He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
 The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains,
 Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
 Are seized unalterably and he endures
 An ecstasy and an immortal change;
 He feels a wideness and becomes a Power,
 All knowledge rushes on him like a sea;
 Transmuted by the white spiritual ray

He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
 Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech...

(*Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto 3)

The Future Poetry was written as a series of essays in the *Arya* (from 15-12-1917 to 15-7-1920). In these essays Sri Aurobindo had traced the course of the English muse and shown how it is destined to culminate in spiritual poetry of the greatest depth and height. There we were given a foretaste of the nature of this epic in these prophetic words:

"The epic, a great poetic story of man or world or the gods, need not necessarily be a rigorous presentation of external action; the divinely appointed creation of Rome, the struggle of the principles of good and evil as presented in the great Indian poems, the pageant of the centuries or the journey of the seer through the three worlds beyond us are as fit themes as primitive war and adventure for the imagination of the epic creator. The epics of the soul most inwardly seen, as they will be by an intuitive poetry, are his greatest possible subject, and it is this supreme kind that we shall expect from some profound and mighty voice of the future. His indeed may be the song of greatest flight that will reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of the Divinity in man and the univese."

(*The Future Poetry* , pp. 376-77)

The expectation and the prophecy have been amply fulfilled and the profoundest and mightiest voice has spoken and the Destiny of Man has been revealed to him in the most luminous rhythmic speech.

RAVINDRA KHANNA

POETRY, LOVE AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

TWO LETTERS

I

I AM afraid we saw that exquisite poem of James Cousins from different angles. You were very "profound" and saw it symbolically, so to speak; I was very "naturalistic" and understood it as addressed by a man to his human beloved. When I use the epithet "naturalistic" I do not mean it to stand over against "idealistic": in fact I take both of them to be mutually convertible in a context like this.

What I have in mind is the idealism that is the acme of natural human love—a sort of half-mysticism that is very splendid but still not the real spirituality. In all great love poetry this half-mysticism plays a part—even when the love is most physical, that element comes in as a passionate deification of the body, rendering carnal desire a kind of colourful ritual and worship. In the higher manifestations of love it cannot help being all over the scene—and, while in comparison to the lower sensations it is something radiant, it is in comparison to the true life of Yoga an immense mistake, all the immenser for being radiant enough to form what the Upanishads would call a beautiful golden lid or shield over the authentic Sun of Truth.

It is as an expression of idealistic, semi-mystic love between two humans of opposite sexes that I took Cousins' sonnet. You took it as almost a statement of the soothing, purifying, enlightening, transforming Yoga such as practised from day to day in the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo, under the personal touch of the Mother, a Yoga in which the surface consciousness does not cease to exist but gradually becomes harmless and ultimately a channel for the inner Divine. It is possible to put this interpretation upon what is most probably Cousins' apostrophe to his wife—it is possible to say that Cousins is really addressing the Inmost Dweller, the Divine seated in the heart, and that he is aspiring to bring into the outer moments of existence the cool and quiet and pure and luminous harmony of the soul with its God.

I have no quarrel with you there. All great love poetry can be so viewed and absorbed into a genuine spiritual drive, because behind every idealistic intensity there is always the hidden Divine—the Divine assumes various shapes and garbs and is called by innumerable names and comes to each according to his nature, need, level of evolution. At a low level of evolution it is not easy to discern the supreme Presence—the miser, the glutton, the lecher, the dictator are all "clutching the inviolable Shade" but such a hard accretion has formed that the Divine has turned into an extreme opposite—only the extremity, the utter all-in-all sense in the oppositeness gives a clue to His secret greatness. At a high level everyone intuits that greatness but still through a veil, through "natural" appearances and human relation-

ships, through ethical and idealistic values: the direct intimate concrete approach to the Divine is not made. Cousins' sonnet struck me as meant to be an indirect intuition, a human and "natural" relationship at its most lovely and sublime.

As such I pointed out that its experience was insufficient, not directly spiritual, and that the "peace" it spoke of was still a precarious quantity—a movement on the outer fringes of the soul and, as weighed against the deep, the immense, the self-existent Atman, the Self of selves, it was negative. I may here observe that I did not intend to limit the spiritual realisation of peace to the static Atman: force and light are essential if the outer life is to be kept an evolving part of Yoga and not just a moral purification and self-control raised to the n^{th} degree where it is caught up to a point of spiritual spontaneity—a point, mind you, and not yet the broad far-reaching and deep-plunging sweep that comes with a dynamic sadhana. This "point", however, is not negligible, it is a stupendous achievement in itself, since it lifts a man clean above mere morality and idealism and gives a very genuine, inviolable, all-independent peace. Those who live in the static Atman every moment live very radiantly and purely and do not have to face the unregenerate nature in that easily disturbed way in which the intense moralist and the fervent idealist have to as soon as their high moments are passed—and those high moments are bound to pass because they do not belong to the realm where Desire has no being, the realm of the Atman.

The dissatisfaction which breaks upon the moralist and the idealist does not trouble the knower of the Atman in the same sense at all. What dissatisfaction can you attribute to the Buddha? Or even to Ramana Maharishi? You have but to look at the "peace" of merely a supreme ethicist, such as we have had in one or two examples in our own day, to see the gigantic difference—the whole personality is so much smaller, so much more subject to bungling and two-mindedness and obscurity. Of course, if one shot up into the Atman on rare, isolated accidental occasions, the state might be somewhat similar or perhaps even worse by reaction; but I am talking of those who have *realised* the Self and who dwell all the time in it—as the Masters of Yoga do. Still, all this does not signify that I am for the static Atman and nothing else. I cited the Atman as the true tranquillity as distinguished from the pseudo-calm of the idealistic life. The distinction you make between Personal and Impersonal, persistence of surface consciousness and its utter submergence, did not occur to me, for I was simply contrasting two kinds of peace. I am all for the Force and Light of Ishwara together with the Bliss of Brahman; what I insist on is the Divine, the genuine Divine and not His imitations or approximations or disguises, no matter how enchanting or exalted these things may be.

In poetry which means to be spiritual, the direct intimate touch of the Divine is more wonderful, more rare, more helpful to the aspirant than any human relationship made glorious and ecstatic with the idealistic emotion. That is all I wanted to say. If Cousins is considered symbolically, you are perfectly in the right as regards the profound value of the state he sings. It is, in essence, the same state I have in mind—the Atman is in it, the Brahman is at its core, and there are various other aspects

of the Divine—personal, impersonal, powerful, luminous, purifying, caressing.

By the way, what makes you think I may doubt your 'appreciation of my poetry'? I am fully aware how keenly you respond to it—I need no assurances on that score. If by any chance you preferred Cousins' inspiration to mine instead of having a palate equal to all flavours and substances, I would not deem that a ground for running down Cousins or for altering the affection I have for you.

2

After writing my letter, I thought I had perhaps not done full justice to your view. So let me make good the deficiency.

It mostly happens in a poem that the expression outruns the experience and exceeds the initial attitude. Not that there is insincerity and exaggeration—the substance too disproportionate in value to the imposing structure of the language. I am trying to draw attention to the fact that the poet always plunges deeper than the normal run of life, and in giving tongue to vision, feeling and thought he brings into focus the inmost truth of them that is not always perceived in experience, at least not immediately and seldom in full force. Beyond the passing occasion and the peculiar circumstance he reaches the general abiding principle, the living essence through a unique flash of the revelatory light natural to whatever plane he works on. (As you know, poetry can come from several different planes—subtle-physical, vital, mental, psychic, occult, spiritual.) This living essence, this archetype, so to speak, is no exaggeration of facts nor does it stamp the poet's words with a sense of strain or pretence—on the contrary, it gives an extra clarity and spontaneity to them because it uncovers what the facts dimly, brokenly, fragmentarily represent.

Now, Cousins, functioning in one of the mentalised domains of the Spirit and bringing, into all he touches, something of the Spirit's radiance and height according to the measure of that domain, addresses his human beloved in terms that strike deeper than the usual attitude of human love. Surely when confronted with his feeling for that beloved he cannot indulge in the true mystical emotion, the genuine spiritual experience: that emotion and experience need a clear outsoaring of common attitudes, even when the Divine is worshipped in a human or natural guise: *bhakti* is not the same as ordinary *prem* with its desires and demands and dramatics. Ordinary love, at its purest, is still shackled to the all-too-human formula—the sense of the Guru and the Avatar can alone liberate it, the formula of friend and sweetheart and wife and even mother is not enough, the vision or intuition of the Lord and Master, the Divine Beloved, the Supreme Shakti, is necessary to give wings to our emotions and lift them into the pure psyche and to the "overhead" Spirit. I do not believe Cousins started with any such clearly spiritual *élan*—but because of his touch with the true mystical planes there came into his experience a glorifying exaltation, and into his expression a bliss and a beauty that can bear a spiritual interpretation: indeed the language is such that to give it anything save a spiritual interpretation is to waste it. In the hands of an aspirant it becomes a flow of inner light, tending to do most of the

things you write of; but in the hands of Cousins himself it could never have been the pure alchemy because he mixed with it in his own mind elements that belonged to a lower plane: his experience was checked to a certain extent by his attitude. Nor will the ordinary reader feel that here is something out-and-out spiritual: he will see in it an idealistic peak rather than a spiritual summit of the kind he will instinctively feel though he may not make much out of it in those lines of "Arjava" (John Chadwick):

This patter of Time's marring steps across the solitude
Of Truth's abidingness Self-blissful and alone.

The difference, however, will not stand in the way of an aspirant, since in Cousins' sonnet the expression has really escaped the poet's initial attitude and lends itself most aptly to a symbolic spiritual understanding of it. In poetry, it is after all the final expression that matters, rather than the poet's original conscious intention. Not only does he go deeper than the normal run of life, he also at times outruns or transcends his own intuition so that the true significance is found by others who are pitched at a higher key than his mind or at least have a glimpse of a plane beyond the one magnificently explored by him.

Your way, therefore, of looking at Cousins' poem is quite justified—though, personally, another kind of expression of spiritual peace is more to my satisfaction. I like this sonnet very well indeed: the idea is worked out in a happy image, the language has a charming depth, the rhythm is alive, and yet, as spiritual poetry, it does not appeal to me so completely, so piercingly as, say, parts of the following that I have marked with single or double lines:

MASK

Beyond your many-coloured moods I bear
The flowering white monotony of foam,
The diamond dimness of the domèd air
And the deep Mood which silence makes its home.
In me, the Timeless, time forgets to roam,
Drunk with my poise, grown sudden unaware,
Offering up its noontide and its gloam,
Withdrawn in a lost attitude of prayer.

I have grown illimitably alien
To the brief gaudiness of time and space,
A thing immortal beyond mortal ken,
Evasive essence that you cannot trace.
Here, even here, amidst a crowd of men,
I hide the Light behind a human face.

The theme is not exactly the same as that of Cousins; but I am not talking of the theme nor am I talking of the poetry as such: I am talking of the spiritual note, the mystical breath, the intuitive vibration of the verses I have picked out.

However, poetry has many mansions and each has a splendour worthy of praise. It will be an evil day for me when I cease to admire all those mansions and fail to be moved because the spiritual stroke is not everywhere equally intense.

K. D. SETHNA

THE WIND OF GRACE ON A SUMMER EVE

THIS sweet soft touch, O breeze, O roving Love,
Now finds the body ravished—all is bliss
As though heat were an overtone of pangs
Which made each pore a mouth forlorn for a kiss!

But lo, it passes. Was it just a lull
To send me soft asleep over my pain?
Nay, past the opiate of its visiting thrills
I seek the poise that quenchless shall remain.

Listen, a loud resurgent wind of Grace
Is now abroad, a sweeping immensity.
The mighty roll and swell drums on my ears
Bursting the bounds of the little shell of me.

O cosmic breath of Love, while lost in thee
I find and breathe my own infinity.

NARESH

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

(Continued from the issue of August 15)

THE STORY OF MAHABALI

AFTER the destruction of Thadakai, Visvamitra takes his protégés across the desert to a lovely and fertile country. Rama asks him to whom the country belongs. This gives Kamban the chance to tell a dramatic short story through Visvamitra.

Once upon a time this country was ruled by a mighty king called Mahabali. By dint of his might he brought Heaven and Earth under his sway. He decided to augment his powers by performing a Yaga which even the gods could not perform. He, therefore, entrusted his kingdom to holy men and launched upon the great sacrifice. The gods, who learnt of this project, went to Lord Vishnu and requested him to frustrate the Yaga lest Mahabali should acquire much greater powers. Vishnu readily granted this prayer.

He, who had created the Cosmos, took birth as a stunted dwarf. As the far-spreading banyan tree lies hidden in a tiny seed, so did Infinity in this pigmy shape.

The Dwarf mastered all knowledge and wisdom. Meditation illuminated his form. Wearing a sacred thread, uttering magic incantations with his tongue and holding burning embers on his palm, the Dwarf went forth to the Court of Mahabali, who received him with honours and said that he felt blessed by his visit.

Addressing the King

The Dwarf said,

“By giving to others far in excess of their desire,

Thy hand has grown longer and longer.

Those, who seek thee, are blessed

And those, who don't, lack blessing.”

Heartily pleased with this compliment, the King asked, “What can I do for you?” “Give me three feet of land, if you have it,” said the Dwarf. “Granted,” declared the King, but Velli, his preceptor and minister, obstructed the King and said, “His appearance is deceptive, my King! Don't take him for a mere dwarf. Beware, he is the One who swallowed long ago the whole Universe and the Beyond.”

“Imagine the good I get by making a gift into the supplicating hands of the Lord himself,” declared the King, whose ideal was to give freely and ungrudgingly to those who sought his aid.

In a poem of unsurpassed intensity and felicitous form, which defies the translator's art, Kamban puts the following into Mahabali's mouth:

The Dead are not
The dead;
But
The dead are those
Who,
Without dying,
Live
With palms outstretched
For alms,
And who are the living,
My friend,
If not the givers,
Who, though dead,
Live for Ever?

With these words Mahabali rejected the advice of his minister and called upon the Dwarf to measure out three feet of land and take it. In the absence of Registration Offices transfer of property was made in those days by the donor pouring water on the hand of the donee.

The Infinite God stuck out his dwarfish hand on which the King poured water. The moment the water touched his hand, the Dwarf began to grow taller and taller. The watching crowd watched admiringly as the Dwarf rose to normal human height, but they became fearful as he grew and grew and touched the Heavens and grew beyond them.

This phenomenon tempts Kamban to quote Tiruvalluvar with quaint humour. Tiruvalluvar had said seven centuries earlier that the value of an act of kindness must be judged, not by its intrinsic worth but by an extrinsic standard, namely, the quality and culture of the taker; the higher the culture of the recipient, the greater the worth of the help rendered to him. Kamban gives a delightfully ironic twist to this statement by observing that the Dwarf's height increased and multiplied like the act of charity rendered to a great and noble soul.

The planted foot grew wider and wider
Till it covered all the Earth
And made the Earth look tiny;
The raised foot
Out-compassed the Heavens,
After bringing them within its sweep,
And returned,
There being no room to put it in.

Visvamitra drove home the point of the story by adding that the returning foot of the Lord came down upon Mahabali's head, wiped out his Ego, and absorbed him in its Ultimate Substance.

Kamban's aesthetic sensibility would not be gratified till the story is rounded off with a delicate *finale*. So he adds that Lord Vishnu, after absorbing Mahabali and gifting his kingdom to the Gods, went back to his abode in the Milky Way to rest Himself.

As the Blue One
Laid himself to rest
In the Milky sea,
Lakshmi, his consort,
Softly touched his feet;
And the rugged feet that had encompassed all the worlds
Blushed and turned pink
At her tender touch.

It is by such *delicatesse* that Kamban succeeds in bringing out, with passionate intensity, the paradox of Infinite Power and Infinite Tenderness.

RAMA FALLS IN LOVE

Listening to such stories, Rama and Lakshmana follow Visvamitra to Mithila, where the wedding of Rama with Sita is to take place.

In the *Ramayana* of Valmiki, the couple had not set eyes on each other before they met at the wedding. In fact, Valmiki's Sita, while recounting to Anasuya the story of her wedding, says that she was just six years of age at her wedding. There was, therefore, little scope for romance at that age. What is worse, Valmiki's Rama, even after earning Sita as a prize for lifting the bow of Siva and breaking it, refused to accept her as his wife, unless his father Dasaratha approved of the alliance. As for Valmiki's Sita, she deemed herself the victor's property by force of Janaka's proclamation.

On the contrary, Kamban throws in a love-scene of extraordinary lyrical beauty, after making the couple mature enough to fall in love with each other before the wedding and even before the breaking of the bow.

Upon his description of the exalted charms of Sita, Kamban lavishes his entire aesthetics of Beauty. According to Kamban, even before the birth of Sita, the Goddess of Beauty appeared to have arrived at perfection; she had become a Being rather than a Becoming. Down the ages she had evolved by abstracting and assimilating the myriad aspects of Beauty from the myriad beauties in Creation. After assimilating the finest in Beauty, the Goddess found nothing new to absorb, and therefore ceased to evolve. But lo! when Sita was born, the loveliness of Beauty gained a

new grace and shone with an ampler radiance than before.

As Rama went round the streets of Mithila along with Visvamisra and Lakshmana, he caught a glimpse of this beauty of Sita from her reflection in a moat beside the King's palace. As he raised his eyes from the reflection, he saw Sita herself standing at the palace balcony. The subtle psychic fusion of two beings in love is arrestingly described by Kamban:

Eye caught Eye, in pairs,
And each the other devoured;
Unhinged, utterly exhausted,
The Prince stood looking at the Princess
And the Princess stood looking at the Prince.

The in-drinking look of each
Formed the love-rope,
Which clasped and bound the other;
The heart did the pulling,
And the Lord with the lovely Bow
And the Maid with the lancet look
Changed places,
Entering each other's bosom.

Visvamisra and Lakshmana, who had been lagging behind Rama, came up to him. Rama woke up from his absorption and reluctantly followed them to the palace of King Janaka. The mind and the poise and all the charms of Sita lingered around and followed the figure of Rama.

With the disappearance of Rama's figure, to which her soulful glance was riveted, Sita's mind drifts wildly and aimlessly and she laments:

Before his dark hair,
His moon-like face,
His long-drawn arms,
His bewitching shoulders
Could work upon me,
His smile made haste
To swallow my soul.

What lies close to my heart
Is
Not even his dazzling, broadening chest,
Not even his lotus-shaped feet,
But the way he walked,
Like a majestic tusker.

The moonrise made her hotter with desire for Rama. She wilted and withered with the lotus flowerspread on her bed. Cool sandal paste smeared on her body singed her like liquid fire. Kamban, who creates all this sweet agony, projects himself into the mind of Sita and makes the empathetic interjection: "Could there be a drug-cure for the malady of Love?"

Meanwhile the trio had reached the palace of Janaka, where Rama is allotted a bedroom in the balcony. Visvamisra and Lakshmana leave Rama to himself and share a room downstairs. Rama is a stranger to the feeling of Love. As he is musing over Sita, darkness closes in, adding poignancy to his musings. His condition is aggravated by the rising moon. Is he alone? No, says Kamban. Solitude, Darkness, the Moon, his own tormenting self and his Sita keep him company. Rama laments:

The lightning that shot past the sky,
Did it mould itself
Into the graceful contours of woman?
Ah, I see her in the interior
Of both my eyes
And in the centre of my thoughts.

The region of her waist,
Looking verily like a chariot;
Those two long spearing eyes;
That couple of shooting breasts;
And oh! that inward-drawing smile—
Does that pitiless God of Killing
Need all this panoply?

In the company of these tormenting thoughts Rama spends most of the interminable-seeming night and then falls asleep. Kamban, who, unlike Valmiki, depicts Rama as God, is moved by the human agony that afflicts Rama. The love-torn Rama inspires Kamban to point out to us the condescending grace of God, who, out of compassion for Man, comes down upon earth, imprisons himself in Time and Space and subjects himself to agony in order to redeem Man. The Poet sings of the waking up of Rama at dawn in words of untranslatable charm:

The sweating Sun,
riding in his chariot,
borne on wheels of light,
Dipped and bathed himself in the western sea,
and rose, refreshed and cool,
in the Eastern sky
And, with his tender arms of light,

touched the feet of Rama
 and stirred him out of sleep.
 And Rama reached the shore
 of that endless agonising night—
 The Joyous One, who might have slept
 in the Sea of Infinity
 On his native couch of a thousand dazzling lights,
 chose, instead,
 to turn and writhe in pain
 on this constricting couch of Space and Time.

As one reads this magnificent poem in the original, one feels the rush of sound of a myriad oceans. The poem has been suffused with such inspired music that the resulting rhythm haunts, and the haunted reader finds himself slipping out of the prison of cause and effect.

THE BREAKING OF A THOUSAND BOWS

Janaka, the King of Mithila, had vowed to give his daughter Sita in marriage only to a man who could bend and string the mighty bow of Siva, which was in his keeping. Many a valiant King had tried and failed to string the bow.

The sage Visvamitra introduces Rama to Janaka and tells him of his great prowess in archery and suggests that his protégé might be allowed to have a try at the bow.

"I am at a loss for words,"
 Said the King,
 "I grieve that this elusive bow
 Should have vanquished me so far.
 Sita has performed great penance
 And if Rama can haul and string the bow,
 He can haul us ashore
 From the Sea of Sadness."

"Go," said the King to the men
 Who waited around him;
 "Bring hither that mountainous bow"
 "Aye," said the men and four of them rushed to the shed,
 Where the gold-gilt bow was kept.
 Six thousand men,
 Looking like mighty elephants
 Of strength immeasurable,
 With bushy locks flowing over their shapely shoulders,

Laboured to move the bow,
Levering it now and again
Over props laid intermittently on the ground.

As the Earth-congesting Bow arrived,
Mother Earth felt relieved
At the shift of the weight on her back;
The Northern mountain,
With its head lifted high and proud,
Blushed at the sight of this rival-Bow;
And the citizens of Mithila,
Like the roaring sea,
Surged all around—to look.

“Has Mount Meru been rolled into a bow?
No, it must be the Mount
With which the Gods churned the ocean
Long, long ago.
Perchance, it is the King of Serpents
Who supports the Earth;
Or is it the long rainbow placed in the sky
but fallen upon the Earth?”

“Why, in Heaven’s name, did he have this brought?
Breathes there a King so mad as ours?
Will Sita’s maidenhood ever surmount this Bow?
Fate willing, Rama may yet string it.”

As the surging citizens were speaking thus,
They brought the Bow before the King
And laid it down;
And the back of the Earth
Sprained a muscle.

The Princes, who saw this spectacle,
Threw up their arms in despair
And murmured,
“Whoever can string this bow?”

Janaka looked at Rama and then at the formidable bow. He became depressed and apprehensive. He cursed himself for the rashness of his vow and was filled with concern for Sita’s future.

The King cast a wistful look,
 First at the charms of Rama,
 Then at that agonizing Bow
 And then at his unwed daughter.
 Sadananda, the King's priest,
 Delved into the tormented mind of the King,
 And spoke:
 "The form of Mother Earth
 Remains unmanifest
 Till the ploughman ploughs her,
 But at the touch of his ploughshare
 She emits rays of light
 In the shape of radiant shoots.
 And when our King tilled the soil,
 Mother Earth revealed herself
 In all her glory
 And emerged in the form of lovely Sita,
 That Queen of Women,
 Looking at whose resplendent beauty,
 Lakshmi felt humbled and stepped aside in reverence—
 Lakshmi,
 Who had emerged as the child of the Ocean
 Along with Nectar, the drink of the gods."

In this song Kamban lends a new significance to the apparently meaningless myth that Sita was a foundling recovered by Janaka from under a plough. He uses the myth to glorify the calling of the ploughman, whose magic touch brings forth the hidden charms of the Earth and, when the King himself realizes the nobility of the calling and turns to the plough, the Earth reveals the totality of her beauty by taking shape as Sita. Kamban makes the further point that the potentialities of the Earth are unlimited in contrast with those of the Sea, which is neither as fertile as the Earth nor as susceptible of exploitation or cultivation. That is why the poet suggests that Lakshmi, the child of the Ocean, realizes and admits her inferiority to Sita, the child of the Earth. It is by such subtle suggestions that Kamban rationalizes Puranic stories and invests them with aesthetic significance.

After hearing Sadananda, Visvamitra gave Rama a meaningful look.

Up rose Rama,
 Like a tongue of flame
 Leaping from a sacrificial fire
 To meet the falling ghee;
 "Broken is the bow," shouted the gods in joy
 And benediction was uttered by the saints.

Before Rama could,
At his preceptor's command,
Break the bow,
Ananga, the God of Love,
Broke a thousand unaimed bows
In the hearts of the assembled maids.

"Look, how heavy is this Bow!"
Moaned some girls,
"If the crimson hand of our bashful Sita
Should fail to clasp the broad brave hand of Rama,
She must needs remain a hapless maid for ever."

"Should the king be keen
That his daughter must wed,
He should tell Rama straight
To take her.
He is a fool indeed to place Siva's mighty Bow
In front of this tender child."

As the maids argued about it and about,
Prince Rama strode majestically forth,
Putting to shame the gaits of
Tusker, bull and lion.
The good men said, "Hurrah."
And the gods gave cheers.

The Bow lay like Mount Meru
And he lifted it with effortless ease;
He lifted it as he would lift
A garland of gay flowers made
To put around Sita's neck.

Unwinking, watched the crowd,
They saw not
Rama planting the Bow firm against his foot
Nor how quickly he drew the bow;
His taking the Bow—they saw,
The breaking of the Bow—they heard.

The gods showered flowers;
The clouds showered golden rain;

The seven seas rejoiced,
 Scattering pearls and gems;
 The assembly of holy men
 Showered their blessings
 On this day, which has brought
 Good luck to the King.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

HOW DID IT HAPPEN? GOD KNOWS!

Nose—down whose luring slope saints fell from the skies,
 Ere they were lifted back by those blue eyes!
 Nose curving towards earth, yet with a point
 Where up and down are wondrously conjoint—
 Nose with arched nostrils where the breath of pride
 Goes in but comes out with deep warmth allied—
 Nose which for age on yearning age had been
 Far stuff of artist reverie—but now seen
 By every gaze!—across that bridge of thine
 Venus has reached earth's spaces undivine—
 O shape intact from Eden's day ere all
 Things that are human broke with Eve's great fall—
 I to my praise of thee would add this prayer:
 "Beloved and beautiful visitant to earth's air,
 Catcher of each man's heart, be it young or old—
 Catch every thing but one—the common cold!"

NOSEGAY

INDIA AND ISRAEL

RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM IN ANCIENT TIMES

(We reproduce, with great pleasure, from the periodical News from Israel the following summary of lectures by Professor Chaim Rabin, which appeared in the issue of July 1 (pp. 9-15). Prof. Rabin comes from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The lectures were delivered at the Institute of World Culture, Bangalore, and at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. They do an admirable job by presenting in a lively and organised manner a mass of information from various sources open only to the professional scholar. What is of particular value is the overall vision of the cultural interrelation of different countries in the far past, with a significant focus on that between India and one of the greatest centres of cultural influence in the ancient world outside our subcontinent : Palestine.

At the end we have put some editorial notes to bring in what we thought to be greater precision here and there in certain specialist fields concerning the past of India. We have chosen that place rather than the foot of each page, in order not to interrupt the flow of the discourse. With the help of the small numerals we have inserted into the text the reader can check back to the relevant passages.

We hope the learned lecturer will not take our notes amiss. Our appreciation of his treatment of the subject as a whole and in most of the details is profound.)

I

WHEN you look at a map, you will see that there is a large distance between India and Palestine. They are separated from each other by the large expanse of Arabia and the Arabian Sea, 6 hours' flying time even with modern jet planes. When people hear for the first time that there was some connection between ancient Israel and India, they laugh: "Such a large distance—how could there possibly have been any connection!" It is only when we delve into historical records that we see that such connections existed, and that, in fact, Palestine and India had close relations in ancient times in a variety of fields, especially the economic.

The history of the Jews begins as one can read in the Bible, with their return to Palestine after their captivity in Egypt, about 1200 B.C. Centuries before that, their ancestors, the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, lived with their families in Palestine. Jacob left Palestine about 1500 B.C. for Egypt, because of a famine (as the story is told in the Bible and also in the Koran) and settled down in Egypt. Only in Egypt the Jews grew into a large nation out of a small family of 70 people. After 1200 B.C., the Jews conquered large parts of Palestine and settled there. They had a very brilliant history in Palestine, extending from 1200 B.C. until the year 70 A.D., with

a short interruption of 70 years when part of the people were exiled to Babylonia (587-520 B.C.). Thus, for some 1300 years, Palestine was the home of the Jewish people, and only from 70 A.D. onwards were the Jews driven out of Palestine and spread over many countries of the world, until the end of the 19th century, since when many Jews have returned to Palestine, created towns, villages and agricultural communes, revived their language, and in the end, in 1948, established the State of Israel.

But the history of the connections between India and Palestine begins well before 1200 B.C. I want to say a few words about the earlier period because it does concern us as well. The oldest information we have about connections between Western Asia, *ie.*, Palestine, Syria and Iraq, on the one hand and India on the other, goes back to 300 years before the Christian era.* In the period about 2500 B.C., until sometime after 2000 B.C., we know about an extensive trade that was carried on between what is today Iraq (Babylonia) and a country that goes under the name of Melukhkha.¹ We have many business documents reporting all kinds of transactions between merchants of Babylonia and other ancient lands, and this country, Melukhkha. It has now been proved conclusively that this Melukhkha was no other than the country of Harappa and Mohenjodaro—the Indus civilization, which extended from the North-West Frontier right down into the neighbourhood of Bombay. No doubt, not only trade went from one place to another, but probably also culture. We know that art went across, because in Iraq we have found seals produced in India, with pictures of Indian animals and the typical script, still undeciphered. Many scholars believe that the people of the Indus civilization were Dravidians. If we could read the writing, we could tell. But there can be no doubt that many Indians living today are descendents of the citizens of that wonderful civilization.

This trade stopped around 2000, because at that time the Indus civilization ceased;² the great cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa were destroyed, we do not know by whom. It may have had something to do with the coming of the Aryans, but it is still a matter of scientific controversy whether the Aryans found these cities already destroyed, or whether they are mentioned in the Vedas.³

When the Aryans, around 2000 B.C., came to India and established themselves, they created a new type of civilization, which from the spiritual point of view was a great one, but its material achievements were mainly in the field of husbandry. At the time of the Vedas, industry and the arts of living were represented mainly by the original inhabitants of India, while the Aryans were the agriculturists and concentrated on religious and spiritual developments.⁴

Only later North India became once more a country of industry and trade. At the same time Dravidians, in what is today Tamil Nad and Kerala, traded across the seas, both with the East (for instance Java, South China, Siam, and as far as the Philippines) and with the West. But before we come to this, I want to mention another episode.

* The text looks mutilated here. Are 3000 years or else 2300 instead of 300 meant? (Editor)

The Aryans who came to India probably went across southern Europe and the boundary land between Europe and Asia, and entered India across the Hindukush⁵ But a small group of these Aryans seems to have separated themselves from the main body and to have reached Western Asia. From 2000 until down to 1300, we find in the documents of Western Asia a certain number of people with unmistakably Sanskrit names, names that were also used by the people of India. We know that these people, like the Indian Aryans, were great warriors. They introduced war chariots both into India and Western Asia. They introduced the training of horses into Western Asia. We have an interesting treatise in the Hittite language on how to train horses, which contains a number of Sanskrit terms, such as *ekavartana* "one turn round the race course."⁶

These Aryans allied themselves with a non-Aryan race called the Hurrians. Together with them they founded the empire of Mitanni, which lasted for 300 years, and only came to an end about 1250, scarcely two generations before the Israelites came back from Egypt and began their conquest of Palestine. All the rulers of Mitanni had Aryan names. Through their names, we can also establish that the Aryans founded small kingdoms in various parts of Syria and Palestine. Although so far not a single document in this Aryan language has been found in Western Asia, it stands to reason that those warriors had a culture and religion very similar to that of the Aryans who came to India, and that the local population, as in India, gradually took over some features of Aryan thought and manner of life.

Some such Aryan warriors, who remained in the country after the main period of Aryan power had ceased, may be even mentioned in the Bible. Thus, about 1100 B.C., the Israelites fought victoriously against a group of rulers including one Sisera, depicted as a great warrior and probably as a leader of chariot troops. This name has never been satisfactorily explained; it may well be Sisirah ("coolness"), a name borne by some persons in early Sanskrit literature. Even as late as the eighth century, we find at the royal court of Jerusalem a high official of non-Israelite origin, Shebna, or according to the Greek translation, Shuban, who possessed fine chariots; his name is perhaps Sanskrit Subhanu or Subandhu, the latter name having been that of an important ruler in South Palestine in the 14th century (but it is equally possible that the name is Semitic, and abbreviated from Shubnayahu, found on seals of that period).

The activities of the Aryan settlers in Western Asia thus lasted until and beyond the time when the Jews established their state in Palestine. Indeed, the connection may even be more intimate than this. Amongst those towns which were ruled by Aryan aristocrats, by the so-called Maryannu (the Hurrian form for Sanskrit *marya*, meaning "young men"), there was also Urusalim, the present Jerusalem. It is probable that during part of the time that the Israelites were in Egypt, the city was in the hands of a group of Aryan warriors. More than that, the Temple of Solomon (today the Sanctuary of the Moslems, with the Omar Mosque and the Masjid al-Aqsa) stood on a spot bought by King David, the father of Solomon, from a man who is in the Bible called Arauna. It is probable that the name of this man was none other than Varuna, i.e., it

was an Indian name.⁷ The ancient Indian God Varuna is mentioned in West-Asian documents. It is even possible that an Aryan sanctuary stood on this spot before it was sold to King David, and the Temple of Solomon built on it. By then the Aryans, diminished in numbers, had been absorbed by the local population.

Until the present day, the Hebrew language contains about 10 or 12 words which go back to an Aryan origin. One example: the scabbard into which a sword is placed is called in Hebrew *Nedan*, Sanskrit *Nidhana*. The modern word for arms is *Nashek*, Sanskrit *Nishanga* "the arms one wears tied to one's body". Hebrew *rikma* 'embroidery' seems to represent Sanskrit *rukma* "gold" and "golden sequins" which were sewn on to clothing. We still use the word *adir* "mighty, great", which may be nothing but Sanskrit *adrita* "honourable," perhaps the name by which these Aryans referred to themselves.

Thus the most ancient connection of the people of Palestine with India came in an indirect way, by an Aryan group, of the same stock as those who came to India, that somehow reached Palestine. When the Israelites entered the country, they adopted from the local population these words, and so preserved a number of Sanskrit words in their language from the most ancient times.

2

I said that the trade between West Asia and India had stopped round about 2000 with the cessation of the Indus civilization. For a long time, for about 1000 years, we hear nothing of trade connections with India. We read in the documents nothing about typical Indian products. We should not wonder about this. Probably through the disappearance of the ships of Indus civilization merchants from the Persian Gulf, those waters became infested by pirates drawn from the impoverished populations on its shores. As late as the 4th century B.C., the fleet of Alexander the Great found it extremely difficult and perilous to sail from the mouth of the Indus to the shores of Babylonia. Moreover, Aryan India was at first a mainly agricultural community. Indian scholars have been discussing the question whether at the time of the Rig Veda there was any overseas trade. I think they have found that the ocean is referred to, but there is nothing about ships on the sea. On the other hand, in the same period Babylonia was invaded and ruled by Semitic tribes from the West; the most famous amongst those rulers being Hammurabi. Politically and economically, Babylonia began at that time to turn westwards, and continued to do so throughout its subsequent history.

But after the year 1000, *i.e.*, in the time when the Israelite kingdom was established, and more specifically, in the time of King Solomon who built the Temple and who ruled about 950 B.C., we begin to hear again about Indian products appearing in the markets of Western Asia. In fact, Solomon himself may well have traded with India. In the Bible, in the First Book of Kings (10:22) we find the following account of Solomon's joint enterprises with the Phoenicians: "The King had at sea Tarshish ships with the ships of Hiram (King of Phoenicia); once in three years came

the Tarshish ships, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and monkeys and peacocks." Ivory and monkeys you could get from East Africa, but there is only one country in the world where you could at the time get peacocks, and that is South India, which is the home of the peacock. Therefore, if it is correct that he bought peacocks his ships must have touched South India. The word for "peacock" which is used in the text is in Hebrew *tukki*, and resembles the Tamil word *tokai*, also found in other Dravidian languages. Therefore, even the word seems to have been taken from the people who sold the peacocks to him. Why should Solomon want to buy peacocks? In one of the Buddhist stories of the *Jatakas*, people went by ship to Babylonia (Baveru) and sold there first a crow and on their next journey a peacock. Apparently, people were wealthy enough to buy exotic animals, as did the Romans later.

Solomon's expedition was in the 10th century B.C. After that, the Kingdom of Judaea came to be an active participant in the trade with India. Trade with India was generally carried out in the following way: ships came from India to the south end of Arabia, because you can come across with the monsoon. On the other hand, it was very hard to sail up to the Red Sea, because of the adverse wind and also because of the pirates. Goods were therefore brought overland by camel caravans from South Arabia. One of the points where they touched civilization was Judaea. The Judaeian kingdom was one of the mediators in the trade that came from India.

We know that they traded in rice, which of course came from India. In Hebrew there are two words for "rice", both of South-Indian origin. One is *orez*, from Tamil *arici*. It is true that in Hebrew sources this word occurs after the Bible, but it must go back to at least the 4th century B.C., as by then it begins to appear in Greek as *oryza*. It is often claimed that Greek *oryza* is derived from an older form of Sanskrit *vrihi*, when it still sounded something like *vrizhi*, but this is quite unlikely, as such a form would have been used only before the Aryans entered India, when they still formed one people with the later Persians: at that period they would hardly have known of rice. The other word is attested only in Ezekiel 27:17 (7th century), and was properly understood only by the Syriac Peshitta translators. It is *minrut*, from Tamil *unti*, pronounced *winti*, and with *m* for *w* according to Babylonian fashion (Ezekiel lived in Babylonia). Until today rice is called *timman* in Iraq, the same word with metathesis. Hebrew texts also mention other aromatic substances by their Indian names, such as eagle-wood (Tamil *akul*, Sanskrit *aguru*), Curcuma, and especially Nard or Spikenard (Sanskrit *nalada*). Possibly the Hebrew sources also mention cotton, in the form *butz*, which is a material from which expensive clothes were made, and which is usually translated "fine linen", but may be Sanskrit *picu*, Tamil *panci* "cotton". We learn from Assyrian sources that one of their kings in the 8th century planted in his park "trees bearing wool like sheep," which he had "shorn" and from the wool of which he made clothes, *i.e.*, Indian Cotton trees. There was, however, an important difference between the 9th-5th centuries, when the Indian trade was at its height, and the time of Solomon, when it had just begun. Solomon, in conjunction with the Phoenicians, ran ships down the Red Sea, and perhaps

all the way to South Indian ports. This was not done afterwards, until in the first century B.C. the admiral Hippalus of the navy of the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt "discovered" the monsoon winds. The ships from India went only as far as the ports of South Arabia, where a high civilization developed among the Sabaeans, Minaeans, Qatabanians, and other nations inhabiting what is now the Republic of South Arabia and the north-eastern parts of the Republic of Yemen. From there the caravans went out on their long trek along the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Both Minaeans and Sabaeans established colonies in North-West Arabia, almost touching the southern boundaries of Palestine. The Jews of Palestine functioned as intermediaries, buying from the South-Arabians and selling to the Phoenicians, Greeks and other nations north and west of them. Hence their contacts with India were mainly of an indirect nature, except during the brief period of Solomon's reign, and as they received the goods through South-Arabian hands, so they received the Indian words largely through South-Arabian mouths. We can prove this in one case at least: the word *orez* "rice", which we mentioned before, is to the present day pronounced in South Arabia something like *rez*, thus in a form much more similar to Tamil *arici*; it thus took its changed form somehow while wandering northwards. Similarly we find in an ancient South-Arabian inscription, put up by a merchant visiting Egypt, the form *bautz* for "cotton", which resembles Tamil *panci* still a little more than the Hebrew *butz* or Greek *byssos*. If South-Arabian inscriptions were a little more concerned with trade and less with war and buildings, we would probably find in them more of the Indian words we can trace in Hebrew.

It is even not certain whether the Jews of Palestine before 587 knew that the goods they bought came from India. The South-Arabians were most secretive about the origin of their goods. Thus they managed during the entire ancient period to keep secret the place from which cinnamon came, and pretended it was found by them in birds' nests on high mountains in Arabia: of course the home of cinnamon is Ceylon and the Malabar coast. Maybe the South-Arabians did not want to repeat the experience of Solomon's expeditions, cutting them out of their trade, and to send the Queen of Sheba to charm a new king into a commercial treaty (I Kings 10:1-10). The name of India is not mentioned in the Bible, except for the late Book of Esther, where it appears in a Persian form (*Hoddu*, for Old Persian *Hindu*).

Nevertheless we must not exclude the possibility of cultural influence. Traveling to India with the monsoon winds was not the same as sailing to other countries: it was not possible to return at once after having completed buying and loading, but one had to wait for months for the monsoon to change direction, and thus the merchants willy-nilly became temporary residents of Indian ports and established some contacts with their hosts. Thus they learnt how to use a substance like eagle-wood for perfuming their hair and clothes with its fragrant smoke (as mentioned three times in the Bible), or how the cotton was harvested from the cotton trees. Perhaps they also were invited to hear the poetry of the bards recited, and brought home new ideas of literature. It may thus not be purely accidental that the relation between lovers as depicted in the

Song of Songs resembles somewhat that which characterizes the Tamil Sangam poetry, both being quite unlike what we find in other ancient literatures, just as it may be an echo of the Sangam poetry that we find in early Arabic poetry (from the 5th century A.D. onwards) such preoccupation with love and the woes of lovers parted. It has been claimed by some scholars that the introduction of the theme of faithful and painful love into European poetry in the Middle Ages was due to the influence of Arab poetry in Spain.

3

The description we have given of trade with South India in the 10th to 6th centuries B.C. raises an interesting point of some importance for the history of India. Archaeologists and anthropologists have in recent years generally been of the opinion that the Dravidians only came to South India with the advent of the Iron Age, after 500 B.C.—some even date them as late as 300 B.C. If our reconstruction is right, or rather if we take the Bible seriously when it gives us, in texts preceding the 6th century B.C., Tamil names for Indian goods, then the conclusion is that Tamil speakers must have occupied those southern sea-ports before 500; and if we accept the story about Solomon's peacocks as true, then Tamils were there about 950 B.C.⁸

After the Persian conquest of Babylonia in 539 and the re-establishment of a Jewish community in Palestine under King Cyrus, a new link with India was opened. Parts of north-western India belonged to the Persian Empire. This contact was thus with Aryan populations, and we can note in the latest books of the Bible, written during the Persian period and after, Aryan (Sanskrit or Prakrit) words coming into use in Palestine. The old Hebrew name for carmesine-dyed stuff fell out of use, and the colour was now called *karmil*, from Buddhist Sanskrit *krumlika* (Hindi *krimiya*); cotton came to be known under the name *karpas*, from Sanskrit *karpasa* (Hindi *kapas*).

Towards the end of the period we are dealing with, i. e., towards the end of the independent Jewish State in Palestine, trade with India was taken up on a large scale by Greeks and Romans.

Alexander the Great conquered Asia, in the year 333, when he destroyed the Persian Empire. The Greeks took over the Indian trade of the South Arabians, and began to trade directly with India, and after this, when the Greeks were conquered by the Romans, the Romans took up the trade with India. Trade with India became an important affair. The Roman author Pliny complained about 70 A.D. that trade with India ruined the Romans. Every year, millions were spent on importing goods from India, "but"—he adds—"what can we do? Our wives want them."

They bought silks, cotton, condiments, and especially one condiment, pepper, which only grew that time in South India. So much pepper was bought that it got the name *Yavana-Priya* "the substance beloved by the Greeks and Romans." They built specially large ships, so they could fill them with pepper. Their food must have tasted as hot as the South Indian food! The Greek and Roman merchants also had

to stay for a certain time in India and we hear, for instance, of the beautiful houses the Yavana built at Puhar, in the *Silappadikkaram*. The ancient Dravidian Kings even had Yavana guards. Greek mercenaries were much sought after also in the West.

In this period, no doubt, the Jews and other non-Greeks took a very important part in the trade. India has just been celebrating the 2,000 years which have passed since the Jews first settled in Cochin, as part of this movement of traders.

Once more the commercial relations resulted in the penetration of Indian words into Hebrew, into the Aramaic language spoken by the Jews, and into some other languages of Western Asia, including again Greek. On the festival of Tabernacles, Jews take to the synagogue a special kind of citron called *Ethrog* since early post-Biblical times: this, via Persian *turung*, is derived from Sanskrit *matulunga*. Other words that the Jews adopted at this time are *zungwil* "ginger", from Tamil *inciver*, earlier, *zinciver*, Sanskrit *sringavera*; *margalit* "pearl" from Sanskrit *manjari*, or perhaps from Tamil *manali* "a small unit of weight." These two words also passed into Greek as *zigiberi* and *margarite*. A remarkable borrowing is *tarved* "stirring spoon, ladle", from Telugu *treddu*.

The harbours where western traders came were Muciri (Cranganore) in the west, and in the east the town called in Greek Poduke, probably nothing but a Greek pronunciation of the word *Puducceri* (Pondicherry). In fact, near Pondicherry, at a harbour called Arikamedu, there were found Roman coins, and a huge hoard of Roman jars freshly imported. There must have been a big trade going on in these products. The Jews, in the last period of their independence, took part in it, and went on after they ceased to be independent. In fact, they continued even after the Western Roman Empire ceased to exist in the 6th century, and Europe became a country of lower culture when the Middle Ages began and barbarianism heralded the "Dark Age". In that general decline, the Jews, scattered all over Europe, held an important position. They were orientals, who carried with them the higher culture of their Eastern homeland, and did not take part in the barbarization. The Jews were 100% literate at a time when even kings could not read and write.

In the 7th and 8th centuries we have records preserved of a Jewish family called the Radanites who carried on trade from Germany and France, across Italy, Palestine, Egypt and down the Red Sea to India. They imported to Europe pepper, silk, Indian condiments, spices, perfumes, etc. The Radanites thus were early international traders.

Until the 12th century we know the Jews played an important role, especially in the trade between Egypt and South India. At a time when the Jews were excluded from many economic activities, people could not do without them in the trade with India.

perfection of their system of writing. The ancient Indian scripts were similar to Semitic, and it is generally believed that they were taken over from the Semitic system of writing. Probably it was the Phoenician or South-Arabian traders who brought the alphabet to India.⁹ However, there is a very important difference between Semitic and Indian writing. In older Semitic writing, consonants alone are to be found, and no vowels are indicated. This is a shortcoming in the writing of the Semites which they did not succeed in overcoming by themselves. The Greeks solved it by using some Semitic consonants to indicate vowels. The Indians, on the other hand, invented special letters for the vowels, and originated the idea of two written forms for each vowel, one at the beginning, and one for the middle of the word, which is attached to the consonant, as in modern Indian writings. This happened in India quite early. In about 300 A.D. we find in Ethiopia, a country also influenced by India in other respects, the same system of adding vowels as little circles and strokes to the consonant letters, as the Ethiopians do till today. They were the first Semitic people to turn consonant writing into a system expressing both vowels and consonants. They must have learnt this from India, as is also proved by the fact that they recite the vowels in approximately the same order as is customary in Sanskrit (a, u, i, ā, e, vīram, o). From Ethiopia, this idea came to the Arabs. In the early Koran manuscript a, u, and i were expressed by big red dots placed above the line, on the line, and below it.

Only later the system of indicating vowels was introduced as used in Arabic, Persian and Urdu today. Apparently inspired by the older Arabic system, which was originally Indian, as we have seen, the Jews in the 7th and 8th centuries adopted their own methods by dots and lines put above and below the consonants. This idea of indicating vowels is important. It has helped preserve the language. If this was originally brought from India, it is one import for which we have to be grateful to India. When we print books, we dispense with the vowels. But in prayer books, books for children and poetry, we keep the vowels. Thus, India has indirectly helped to keep the grammatical tradition and correct pronunciation of Hebrew alive during the many centuries it was not spoken.

We have to thank the Indians for many other things. There is no doubt that ideas of Indian religion reached Western Asia and exercised a very deep influence on the religious ideas of the West. Some people believe early Christianity was influenced by Indian thought. Jewish mysticism was deeply influenced by the ideas of Indian mysticism. We have theosophical mysticism in which certain Indian ideas can be traced. The contact in this case probably was through the Arabs.

The *panchatantra* collection of stories was taken over by most western peoples, and we have a Hebrew version of it made from an Arabic text which in turn was probably based on a Persian one. Also another book was taken over in Hebrew literature in the Middle Ages. There is a very interesting 11th-century book called "The Prince and the Beggar" which became most popular among Jews as a treatise on ethics. It was proved recently that this is nothing but a version of one of the books on the life of the Buddha, which somehow got into Western Asia and was adapted into Hebrew.

In summing up, we may say that the contacts between India and distant Palestine have often been close and fruitful. These contacts have no doubt helped both peoples to advance. They have been useful in the spiritual and economic sense and we can only express the hope that also in the future our respective cultures will be able to fertilize each other, as they have so frequently done in the past.

CHAIM RABIN

EDITOR'S NOTES

1. If we go by Sir Mortimer Wheeler (*Early India and Pakistan*, Bombay, 1957, pp. 109-10), it would be more exact to say that Babylonia had trade-exchanges with Melukhkha from c. 2350 to c. 1700 B.C. They were in full stream during the Sargonid Dynasty of Akkad which started in about 2350 B.C. At that time the two countries were in direct contact. The contact became indirect and diminished in the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur, about 2100 B.C., and grew weaker still during the Dynasty of Larsa, about 1950 B.C., until it was no more than a trickle in the period of the Hammurabi Dynasty, about 1700 B.C.

2. The latest opinion, based on an analysis of radiocarbon estimates by D. S. Agarwal, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay, is that the Indus Valley Civilization which had been previously dated by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and others to c. 2500-1500 B.C. lasted only for about 550 years from roughly 2300 to roughly 1750 B.C. This dating, first suggested by Agarwal in *Science* (Washington, 28 February 1964, Vol. 143, No. 3609, pp. 950-52) brings the life-span of that civilization into accord more or less with the chronology of trade-exchanges between Babylonia and Melukhkha revealed by commercial documents as well as with the chronology derived from the archaeological finds of Indus Valley objects in Mesopotamia.

3. After the extensive surveys in southern Baluchistan and the lower Indus Valley conducted by the hydrologist Robert L. Raikes in the same year (1960) that the University Museum, U.S.A., undertook an archaeological survey of the Arabian Sea coast of West Pakistan, and after the joint reopening of the Mohenjodaro-site during the winter of 1964-65 by the University of Pennsylvania and the Pakistan Government—after all this recent work the view most widely held is that tectonic disturbances in the Indus region, leading to repeated and prolonged catastrophic floods, caused the destruction of the Indus Civilization. The Aryans had nothing to do with it. It is even questioned whether there was at all an Aryan invasion. As George F. Dales ("The Decline of the Harappans", *Scientific American*, May 1966, pp. 93-100) remarks: "For one thing, no one has any exact knowledge of the date when the Aryans first entered the Indus valley area; they have not yet been identified archaeologically.

For another, the sole purpose served by the invasion hypothesis is to explain the demise of Harappan civilization. If evidence can be found that Mohenjodaro declined for other reasons, the invasion hypothesis goes by the board."

4. The date commonly postulated by the theorists of the Aryan invasion has been c. 1500 B.C. And they imply a distinction between an Aryan and a Non-Aryan India. But the whole concept of races is fast undergoing a change and, in any case, Aryanism is not an ethnic but a cultural entity. The Vedas speak of Powers of Light, Divine Forces, in conflict with Powers of Darkness, Diabolic Forces: they are basically concerned, as Sri Aurobindo has shown (*On the Veda*, Pondicherry, 2nd Ed., 1964), with a story of spiritual conquest, an inner psychological movement poetised with the help of a multitude of symbols and analogies. And, if there was no Aryan invasion, the state of society pictured in the Vedas should place these scriptures in a period anterior to that of the Indus Civilization. So-called Aryans could very well have been part of the mixed population of the Indus cities and, by their post-Rigvedic culture, have contributed to the complex of that civilization.

5. An "Aryan" passage across the Middle East and into Europe is well-attested, but an Aryan entry into India across the Hindukush is still a mere assumption of historians. Although widely accepted and useful for some purposes, it stands unproved. The Rigveda itself indicates no route of invasion: in fact, it has no suggestion of any entry into India from outside.

6. If these people had Sanskrit names and used Sanskrit terms, they are most likely to have been an offshoot from the peripheral areas of Aryanism in India itself—as is pretty conclusively suggested by Paul Thieme in "The 'Aryan' Gods of the Mitanni Treaties", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (Vol. 80, No. 4, October-December, 1960, pp. 301-17).

7. It seems certain that Arauna was an Indo-Aryan. W. F. Albright (*The Cambridge Ancient History*, Revised Edition, 1966 Vol. II, Ch. XX, p. 14) writes: "Araunah the Jebusite, who is said to have sold the site of the future Solomonic temple to David, appears to have the same Indo-Aryan name as Ariwana or Arawana, a prince of the Damascus region in the Amarna age [1389-1358 B. C. or else 1375-1344 B. C.]."

8. Professor Rabin's argument seems valid and we may add that, as Furer-Haimendorff supposed from the overlap between the area of megalithic culture and that of the distribution of the present Dravidian languages, Dravidian was introduced by the megalithic people who, as H. D. Sankalia has explained, go back—at Terdal in the Bijapur District and at Tekkalkota, District Bellary, and at Halur, Dharwar District—to c. 900 or 1000 B.C. Cf. H. D. Sankalia's "Beginning of Civilisation in South India", II International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies (January 3 to 10, 1968), Madras, pp. 11-12.

9. Suniti Kumar Chatterji ("Brahmi—The Mother of Indian Scripts", *Indian Systems of Writing*, Publications Division, Delhi, 1966, pp. 9-11) points out that there are some basic divergences between Phoenician writing on the one hand

and Brahmi on the other, which make it difficult to affiliate them. In contrast, the agreement between the latest or linear stage of the Mohenjodaro script and Brahmi would suggest "that Brahmi was derived from the former, and was gradually perfected by 300 B.C." from an earlier stage of itself which we may call Proto-Brahmi. "Thus the origin of the Brahmi script and its subsequent developments in the succeeding centuries was native Indian." This, of course, is not to deny all Phoenician or South-Arabian influence. But, apart from the close resemblance of some Mohenjodaro signs to Brahmi letters, a very important other similarity must be noted: "in some of the Mohenjodaro signs, it would appear that the Brahmi characteristic of tagging on vowel signs to the consonant letters is also found, besides combination of two or more consonants."

K. D. S.



DEAR READER,

On December 1, this year, the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education will complete 25 years.

On this occasion, *Mother India* will bring out a special issue of about 250 pages with numerous photographs.

This issue will be a compendium of the educational ideal, system, method, process and practice at our Centre.

We hope our readers will come out enthusiastically to help us and co-operate with our efforts to make this project widely known and to collect advertisements for the issue. All the money realised will be offered to the Mother in the interests of the Centre.

Please write to us about the way you can help.

MOTHER INDIA



GIFTS OF GRACE

(Continued from the issue of August 15)

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

To complete the story something more has to be said.

I was no longer a child—I was a man, but not fully a man. In that period of transition I entered upon life. From my childhood I had a great fascination for travelling. The father of a friend of mine was in Railway Service. My friend suggested, “Why not try for a post in the Railways?” At the very thought my imagination took fire. It seemed to open for me the door of heaven.

On the recommendation of a Railway Police Inspector who had been my father’s schoolmate I was allowed to sit for a test in the Traffic Manager’s Office at Gorakhpore and I passed it with credit. I returned home to take leave of my parents and relatives before joining the Service.

In my home town a member of my community made an incidental remark—“Service! and in the Railways! What prospects has it for you?” I looked aghast. The heaven of my dream evaporated in a minute.

I little knew then that the life of his daughter was linked with mine and that she would play a distinctive role in my spiritual development. Was there a secret hand guiding my destiny right from the beginning? There are other instances to which we shall refer later on.

In Calcutta I had many relatives who were men of means. One of them was my maternal uncle. He wanted that I should come to Calcutta. I had a great liking for Calcutta life. In my fancy I used to think how lucky they were who were citizens of Calcutta—a city of magic and miracle! a city where there were often showers of gold! So I jumped for joy and at once left for Calcutta.

There I was introduced to a big firm which had just started importing piecegoods from England. In a few months I learnt the technique of dealing with foreign firms. The new job proved to me a precious gift of God, opened to me the gateway to life and its glory.

“Have faith in things of the moment and enjoy them to your heart’s content” was the first lesson that my young mind learnt in Calcutta.

Come in! Here is pleasure, here is plenty—rang the voice of Calcutta in my innocent ears. To know the real joys of life all you need is—money!

And I got consumed with the desire of earning. There rose a cry within—money, more and more money. Money became my God!

Here one might find my life marked by insoluble contradictions. Though I had resigned myself to the call of the flesh, yet something in me whispered: enjoy life as

best you can so that there might remain no hankering for anything.

Day by day I had been getting entangled in worldly pursuits but at times I was split in two. Half of my being took delight in all this and the other looked down upon the doings of the former—questioning “Look! How great was your craving and how little your gain! Where is true joy in all these things? And how trifling are they!”

This conflict did not allow me to sink knee-deep into the mire and kept me discontented with myself.

It would be wrong to say I was led by any ideal. I didn’t know what the meaning and purpose of my life were and whither I was drifting. My life was like a rudderless ship, tossing on the waves, a victim to gusts of wind.

Sharp conflicts and ups and downs were always there in my life. Even when I turned to Yoga I had to struggle hard; then only could I obtain something. Rarely has anything come to me as a windfall. In Calcutta the nature of my conflict was different: Under the play of circumstances I had to choose the hand of the same girl spoken of earlier. One part of me was happy, the other sad. Then I became a riddle to myself. I asked myself why I was sad but I did not know what to answer.

A year after the marriage there was some trouble and one night I left my place to take up *Sannyas*. One given to carnal pleasures, hot by temperament and not free even from conceit by nature: that was I, and yet I thought of *Sannyas*! Of course, by *Sannyas* I never meant putting on saffron clothes or living on alms but giving myself entirely to Sri Krishna. I passed hours and hours sitting alone in the Calcutta *maidan*. At last I decided to seek initiation from Ramdas Babaji, a great devotee of Sri Chaitanya, but on coming to his presence I could not utter a word.

At about 3 a.m. it struck me that to desert life because of troubles was a sign of weakness. I must gain victory over the world and then pass on to the other life like a triumphant warrior. This very thought impelled my return home.

In course of time I earned a lot, but as if by the fury of an elemental upheaval all was swept away at one blast and I was left in a state of utter confusion and frustration. For a time I found myself faced with aimless drifting but fortune smiled on me again and I was on the way to success when there came another blast. After three such repetitions, a query arose, “Is life to be spent in an unending circle of loss and gain?”

This was one of the darkest hours of my life and at the same time a forerunner of one of my brightest days: it led me to find my way out of the night.

In those days two questions were uppermost in my mind. Looking at the conditions of various people I used to ask myself, “Are they happy in life? Can they say there is not even a shade of grief in their happiness?”

One of the persons of whom I enquired was a classmate of mine, a son of one of the richest men of my place. “Well, Abhoy,” I asked, “you are blessed with all that the world can give: a big zamindari, a palatial building, a charming wife, healthy lovely children. Can you say that you are also altogether happy and there is no touch of grief in your happiness?”

“Far from it, my friend,” said he in a melancholy tone, “I may say you are far

more happy than I. There is no end to my worry, both at home and in the zamindari. My mother says that I always side with my wife whereas my wife says that I have no love for her, I never care for her. In the zamindari too there is no end to litigations."

And the next question: how to win the Grace of Sri Krishna? Once I approached the head of a religious institution but was told: there is no room for one who is rejected by the world. And that was exactly my condition in those days.

Thank God, I was rejected by the institution, though it pained me at the time. Had I fallen under the influence of a Guru of the ascetic type, surely the violence in my nature would have risen up. A subsequent chapter will show that suppression leads nowhere.

Lives of saints and sages indicate what amount of sincerity, purity, concentration, patience, perseverance, non-attachment is needed in the search for the divine realisation. And where was I?

Even after being initiated into yoga I was not conscious enough of the goings on of my Sadhana. Seated in a boat I seemed to be moving on, led by the current. I had no say. No fire, no will-power.

When the consciousness awakened and it took years and years, there came a marvellous change in the outlook. There developed a power of self-scrutiny. Life in Sadhana became a laboratory and I began to study my nature, the how and the why of things and events.

The day I took the resolution to free the vital consciousness from its cravings,¹ I came to know what was meant by Sadhana and where in its field I stood. From then on, life became a battlefield.

To cite a minor instance:

In my childhood I was very fond of sweets. The temptation was so great that I did not hesitate even to steal provided there was no fear of being detected. What a fight I had to give to get rid of this little attachment, the desire for delicacies!

My vital being was full of cravings. There was no end to its demands. And the mind? It was so restless that I could not meditate even for a minute. If such a man reaches a stage when there is "no thought," "no desire", though attained as yet only partially, will it be wrong to call it a gift of Grace? But how? What a mighty war I had to wage with my nature I shall tell in its proper place.

(To be continued)

A DISCIPLE

¹ You have only to persist and after a time the vital consciousness will be free.

Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga*, Tome II, p. 150.

A LETTER FROM AUROVILLE

NEW ADVENTURE—THE GROUP SOUL

The plan now being formulated for Auroville's "Advance Colony" opens for us a new and challenging experiment in intra-personal living. Essentially it can be accepted as the first Auroville movement to have the individual and the group combine in a work-life engagement significant to the ideal of human unity. The imperative implication of the advance colony can be seen by extracting the two main movements in effect until now.

Primarily, there has been in ascendance within Auroville an overall general movement of development.

Paralled and within the general movement, there has been the functions of central and peripheral individuals.

Separately, neither of these constitutes group unity. A synthesis of the two creates a third movement which accomplishes that.

The general movement, we may remember, consisted of determining the physical concept of the township, the comprehensive nature of its architecture, the zonal requirements, and preparations for the projects to be developed. The concepts were derived from spiritual, psychological and philosophical pre-requisites. These now render Auroville and its intentions more concretely intelligible to the heart and mind. Structuring the city's embodied form was then the first general necessity, in order to grasp some indication of the beautiful and complex idea which the Mother presents to us. Knowing that you have seen the township's plans and also heard what the Mother has said Auroville will be, it is not necessary to go over those details again. For now I only wish to outline what has been leading us to a possible convergence of group and individual for the first time. This, in turn, can show us what necessities we face in order to form a real unity to build an advance colony and make it a success.

Also in the general movement was the development of a number of important factors necessary to perform the work and prepare the various projects required for Auroville's growth. Most important was an enlargement of the staff necessary to deal with the growing involvements. From an original handful who had to do everything from office work to road-building and visitor relations, the overall staff has now grown into a group of eighty persons. The enlarged staff is now beginning to perform the many departmental tasks necessary; the office work, government relations, industrial developments, international branches, purchasing, transport, architectural design, technical research, construction, fund raising, information, travelling exhibitions, living accommodations, visitor services, agriculture, and overall administration.

So we see that the initial general movement formed a skeletal foundation for internal functioning and external communications and contacts. Much of this is

preparatory for things which have yet to come to fruition. (From experience, one may hope that this fruition will extend itself to include a more unified way for our staff to operate, with itself and others, and the staff, I'm sure, would agree, for that is part of the group experiment which makes Auroville's manner of growth hard to fathom by usual standards.) So much for the general movement.

Enumerating the individual activities is more difficult, as there is a complex subtlety in the nature of Auroville's way of growth which does not exist in other organizations. This is its potential hope and at times its dilemma. In government, industry, the military, or the U.N. the activities and processes are readily related to or can be accounted for within a hierarchy of functions and absolute bureaus; but with Auroville many individuals, dispersed throughout the world, are engaged and helpful out of a personal goodwill and impulsion to participate. Let us just say that these individual activities range widely from the Auroville staff to India's UNESCO representative, right on through to the offering of materials, money, part-time and occasional services of people in the Ashram and elsewhere in the world, including the forecomers who are building and living on the Auroville site, individual Aurovillians and the young boys and girls of the Ashram who volunteer their time to plant trees, and others who perform work in the office or on the site itself and those doing the Mother's work in general, which often relates to Auroville. The general movement and the individuals' functions no doubt have had to take strange turns. They did and still do, in order to coalesce into final unity only when freedom for both can be assured. Who of us really knows enough to judge what its growth should be like?

But now the advance colony prepares us for a new opportunity towards unification which can overcome the dissolution and disillusion. We can recall that the only other intensive mass operation undertaken in Auroville was the organization for the February 28th Dedication Day Ceremony. Then, everyone had their work cut out for them to one main purpose. And to some degree, like the ceremony, the advance colony will require a concerted effort.

The various departments and staff of Auroville will have to make room within their general and individual operations to include consistently running facilities aimed toward this one enterprise. This in itself could bring to Auroville's general movement and operations a cohesiveness and concentration that has not existed since the ceremony. All individuals involved and related to the specific aim of creating an entire colony can find again the mutual spirit and joy of accomplishment which was so strongly present during and after the ceremony. It is that condition, inexpressible in words, which can be established by a unified work.

But more exists, much more. For in such a circumstance all the factors can come together for an opportunity to accomplish in a condensed act that which Sri Aurobindo detailed as his *Ideal of Human Unity*. Not since the first beginnings, when the original ground was broken open for that ideal by the International Centre of Education, have we had available both halves of the necessary conditions for success. An international group prepared to live and work together. This blending is at hand,

Call it advance colony or let it happen without being titled, it is the privilege and opportunity to participate in the working out of Sri Aurobindo's ideal and will.

The advance colony, or some such unified and integrally functioning life, is the development of the group soul. A required formation if Auroville is to be a vehicle for uniting mankind. The approximate alternative, a bunch of good-hearted, hopeful individuals, each doing his own thing, cannot quite be heard in the world as the force of an undeniable chorus of voices. The joy of brotherhood and the solutions to its existing problems are waiting for us out there where and when individuals will give themselves, in trust for a greater growth, into the hands of the group spirit over which the Mother presides. The experiment to find this group soul calls for self-aims to be subordinate to the successful birth of this first settlement. That is what is expected of us. To make it a reality none will ask it of his neighbour or wait first to see it in him. He will ask it of himself. As each person and his actions reflect the sacredness hidden in this uniting, the soul of Auroville will take form.

The act of birth of the group soul cannot take place in the mind of Auroville. One can think about it there and perhaps devise something of it there. It is only in the body of Auroville, the physical place the Mother has chosen for its delivery, that the event can be made corporeal. To deny it is unreal and retards its actualization. Those who wish to bring the soul of Auroville into life will now come together to participate, feed or sustain or live out its actual embodiment.

GENE

TOWARDS A NEW WORLD

WHO is whose? O vain the ties;
 All is the fret and foam of flesh,
 The drunken self's flickering flush.
 Who sees and knows for ever lives,
 Lives apart, like a star alone,
 A white throb of the infinite One.
 It is enough, O Soul, I have done,
 Done with the Time-pressed need for pain.
 Towards a new world of a new light
 My heart's deep-echoing crimson beat—
 The purple throb of a budded rose
 To the being's boundless rapture-core!
 A ravishing God-lust grips me bare,
 A trembling soul in sheer self-loss.

VENKATARANGA

CAN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD BE PROVED?

(Continued from the issue of August 15)

(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. In this discussion which has mainly been between A and C I find myself in agreement with C. He has shown, I think, that A's argument for the existence of God, whether based on the GE Principle or on the Superiority Principle, breaks down. To begin with, I felt sure that the argument would be guilty of the fallacy of regarding 'existence' as a predicate. Looking back over the argument it is not clear to me whether C thinks that it does commit this fallacy. At one stage he said that it does, but the subsequent course of his polemic against A's argument seemed to ignore this point altogether.
- C. I admit I was confused. I now see that A's argument does not commit this fallacy. There are broadly three objections to the argument: (a) it mistakenly dismisses the hypothetical 'If God exists, He necessarily exists' as modal nonsense; (b) it wrongly assumes that we can refer directly to the ontological modal characteristics of a thing, and (c) it mistakenly identifies 'necessary being' with 'independent being' and 'contingent being' with 'dependent being'.
- K. Then why was A at such pains to prove that in the case of God 'existence' is a predicative expression?
- C. Well, all I can say is, he need not have been at such pains!
- K. Your refutation of the argument, though based on different grounds from mine, satisfies me in principle, for my inner feeling all along has been that pure *theoretical* reason can neither prove nor disprove the existence of anything.
- C. I think that is a very valuable insight, if by theoretical reason you mean reason which proceeds majestically *more geometrico*.
- K. A wondered last time whether the argument you proposed to put forward to show that 'God exists' is self-evidently true was not after all a variant of his own argument which tries to show that 'God does not exist' is self-contradictory. My interest is in finding out whether your argument differs from A's argument in that it brings out the presuppositions of pure *practical* reason.
- C. Not if that means that my argument merely makes explicit the presuppositions of the moral consciousness. There is, however, another sense in which thought is

the expression of practical reason. The foundations of thought in philosophy are always allogical. This means that will is the foundation of reason, but the content of the will is in reason itself. I therefore do not accept your dichotomy between theoretical and practical reason. Reasoning in philosophy is necessarily both theoretical and practical and these two aspects are inseparable.

- K. Then I would say that when reasoning proceeds *more geometrico* there is an artificial separation of the theoretical from the practical reason and that is why its procedure becomes awkward and labyrinthine and its results remain inconclusive.
- C. Yes, I would agree with that. But I think the act of commitment in practical reason goes far beyond the moral ought. It is a commitment to the concept of God. For both you and me 'God' is the presupposition of the practical reason, but for you it is the presupposition of reason reflecting on the moral will, for me it is the presupposition of reason *per se* or reason which is the expression of the supernatural will or the soul's yearning for the ultimate.
- K. I think that is essentially the same as my point of view raised to the mystical level but I cannot follow you there because there is very little of the mystic in me!
- C. Mysticism, I believe, is the culmination of metaphysics, but I think that the mystical aspect of my point of view does not need to be emphasised in order to show that 'God exists' is self-evidently true. What is important is to raise thought, not to the mystical, but to the self-conscious or critical level.
- K. And you think that my view of the function of practical reason does not rise to the level of self-consciousness?
- C. I'm afraid so. I hope I do not sound presumptuous when I say that both your thought and A's thought move at the pre-critical level. You two present in your thinking the thesis and the antithesis. A says that the existence of God can be demonstrated. You say that reason cannot demonstrate the existence of God. My way of thinking offers a synthesis which brings out the truth of both the affirmation and the denial.
- A. It seems that the disagreement between C and myself, if really there is a disagreement, is not in what we accept to be true, not, that is, in our ontological commitments, but on the question of method and the concept of reasoning in philosophy. The discussion is not at the level of ontology or theology, but at the level of metaphilosophy.
- C. I agree, but the relation between philosophy and metaphilosophy is a very intimate one. I think that metaphysics and theology cannot be properly done unless we rethink their problems from the metaphilosophical point of view. Empiricism and secular philosophy can ignore metaphilosophy up to a point, but I believe that in the demand for a transcendent metaphysical system thought is implicitly pressing upwards and burrowing inwards in the attempt to achieve self-consciousness and come fully into its own.
- K. And yet since the days of Plato, and even before, metaphysical systems have flourished in disregard of the problems of metaphilosophy.

- C. Well, the evolution of the human mind is a slow process and philosophy's no exception. Rather, since philosophy aims at integral knowledge of the totality of experience, it is but natural that it should be the last activity of the human spirit to mature and come into its rightful heritage. Since the 16th century the natural sciences have come into their own, but philosophy, 'the Mother of all the sciences', has yet to find her own origin and discover her soul. She has laid down, as the highest wisdom, the maxim 'Know thyself', but she has yet to apply the maxim to herself. I believe that so long as metaphysics is pursued and metaphysical systems are constructed at the pre-critical level they will inevitably bring about a reaction and a periodic relapse of thought into positivism. The mounting tension created by Hegelianism with its pan-logism has brought about a very sharp and bitter reaction in recent times, leading to a denial, not of the grandiose truths of metaphysics, but of its very meaningfulness as an intellectual inquiry and its *raison d'être*. One good thing that recent positivism has done is to destroy the lofty pretensions of that class of metaphysicians who imagined that they could spin out from pure reason ineluctable necessities of thought that could legislate for all existence. I think that metaphysics in the old grand manner is dead.
- K. But isn't that just what Kant tried to show in his *Critique of Pure Reason*? Did he not lay the foundations of Critical Philosophy and raise thought to the level of self-consciousness?
- C. I'm afraid not. There have been sporadic attempts in the history of philosophy to bring philosophy to a consciousness of itself. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was perhaps the most systematic and an all-out effort to achieve this end, but I think the best that can be said for Kant's attempt is that it was a magnificent failure. He saw clearly the situation in philosophy that called for a critical reappraisal of what philosophy is and does or can do, but his diagnosis of the ills of philosophy was wrong and his 'remedy' has only added to the prevailing disease. Kant merely substituted one set of ineluctable logical necessities legislating for all existence for another, and so gave a new impetus to the confusion that has made metaphysics and philosophy 'the battle ground of endless controversies.'¹ His so-called 'Critical Philosophy' is done at the pre-critical level with unexamined presuppositions at work, and so fails completely to raise thought to the level of self-consciousness.
- A. But will not your metaphysics married to metaphilosophy in its turn provoke a reaction and bring about a relapse of thought into positivism of a still more ingenious and sophisticated kind?
- C. It is difficult to make *a priori* prognostications of the course of human thought, but I think that the new metaphysics, if I may so call it, will cut the ground from under the feet of positivist opposition, at least of a logical kind, by showing that the origin of all constructive, as distinct from critical, philosophical systems, including positivism, is an act of commitment which is alogical.

- K. Cannot this itself be questioned?
- C. Surely, but the conclusions of metaphilosophy are not, or should not be, what the Madhyamikas call 'views' or *dṛṣṭis*, i.e., they are not an elaboration of a biased alogical act of commitment. Hence what I have to say may be criticized, but not from the positivist or any other specific point of view. At the metaphilosophical level biased thinking, though not rejected, is transcended, that is, one thinks from a position where one is aware of one's bias and keeps it, but does not allow it to operate for the solution of metaphilosophical problems. Hence at this level the positivist and the metaphysician will meet for the first time on common ground and resume their dialogue but in a different spirit and with a heightened awareness which will show their previous polemic bickerings to be the expression of philosophical immaturity.
- K. The positivist lion lying down with the metaphysical lamb! A pleasing picture, but one sees no signs of its coming to pass.
- C. I think there are unmistakable signs. Anglo-Saxon empiricists have, on the whole, shed their aggressiveness and their 'off with his head' arrogance and with becoming humility are beginning to court the metaphysician. I believe one of the main reasons for this exhibition of 'tendermindedness' is that the anti-metaphysical campaign resting on a single logical principle has failed not only to eliminate metaphysics but to provide an alternative to it to which all philosophers sharing a temperamental antipathy to metaphysics could subscribe. This is forcing them to examine the foundations of their own thinking and is creating an uneasy realization that perhaps there are no foundations at all, or, at any rate, their thought does not rest on the foundations of an impeccable logic. They are beginning to realize that they are not in a position to cast a stone at the metaphysician.
- K. I agree that the empiricists of today cannot be described as *anti*-metaphysical. They are willing to talk to the metaphysicians almost on equal terms; but isn't there still a touch of condescension in their attitude when they say that the metaphysician's vision of the world, his *weltanschauung*, though not meaningless, and perhaps even uplifting, is after all only a way of looking at things and does not give us any knowledge of what there is.
- C. That may be their view which we have to respect and not a matter of condescension; but what, in their view, is the difference between ennobling vision and knowledge of what there is?
- K. Metaphysics, they would say, is more akin to poetry, but it is not a cognitive activity and its propositions have no truth-value. We cannot regard it as a mode of cognition unless the metaphysician shows how the truth-claim of metaphysical propositions can be tested and verified. And this, they say, the metaphysician cannot do.
- C. You mean the metaphysician cannot demonstrate the truth of his conclusions. I agree, though A would contest this view. But to ask for demonstrations is,

according to me, still doing philosophy at the pre-critical level and assimilating philosophical reasoning to mathematical reasoning. Besides, is the empiricist in a better case? What criterion can he offer to test the truth-claim of his own theory? I mean a criterion distinct from that in the light of which the empiricist's system is constructed, for to offer this as the criterion for testing its truth-claim would clearly be to beg the question.

- K. I should think he has none; but then nor has the metaphysician a criterion, which is distinct from the one immanent in his system and which can be used to settle any truth-claim he may make.
- C. Agreed, but then the conclusion should be that philosophy as such is only a way of viewing things, but does not give us knowledge of anything and that no philosophical system, not even empiricism, can claim to be cognitive.
- A. Is that your view as well?
- C. No. What I am suggesting here is that empiricism is not in a better case than metaphysics if we say that reasoning everywhere lacks in demonstrative certainty. Empiricists would then have to acknowledge that if metaphysics is to be denied the name of knowledge because its conclusions hang in the air, as it were, empiricism too cannot be regarded as a cognitive theory and for the same reason.
- K. The empiricists would never admit this.
- C. They cannot long resist the time-spirit. There is today a strong *nisus* in thought to rise to the level of self-consciousness. The empiricists cannot ignore or resist this pressure from within. So far as philosophy at the merely constructive level is possible the game has almost been played out. The sheer *ennui* which must overtake their thought will compel the empiricists to respond to the increasing pressure on the philosophical mind to rise to a new level of awareness; and when they respond to it they will have to face up to the uncomfortable possibility that their conclusions, equally with those of the metaphysician, hang in the air. In fact one of the leading empiricists has openly expressed the view that philosophical theories are neither true nor false.² This is an early and tentative approach to a deeper-level understanding of the intention and capacity of philosophical reasoning as an instrument of knowledge.
- A. An ultimate pluralism in philosophical thought, and that too a pluralism without the 'ism', if philosophical thinking ends only in 'vision' and not knowledge! Such a situation is intolerable, but inescapable, if each philosopher merely becomes aware of his 'bias', *i.e.*, his alogical act of commitment, without discarding it. There must be an overall, universal criterion of thought distinct from the diverse criteria, each internal to its own system, in the light of which one may sit in judgment on these conflicting biases from a wholly unbiassed point of view. Either that or there is no such thing as philosophy.
- C. I agree, but this universal and system-neutral criterion is not the abstract principle of self-consistency, for you must remember that all philosophers claim to think consistently. To discover the higher-level criterion is a part of the process

of raising thought to the level of self-consciousness. This would be one of the points on which a fresh dialogue could take place between the metaphysician and the empiricist. I think this criterion emerges in the very inquiry into the question, how can philosophy justify its claim to be a cognitive activity?—for I agree with you that if philosophy gives up this claim then it must abdicate.

- K. This means that we should be able to show that in spite of the existence of divergent and incommensurable criteria we can still make sense of the claim that philosophical propositions have truth-value.
- C. Yes, I think that is the basic problem of metaphilosophy. I believe that the metaphysician alone has the answer to the problem of justifying the truth-value of philosophical theories, and hence his 'bias' survives the final critical scrutiny and becomes part of a total system which, as a whole transcends all bias, not in the sense that it demonstrates the truth of its point of view, but in the sense that it shows that it comprehends all other possible points of view within it. In fact it is the metaphysical 'bias' itself which contains a pointer to the approach that transcends all bias. This apprehension that metaphysics has in it the potentiality of raising thought to the level of self-consciousness, rather than dialectical and polemical onslaughts against its opponents, establishes the greater truth and comprehensiveness of the metaphysical 'bias'.
- K. What is the metaphysical bias?
- C. The immanent criterion of the metaphysical system, shall we say? It is the concept of God, or rather the concept of God as that which is 'to be realized' in a supra-rational experience. To one who has reached the level of self-consciousness in philosophical thinking and to whom the concept of God is not non-significant, 'God exists' is seen to be self-evidently true.
- A. This is of course what you have still to show; but I suppose our discussion today was not a digression but a prelude to the exposition of the proof of God's existence from the standpoint of what you call Critical Philosophy or at the level of self-conscious thought.
- C. Yes, but to reach this level and to prove the existence of God, assuming that 'God' is a significant concept, are not two distinct things. Thought, when fully self-conscious, culminates in the insight that 'God exists' is self-evidently true. But I suggest we meet later to resume the discussion.

(To be continued)

J. N. CHUBB

NOTES

1. The so-called reformers of philosophy, including Kant, have all assumed that by introducing a new method, or by setting limits to the pretensions of Reason, philosophy can be set on 'the sure path of science'. "There is something both pathetic and ridiculous," says Nowell-Smith, "about the way in which generation after generation of philosophers has started by attempting to clear the ground of obsolete dross and gone on to establish necessary foundations for every future metaphysic."

2. Nowell-Smith, *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*, 1947-48.

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo Circle: Twenty-Fourth Number (1968). Publishers: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Pages: 102, Price: Rs. 5.

The title under review is the twenty-fourth number of the periodical Sri Aurobindo Circle, published annually on the 24th of April to commemorate the event of the second and final arrival of the Mother at Pondicherry. As the periodical draws its inspiration and sustenance from the Integral Vision of existence as propounded by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the most recurrent concern of the groups of essays published in it is with the evolutionary destiny of man and the possibility of 'the integration of heaven and earth'. Because of the all-embracing character of the Aurobindonian *Weltanschauung*, these articles prove to be wonderfully varied in content, touching upon all possible aspects and activities of the phenomenon that is man.

The present Number maintains in ample measure the high repute of the periodical. The opening chords are struck by some new messages of the Mother and eight unpublished letters of Sri Aurobindo. To make us not only hear but see the Spirit's symphony there are two superb photographs of the Mother.

Each one of the essays following the overture is an intellectual treat and entices the reader to a considerable depth of immersion. For, be it noted that the *forte* of our authors lies not in the indulgence in mere intellectual pyrotechnics; they are essentially pilgrims on the path of the Spirit, possessing no doubt robust minds but tempered with rare soul-sensitivity and illumined by the keen-edged perception of truly humble seekers after insight. Thus everyone of the essays collected in this Number lets fresh air into the often stale settled atmosphere of academic scholarship.

In the essay "Sight behind Thought" Jugal Kishore Mukherji seeks to show through an interestingly documented study that seer-knowledge being more authentic, more compelling and more satisfying than a mere thinking knowledge, an ever-insistent although mostly unconscious thirst for this vision, *dṛṣṭi*, invariably creates in man, the mental being, the exigence of 'visualisation' in diverse domains of his intellectual activity. Although this sight-support in the fashion of a chameleon changes its aspect from domain to domain, and even in the same domain from one individual to another, it is invariably there with its lurking presence. Mukherji studies this interesting phenomenon in its polychrome manifestation.

In his "Teachings of Sri Aurobindo" Arabinda Basu, late of Durham University, gives a succinct account of the Yoga-Darshan of Sri Aurobindo, and this against the background of a panoramic survey of the whole spiritual history of India starting with the Vision of the Vedas and running on to our present times. Basu delineates with great acumen the essential features of the traditional Yogas of the land, shows

their *lacunae*, points out the newness, in outlook and practice, of the Integral Yoga as propounded by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which, in the words of our author, is "God's own chosen method of fulfilling man in the world which is His visible manifestation—as yet imperfect but destined by the Divine to be the embodiment of His utter Glory and Harmony" (p. 42).

In "Sri Aurobindo and Indian Aesthetics" Prof. Sisirkumar Ghose, guided by the light of Sri Aurobindo, delves deep into the inmost truth of the Indian aesthetic attitude and achievement and discovers in "the deathless doctrine or seed-idea of Ananda, or the principle of Bliss or Delight as the matrix of manifestation" (p. 45) the true foundation of Indian aesthetics which is thus essentially the aesthetics of the spirit. In this essay replete with deep imaginative insights, Ghose sums up his findings in the following terms:

"Not only does beauty, traced to its original home, give a nontemporal quality to our experience but it also reconciles opposites. ... A marriage of opposites is always a mark of maturity, the creative formula. It is a test of great art that it alone can 'reconcile the Eternal with the Abyss'. For reconciliation and not escape or palliation is the answer, the Aurobindean answer, to the Riddle of the world" (p. 51)

The motif of Prema Nandakumar's critical study of three poetical productions of Sri Aurobindo is mirrored in the concluding words of the authoress:

"On the one hand, Sri Aurobindo wrote the spiritual dramatic poem *Ahana*, and enlarged it into the spiritual dramatic epic *Savitri*. On the other hand, he wrote a typical Greek epic in *Iliad*, and followed it up with the ideal Hindu epic in *Savitri*. Wherever we may fix our starting-point in the Sri Aurobindo canon, we always arrive at last at *Savitri*. This is his final testament, rounded, perfect" (p. 82).

Indeed in her essay, at the same time sharply searching and deeply moving, Prema Nandakumar displays her critical intelligence and her skill in operating detail by detail with increasing revelation to show that *Ahana* with its profound vision of the descent of the 'Dawn of God' upon earth is but the prelude to the cosmic drama *Savitri*, whereas *Iliad* with its portrayal of the struggle between heroic mortals may be viewed as "a foreground drama leading to the struggle and victory described in Sri Aurobindo's poetic *magnum opus*, *Savitri*".

Readers acquainted with the writings of K.D. Sethna are always filled with a sense of expectancy whenever they happen to come into contact with anything fresh from the pen of this unusually versatile writer who is at the same time an eminent poet, a highly competent literary critic, a research scholar in history and a journalist. "The Inspiration of *Paradise Lost*" is an essay of *longue haleine* which Sri Aurobindo Circle has undertaken to serialise since three years ago. The present issue contains sections 5 and 6 of this very interesting and instructive study, bearing the titles: "Milton's Epic Lyricism" and "The Preparation for *Paradise Lost*". The subtle and distinguished flavour with its imaginative undertones so characteristic of Sethna's writings is apparent all throughout the present essay each of whose paragraphs brings to the receptive awareness of the reader a genuinely striking experience of revelatory

flashes. What a pity that one has to wait for a full long year for the following sections to appear in print!

In "Psychology and Education" Prof. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar refers to the problem of 'knowledge explosion' actually occurring before our eyes, disengages some of the potentially dangerous implications of this explosion if uncontrolled, and trenchantly puts the question: "Can we hold together this immense body of *information* and fuse it into *knowledge* and practise it as *wisdom*?" (p. 55). At the end of a cogent exposition of his theme, Prof. Iyengar comes to the conclusion that "for a fuller understanding a *new education* in terms of a *new psychology* is called for; such a psychology must embrace within its scope the dynamics of the surface mind, the below-surface subconscious and unconscious, the above-mind consciousness in its stairs of increasing comprehension and of the circumconscient field of universal consciousness; and only such new integral psychology in the active service of education would be able to meet and master the crisis of our time" (p. 59).

In these hard days of Shadow and Doom when mankind "flights between ardor and ashes" (*The Phoenix* by James Merrill), we heartily recommend these hundred odd pages of light and cheer to all those lovers of the Spirit who would like to bathe in the life-giving fountain-stream of the Aurobindonian vision of man's integral fulfilment.

LUJAG KORESHI

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

FOURTEENTH SEMINAR

25TH FEBRUARY 1968

THE Fourteenth Seminar of the New Age Association was convened specially to celebrate the Mother's 90th Birthday, falling on the 21st February 1968. It was held on the 25th February 1968 from 4.30 to 5.35 p.m. in the courtyard of the Centre of Education. The Mother Herself had given the following subject for this Seminar:

What we expect from the Mother.

The following five members of the Association participated as speakers:

Debranjana, Manoj, Mita, Shobha, and Srijit.

The programme began with listening in silence to a short recorded music of the Mother. Then Kishor Gandhi, the Chairman, made the following introductory remarks:

Friends,

We are holding this Seminar specially to celebrate the Mother's 90th Birthday. Our intention is to pay our loving homage to Her on this occasion and to express our deep gratitude to Her for the constant inspiration and guidance She has given in all the activities of this Association since its inception nearly three and a half years ago.

At the outset I shall read out to you the Mother's own answers to four questions which we put to Her pertaining to the subject of this Seminar:

Q. 1. What is the right thing that we should expect from You?

EVERYTHING

Q. 2. What have You been expecting from us and from humanity in general for the accomplishment of Your Work upon earth?

NOTHING

Q. 3. From Your long experience of over sixty years, have You found that Your expectation from us and from humanity has been sufficiently fulfilled?

AS I AM EXPECTING NOTHING I CANNOT ANSWER
THIS QUESTION.

Q. 4. Does the success of Your Work for us and for humanity depend in any way upon the fulfilment of Your expectation from us and from humanity?

HAPPILY NOT.

20-2-1968

Blessings,
THE MOTHER

Now three members of our Association will read three poems on the Mother. The first two by Arjava (J. A. Chadwick), a late English disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, will be read by Arati and Jhumur. The third by Romen will be read by himself. Then five members will deliver their speeches. After the speeches I shall read a few writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother bearing on the subject. In conclusion Abhijit and Kanu will read two extracts from *Savitri*.

After this the three poems on the Mother were read out by Arati, Jhumur and Romen. Then the five speakers were called to deliver their speeches.

These poems and the speeches by Debranjana and Manoj are reproduced below. The remaining speeches and the extracts from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will be published in the ensuing issues of *Mother India*.

POEMS ON THE MOTHER

(1)

THE DIVINE SHAKTI

Cosmic, Transcendent, Individual.

Send Thy pure cadences, O Mother Divine,
To echo inly through the caves
Of a deepening heart which knows itself for Thine.
Play Thy moon-music on the quiet waves
Of an ocean's wideness in the still soul,
Where tidal waters wait Thy hushed control.

Unsullied wisdom of gold which was thrice refined,
Shine in the clear space of holy noon
On all the upland hollows of the mind:
May every shadow-harboured thought be strewn
With solar vastness and compelled
To feel all fear and all self-limits quelled.

Men have found Thee in wildness and sharp-tanged air,
Breathed of green multitudes of earth,
Far from hate's city, orbits of despair,
Alleys of desire or sultry streets of dearth.
Take my offered will and let it be
Fragrant as Thine own, tameless, pure and free.

ARJAVA

(2)

TO MOTHER

Come on the wings of sleep
Grave or with a smile,
Come ere the hushed tide neap
Or tangling thoughts beguile.

On this dark spirit-main
Rise as a full-orbed moon,
Transform the murk of pain
To a fleckless silver boon.

Or through dream-heavy air
On sandals of sound draw nigh
Till echoes waking there
Spring forth in thrilled reply.

Out from a planet's gloom
All aspects call to Thee,—
Life in our stirless tomb,
Light on our darkened sea.

ARJAVA

(3)

THE MOTHER

Aureoled with the flame of the intangible,
 Here she stands upon the dumb rock of sleep;
 Poised, an immense tranquility of the sun—
 The Mother of the night-spaced universe.
 Here through this mire of deep oblivion
 She, the limitless, must track her course
 Into the very heart of death's abode;
 Here she must wear the heavy earthly mask
 Of life's gross ever-changing passion-moods;
 She, who breathes life into the seas and stars
 And wide worlds of enraptured harmonies
 And golden vistas of unchanging bliss
 And peaks of silence housing the heights of trance
 And giant oceans of unbarrable power
 And sweetness unconceived by mortal heart,
 Must enter the dungeon-frame of mortality
 To vesture this dun abysmal nakedness
 With the golden passion of the Infinite.

ROMEN

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM THE MOTHER

I

"What we expect from the Mother"—this somewhat unexpected question has teased my mind into some new dimensions of thought. It highlights the exigencies of the time—the need to make a dynamic reappraisal of truth. Secondly, it gives me a glimpse of the Mother's abundant compassion for her children aspiring to create a new pattern of life. She is, as it were, standing before us with all her starry riches and condescending to meet our every enlightened wish. One also feels a silent quiver of gratitude for her granting us a freedom of choice. It is to be noted that she does not command us with "Thou shalt's" and "Thou shalt not's". Instead, she urges us to formulate and enliven our otherwise diffusive aspirations. She wants us to make a self-searching examination into the secret springs of our nature. There is a nugget deep down in our heart. The Mother is waiting to see that we discover it.

But all this is yet on the periphery. Let us now be in the centre. What do

we propose to expect from the Mother? Well, we are living at a critical turn of history when problems burgeon at every turn of our look. Thinkers worth their name have thrashed out the nature of these evils and suggested the possible remedies in ever-abounding books, articles, pamphlets. But the problems remain the same. The world continues to be a cacophony of discordant notes signifying nothing. We would certainly like to see harmony reigning on our globe and we can pray to the Mother to hasten its advent. But, I am afraid, a big majority of us are yet incapable of sympathizing sincerely with these world-problems which seem to be out there beyond the pale of our beings. We may, of course, now and then indulge in a sort of intellectual sally and pretend to unravel the various skeins of life. But such flights are always ephemeral. Living in our own selves proves to be more spontaneous and perhaps quite legitimate. Every individual is a miniature world, and at the same time a part of the larger world encircling him. Any great transformation within his being will result in a corresponding repercussion in the outside world. Hence it is said: we cannot change our neighbour unless we change ourselves—a truth how often we forget in a racing enthusiasm to transform the world!

Since, then, we hold that the transformation of our own selves rather than the transformation of the world out there is our immediate concern, what part of our being would we like to put on the anvil? I believe that, as the children of the Mother aspiring to be worthy of her effulgent love, it is our heart we would like to put in the transfiguring fire. Yes, we all crave for her love and yet precious little has been done to cleanse our heart. So often our aspirations dwindle, and darkling desires grow rife! Hosts of errant and floundering pleasures obfuscate our minds. Our actions militate against our aspirations. And life becomes painfully a tissue of contradictions. How, then, shall we remain constant in our aspirations? This is our common problem. And this we cannot hope to see resolved unless the Mother tends our strength. We, therefore, pray to the Mother:

“Give us strength that we may cleanse our hearts of all impurities; enlighten our reason so that in a medley of choices we may win now the truth; grant us perseverance so that we may never recant our promises to be your worthy children.”

These, then, are our expectations—our ardent prayers we offer at the feet of the Mother.

DEBRANJAN

II

Friends,

I have been asked to say “what I expect from the Mother”. The answer for me is very simple: EVERYTHING and NOTHING. Sounds paradoxical? I explain.

I say *everything* because who else can give me everything? I know that She alone is capable of satisfying all my needs—from the most physical to the highest spiritual. For,

She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
The joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.¹

I say *nothing* because I know that She is already doing the needful—and that, in spite of all my stupid and obscure oppositions to Her workings.

Although our fallen minds forget to climb,
Although our human stuff resists or breaks,
She keeps her will that hopes to divinise clay;
Failure cannot repress, defeat o'erthrow;
Time cannot weary her nor the Void subdue,
The ages have not made her passion less;
No victory she admits of Death or Fate.²

AMEN.

MANOJ

¹ *Savitri*., Book III. Canto II, p. 356.

² *Ibid.*, Book IV, Canto I, p. 402.

THE INTEGRAL MAN

SYNOPSIS OF THREE LECTURES DELIVERED AT MYSORE UNIVERSITY

I. THE ORDINARY MAN

THE ordinary man is almost entirely concerned with his environment, physical and socio-cultural. His consciousness is outward-directed, *Bahirmukha*, and superficial. His life consists of activities, bodily and mental (including intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and religious) which are largely of the nature of action and reaction to the environment. He is seldom himself and has hardly an awareness of what he is. A steady, firm, self-poised action is therefore a rarity. Impulses, actions and reactions and the basic restlessness of human nature govern and guide him. The higher needs of life, a deep peace and self-satisfaction and a real upliftment and elevation of experience are rare occasions.

II. THE INTEGRAL MAN

The ordinary man virtually lives superficially, on the surface within himself, and plays up with the surface qualities of his environment, helped by certain generalising principles, the ideas and ideals, and the laws of physical nature and standards of social behaviour.

But this waking surface personality is only one dominion of life. The sub-conscious is another and a larger dominion, much determining and influencing the waking actions and reactions. The waking personality has enough oppositions and contradictions, but the sub-conscious is ordinarily chaotic. It is highly impulsive and disorderly. The larger perceptions and creations of normal personality constitute a dominion by themselves. These primarily pertain to the universal aspects of matter, life and mind. However, this is yet a dominion ruled by the principle of opposition, the *Dvandwa*.

The higher unities and integrations of knowledge, of love and of power constitute yet another dominion, the super-conscious, the transcendent dimension of life.

The Integral Man is thus an extremely large reality. He is not a man exclusively identified with his activities, the outer becoming, and ignorant of all other parts, but a man aware of his true self, the essential being, and in due relation to it aware of his outer part, as also of his sub-conscious and the larger universal parts and the super-conscious part.

Such is the conception of the Integral Man and indeed he will live and enjoy a large and vast life and act in the world with the resources of such a personality.

III. THE INTEGRAL MAN AND THE FUTURE

If the Integral Man is a large and a vast integration of the experiences of the waking, the sub-conscious, the subliminal and the super-conscious, what kind of world will he create?

Are the divisions and the discords of the world not a reflection and a projection of the inner divisions and discords of the ordinary man, a play of the narrowness of his ego and his fears and anxieties? Are our religions and philosophies and cultures too not marred, more or less, by its narrowness?

It will be interesting to visualise the rise of the Integral Man in human living and the new creations in thought and life he might usher in.

INDRA SEN

EYE EDUCATION

Q. I am a teacher. What instructions will you give so as to help the students?

A. 1. Perfection is the aim of our life. Under the modern conditions preservation of good eyesight is not possible without eye education. The Mother recommends a plan of eye education for the Centre of Education.

2. HOW TO TEST THE SIGHT? Keep the eye chart at 20 feet distance and read it with each eye separately. Write the results in the form of a fraction. The numerator of the fraction is always the distance of the chart from the eyes. The denominator always denotes the number of the line of the chart read. If you can read the line marked 20 feet at twenty feet distance with the right eye, the vision is 20:20 (Normal); if you can read the line marked 50 feet at twenty feet distance with the left eye, the vision is 20:50 (Defective).

To test the near vision take the Fundamentals chart and hold it at 10 inches. Note which number you are able to read. The normal eye can read the smallest type of the Fundamentals.

3. The teacher, who holds the first period of the class, will see that the students, after palming, read the eye chart from their seats silently, first with both eyes, then with each eye separately, avoiding any pressure on the eyeball. Reading of the same familiar eye chart with gentle blinking is a wonderful eye education. Every home and every class should have the eye chart. Splendid results will be obtained if each teacher, before he holds the class, tells the students to do PALMING.

4. WHAT IS PALMING? Close the eyes and cover them with the palms of the hands avoiding any pressure on the eyeballs. Keep the eyes covered for about five minutes and imagine something interesting and familiar.

5. HOW TO READ? Hold the book within twelve inches. Blink gently at each line. Do not be in a hurry to finish the book. Reading very fast usually causes strain in the eyes and mind. Reading small print and reading at a close distance is good for the eyes.

6. Reading under bright electric light is harmful because the light reflected from the paper causes strain to the eyes. Light just sufficient to read is good for them.

7. For quick relief of pain in the eyeballs and headache, reading fine print under candle light usually acts as a miracle. Get the habit of reading fine print daily and you will be saved from all eye troubles of old age.

8. Staring is bad. Tell the students to blink gently and frequently while seeing objects, reading books or watching the cinema. In wrong blinking the upper lid touches the lower lid with a jerk.

9. Students who find it difficult to get rid of eye strain or headache or defective vision may be sent to the School for Perfect Eyesight.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL
School for Perfect Eyesight

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 8

August-September 1968

1. *The Need to Understand New Methods*

There is today such a plethora of 'New Methods' for education that one wonders whether the true search for an integration of faculties of learning or a world business combine to accrue more money for the pockets of Big Business will eventually win out. However, out of this welter of words there is hope of a 'New Creation' because the youth of the world demand it, ignorantly, fumbling their way through iconoclastic moods of revolt, but nevertheless demanding that the old shall go and the new shall be born.

There are two important factors that have to be brought into focus: there is the question of selection for a specific aim or ideal—what purpose or ideal has the new method to serve? And there is the question of who is best qualified to make the selection; the administration or the teaching staff?

There is a criterion which can be applied, keeping these two important factors in mind, and that is the inescapable fact that whatever subject is involved and whatever method is employed *the student must participate to the full*. This is the ultimate yardstick which must measure any new method of learning or instruction if education for the future is to be at all effective.

The fast expanding consciousness that education is all important in any modern society has fortified the interest in the theory of education. Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre may be the philosophers who have given a form to the label of existentialism which makes for total individual responsibility, holding that men are makers of their own destinies and therefore should be free to participate in their own existence. But up to now such freedom or even the idea of freedom has been in the hands of those who 'govern' our education. The state or government finances the education of the child, therefore it alone should say what type of education he should have and for what purpose he should be educated. The teacher, the student, has only to accept.

In all new and underdeveloped countries interest in education is perhaps foremost in the mind that has to compare them with other countries. Great efforts are made build and equip new colleges and schools. Between 1950 and 1960 China doubled her to school population and similar achievements are recorded in other parts of Asia and Latin America. Nearly two thirds of the world now insists upon at least four years of primary education and in industrialized countries most children receive secondary education up to 15 or 16. This means that even those governmental and secular au-

thorities have awakened to the importance of education *per se*, and yet they find it difficult to delegate any part of their authority to those who are most intimately associated with the huge task of regeneration of methods to suit the world of tomorrow.

The research worker understands the urgent need to implement new methods of learning. And lately the teacher has come to have more faith in the work of the researcher. Their understanding is implicit in their identity with the student. It should be quite obvious then, even to the most obdurate sciolist, that the selection or choice of a new method of education should be vested in those who have to work with it, provided they are given the freedom of implementation within the aims and ideals agreed upon.

It is equally quite obvious that the probability of a minister of state, or any government official, having the knowledge and experience of new methods of learning is very remote.

Indeed, they would most certainly be way back in the textbook era when the textbook was the teacher's journal and bible. Little do such personages realise that a textbook, especially of, say, science, mathematics, or even economics, is often out of date within a few months. That with the advent of mass media communication the necessary data on any particular subject are constantly changing and evolving new substances, new processes, new methods so as to demand a very flexible and plastic handling of means and material. Then, who but the teacher or researcher is near enough to the student and his needs to understand the aims and ideals of the student? Who but the teacher or research worker in education would know the dreams, the aspirations or even the motivations of the child, the student, the world-citizen of tomorrow?

Certainly there are educational commissions to advise the government, but even if they are themselves free from political bias are they better able to answer these questions than the teacher or the research worker in education?

It is inevitable that if the power to implement educational policy is vested in the central authority there is the temptation of politicians to use schools for the realization of doctrinal ends. That is why in England there is the fear of enforcement of such policies as the one about comprehensive schools, although there seems to be a balance of power between the national government and LEA's (Local Education Authorities). Nevertheless it is doubtful if even local authorities are capable of dealing with the intricate understanding of the quantity and quality of New Methods demanding attention of students and teachers—New Methods which often are the outcome of the 'fallout' of the complications of modern electronics and space technology which is racing towards the sun-lit horizons of the future.

2. *Mental Education*

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have written several works on education and Sri Aurobindo has made a special reference to "The Human Mind" in *A System of National Education* where he says that "the true basis of education is the study of the human mind, infant, adolescent and adult".

The educationist has to deal with an *infinitely subtle and sensitive organism*, not with dead material like the artist or the sculptor. The subtlety of this human organism is so interconnected with all the other parts of consciousness that it gives out and receives conscious impulses all the time by which it grows into a unit of conscious awareness. Most human beings have a strong vital (emotional) mixture as part of their mental thinking. This is often so strong as to lead to impulsive action as a result of any thought process. This builds up into a psychological as well as a motor behaviour pattern which is so inextricably mixed as to receive little or no control from the mental being.

It is increasingly borne in upon us that the true study of man and his parts is the first and foremost requirement of education. We are being forced to get back to first essentials if education is to serve the individual of today and not some vague image, fast disappearing in the past, of the politician.

One of the immediate needs of mental education today is to deal with the mixture of thoughts and ideas which prevent clear ideas and the urgent birth or outcome of creative thinking. For example, how would the educational system, as it stands today, deal with the very real problem of *how to stop mental discussion*, a problem which faces every thinking person who is aware that it is a problem to be solved if he is to acquire the inner peace necessary for creative or intuitive expression.

Have we any system of learning that would even try to deal with this challenge to man's creative faculties? Is it at all recognised as a real need in any official educational report as a problem to be dealt with? The odd psychologist might hit on an oblique approach to the subject but it is doubtful if this could be carried into the curriculum as a recommended need to mental education.

Silence of the mind is a discipline that has to be initiated as early as possible in the transition from vital education to mental awareness, otherwise a very confused outcome is the result when abstract ideas and logic are introduced to the student.

You can tell a student it is best now if he talks as little as possible and only when it is necessary and to the point of learning. But he must know why and what the link is;—that concentration is the key to mental activity directed to a particular requirement; that this is aided by thinking only of what you are doing at the moment, looking not to the past or to the future or allowing thoughts of such to enter. Never to regret what is past or imagine what will be in the future—for this only wastes mental and emotional energy and dissipates thought. And finally never to allow any pessimistic thought to enter the consciousness for this brings depression which is a disease of the mind. One must elect to become a voluntary optimist, for out of optimism comes the faith necessary for creative thinking, creative expression, and manifestation of the Truth.

The mind is as a lake which reflects the truth of the sun, the moon and the stars. If it is disturbed or muddled, it reflects nothing from above and is only concerned with its own conflict and confusion. This is not merely a simile, it is a very real experience of all who have entered the inner mental realms of consciousness. And as

man rushes toward the complex world of tomorrow his mental faculties evolve to meet the cybernetic problems he is there to encounter. Are we, the educators, the pioneers of that world, prepared to measure up to the call of Truth, the aspiration of all that is young and trusting, vibrant with the enthusiasm that the New World is good to live in? Are we ready to subscribe to the belief that life is a wonderful adventure which leads us to a gnostic greatness never before imagined, a golden dawn of Beauty, Love, Knowledge and Truth?

3. *Thought of the month*

The mechanical movements are always more difficult to stop by the mental will, because they do not in the least depend upon reason or any mental justification but are founded upon association or else a mere mechanical memory and habit.

SRI AUROBINDO, *Bases of Yoga*, p. 37.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

SWEET LIFE OF MYSTERY

(No 2)

Breathes there a man who will not go,
 Away from home and simply glow—
 And rave about some common dish,
 As if it filled his dearest wish!
 He'll praise his hostess to the skies—
 While you sit there and realise
 That *if* or *when* you serve it next,
 He'll gaze at you as if perplexed!
 He'll sigh...and say, in voice *most* gruff,
 "You know I never touch the stuff!!"

Not by Leena

The above verse I found some years ago in a magazine, I cannot remember the magazine or the writer, only the verse.

As it goes with my Life of Mystery lamentations, the Editor has included it.
 With compliments to the Magazine and

All honours go to her who wrote...
 She is a girl I love to quote.

LEENA