

MOTHER INDIA

DECEMBER 5, 1969

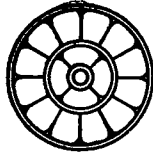
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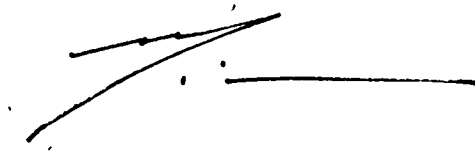


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XXI

No. 10 & 11

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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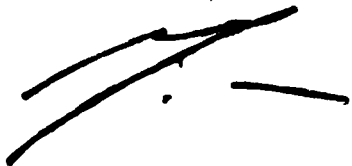
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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

I

Ici le bon sens est
indispensable et le yoga
intégral est basé sur
l'équilibre, le calme et
la paix et non pas sur
un besoin malsain de
souffrir



Ici le bon sens est indispensable et le yoga intégral est basé sur l'équilibre, le calme et la paix et non pas sur un besoin malsain de souffrir.

Here sensibleness is indispensable and the integral yoga is based on balance, calm and peace and not on an unhealthy need to suffer.

May 12, 1969

II

Q. L'hostilité, le recul et la défiance me semblent si inutiles. On pourrait si facilement être amis les uns et les autres.

*C'est justement ce que le
Seigneur Suprême se dit quand
Il voit la vie des hommes
sur la terre ! . . .*

ton frère et benédiction
A

C'est justement ce que le Seigneur Suprême se dit quand Il voit la vie des hommes sur la terre ! ...

Q. Hostility, recoil and distrust seem to me so useless. We could so easily be friends, each and all.

This is just what the Supreme Lord says to Himself when He sees the life of men upon earth.

September 14, 1969

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

13-8-1934

Q: On the night of the 11th I meditated for some time before going to bed. I soon felt as if there was a very bright sun. Its rays were passing through my chest and falling on Sri Aurobindo's picture-image present in my heart-centre. Due to the rays the picture-image began to shine so much that the reflection was dazzling my eyes! I began to ask myself what this was. Soon the idea came that I was having an experience. I got up, put on the light and, lest I should forget afterwards, wrote down a short account.

Now I want to ask you two questions. Was it really an experience? Would it have developed further had I not got up abruptly to note it down?

SRI AUROBINDO: The sun is the symbol of the concentrated light of Truth. The experience indicated that the light of Truth was entering into the heart centre and pressing for the change of your experiences which are still in the mind to the deeper spiritual experience which can be not merely a preparation but the firm foundation of your sadhana.

It is possible that something more might have happened—at any rate an experience should be allowed its *full time* whether to develop or have its full effect. It should not be interrupted except in case of necessity—or, of course, if it is not a good experience.

Q: Last evening I saw clear visions of Lord Krishna. This morning I saw Sri Aurobindo standing on a lotus. I talked and smiled to him. I also felt as if Lord Krishna was giving motion to the Sudarshan chakra. What does it all indicate?

SRI AUROBINDO: These are the usual mental images. The chakra symbolises the action of Sri Krishna's force—the action of the Divine in you is already beginning to be clear and strong, but the realisation of the Divine behind it is still faint.

16-9-1934

SRI AUROBINDO: To keep the consciousness awake you must set apart a certain time every day for concentration and remembering the Mother and keeping yourself in contact with us. What is gained is not lost by interruption, but it goes behind and may take time to come out again—so the thread should not be cut.

Your intuitions about the boy show that that faculty is awake in you; but you did not go because, as events proved, it was not necessary. The restlessness came from the vital; one should reject this reaction and act in perfect calm, keeping confidence in the Divine.

What you heard from inside was partly true. That is to say, there was no harm in taking advantage of any help you could get from the Maharaja; but there should be no eagerness; whatever offers itself should be taken as coming from the Mother. Eagerness disturbs the working of the forces and often creates obstacles.

Our blessings and protection are with you always.

From DR. R. S. AGARWAL

A QUESTION AND ANSWER

Q: My physical mind has this doubt: so long as the mind and vital are still unquiet how to believe that the physical purification has really begun?

SRI AUROBINDO: Does it imagine that everything is done by sections? All the parts of the being react upon each other. The purification of the physical begins long before the mind and vital are thoroughly and permanently cleared. 30-5-1934

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.)

APRIL 11, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*suddenly to N*): What is all this that X writes about sadhakas siding with Meghnad Saha against A in the controversy between these two? And what is the discussion on Aldous Huxley?

N: It seems that in his controversy with Saha, A made a mistake, for which he got a licking from Saha. Some sadhakas were glad about A's defeat. At this, X and Y were very puzzled. They couldn't understand how anybody could feel elated at one's own people being beaten. Y said that he hadn't seen such feeling even at Shantiniketan.

SRI AUROBINDO: That may be true, but what was the point at issue?

N: I don't know. I haven't read the writings.

P: I believe it was the philosophic interpretation of the theory of relativity and the change that is coming in among scientists—for instance, Jeans and Eddington.

SRI AUROBINDO: But scientists won't recognise any metaphysics—except perhaps some scientists in America. On the Continent no recognition is given to the metaphysical views of Jeans or Eddington. The scientists there say that science is concerned only with explaining the processes of the universe; as for the rest, it is not their business. You can no more say that science is turning towards metaphysics from Jeans' example than that fiction is becoming Yogic from Huxley's.

N: The point about Huxley seems as follows. Y told Z that Huxley had undergone a great change, becoming a Yogi and having spiritual experience. Z denied it, saying, "What is there of Yoga here? It is all mental." Then Y spoke of Huxley's experience of peace as described in *Eyeless in Gaza*. This again was contradicted by Z. Y asked him: "But have you read the description? Have you gone through Huxley's latest books?" Z replied: "No." At this, Y said: "How then can you speak like that?" Y was pained that without reading about a man Z had passed a judgment. Z does not believe that there can be any change in Huxley.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? Just because a man has once been different, can there be no change in him?

N: Y told him what you had said to me—that Huxley might have had some experience in the mind. To this, Z replied: "People interpret in their own way what Sri Aurobindo says."

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't remember what exactly I have said. It may be to the effect that Huxley had some mental experience.

N: But mental experience is quite different from spiritual, isn't it?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, not quite different. For, it is not something obtained by mental discussion or understanding. It is an experience of the Truth in the mind.

P: To go back to your statement about the change in science, that we are fifty years behind Europe and that, except for the Russian Communists and perhaps a few scientists elsewhere, science does not hold its old position any more. I think even the Russian Communists may be getting disillusioned with the old position.

N: Yes, but not our Indian Communists. Possibly because they are Communists as a fashion only. As Suhrawardy says, they call themselves Communists but build fine houses in Ballygunj.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because real Communism hasn't come here yet. Their standpoint may be: "It is better that we Communists rather than non-Communists should have fine houses." (*Laughter*)

AFTERNOON

Dilip had sent an extract from Huxley describing his experience of Peace. As soon as the door opened, Sri Aurobindo started to speak.

SRI AUROBINDO (*to N*): You have to take this extract back to Dilip and tell him I have read it. Say that it is a big Yogic experience—a psycho-spiritual one. It shows a going through the psychic down into the vital being and finding there the unitarian principle, the principle of oneness with everybody. Huxley speaks of "dark peace" because it is down below that he goes and from there opens to the Light above. All the details are quite recognisable, and they cannot be by mental construction. This experience must have changed his life.

EVENING

Sri Aurobindo saw in the afternoon that N was reading Dilip's extract.

SRI AUROBINDO: Have you read it? Remarkable and significant, isn't it?

N: Yes, very much so—a fine description.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is no poor mental imagination at work here.

P: Is the extract from *Ends and Means*?

SRI AUROBINDO: No; it is from the last chapter of *Eyeless in Gaza*

P: In *Ends and Means* he more or less describes the remedy for the present troubles of the world, and speaks of non-violence as a means.

SRI AUROBINDO: There he also discusses the future of the world and speaks of Mohenjo-daro and says that the people of those ruins must have been doing Yoga.

N: Huxley has a powerful self-expression.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he has a remarkable style and a subtle and plastic mind. He must have done Yoga for some time to get that self-experience.

N: I wonder how from being a cynic and atheist he got converted to this.

SRI AUROBINDO: Cynicism and atheism were the inheritance of the age. Even then he was dissatisfied with the world conditions and there was some psychic aspiration for better things.

N: Joad seems to be veering round again.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is floating. He had come to a spiritual standpoint but he gave it up, he said, owing to the hard knocks of the philosophers. Now he sees that it can be upheld; so he is changing.

N: Einstein seems to have said that cosmic religious feeling is an incitement to science.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see. But what does he mean by "cosmic religious feeling"? If Einstein could use such words, Meghnad Saha can't say that he is not a scientist. Or perhaps he will say that Einstein is giving only his personal views.

But what exactly is Einstein's "cosmic religious feeling"? It may not come to much. It may be simply a sense of reverence at the sight of the universe or else a vague feeling of worship.

N: By the way, who are the Chaldeans?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are the ancient Babylonians and they came to be known as Sumerians. In the places they occupied, archaeologists have found several things like those at Mohenjo-daro.

APRIL 12, 1940

N: Authorities in England say that the Allies have captured Bergen and Trondheim, but the official circles don't confirm the news.

SRI AUROBINDO: If they have captured them, why should they conceal the fact?

N: Bose's group have indulged in rowdyism against the new Bengal Provincial Congress also, by hurling stones and shouting violently.

SRI AUROBINDO: And the B.P. can't retaliate because they are non-violent. This creed of non-violence is very funny when put into practice. Gandhi perhaps thinks that Bose's heart will melt by it.

P: In Denmark Germany has restricted all food stuff, even the use of fodder by the Danish people, somebody said. I said, "Will the Germans eat fodder now?" (*Laughter*).

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps they want to export fodder to Germany for their cattle. In that case, they can't have butter from Denmark.

P: Germany thought she would have an easy victory over Norway, as in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Denmark.

SRI AUROBINDO: Denmark is easy, for geographically it is a sort of suburb of Germany. The Germans have practically to walk in. Poland they conquered because the Allies had no chance of helping it directly. Czechoslovakia was different. The Czechs could have offered good resistance but for the Allies who betrayed them. If the Allies had agreed in their favour at that time in combination with Russia the Czechs could have given an effective fight to Hitler.

Q: The Allies didn't want to combine with Russia probably.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, that was not the cause. The cause was: they were not ready for the war. They were not even mobilised and all their war machinery was insufficient. In the case of Norway, Germany's power will depend on the control of the sea. It will have to transport troops and mechanised units across the sea. If the British Navy can intercept them, then it will be difficult for Germany. It is a very well arranged *coup* by the Germans. Once they have occupied the main ports and landed troops, it will be difficult to turn them out.

P: The British seem to be landing troops at Narvik.

SRI AUROBINDO: That won't help much because it is far off and there is no proper transport facility for mechanised units. If they can capture one of the ports, then it will be very easy for them. Or if Sweden, instead of foolishly guarding its neutrality, joins the Norwegians, then by the time they make a combined resistance the Allies can land their troops in Sweden. Sweden does not seem to realise that it is its turn next to be swallowed up by Germany.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at P*): All this news seems to be travellers' tales and rumours. There is no official statement. There are various contradictory assertions. Some say Oslo is pressed upon by the Allies, others that Bergen is captured and the only truth seems to be that a battle is going on but no result is yet known. The British Navy hasn't scored any great success yet. What they seem to have is only organisation, strong and efficient organisation, but no military genius and, in this organisation, there is no room for initiative. It reminds me of the Italian historian who said that organisation is the only thing that matters. Napoleon's successes were considered as due only to sheer luck.

P: And any individual initiative is likely to be crushed under organisation. If the Allies can't do anything, they will lose all the moral sympathy of the world. Already they are on the point of doing it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite so.

P: If they could take Norway, they could even attack Germany through the North.

A: That is not easy. Germany has its Kiel fortress, which is one of the strongest in the world.

APRIL 14, 1940

P: It seems the Germans are carrying their guns and machines in aeroplanes to Norway.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why can't England do the same? They don't seem to want to do anything that involves work. They want to capture or conquer without doing anything. They don't have any initiative. In individual actions they have so far shown superiority, but in group actions what they have is organisation and they have perfected only that. Even Gamelin has organised his army very perfectly but he has not shown any military genius. So long as Chamberlain is at the helm, nothing will happen. He applies only business intelligence to politics.

P: They have captured the Faroe Islands, which appear to be strategically important.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where are they?

P: Somewhere between Orkney and Norway.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then they are of no importance. Hitler is not such a fool as to go and occupy Iceland or Greenland.

N: Does Chamberlain direct the military operations?

SRI AUROBINDO: No; he supervises all the Departments and is advised by the Military; but, if the Ministry is against any move of the Military, they can't do anything. If Hore-Belisha had been there, he could have done something.

S: He was the man we were thinking of, the other day, and, on this very point you have mentioned, he resigned. Somebody remarked about the occupation of the Faroe Islands that the Governor there had only six guns. The British had no difficulty in occupying it. (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO (*after some time*): I can't understand the moves of the British. As soon as they heard of the German occupation, they could have occupied Bergen. Bergen would have been far a way from Oslo and also within their striking distance. If Germany had six destroyers, they could have brought twenty. Even if a great part of their fleet had been lost, they would have gained a lot. They seemed to be enamoured of the idea of blockade, the Navy's starvation of Germany; and they are daunted by the presence of the Siegfried Line on their east. They don't want to risk anything. They are tied up by their organisation while Hitler fixes himself to nothing. He considers all possibilities and strikes according as it suits him.

P: Yes, the British should have their plans and moves fixed beforehand: "if such things happen, then we shall do this or that." Instead, they appear to do things too late and decide after a move has been made by the enemy. The countries still remaining neutral are already scared and can't rely very much on the Allies.

S: There was something in the papers about the Balkans—some threat to the Allies.

SRI AUROBINDO: And I suppose the Allies said they were watching the situation. (*Laughter*)

N: Without Norway, can the Allies' blockade be effective?

SRI AUROBINDO: It can be. They can impose it with their Navy. If they can smash the German Fleet now, then there is a chance of peace as was prophesied by the London astrologer Blake.

N: If the Germans have only 20,000 troops in Norway, scattered in various places, they can be easily routed.

SRI AUROBINDO: If the Norwegians could have fought like the Finns, there would have been some resistance.

EVENING

SRI AUROBINDO (*looking at P*): The French Radio says that one German officer was shot by Hitler's order because he criticised Hitler's invasion of Norway, saying that it was a blunder which would bring economic ruin to Germany and all sorts of faults and crimes would be imputed to Germany.

P: The German people will perhaps like it as a deserved punishment.

SRI AUROBINDO: Many people must be thinking like this officer; only they won't dare to speak out. He, being a military man, was outspoken. His conviction got the better of his prudence. The French Radio also says that one more major left the puppet ministry and joined the Norwegians. Perhaps he has become wiser. This puppet ministry is not only of professors: there are many majors in it. The German Fleet seems to have lost heavily—two big battleships have been destroyed. If the whole Navy is destroyed, the Germans will be in a very bad position. They will be quite isolated in Norway.

P: They are said to be carrying troops in aeroplanes.

SRI AUROBINDO: That can't come to much. The ships only can do enough.

P: If the Allies can set up a base somewhere there, it will be very advantageous to them: they can then attack German bases.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course.

P: In Denmark the Germans can't do much because Denmark has to depend on import for foodstuff. It has very scanty resources of its own.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, Germany will have to support the Danes when it can't even support itself.

P: It seems the Norwegian industrialists and landowners are in favour of Germany.

There's news that the Russian Fleet is in the Arctic.

SRI AUROBINDO: Fleet? Only some ships perhaps. The Fleet is either in the Baltic, the Black Sea or at Vladivostok. And if from the Baltic it comes out it will be noticed.

(*To be continued*)

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF 1920-26

(Continued from the October issue)

(These Notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in these talks seized the young aspirant's mind was jotted down the next day. Neither complete continuity nor absolute accuracy could be maintained. But in reconstructing from memory the author sought to capture something of the language no less than of the thought-substance. In places, later editing has been found necessary in order to clarify notations which had served merely as signposts.)

BERNARD Shaw's *Saint Joan* is no drama at all... Joan talks like a pushing, impertinent, peasant girl; Charles the King like a street urchin; the rest like London shop-boys. When they talk on big subjects they talk Shaw. There was poetry in Joan's speech and action, but G. B. S. knocked it out and instead gives you prose. In order to write about that age you must know about the Catholic Church, about Feudalism and many other things. You have to give a living picture of those times. It will not do in a drama to give your opinions about that age.

The curing of diseases by the worship of goddesses at their shrines is due, no doubt, to faith, but there is also some power at the places concerned. For instance, at Lourdes many cripples have got cured. Scientists have been to Lourdes. Zola too went there. It is surely not the mere water that is curing people of lameness, it must be something else: something wanted to manifest at the place—a girl saw it in a vision and a chapel was built for it, it came down and established itself there.

The curative forces are at times what we call forces of the vital plane. The small gods and goddesses are generally vital gods and goddesses and they want worship. They are angry when you don't worship them just as one is angry when one does not get what is promised.

The mental gods are quite different. They only want to express themselves. They have no other motive. They want to benefit the person they come into contact with.

The animal is a physical being with something vital supporting it, man is a physical being supported not only by the vital but also by the mental. The true mental being is not bound down to the physical forms of things, it seeks to know Truth, Beauty, Good.

The cat is more vital than psychic. The dog is psychic—psychic in the physical. The development of the dog is of one kind, that of the cat another... There are any number of forces trying to realise themselves in life. There are at the same time forces working in opposite directions, wanting opposite things.

When I was in jail, I had for 10 days brilliant visions and fine experiences. I thought there was some Truth in them. But one day at last there suddenly came a blow from above and the whole thing was smashed. Again there was a period of similar bright visions, followed by another smashing blow. Such phenomena go on until the mind has learned that all that presents itself in brilliant colours is not the highest Truth. There are many imperatives, but you have to wait for the highest sanction. We must accept no intermediate force, we must want only the highest.

The old European Psychology had nothing in it, the new Psychology has something, but it is false on the whole: it works on the lines of the physical sciences. You cannot generalise in the domain of Mind, as you can with regard to Matter. Mental things are very subtle and you have to take account of many factors. The theory that all action is determined by "complexes" is not correct in the way it is formulated. If you say that everything we do produces an influence on the inner being, and conversely that whatever is within us, within the subconscious, influences our actions in the waking state—well, that would be all right.

The psychoanalysts' theory of complexes works on a wrong foundation. You may apply the results of psychoanalysis and try to remove the obstacles—the complexes—but you will not succeed. Freud has studied some abnormal phenomena and made a general law: *e.g.* the subconscious accounts for all dreams. But there are dreams that are not due to the action of the subconscious. The realm of dreams is very wide.

Sannyasa is a movement of the vital being supported by conventional mental ideas. Used rightly, it is a great concentrated force, Tapasya. But ordinarily it is a suppression, a hardening and drying up of life-movements, followed by reactions. The life-force in the sannyasi suddenly jumps up on occasions. People would say the devil jumps up, but that is not true. The right way of progress is to rise to a higher plane and replace the lower movements—that is, transform them...

Bhaktas reciting songs of Radha and Krishna indulge in sexual imagination ordinarily, it is no case of real sublimation. Sublimation is when you rise to a higher plane and find there something that corresponds to the lower movement. For example, sexual love is of the vital plane; if you bring it down to the physical it becomes ugly. The real Radha-Krishna consciousness belongs to a higher plane where there is a mystic union and a kind of ananda corresponding to sexual love. To reach this plane and live on it—that is sublimation... Awakening the Shakti in the various centres, chakras, and meeting the Purusha in the Sahasrara is different from all such sublimation; the ananda in this case is the essential Ananda.

The Veda speaks of the Panis stealing the Cows and holding them in the subconscient. It is a way of looking at a certain phenomenon. In a sense all knowledge is subconscient. As some light from above comes and presses down, more and more from the subconscient is revealed. First, there is a stumbling movement of consciousness, then a loose formation, and as more light comes down there is an organisation. Everything is in the subconscient and gradually rises up and discloses itself.

The idea of an Aryan race is not clear from the Veda. The word "Arya" is used only in India. It is not found outside India. It does not imply a race but a certain type of culture. Oneness of language does not mean oneness of race. Sanskrit is allied to Greek, but the races speaking these two languages are different. The French and the Spaniards have a language very similar to that of the Italians but they are distinct races. The French seem to be the same from prehistoric ages. The evidence of the skull is important to anthropologists but the theory based on the skull is also shifting. The skull—or, for that matter, hair—has nothing to do with race, for it is found that if people settle in a particular locality for a long time, they develop a particular kind of skull; so it is not the race that is responsible for it. I don't think it is actually the place or anything physical, either—like climate—that is responsible for it. It is something psychic behind, that is the cause. Now the idea that people belong to any one race that has a single type is being given up. We may speak of several races, if we like, but all of them that we see at present have a great mixture of blood. No so-called race is pure.

It is not ignorance or passion which is hard to conquer. It is stupidity.

Mahomedanism gave to the world what it had got to give. I don't think it has anything more to offer. Sufism may survive. The rest must undergo a sweeping change.

Theosophy spread in India in the tide of the reaction against the European mentality, when people began to look to their past. Mostly, small men, not of the first class, joined the Theosophical Society. Blavatsky had creative power—imagination with some intuition—and she was clever. Leadbeater had a power of vital vision, but a weak power of mind; he had a certain force which was not always of the best kind. Steiner of Germany was a more powerful man with a stronger mind. Mrs. Besant was cut out for a politician and, if she had not meddled in Theosophy, she would have done something in politics. She has an energy, a sort of vital energy, the vital energy of action—not the vital energy of creation; it is an energy that is dry and cannot create. She does put things in an intelligent mental form but it is neither creative nor inspiring. With Jinārajadāsa as the next President of the Theosophical Society there is no more chance for Theosophy in India. It is already fading.

In most people it is not the central being that finds expression, it is some minor

personality which serves for the temporary purposes of this life. Very few express their central being with real Yoga. It stays behind.... The vital plane tries to imitate the light, the rapidity of movement of the higher. It imitates the calm of the supermind. There are Asuric forces that are very calm. The Asura has Tapasya, which is his chief weapon. Ravana and Hiranya were great Tapasvins. Such beings try to do good to humanity even, but in their own Asuric way. And "doing good to humanity" is one of the favourite weapons of the Asura. So also is the following of an ideal: sacrifice for principles, for instance.

The danger of people doing sadhana together is that instead of each being on his own path they may all go stumbling along the same path.

In the case of women it is generally the psychic being that opens first, while with men it is the mental or vital, and the psychic is in the background as the support. In a man's sadhana, when it is going on in the psychic plane, it is generally the psycho-mental at the best. When a man and woman—husband and wife—take to sadhana together and follow the same path, each is usually the counterpart of the other, both serving as complements. The man brings the mental, vital and other developments and the woman contributes the fullness of the psychic. If a man tries to insist on psychic development without paying regard to the mental and other parts and their opening, there is the danger of his falling into the vital plane, the plane of vital visions, which is full of attraction away from the true path unless there is protection.

Passive resistance often fails to bring any pressure on the enemy after some time. At the most it makes the opponent morally uncomfortable—and that too if he has a certain temperament.

Indians at present are lacking in character. We cannot work steadily. We begin one thing today and leave it tomorrow. Sometimes people get freedom by bluffing. We know bluffing well by this time. We have learnt it from the Englishman. I think freedom will come, when it can no longer be prevented—it will come by God's grace.

One of the most powerful sattwic illusions is that Yoga is for humanity. It has a very great hold on people. The question is not whether we can do anything for humanity; the question is whether anything can be done. Not that there has been no evolution till now. Humanity is moving itself. The only difficulty is that humanity has a tendency to come back to its starting-point again and again. I do not say that nothing at all can be done for humanity. What I say is: there is nothing radically altered, no fundamental change in humanity. Often something comes down. But you soon find humanity the same as ever. To give to the truth that descends a form suited to all capacities, to adapt it to humanity in general, is to make it false. Even Buddha and Christ could not succeed there. I think that any similar effort now also

would not succeed. As the radical change cannot be brought about in the mind, we want to change it by something which is not mind. We want to bring in supermind. As humanity means the mental level, the working of our Yoga is not for humanity, not for serving the level of mind: it is for something which is more than human. Of course, the change is to come in humanity and from humanity, it is not to appear out of nothing, dropping from heaven in a void, but the agency is not mental and the goal is not the human level.

Q. Would not the change require a change in man's form?

I cannot say, but I can say that it would require a change in his physical functions. They must all be transformed, otherwise this stupid body of man is incapable of holding the supramental power. The form of the body may not change.

This Yoga requires perfect balance. It opens a possibility for the higher consciousness to work as well as for the powers of the vital plane to come in and take possession. If a man is ill-balanced, these powers take possession easily. Sometimes the man who has no faith in things invisible is better than the man who has faith in them or the man who has a tendency to occultism. He is generally free from attacks from these planes because he is not open to them and does not accept them. Of course, this holds to a certain extent only. The man who believes in them gives the invisible forces a chance. For this Yoga one must have a sane mind. "Sane" does not mean matter-of-fact or dull; and, when I speak of want of balance, I do not mean that people may be insane. I mean that their development is not proportionate but lopsided or there is a twist somewhere in their nature which prevents the harmonious development of all the parts. It was balance that saved me all through. I believed at first that nothing was impossible and at the same time I could question everything that came. If I had believed in everything that came I would have been like some erratic yogis dancing in the street. A perfect Yogi can have a strong imagination and an equally strong reason. Imagination believes in everything while reason works out the logical steps. Even scientists have a strong imagination; they get the suggestions for discoveries through the imagination. Imagination is the power of conceiving things beyond the ordinary experiences of life. It ultimately becomes inspiration as it goes higher and higher up. For instance, in the poets generally it is the inspired imagination that works; in the scientists it is intuition. What corresponds to it in the Mind is intellectual insight.

The capital period in my intellectual development was when I could see clearly that what the intellect said might be at once correct and not correct; that what the intellect justified was true and its opposite was also true. I never admitted a truth without at the same time keeping the mind open to its contrary. Mind means infinite possibility. Reason or intelligence chooses one possibility and excludes all the rest. It is like "law" in science. You accept it because it explains most of the known phenomena. The selection of the intellect is narrow. We select a view and we see the reasons for the view we hold and we suppress the other reasons that point away from it, or the intellect justifies the choice which is made by it or even by some other part of the being. But as

you go higher a wider movement develops which reconciles all contraries. You see the forces behind mental ideas. If the ordinary man saw all intellectual things as mere possibilities he would be confused. How to select and how to act? But from a higher level, one simply looks at them, watches them, sees what they are and what is behind them. For instance, I can laugh at Shankara's Mayavada or Gandhi's views. But I can also see the truths that are behind them; I know their place in the play of the world forces. I can see the forces behind Shankara's or Gandhi's ideas.

You must try to balance yourself—of course within your own limits. You can correct the exaggerations of the parts that are well developed and develop those that are suppressed and bring about a balance in your being.

To write my life is impossible. The idea is wrong. Who can write it? In case of poets, philosophers and Yogis, it is no use attempting their biography, because they don't live in their external life. Their real life is the inner life, and how can anyone else know that life? It is different with men of action: say, Caesar and Napoleon—men who develop themselves through action. Even in their case it would be best if they wrote the biographies themselves.

(To be continued)

V. CHIDANANDAM

THE MAHABHARATA WAR AND SRI AUROBINDO: AN INNER CONVERSATION

A TALK TO THE SCHOOL STUDENTS

I'd like to share with you a very interesting and illuminating "conversation" I had with Sri Aurobindo on the subject of the film, *Veer Bhimsen*, that we saw the other day. Since you were there in defiance of the heavy rain drenching you through and through, I was very happy to see that you still took great interest in our Puranic stories; you'd not become so modernised as to lose the taste of the glory that was India once and still is, though covered up with all that poverty and squalor.

At the beginning, as I was entering the playground, there was a little bit of drizzling. I met Pranab at the gate and said, "Look!" He replied, "This drizzling doesn't matter. If it rains today, I'll put up the film tomorrow." His tone meant that if it rained tomorrow, he'd put it up the next day. You must have it. I don't know what exactly he liked most there. (*Laughter*) But probably, knowing him as I do, and being the great hero that he is, he must have taken an extraordinary delight in the audacious exploits of Gadadhar Bhim. You also have enjoyed the picture, I am sure, though what you liked most I can't tell, whether Bhim's 'gada' (mace), or Krishna's 'chakra' (discus) at the back of his head, or Draupadi's sad plight or else the dancing of the dwarf. Maybe if you ask me I'd tell you what I liked most. I liked all that you did, and the glimpse, as I first said, which I got of our former glory. Different people like different things for different reasons.

That reminds me of a story told by nobody else than Sri Ramakrishna. You know he was a very witty Avatar—all Avatars are witty—I being a disciple of a great Avatar must be expected to be at least half-witty. (*Laughter*). Now the story goes thus. There was once in some holy place a samkirtan path, kirtan, bhajan, devotional songs woven around Sri Krishna and Radha and the gopis, etc. So the passers-by were attracted by the kirtans. One of these passers-by, a very ordinary man of the village, came and sat there. He began to listen with rapt attention to the music. You know the various devotional attitudes and actions, tears particularly, and so this ordinary man began to shed tears profusely. Well, at the end of it all when he was asked what made him weep so much, he replied: "Babu, I liked it very much. You've seen by the shedding of my tears, it was wonderful!" "But what made you like it?" "When the singer was crying 'Bandhu he, bandhu he!' it reminded me of my beloved, so I began to shed tears out of joy."

So, ladies and gentlemen, the film must have gone home to people for various episodes. I for one divided my delight between Bhim's 'gada' and Krishna's 'chakra'. But somehow Sri Krishna was uppermost in my mind. I don't know if it has ever occurred to you—to some it must have—that Sri Krishna whom you saw was no other

than Sri Aurobindo. But that was what touched me most and I was constantly thinking: "Ah, so Sri Aurobindo came as Sri Krishna and did all this!" It gave me an immense pleasure to think, to see Him in the film so vividly. Although the film was somewhat crude, somewhat ludicrous, it came as a sort of a revelation. And I felt somehow, when I saw the battle of Kurukshetra, that all of us here must have taken part in that battle in which Krishna was Arjuna's charioteer. We must have fought, we must have killed, we must have died, we must have lived... That was the impression I had of that great holocaust as it passed before me on the screen.

My association with Sri Aurobindo (and prolonged service of Him) somehow corroborates and confirms this belief, this faith of mine that perhaps as a rat or a cat or at best a common soldier I might have been there, taking some part in it. So also all of you: either fighters or wives of fighters or sons or daughters of fighters. Some such connection must have been there either at Kurukshetra or somewhere else, which has brought all of us here. I think the Mother said once that we had all met before. Otherwise we would not have met today, in this field of yoga for transformation. That is my personal view.

Anyway, when I saw the film there were some questions that troubled me. Since I identified Sri Krishna with Sri Aurobindo, seeing Sri Krishna's personality at that time and Sri Aurobindo's personality as I knew it, I couldn't reconcile the two. I had seen Sri Aurobindo as very gentle, nay tender, almost child-like, sometimes a 'bhola-nath', and here was a different person: a charioteer, a shrewd statesman, a man of action, an encourager of violence. As I was pondering all these points, turning them over in my mind, Sri Aurobindo appeared before me and I had a long conversation with Him, while I was seeing the film. The talk is somewhat long, so I'll tell parts of it here and there because you don't expect me to remember everything that I heard and talked about. Even as I was seeing the film I was asking questions. He was answering me, just as he uttered the Gita in the field of battle; so it was now, in a less exciting, less dangerous context.

"Well, Sir," I asked Him, "all this carnage, all this massacre that I see perpetrated here, you are the author of all this. I will, however, come to it later on. Please tell me first why do you make the Pandavas suffer so much?—these Pandavas who were your devotees, who were your bhaktas, who were your friends, who have taken shelter for their life and death at your feet, for what capricious reason have you made them suffer so much?" Then, well, as I provoked Him, He also in provoking tones answered: "You should have known by now that those who love me, and those whom I love, suffer most." I muttered, "Strange idea of love!" (*Laughter*) Then He said: "Otherwise what is the use of love? What is love for? Is it only for a pot of honey? Only to tread on the rosy path? Love has to be tested in the burning fire in order to see how far it is genuine. Remember the line in *Savitri*: 'And must fire always test the great of soul?' So here you are. These Pandavas were great of soul...and love is a thing which is divine. If it is genuine it has got to pass through fire." So that was the answer He gave me. Further He said: "These are my chosen instruments. They have

come here for a special purpose of mine. I've got to do some work through them. So they have to be prepared through all trials and difficulties and hardships. Pain is necessary, knocks and shocks are good for the soul. See on the other hand the Kauravas. They have enjoyed a happy life, a life of ease, a life of comfort. To what end? It is all because of their *māmā* (uncle) who brought ruin to them, their multifarious hardships." As soon as He uttered the word *māmā*, my thoughts went to my own nieces whose presence in the Ashram has *māmā*-fied me for many people! (*Laughter*) To continue with Sri Aurobindo's reply: "Also don't forget that though I am inflicting punishment as you call it, or suffering, I am always with the Pandavas. I have never deserted them, wherever they are, I am with them, I guard them, I protect them, I guide them. My love is always with them. Is that not enough? You see only the dark side of things because the Man of Sorrows in you pleases to show you that. Please see a little widely, a little deeply, a little more intuitively and perceptively."

"All right, Sir, I accept. Still, a greater puzzle haunts me: How could you have allowed Draupadi to be dragged, to be insulted publicly before so many—such a vast audience? Why did you allow that? For what reason? Can you explain that?" I said with burning indignation. He answered: "Peace! You are evidently moved too much by ladies. (*Laughter*) So am I. But first of all kindly remember that I was not there when she was being dragged. Secondly, what were her five fine husbands doing when this poor woman was being insulted before all that noble audience? They didn't dare lift a small finger. They were all kshatriyas, they were all heroes, they were all nobles. Why didn't they protest?" I said, "That is another question. My question is why didn't *you*? You certainly knew what was going to happen. Why did you allow it to happen; and this ignominy for a woman is unbearable. You know that very well, and you came when at the extremity of her pain and suffering she cried out, "*Trāhi mām, trāhi mām!*" He said, "Yes, I did come." "But you came rather late!" "Yes, I came rather late, but why? Because she called me rather late. She was waiting and looking to her husbands to come and protect her. They didn't oblige. Then she looked around at the audience, they didn't care a rap. Utterly helpless, she began to cry for me, and I came at once. That heart-piercing cry, that cry of lamentation and agony! When you have found that everything is lost, it is at this moment when you call the Divine that He comes to rescue you. But there is a deeper mystery behind it. Shocking indeed! With your rational pate you do not see, do not understand."

I was all agog. Let's see, let's hear what deeper mystery He is going to reveal. Then He said: "It was or it is such atrocious behaviour that strikes against the Divine Seat and tilts the balance of the God of Justice. The atrocious manner in which the Kauravas acted towards a helpless God-loving woman sealed their doom and the Pandavas woke to the idea of grave revenge then. Mahakali's wrath fell upon them because they insulted Her own Shaktis, Her powers. Beware!"

I said: "I fear Pranab's wrath more than Mahakali's!" (*Laughter*) "Then... have you finished your questions? I've elsewhere to go, so many are calling me."

I said: "One other question. Now I accept poor Draupadi's humiliation, but what about Abhimanyu, that poor boy? Why was he sacrificed at the altar? Was this not a very terrible sacrifice?" He replied: "Yes, and it is for the same reason. It was necessary to awake fully the wrath of the slothful and sentimental Pandavas. Even the revelation of my 'vishwarupa' could not utterly convince Arjuna to take up arms and fight the Kauravas. He was still hesitating. So when Abhimanyu died at the hands of so many heroes in an unfair manner, that did the trick. You have read Homer, I suppose. You know the story of Achilles. He was sulking in his tent because of a wrangle between himself and Agamemnon for nothing more than—a woman. But when he heard that his great friend Patroclus was killed by Hector, then all his wrath flared up and he went out in a mad fury to fight. So his friend had to be sacrificed. Here too Abhimanyu had to be sacrificed in order that the others might join the fight; and you saw Bhim's 'gada' break the proud thighs and his hands open the hard bosom."

I shuddered and said: "That, I think, is too much. Particularly Draupadi soaking her hair in Dushasan's blood!" "Ah, since when have you become so humane? Three cheers for St. Nirod! Is it your Buddhist blood, or Gandhi's non-violence at work? You must remember, my friend, that it was the heroic age when men and women were heroes and heroines. I suppose you won't approve of Kurukshetra either, and advocate the gospel of love and compassion. Gandhi said that all that battle was symbolic. Well, that is what India has come to today. See the condition of the world: Russia, America, Israel, Nasser and Mao Tse-tung. Well, really, our Indira Gandhi is hard put to it to manage her house. She looks with one eye at Russia, with another eye at America and perhaps with both eyes at China. (*Laughter*) And this is our position today. So where is our gospel of non-violence leading? No, you can't have non-violence till..." He did not complete the sentence. He went on: "Have you read my *Essays on the Gita*?" "Yes, I have read it." "Read it again and look with a fresh eye at the passage where I have dealt with this question." Then He left me.

I came home and read the passage. Let me read it out to you:

"No real peace can be till the heart of man deserves peace; the law of Vishnu cannot prevail till the debt to Rudra is paid. To turn aside then and preach to a still unevolved mankind the law of love and oneness? Teachers of the law of love and oneness there must be, for by that way must come the ultimate salvation. But not till the Time-Spirit in man is ready can the inner and ultimate prevail over the outer and immediate reality. Christ and Buddha have come and gone but it is Rudra who still holds the world in the hollow of his hand. And meanwhile the fierce forward labour of mankind tormented and oppressed by the Powers that are profiteers of egoistic force and their servants cries out for the sword of the hero of the struggle and the word of its prophet."

So this is the message interpreted by Sri Aurobindo. Perhaps you know that Sri Aurobindo said that when He was in jail the Gita was put into His hand. Not literally, mind you, but in a subtle manner as things are given to you in your dreams, in your visions. So He told us that this Gita was given to Him by Sri Krishna; and if you read *Essays on the Gita*, which I recommend very strongly to all of you, those particularly who are grown up, you will have no doubt that it was Sri Aurobindo Himself who was Sri Krishna. Who else could be the author of the luminous and revealing interpretation that He gives, the intimate and understanding tone in which He expresses Himself, and the deeper secret undiscovered by anybody yet that He lays bare? There have been so many interpretations of the Gita, partial all of them, but none has that “*uttamam rasam*”, the supreme taste, which is His alone—because He is dealing with His own ancient message. For that matter, you will see that any other book He has written is all out of personal experience. Take the narrative poem, *Baji Prabhau*. In the description of the battle, the see-saw of fortune, the flight of the soldiers, the forward movement of them, the description is given in the minutest detail. It would have been impossible for any imaginative writer to provide such intricate movements of the battle. So also about all other books. In His past lives He has played so many roles and He has now relived them, brought them out. *Essays on the Gita* particularly is one of the most fascinating books that I’ve ever read. We have no doubt that Sri Krishna was born as Sri Aurobindo and carried on the same struggle even in our day, inwardly and outwardly—from the higher inner chamber in which He lived for so many years, all along not as a fighter, not as a charioteer, but as a commander of a great spiritual power which knows no time and space, and by the marshalling of that power He has moved, He has guided the world-chariot. When Hitler was in the ascendant, all of you know that it was the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who championed the cause of the Allies, and the Mother declared it was Her war. She even said in one of Her most firm notices: “Those who speak against the Allies are traitors.” At that time Churchill and De Gaulle stood as champions—the Pandavas—against the Hitlerite Kauravas. And after so many ignominious defeats ultimately you know what happened: the Allies were triumphant, the Fascists were crushed, the Japanese were routed.

Perhaps you do not know that during the visit of the Cripps’ Mission Sri Aurobindo sent His emissary from here to Delhi to persuade the Congress to accept the British proposals. Such a thing Sri Aurobindo had never done before. But he saw that Cripps had come on the wave of a great inspiration. Had Sri Aurobindo’s suggestion been accepted, as all clear thinkers say today, India’s state would have been different. There is such a thing as fate. When this Mission failed we told Him, “You see, your mission has failed.” He said “I knew it would!” And we pounced on this pronouncement: “If you knew, why did you send your emissary?” He smiled in his usual enigmatic way, and looking up said: “Well, I have done a bit of ‘kartavya karma.’”¹

¹ disinterested work

Again that reminds me of Sri Krishna. You know he went on a peace mission. He knew very well that it would not be accepted, but he wanted to give a chance to Duryodhana. "Do accept peace. Let's live amicably," he said. The result—you know: Duryodhana tried to arrest him. Here, fortunately, Sri Aurobindo was far away, safe and, after all, the Congress are our own people...

You see then that there are so many parallelisms between Sri Aurobindo's life and Sri Krishna's and you know very well what happened on 24th November 1926: the great descent. He said to us that on that day, 'siddhi day', Sri Krishna's consciousness descended into Him.

Now, I have finished my tale.

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO'S TEACHING AND ASHRAM

(An American scholar, Mr. Harris-Evans, currently in India for a study of Indian Spirituality, had recently two interviews with the author. The following report is based upon them.)

INTERVIEW I

Q. Can you tell me the role of the ritual with music and the collective meditation that follows it at the Playground, in the Ashram here?

A. We have no ritual here in any form. The music that you hear at the playground is no part of the meditation as such; we shall come to it later. Let us first speak about the collective meditation.

The object of the inner life here is to effect a contact with the Divine and develop it into a growing relation. The Divine is indeed everywhere, within each individual, outside his being in the universe, and also beyond the universe. And it follows therefore that the Divine can be perceived and contacted in any of these three statuses. Yet it is found by experience that the easiest and the most direct way is to seek the Divine within oneself. Normally man lives in his surface being and is hardly aware of the Divine in the inner recesses of his being. The way to become conscious of this Presence within and gradually unite oneself with the Divine entity, the soul or the psychic being, is called Yoga. Meditation, concentration, prayer—these are some of the effective means—limbs of the Yoga—to awaken to the reality of the Divine, to establish contact with it, to open more and more of one's consciousness to it. In the Ashram each individual chooses the means that is natural to him to achieve this end. Meditation, in some form or other, forms an important part of the inner discipline. Individual meditation is sought to be supported and energised by group-meditation.

The role of collective meditation is to reinforce each other's aspiration and evoke the Divine Presence by a collective seeking. A force of evocation is generated where a number of people unite in a common aspiration. This is the rationale of collective prayer or worship in all traditions. Naturally each individual benefits by the impetus received from the collective aspiration. No doubt the advanced section finds its level pulled down somewhat due to dilution with the less mature, but there is the recompense of contributing to the larger effort. In the process a certain solidarity of approach is built up on the subtler level of the being and a sort of magnetic field created for the higher forces to flow into.

Formerly when the Mother used to preside over the meditations, they were held twice a day, then once a day till with the increase of numbers and more pressing demands on the Mother's time the sittings were reduced to two a week. Now though the Mother does not physically preside, the meditations continue under the auspices

of Her subtle and yet unmistakable Presence. The music of which you speak is not an essential part; it was requested by some devotees to help them collect themselves for the meditation. Indeed the music came in at a very late stage in the history of the Ashram.

Music and other ceremonials are dispensable items in the communion with the Divine. They may be helpful to some at certain stages of development but it must be understood that they are only aids, a physical help to concentration, aspiration, canalisation of thoughts and feelings.

This is not to say that form and ceremony have no part in spiritual life. In certain traditions they last to the very end, as in the lines of personal worship. Form serves as a physical nodus for the meeting between human aspiration and the Divine's response. Broadly, however, one may say that these formal aspects are more related to the religious side than to the spiritual.

Q. What is the provision for teaching this Yoga to the disciples? How do they set about it?

A. The Teaching is laid down in the books. The ideal of the Teaching, the aim of life in the light of this ideal, the objective by way of Knowledge and practical realisation and the means therefor, are all set forth in concrete terms in their literature by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. When an individual is accepted as a disciple or a person accepts the teacher of the path as his guru, and he follows what is laid down as the teaching, he becomes a practisant of this Yoga. A special spiritual help is made available to him and he sees its effectivity in his inner life. Every situation has been anticipated and provided for in the volumes of letters on Yoga written by Sri Aurobindo and in the talks of the Mother.

Each one feels his way starting from the point where his evolutionary development has brought him. The temperament of his nature generally decides the line of Yoga he is to pursue: whether it is to be one of meditation, concentration, Knowledge or of service and self-consecration, or of devotion and Love or all put together so that a synthetic path is forged in his person. It is understood that this discipline embraces the whole of one's life, converting every detail of it into a part of the Yoga. In this sense, this Yoga is not a specialised technique like the others but an intensified application of the process pursued by Nature in the development of consciousness. The immediate aim is to cultivate the human consciousness so that it enlarges itself, breaks out of its limitations and acquires a divine quality and a divine dimension. Any means that promotes this object is welcome and can form part of this discipline. All branches of the humanities and sciences are welcome to enter into this scheme of spiritual evolution in so far as they contribute to the subtilising and the heightening of one's consciousness. There is no demarcation here between what is called secular and spiritual, between the worldly and the Godly. Both are reconciled on the common ground of the One Self that bases the All.

Q. Has the present pattern of the Ashram any special spiritual significance? What does it mean in the world context?

A. The aim here is not confined to individual liberation. It is related to the cosmic purpose, i.e. the evolution of humanity to higher levels of consciousness in the Divine's creation. Things are envisaged and organised on a miniature world-scheme. Apart from the advantages made available to each member of this society, by providing facilities to breathe and live in a dedicated atmosphere and to orientate his life in every detail Godward, the special advantage in having such a varied community of aspiring individuals from all walks of life, from all countries and traditions, is that all the diverse natures that constitute humanity are assembled in one place. All the difficulties encountered in the process of the change of nature envisaged in this Yoga are faced squarely. This factor of multiplicities of natures, gradations in development among the population raises, indeed, enormous difficulties. The Masters have chosen to face them and push ahead. It is easy enough to shut oneself in a shell of spiritual isolation and liberate oneself into the freedom of the Spirit; but that leaves the world where it was. If ten individuals who have developed a higher spiritual consciousness live together and work spiritually in the service of the Divine's manifestation, the occult force generated is of immense consequence for the rest of humanity.

Q. What is the place of the Mother in this organisation?

A. No spiritual life is possible without a guide. The Mother is our guide and much more than that. She represents and embodies the Mother-Soul in the universe which gathers up, develops and gives a concrete articulation to the aspiration of the Earth in the throes of evolution. In a sense the Ashram is an extension of Her body, the subtle envelope around Her physical frame. Everything that takes place in the Ashram, physically, mentally or otherwise, registers itself immediately in the Mother's consciousness and evokes a response. The impact may be pleasant or unpleasant to Her physical body but it evokes a helpful—and, where necessary, corrective—reaction for the environment. Of Her it is fully true—what the ancients said of the guru—that the guru holds his disciples in the womb of his consciousness.

The moment the Mother accepts one in Her spiritual charge or one accepts Her in the depths of his being as his guide or Mother, an individual emanation of Hers goes forth to the person and lives with him every moment thereafter. It is this personal Mother-emanation that protects, nourishes and guides the individual all his life, whatever his human failings, barring of course gross spiritual betrayals. This emanation goes on working on its own but when necessary it refers back to its source for special help. The Mother has said somewhere that She holds Herself responsible for the spiritual welfare of a person even though he may have met Her for a second. If this is so of people in the common run, much more is it true of those who have chosen to cast in their lot with Her, serve Her and follow Her all their life.

Q. What is the part of the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo here?

A. The Samadhi is the physical concentration of the consciousness that Sri Aurobindo embodied in his material body. Those who have faith can draw as much spiritual substance from the Samadhi as they did when he was physically present.

The Samadhi is not a tomb where the physical remains of the Master are preserved. It is a living reservoir of spiritual consciousness and force, emanating its vibrations incessantly. I hope I am not revealing any great secrets in recording here that there is in these vibrations a powerful sanction to every deep prayer that is offered at the Samadhi. I have known of countless instances where confirmed sceptics have returned men of faith after a visit to the Samadhi. Not all the prayers that are daily offered are of the spiritual kind. They are of all types, worldly, material, idealistic, etc. Whatever the seeking the sanction goes forth. I desist from citing instances for obvious reasons.

Q. How do you envisage the Ashram in the distant future?

A. The Ashram will be what it is today. It is the physical centre of a dynamic spiritual circle that goes on expanding and will continue to expand till it embraces the whole globe. There is here a developing assemblage of certain liberative and fulfilling cosmic forces drawn from the spiritual hemisphere, the *parārdha*, of Creation, through the mighty *tapasyā* of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It is not a static centre of retreat for people who are tired of life. It is a unique kind of self-activating generator which is bound to go on radiating wave after wave of the Truth-Consciousness that is stored here. The precise form of the Ashram may change with the changing needs of time but its essential character of a reservoir of spiritual energies will always continue unchanged, very much like the physical sun radiating charges of light day after day.

Q. What is the meaning of Pranam? Is Pranam a ritual?

A. Outwardly it is a physical meeting between the guru and the disciple. But in truth it is a meeting of two consciousnesses: the growing unit comes before the larger and whole unit and lays itself open to receive the nourishing influx from the latter. The exact form in which the meeting takes place is not of essential importance; what is decisive is the attitude of submission on the part of the disciple and the disposition of sanction and self-pouring on the part of the guru.

With the Mother there is no one form of Pranam. People approach Her in the way that is natural to them: the old and the modern, the Easterners and the Westerners—all of them go to Her in different ways. But the inner communion takes the same mode.

Q. What is the meaning of Darshan?

Darshan is spiritual audience. The Mother gives Darshan on special occasions. When She appears before the congregation that has assembled, there is not only Her

physical appearance which has its own spiritual impact, but the release of a consciousness and power from the higher realms of Superconscience enabling each one—in the words of the Mother—to fulfil his highest aspiration at that moment.

INTERVIEW II

Q. What is the meaning of spirituality according to Sri Aurobindo?

A. The spirit is the essence of a thing, the reality within that gives significance to the form it inhabits. Every form or object has an outer physical reality and also an inner subtler reality. This inner reality in man is what is called the soul, the spirit, the divine. To awaken to this inner reality, to take steps to unite with this reality, to fill one's consciousness and being more and more with this inner truth, to commune with it, to fuse oneself with it—this is the content of spirituality.

I have said this in the context of our discussion. Broadly, of course, spiritual is what concerns the Spirit. What concerns the "spirits" contacted in mediumistic séances and the like does not form part of true spirituality.

Q. What does Sri Aurobindo mean by 'Divine'?

A. The Absolute as it lends itself to experience is the Divine. Put differently, our highest experience of the Reality is of the Divine. This formulation of the supreme Reality takes the form of a supreme Self-Existence, a supreme Consciousness-Force, a supreme Bliss and a supreme Truth-consciousness. This Divine or supreme God is not confined to these original formulations. It manifests itself in several self-modifications and this universe is one such formulation.

In a word, the Divine is the essence and the source of All—all that we see and do not see, all that exists in actuality or in potency.

Q. Do you hold that the Ideal held by this Ashram, the teaching of Sri Aurobindo, is the highest and the final truth?

A. Never. Truth is dynamic by nature. An ideal is the expression of a truth that seeks to express itself at a particular moment when conditions are being made ready for it. When that ideal is realised, when the truth embodied in it is worked out in manifestation, naturally a succeeding truth follows in its wake. This is specially true in a world like ours which is a field of evolution, of growth of consciousness. The manifestation of the Divine Truth in Time is a continuing process. The horizons that beckon the ascent of man go on extending.

Coming to the immediate question, our ideal is the attainment of the Divine Truth-Consciousness in the human body attendant with its consequences of the transformation of human nature into the Divine. It is the governing objective of the present cycle of human evolution, but certainly not the ultimate. Beyond the realms of Truth-Consciousness, Truth-Power, there are the infinite expanses of Ananda,

Delight, Chit-Tapas, Consciousness-Force, Sat, sheer Existence and surely their characteristic values are to be established in the terrestrial universe.

Our earth is the appointed field for evolution, for growth. Anything can live only as long as it participates in this movement of growth. To cease to grow is to stagnate and eventually to die. All here has to grow. Even ideals have to grow. As they are being translated into actuals the ideals pass into still higher ideals and live in their successors.

Q. Do you mean to say that the Divine also grows?

A. Yes. In the field of manifestation God also has to grow, *i.e.* His manifestation grows, the effectivity of the Divine Light and Power increases with the general progression of the evolutionary movement. In this Yoga which seeks to put the great ideal of divinisation of man into practice, all have to grow: the Divine increases, the guru grows in consciousness, the seeker progresses in his being.

Q. I have heard it said here that the Ashram is the kingdom of God on earth. Do you agree?

A. Evidently the kingdom of God has first to be established within before it can extend itself without. The kingdom is to be realised first by a number of individuals before it can take a corporate form. The conception is ages-old, perhaps it dates back to the very beginnings of man. It means the replacement of the human consciousness by the Divine Consciousness, the human nature by a Divine Supernature, and a life lived on that basis. Viewed from this angle the Ashram is certainly an earnest attempt to translate the high ideal into practice. The emphasis on collective realisation in this teaching gives a special significance to the effort in the Ashram.

Q. In India all teachings of saints are based upon some tradition or other. On what tradition is the teaching of Sri Aurobindo based?

A. This teaching is not based upon any single tradition as such. It is born out of a living inner experience of the founders. The Vision of this teaching has grown with a supporting and verifiable experience. In a sense this gospel of the perfection of man in a complete divinisation of his nature is the peak point of the human aspiration from a dateless past. The incessant urge for Light, Power, Immortality that has characterised man's effort at progress in some form or other from the very dawn of his birth has taken many forms in the course of its development. The various civilisations and cultures and traditions are a testimony to this evolutionary effort worked out in diverse directions. Each tradition has contributed its mite to the general progress. I see the essence of all these traditions taken up in this teaching of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which opens a new vista and guarantees a bright future if only man consents to collaborate with the effort of Mother-Nature to break through her earthly boundaries and annex the splendid realms of the Spirit waiting beyond.

Q. What is the attitude of the Ashram to other religions and organisations?

A. A benevolent good-will for all efforts that aim at human advancement in whatever sphere. We recognise the useful role each unit in creation can play—individual or collective.

Essentially ours is a spiritual effort. We believe that those who are called to the Truth that we serve, come to it in whatever way. Our Master said long ago that he did not believe in bringing the Truth to another's door. We have no propaganda or campaign for convincing others of the Truth of our ideal. Men are in varying stages of development; their needs vary; and in the scheme of providence each one gets what is best for him by way of faith and circumstance. Spirituality is not a matter to be discussed and thrust into unwilling or immature minds. When one needs it, when one has arrived at a stage in his evolutionary development where one cannot live without it, one spontaneously turns to the call of the Spirit. That is why we do not seek dialogues with other institutions, religious, theological or other.

But there are several fields of our work, subsidiary to the main, where contact and co-operation with other efforts is welcome and fruitful. There is, for instance, the movement of International World-Union. This Union has branches in many countries of the world and a sustained effort is made to contact and influence the advanced mind of humanity at many points in the light of Sri Aurobindo's Ideal of Human Unity. Similarly there is the new project of Auroville, sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo Society, the City of Dawn, which is intended to provide a forum to all men of goodwill who are prepared to outgrow the mental scaffoldings of narrow religion, nationality and individual egoism in order to forge a commonwealth of world citizens striving to usher in a new order of life based on Light and Love in place of the present rule of Ignorance and strife.

M. P. PANDIT

THE PAST RELIGIONS, THE OLD YOGAS AND SRI AUROBINDO'S IDEAL

COMMENTS ON A READER'S OPINION

I

TIME and again the question has cropped up: Can Sri Aurobindo's ideal be realised by means of the past religions and the old Yogas?

An answer in the negative, insisting on the newness of the ideal and the consequent need of a new spiritual praxis, is usually given. A well-formulated example is the article by "Prabuddha" published in the *Mother India* of December 5, 1964, entitled: "The Gods and Our Sadhana." During the five years since then, there have been various comments both in favour of that article's thesis and against it. And what makes the comments particularly interesting is that the *contras* no less than the *pros* have stemmed from Aurobindonians themselves. The most positive criticism was couched in the following terms, which call for our notice by the striking quotations they incorporate from the Master and the sweeping conclusions drawn on the strength of them:

"Many people are of the opinion that for the Supramental Yoga we require exclusively Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The devotion of these people is commendable, but we must see what Sri Aurobindo has said on his Integral Yoga. Otherwise there is every possibility of sectarianism being developed.

"Sri Aurobindo was dead against sectarianism. He wrote in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, in the Chapter 'The Four Aids': 'The sadhak of the Integral Yoga will make use of all of these aids, according to his nature; but it is necessary that he should shun their limitations and cast from himself that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, "My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru" and opposes it to all other realisation in a sectarian or a fanatical spirit. All sectarianism, all fanaticism must be shunned; for it is inconsistent with the integrity of the divine realisation.'

"Then again in *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* (Second Series, p. 229, first edition) we read these lines: 'I have no objection at all to the worship of Krishna or the Vaishnava form of devotion, nor is there incompatibility between Vaishnava Bhakti and my Supramental Yoga. There is in fact no special and exclusive form of Supramental Yoga: all ways can lead to the Supermind, just as all ways can lead to the Divine.'

"So I think the matter ends here. Sri Aurobindo warned us and gave his final word which we must remember."

Well, have we truly the "final word" here?

The words of a Master of the Integral Yoga are bound to be such that they seem to lend countenance to various standpoints at various times and places. They present many aspects of truth and can be quoted by one side or another to suit particular purposes. Unless taken in the context of the entire Aurobindonian vision they cannot yield their full significance.

But even if the quotations made from *The Synthesis of Yoga* and from *Letters* are taken on their own merits, do we really get the impression that Sri Aurobindo considered his ideal to be realisable by means of the past religions and the old Yogas?

To reject the cry, "My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru" is surely not to say, "Any kind of God, any type of Incarnation, any sort of Prophet, any brand of Guru will straight away do for the Integral Yoga." And to forbid "all sectarianism, all fanaticism" is surely not to go in for a mighty mixture of the world's religions in an impartial acceptance of everything in them exactly as it is. A broad-minded view of the function and utility of all spiritual and religious motives, a willingness to let different human beings accept different creeds and guides and paths according to their natures—this is the obvious intention.

Again, look at the declaration that the worship of Krishna and the Vaishnava form of devotion are compatible with the Supramental Yoga and that there is no special and exclusive form of such a Yoga and that all ways can lead to the Supermind. Is it tantamount to asserting that it makes no difference in the least whether one follows Vaishnavism in the manner current so far or whether one takes to it in accordance with a larger and more plastic spirit which we should expect to be proper to a Yoga admittedly many-sided and widely inclusive and openly designated by a non-Vaishnavite term, a term hitherto unheard-of: "Supramental"? Nor must we overlook the small yet important word "can." It is not replaceable by a sweeping "will" or an unconditional "must". This too should be obvious.

A deeper scrutiny of the first quotation would attend to the point markedly suggested in it that the student or practitioner of the Integral Yoga should avoid "all sectarianism, all fanaticism". He should avoid them because he casts from himself the "exclusive tendency" and takes the essence of all spiritual paths and impregnates it with the new Aurobindonian revelation, making that essence yield the secret truth in it that tends towards integrality. But, if we admit this, then we imply integrality to be the distinguishing Aurobindonian feature, so that what is of living value to us is not one particular cult or another as it is in itself but that in it which can blend with the new endeavour. There is always this blendable part, for the work of Sri Aurobindo is not a negation of the past but its fulfilment: if the Supermind is the truth of truths and if it is meant to complete the evolutionary movement, everything in that movement must hold something which points—however vaguely, indirectly, even perversely—towards the supramental. But the Supermind fulfils the past not by merely encouraging it: it fulfils by bringing a novel light and power and only by this light and

power can the past's pointer be disengaged and employed with fruitful results. So there is no question of reaching the goal set by Sri Aurobindo without appreciating the Aurobindonian work as something which the past in itself cannot give and without which the past is unacceptable to us for our special ends, however valid its acceptance may be for those who—quite legitimately for their own objectives—do not share our aim to consummate the universal evolutionary drive.

The gods and avatars and teachers who have influenced the world are not to be brushed aside: all of them carry a concealed cry for the Supermind, but mostly for an aspect of it rendered separate and exclusive, and we cannot lose ourselves in such a form of the aspect. Thus Shiva has mostly been invoked to grant a liberation from the cosmic imbroglio—"Hara, Hara! Vyom, Vyom!" ("The Free, the Free! The Void, the Void") : this has been the Shiva-mantra. The Free and the Void are indispensable to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, for they are the base and the *milieu* for the supramental dynamism in the world. But if we go in for the Shiva-mantra as made effective in the past we shall hardly be Aurobindonians. Vaishnava bhakti has brought sweetness and intensity and concreteness of the personal Divine into life and, as such, it is indispensable for us who are human persons doing the Integral Yoga under gurus whom we believe to be the Divine embodied. But there has been a lot of emotional and sensational excitement associated with this bhakti, and that certainly is no objective for us : a calm flickerless flaming of the heart is what Sri Aurobindo wants : no loss of true fire is here, but nothing of the dramatic, the uncontrolled, the lopsided, the fitful. Again, Vaishnava bhakti has fixed for its terminus a beyond-life of Goloka felicity : a wonderful *līlā*, play, here with Krishna's inner presence and then a happy storm of passage to a heaven on the other side. This transmundane terminus is also not suitable for the direction of our consciousness. No doubt, the worship of Krishna or the Vaishnava form of devotion *can* go along with the Supramental Yoga, as indeed all ways *can* lead to the Supermind, but it is poor logic to think Sri Aurobindo is deliberately recommending it. If anybody is so minded or so conditioned psychologically as to want to practise it, Sri Aurobindo would not forbid him, provided the potentiality it possesses of being compatible with the Yoga of the Supermind is made active and dominant. We should commit the grossest mistake to think that according to Sri Aurobindo any past spiritual way would be helpful for our ultimate purpose without the least qualification, without the slightest reorientation.

Sri Aurobindo has never said : "Go and follow Shankara and you will reach the Supermind. Be a follower of Ramanuja or Chaitanya and you will automatically do the Supramental Yoga." Nor has he gone out of his way to advise people to take up old cults, as if saying : "Why bother about coming to the Ashram and devoting yourself to the Mother or to me? Stay where you are and as you are and continue in your own religion, carry on your ancient *pūjā* of this or that Ishta-devata, chosen deity, for you are sure to be supramentalised and bound to be a brilliant sadhaka of the Integral Yoga if you just do what your ancestors have done or you have been habituated to do. In fact, there was no need for the Mother or me to get born and pass

through the ordeals of a path that had never before been trod in its fullness and in its details, no need for us to have discovered new lights and powers for earth's transformation which has never been rightly attempted or even properly dreamt of. Any old path, any past cult, any god or avatar or teacher will serve for practising a Yoga with which they themselves were never associated."

Actually, Sri Aurobindo's central stress is on a new life, a transcendence of the spiritual past as well of the past in any other form, though in that spiritual past there are naturally some helpful hints for the new life. Sri Aurobindo appreciates all true seeking and permits the prolongation of the past when sincere people are somehow too addicted to it : he discerns in it those helpful hints and throws them into relief for the benefit of the aspiring addicts : he is eager to aid every man according to his individual bent. But he nowhere welcomes into his Yoga such addiction on its own merits nor does he offer an unconditional *carte blanche* to it. Merely because bigotry and exclusivism are not in his line, merely because he can extract from everything some luminous affinity to his own message, we should not misunderstand his position. To view his wideness, his considerateness, his comprehensiveness as our commentator does is to render pretty meaningless those words of Sri Aurobindo's in a letter on the process of spiritual transformation he has worked out in terms of the Supermind. Among the reasons why he has called his Yoga "new as compared with the old yogas" he lists the following : "... a method has been preconised for achieving the purpose which is as total and integral as the aim set before it, viz., the total and integral change of the consciousness and nature, taking up old methods but only as part action and present aid to others that are distinctive. I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realised in the old yogas. If I had, I should not have wasted my time in hewing out paths and in thirty years of search and inner creation when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out, laid down, perfectly mapped, macadamised, made secure and public. Our Yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure."¹

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *On Yoga*, II, Tome One, p. 108.

THE PROBLEM OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMING IN INDIA

SECOND REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ART, AUROVILLE

ON September 18, 1969 an agreement was signed between the Indian Government and N.A.S.A. in the United States for a communications satellite to be sent up in mid-1972 to be used by India for a period of one year. The problem of television programming in India, therefore, which a few months ago might have seemed relevant for some dream world of the future has now become a problem which is immediate and real. The satellite will be stationed over the Indian Ocean just south of the tip of this country and it will be in synchronous orbit. Synchronous orbit means that the orbit of the satellite will be synchronized with the rotation of the earth. It means that the satellite will be up there in a stationary position almost directly over our heads as the constant reminder of a great challenge. Let us hope that when it actually goes up we can be reminded happily that this is a challenge we have met. In order not to be caught short we must start thinking seriously right now about the type of programs to be transmitted. We have all the mistakes of the pioneers to profit from, and we have the joy of over two and a half years to plan properly.

An important fact is that this is just not an ordinary satellite. India has been mysteriously picked from all the countries of the world to make the first experiments with a new kind of satellite. It is called a direct-to-home satellite. That is, it will relay broadcasts directly to receiver sets on the ground without the need of complicated and expensive receiving stations. The important result is that a very large area can be covered immediately and all that will be needed to tune in will be a small receiver set on the ground and a finger to push the button that says "on". The implications of such a fast, simple and large coverage are unimaginable at the moment, especially for countries in which there is little or no television. It is a time for experimenting. The challenge before us in the Art Department of the Center of Television Art and Science is to help in any way we can to be ready for television programming in India, even with television programs...to be ready when that little frightening sign lights up and someone whispers, "You're on the air." According to our information so far, in the experiment, beginning in 1972 for a year, 5000 villages in North Central India will be covered. There will probably be one set in each village and we can imagine about 200 villagers huddled in front of each set mounted on a platform. This means an immediate audience of about 1,000,000 people.

Overwhelming as this might sound, it is a small audience by current TV standards. A production of *Macbeth* was presented in the United States a few years ago with a famous director and big stars and a ratings survey showed that more people

saw the play that one night than had ever seen it before in all the time, on all the stages, during the over 350 years since it was first written and produced. Still, our experiment here in India is only a beginning and an audience of 1,000,000 people is a good start. It has been announced that the programs to be offered to this first audience will be concerned with helping the villagers with their problems of poverty, over-population, and illiteracy. A few entertainment programs will be offered too. In order to be prepared for effective programming in these practical and down to earth areas we must have a thorough understanding in breadth and in depth of three things. First, we must understand what television really is as an artistic medium. Secondly, we must try to understand as clearly as possible the current position of India in the light of world affairs. And thirdly, we must have an understanding of the particular needs of the audience before us, one million Indian villagers.

For an understanding of television as an artistic medium we have already made a beginning, and the results are shown in our first report, *Television for the New Age*. In this report we have pointed out that although television is a new artistic reality it also builds on the contributions from all the traditional art forms which have gone before. We have begun to intuit in our study of this complex artistic medium that to really understand and appreciate art is to desire to move beyond it. This is an Indian insight and it does not imply that traditional art is just to be "used" as the edict seems to be in some totalitarian states. In India the art experience, like everything else, is seen in the light of a greater reality. Utmost freedom in all the arts can be encouraged and in this spiritual country the artist is led inevitably from the symbol to the Symbolized. All of our artists here in various fields can work together in deepest freedom for the production of beautiful and significant television programs. The spiritual overtones will simply be taken for granted. When it comes to the practical problem of producing programs for a large audience—on poverty, birth control, or illiteracy—the artists' spirituality will become a natural and unconscious background, the Indian atmosphere at its best. The Indian people and the world at large will expect these new dimensions from us. The challenge, therefore, in this artistic area is even greater here. We are expected to approach everything in depth. The challenge in breadth of contemporary communications is large enough, as anyone who has been involved in television will attest...but still, we must know what we are doing both in breadth and in depth. We must understand fully what television is as an artistic medium and understand fully the power it can wield. This has been done too little in this new medium so far and the automatic effects on the human race have been tremendous. We have the chance now to understand and try to consciously control these huge new powers. We have the responsibility in the practical problems ahead to preserve the priceless soul of India while we are trying to alleviate the material suffering of the masses of her people.

Secondly, if we are to do realistic television programming, treating these practical problems, we must fit things into the big international picture. We must know where we are. We must understand where India is moving in the world. In answer to her critics recently Prime Minister Indira Gandhi replied, "Left of what? Right of what?"

By this she seems to imply that India will not "go left" or "go right", nor will it remain in some kind of amorphous, stagnant, imitative middle. India will go her own way according to the needs of her own people, according to her own potentialities, according to her own soul. This does not mean that there are not many good things worth imitating on the left and on the right, nor that it is even possible in the contemporary world not to imitate to a certain extent. It is a question of living together, of being together in the international community, a question of learning from each other while maintaining one's own nation-soul.

As far as "the left" is concerned the current prophet seems to be Mao Tse-Tung. The fact that his *Little Red Book* is being read all over the world (somebody said it is selling more copies than the Bible) should indicate to us that it must be faced and that there is apparently some very real and important good in it. Mao is so sincerely concerned with the sad lot of the common man and so dedicated to changing the situation that he has become without doubt one of the most powerful leaders of all times. We have much to learn from him as we approach the production of television programs which are meant to improve the lot of the suffering common man in this country. Mao refers to the soul of "the left" in his one reference to God in his book. He says, "Our God is none other than the masses of the Chinese people." In India we can admit with conviction that this is right, that God most certainly is the great masses of mankind, but we can also hold with just as much conviction that this is not all He is. Man is in evolution. Present man is part of a supreme divine plan. There is a great past behind us and we are growing towards an even greater future. Still we can offer for imitation many of the methods of Communism, particularly the ones which show a deep concern for the present sufferings of the common man, and those which show the justified hope for some kind of leveling of the "haves" and the "have nots." However, we can try and find a way to avoid the fanaticism which seems to be leading the communists down the dead-end street of internal conflict and the threat of nuclear war. While activating the villagers to a better and more equal life we can rejuvenate their Indian souls at the same time. We can try to instil a deeper confidence in their own full spiritual reality. Without a spiritual motivation which they can understand will these Indian villagers ever pull out of what seems now to be a dead tamasic atmosphere, a sad and hopeless lethargy?

As far as "the right" is concerned, the current prophet seems to be Marshall McLuhan. If we can judge at all from the enormous response throughout the world to his book *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, he is speaking for the soul of "the right". When he says, "The medium is the message", he seems to be saying that God in the West is at the moment in science and the "good life" that all the new technologies and Capitalism have produced. Dr. McLuhan is saying that no message from any philosophy or religious group in recent times has been as powerful—has had as large an effect on mankind in the West—as the very communications media themselves combined with other innovations like jet airplanes, atomic power, computers and all the other marvels of the electronic age. Of course, he is right. Just as

God is the great masses of the world's people, God is also science, rockets to the moon, and a color TV set in every room of the house. A lot of talk about an invisible God in the manner of the old time religions of the West does not make much sense when people are immersed all the time, whether consciously or not, in all these marvelous new powers of God Himself. All these marvelous new powers are arriving in India whether she likes it or not and there is no reason why she should not like it. She already does, but India demands much more from a good life than the God of science and technology, fast travel and instant communication. This must be remembered as we prepare television programs for poor, uneducated villagers who are being introduced for the first time to the new technologies and the new ways of doing things. Their inner spirit must not be threatened. We can offer for imitation many of the methods of the capitalistic West but we can avoid any kind of commitment to a middle-class society which is over-concerned with "things" and which seems to be losing its own youth to an open revolt against they know not what. The Indian villagers will not be moved by the God of science if he is the God of science alone. There must be a way to progress technologically without losing the conscious touches of the Spirit. We must try to find that way and present it in our television programs.

There is no doubt that the challenge of television is difficult and complex but we must face it, and face it now in breadth and in depth if we are to be sure that the enormous powers looming up before us are directed towards the truth and towards the total good; the key to whose secret India holds. Accepting the complexity, and assuming that we have imbued ourselves with a deep understanding of what television is as an artistic medium, and assuming that we have seen in general where India is moving in the light of world affairs, what is the next step in solving the practical problem before us, the problem of 1,000,000 Indian villagers about to be approached for the first time through television? From a technical standpoint we must realise that different languages and dialects will be involved. This will always be a problem for television in India, particularly when we are dealing with a satellite which will ultimately be able to cover the whole country at once. This pushes us to some new thinking about television programming in general for the future. We must think more in terms of visual and sound images and universal symbols all moving together in one dynamic unity. We must show much less dependence on the facility and shallowness of too many words. Our research in this area will influence more than just the villagers involved in our current project.

For the villagers now we must collaborate with our anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists to try and figure out very clearly the exact audience before us and how they can most effectively be reached. In general, we must realize that we are facing a problem of poverty in India, a problem of over-population in India and a problem of illiteracy among a large percentage of the Indian people. Indians rightfully resent so many people from the outside telling them what to do about their poverty, their birth control and their illiteracy. Poverty here, for example, must be faced in the light of a general belief in reincarnation, and in the light of the Spirit as

the most real fact of life. Birth control must be faced in the light of a deep, pervading respect for all life, and in the light of the psychology of sex among a simple people living so close to nature. Illiteracy must be faced in the light of India's familial desire for total, non-phoney, non-split communication with each other. Perhaps all the people of India are not meant to be literate in the sense that we are literate, that much of the outside world is literate now. Perhaps a whole difficult phase of evolution can somehow be by-passed, or at least modified for the illiterate man of today. The printing press and the ability to read and write have never been an integral and necessary part of man's ability to communicate on the deeper levels of his experience. When man communicates with the Divine he no longer has any need at all for words.

We must face this great, new challenge. We must be ready to work very hard together and to do all the research required in art, in international understanding, in anthropology, in sociology, in philosophy, and in other fields which will manifest themselves as we go along.

We must try very hard to get our closed circuit television training system as soon as possible so that we can begin to experiment with our theories of television production in an actual television studio situation. UNESCO has made its first token contribution of three thousand dollars to Auroville and it has been designated that it be used for our television project. We have already ordered our first camera and our first receiving set. We will need more money for the rest of the equipment and for the new studio which our chief architect has already begun to design. Our faith is that the equipment will come and that this work will be accomplished. In the meantime we can continue our enthusiasm and the background research work.

How India solves her problems and how she responds in general to the electronic age will be of tremendous importance to the rest of mankind. India can be, as the Mother has said, "the Guru of the world". It is up to us to help in any way we can to make this dream a reality.

WILLIAM T. NETTER

TWO TALKS ON SRI AUROBINDO AN AMERICAN APPROACH AND APPRECIATION

In our report, last April, of the annual seminar held on February 21 at the Sri Aurobindo Center, Crescent Moon Ranch, Sedona, Arizona, U.S.A., we referred to two talks given by Rear Admiral (Ret.) Rutledge Barker Tomkins of Dorset, Vt. We are now publishing both of them. About the first, a part of which brings Teilhard de Chardin into relationship with Sri Aurobindo by highlighting some general points of contact, the speaker writes in a letter to the Editor: "Global Vision was intended to serve as an introductory summation of what I have come to believe and realize as essential Truths and Principles, keystones, of Sri Aurobindo's teaching." On the second paper he writes: "Grand Synthesis was intended to provide a preliminary glimpse of the essential integral nature of Sri Aurobindo's teaching and a summary description of the nature of his great philosophical and Yogic writings where his teaching can be best pursued." Regarding both the contributions the speaker remarks: "I tried to put the presentation in a form that would be most appropriate for a western audience, educated but not intellectual; individuals who for the most part had no more than a cursory knowledge of Sri Aurobindo's teachings."

THE GLOBAL VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO

IN our modern western world we are very proud of our burgeoning material knowledge with its scientific and technical achievements. They have certainly added much to our ease of living and to our general economic prosperity. But every gain that is made in these areas seems to be more than offset by the increasing turmoil of our human relations—the clash of egos—the egos of nation, race, religion, group, generation, family, the individual.

Our "human" problems are increasingly recognized and deprecated by a growing number of concerned people. More and greater efforts are being made to eliminate or reduce them to tolerable proportions than ever before, but it never seems to be enough. There seems to be a growing, if still not generally recognized, feeling that many of our more acute human problems require for their solution an intellect, a heart, a will that is radically superior to that which is represented by the human mentality of today, intellectual, emotional, volitional.

Where can we look for a fundamental approach to a greater, more integral knowledge? There are two sources that I know of; and, for me, they have proved to be uniquely complementary. They are found in the thought of Teilhard de Chardin and Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo used the word "global" in describing the thinking that supported his philosophic and yogic writings. He said, "it was the only word for certain things, for instance the thinking in *masses* which is the frequent characteristic of the Overmind." The Overmind is Sri Aurobindo's name for the highest plane of mental consciousness, a plane of pure, intuitive, all-encompassing and all-harmonising mind that is far above our normal mentality. I will use "global" to describe both thought and vision—thought and vision which come to us in *masses* rather than in *single facets* or *rays* which are characteristic of our normal mentality.

After attending to the "Overview" of Teilhard de Chardin's thought and vision I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that they too are deserving of the description "global".

The very "globalness" of Teilhard's thought makes it inevitable that there should be considerable variation in the individual approach to it. But, from my own experience, if his thought is pursued far enough, which means that it must be carried and held in the depths of the *inner* consciousness, you will eventually be confronted by a global vision of existence.

A vision of existence as an infinitely great, infinitely varied but essentially unified process of evolution—an evolution that is directed by a "within" that exists in each of the infinitely numerous and varied forms of existence—an evolution that is still in process.

Teilhard tells us that man is the most *evolved* form of manifested existence and that man's evolution has recently entered a critical stage. This stage will be characterized by the rapid mental and psychic development of man. It will be increasingly reflected in all the activities and institutions of society—in fact, a radical change in human relationships is essential for our *survival*.

Let us turn to Sri Aurobindo's thought. It is expressed in a very different form than Teilhard's. Sri Aurobindo's exposition is also much more detailed, more voluminous, wider. If you pursue his thought far enough—and you will probably find this adventure even more challenging, difficult and time consuming than the pursuit of Teilhard's thought—it too will give you a global vision of existence.

A vision of existence as a spiritually contained, directed and inhabited process of evolution—an evolution of consciousness—an evolution that has entered a critical stage, one in which Man—Nature's most evolved manifestation—has, through his evolutionary development, reached a level of consciousness which enables him to make a significant and decisive contribution to his own evolution and to that of the world around him.

It has been my experience that there is no fundamental difference in "existence" as envisioned by these two great seers of our age.

What is the basis, the cause of "existence"? What or who is the Power or Powers that control "existence"?

Before taking up the *basic* fundamental question I would like to invite your attention to another all-important and unique similarity in their thought. The thought of

both Teilhard and Sri Aurobindo calls for an uncompromising resolution of an ancient antinomy. Their thought demands the synthesis of the two adversaries who from time immemorial have mutually excluded each other in the mind of man: Asceticism and Materialism; Other Worldliness and This Worldliness; Mysticism and Reason, the Spirit and Nature, God and Man.

In *The Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard calls for the synthesis of Science and Religion, of Reason and Mysticism.

But Teilhard was greatly circumscribed in the freedom of his exposition by two significant factors: first, the strong opposition of the hierarchy of his church and order to his thought as contrary to religious doctrine and dogma; second, by Teilhard's own apparent ignorance as a westerner of what Sri Aurobindo describes as "occultism", a word which will be defined later in the presentation.

Fortunately for us, Sri Aurobindo was under no constraint, either psychologically or environmentally, in the full rational exposition of his thought.

With his deep and sympathetic understanding of the limitations of the normal human mentality, he iterates and reiterates the great "Truths and Principles" of his teaching throughout his major works. This is especially true of his many expositions of the nature of the divine Being, Omnipresent Reality, the Power that contains, directs and inhabits the great evolutionary process which we know as "existence".

Sri Aurobindo's exposition of the nature of the divine Being is the basis of his philosophy which he calls, "Realistic Advaita", the philosophy which he develops in *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*, and it is the basis of his "integral Yoga".

Advaita philosophy originated in India some three thousand years ago. Vivekananda gives the shortest and simplest definition of Advaita that I know of. I will pass it along to you with the reminder that its disarming simplicity may not make its meaning any less elusive to your understanding than a longer and more complex statement would:

"What does the Advaitist declare? He says that if there is a God, that God must be both the material and the efficient cause of the universe; not only is He the Creator, but He is also the created. He himself is this universe."

This statement seemed perfectly acceptable to me until I discovered a statement by Sri Aurobindo to the effect that Advaita Vedanta (Mayavada) declares that the world is an illusion. Sri Aurobindo denies this doctrine. He says, "The world is a manifestation of the Reality and therefore is itself Real."

So we might establish a short definition of "Realistic Advaita". Sri Aurobindo has a much longer and more explicit one, as follows:

"God, Omnipresent Reality, is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe which is, itself, Real; not only is He the Creator, but He is also the created. He himself is this universe."

The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is based on the perception of the nature of the divine Being as "that which exceeds, contains, supports all individual beings as well as all universe, transcendently of Time and Space and Causality. We have to per-

ceive It also as that which lives in and possesses the universe and all it contains.”¹

In the language of Indian spiritual thought, “This is the transcendental, universal and individual Brahman, Lord, Continent and Indwelling Spirit which is the object of all knowledge. Its realisation is the condition of perfection and the way of Immortality.”²

As we dwell on this conception of the nature of the divine Being we will come to realise that It transcends and exceeds, as it includes, all Name and Form, all manifested forms of God. It accepts all exclusive religions and sects in their proper place; religions and sects that by their innate exclusive nature inevitably reject the concept of Reality Omnipresent implicit in Realistic Advaita.

2. SRI AUROBINDO'S GRAND SYNTHESIS

The Mother first met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry in March, 1914. She and Paul Richard, who was with her, were so impressed with Sri Aurobindo's intellectual and spiritual presence that they urged him to start a philosophical journal, “to give to the world his grand synthesis of knowledge and yogic experience in terms of rational exposition.”³

The journal was called *Arya*. Its cover and front page indicated that it was published by Aurobindo Ghose and Paul and Mirra Richard. *Arya* was published monthly from 15 August 1914 to 15 January 1921. Each issue consisted of sixty-four pages; Sri Aurobindo personally contributed almost the entire content.

He had this to say about the *Arya*:

“It will be the intellectual side of my work for the world.”⁴

“Its object is to feel out the thought of the future, to help in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best and most vital thought of the past.”⁵

“The problem of thought is to find the right idea and the right way of harmony: to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the Self so that it may re-embrace, permeate, dominate the mental and physical life: to develop the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life of man may express the spiritual life through the utmost expansion of its own riches, power and complexity: and to seek for the means and motives by which his external life, his society, his institutions may remould themselves progressively in the truth of the spirit and develop towards the utmost possible harmony of individual freedom and social unity. This is our ideal and our search in the ‘*Arya*’.”⁶

Sri Aurobindo is explicit in directing us towards a more integral knowledge and a higher consciousness.

^{1, 2} The Analysis of the ‘Isha Upanishad’ as translated by Sri Aurobindo. This work appeared in the first issues of *Arya* as a fundamental contribution to Sri Aurobindo's “grand synthesis” of knowledge and yogic experience expressed in terms of rational exposition.

^{3, 4, 5} *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* by A. B. Purani.

⁶ *The Life Divine*.

He tells us "that there are *four necessities* of man's self-expansion".¹

"He must know himself and discover and utilise *all* his potentialities: but to know himself and the world completely he must go behind his own and its exterior, he must dive deep below his mental surface and the physical surface of Nature. This he can only do by knowing his inner mental, vital, physical and psychic being and its powers and movements and the universal laws and processes of the occult Mind and Life which stand behind the material front of the universe: this is the field of *occultism*."²

2. "He must know the hidden Power or Powers that control the world...he must be able to enter into relation with It or Him and be able to remain in whatever contact or communion is possible....follow the law It gives him and the assigned or revealed aim of his life and conduct...This is the approach of *religion*."³

3. "But this knowledge must be something more than a creed or a mystic revelation: his thinking mind must be able to accept it, to correlate it with the principle of things and the observed truth of the universe: this is the work of *philosophy* and in the field of the truth of the spirit it can only be done by a spiritual philosophy whether intellectual in its method or intuitive."⁴

4. "But all knowledge and endeavour can reach its fruition only if it is turned into experience and has become a part of the consciousness and its established operations; in the spiritual field all this religious, occult or philosophical knowledge and endeavour must, to bear fruition, end in an opening up of the spiritual consciousness, in experiences that found and continually heighten, expand and enrich that consciousness and in the building of a life and action that is in conformity with the truth of the spirit: this is the work of *spiritual realisation* and *experience*."⁵

It is this great synthesis of integral knowledge and spiritual experience that Sri Aurobindo exposed so luminously and so explicitly in the *Arya*. All of his major philosophical and yogic works with the exception of *Savitri* originally appeared in the *Arya* in serial form, chapter by chapter. In order to give you a better idea of the encyclopedic scope of his "grand synthesis," I have placed these works on the table in front of me. They include:

The Life Divine—a full exposition of his philosophy, "Realistic Advaita."

The Synthesis of Yoga—A complete exposition of his "integral Yoga" including detailed knowledge of human psychology essential to the practice of integral Yoga and, to my knowledge, not available elsewhere.

Essays on the Gita—A detailed commentary on his own translation of the Gita. His synthesis was evolved from that of the Gita.

Isha and Kena Upanishads—Extensive commentaries on his own translation of these Upanishads. They deal with "the nature of the divine Being" and "the relationship of our normal human consciousness with the spiritual consciousness."

^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5} *Ibid.*

The Human Cycle—

The Ideal of Human Unity—

War and Self Determination—

Sri Aurobindo's thought expressed in the form of social commentary.

*On the Veda—*Translations of and commentary on the Vedic Hymns.

The *Arya* amounted in all to almost five thousand pages of inspired revelation of knowledge and spiritual experience. It is inconceivable that it could all have been the work of a single author in so short a space of time and under the conditions in which it was written until we realise that it was written from the "silence" of a pure, intuitive, global mental consciousness.

There is no "instant" or "abbreviated" Aurobindo! Everyone that I know of has encountered considerable difficulty in understanding his philosophical and yogic thought on first acquaintance. It is usually a matter of years before a facile understanding is reached.

For those whose aspiration and temperament tends toward a narrow simplistic or exclusive religious or sectarian approach to the Deity there is undoubtedly a great deal of Sri Aurobindo's thought that is confusing, irrelevant and unnecessary.

But for those who are seeking an integral knowledge and a perfect synthesis of Spirituality and Reason, a spiritual transformation, Sri Aurobindo's "grand synthesis" is an indispensable encyclopedia of knowledge and spiritual experience. If our aspiration is strong enough, it will be a lifelong source of illumined knowledge which will increase in clarity and intensity as we progress.

RUTLEDGE BARKER TOMPKINS

NAME GLOSSARY TO SRI AUROBINDO'S *ILION*

(Continued from the October issue)

Pallachus: an aged Trojan senator.

Palladium: an ancient sacred image of Pallas (*q.v.*), said to have been sent down from heaven by Zeus to Dardanus, the founder of Troy, or to his descendant Ilus. It was believed that the protection of the city depended on its safe custody. Greek legend has told that Diomedes and Odysseus, at the instigation of Calchas or Helenus, carried it off and thus made possible the sack of Troy. Here, however, the statue is shattered by the dark gods Themis, Dis, and Ananke in order to fulfill the will of Zeus.

Pallas: a title of Athena.

Pandemian: of Pandemos, a surname of Aphrodite, originally alluding to her function as civic and social goddess, but later as goddess of physical love.

Paphia: an epithet of Aphrodite; she had a sanctuary at Paphos.

Paphlagon (*Paphlagonia*): a territory of northern Asia Minor, which included the mountainous coastal region between Bithynia and the Pontus.

Paphos: a city a short distance inland from the west coast of Cyprus; the site of a famous temple of Aphrodite.

Paris: a son of Priam and Hecuba. He is also known by the name "Alexander". Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite were brought to Paris by Hermes to judge which was the most beautiful. Bribe by a promise that he would have Helen, he chose Aphrodite. On her advice, he built ships and carried Helen off, thereby touching off the Trojan War.

Pelagians: a tribe mentioned in Homer as Trojan allies from "Laris" (apparently Thrace). In Greece, Achilles' domain included "Pelagian Argos". They seem to have been a north Aegean people uprooted by migrations. The Greeks came to use the name for all "aboriginal" Aegean populations.

Peleid: a title of Achilles (son of Peleus).

Peleus: son of Aeacus and therefore an Aeginetan. He went to Phthia for purification by Eurytian of a crime. He subsequently married Eurytian's daughter Antigone. Eventually he married Thetis also and sired Achilles.

Pelides: an epithet of Achilles (son of Peleus).

Peloponnesus: peninsula forming the southern part of the mainland of Greece.

Pelops: son of Tantalus. In childhood he was killed and cooked by his father, who served his flesh to the gods to see if they could tell it was not that of a beast. Demeter inadvertently ate part of his shoulder. The gods brought him to life and replaced his lost part by ivory. His father was punished with everlasting torture. Pelops, favored of Poseidon, had many adventures, eventually marrying Hippo-

dameia, for whose hand he had to perform many labors. However, he betrayed a friend, who cursed him while dying. One of his sons was Atreus (*q.v.*). The curse continued to work its effects on the family.

Peneus: river in Thessaly. Larissa is situated on its banks.

Penthesilea: queen of the Amazons; daughter of Ares. She was purified by Priam of her blood-guilt in accidentally killing her own comrade Hippolyte, and so was willing to help him in the Trojan War. The Amazons, female warriors, are always situated on the borders of an unknown world.

Pergama (Pergamum): a city of Mysia in the fertile Caicus valley, about 15 miles from the sea. Here, it refers to Troy.

Pharatus: one of Penthesilea's captains.

Pherae: a city of Thessaly, on the southern verge of the plain of Pelasgiotis.

Philoctetes: leader of the seven ships from Methone and other towns of that region. He was left behind in Lemnos suffering from a snakebite. However, his presence was a necessary condition for the taking of Troy, so he was sent for. His wound was supposed to have reeked.

Phoebus: Apollo, in his aspect of sun-god and dispenser of light. He took on many aspects of the older sun-god Helios (Homer calls him "Hyperion"), but never the chariot.

Phrygia: a country comprising part of the central plateau and western flank of Asia Minor.

Phryx: a demigod and forebear of the Trojans.

Phthia (Phthiotis): a district of Thessaly. It was the realm of Achilles and included Achaea and Phthiotis.

Phthian: an epithet of Achilles.

Pindus: brother of Zethus.

Pineus: river in the Peloponnesus, emptying into the Ionian Sea.

Polites: son of Priam and Hecuba. He was a swift runner and so used as a scout.

Polydamas: a son of Panthous noted for his sage advice. Here, however, he seems to be a son of Antenor (see *Eurus*).

Polyxena: a daughter of Priam and Hecuba.

Pontic: of Pontus (*q.v.*).

Pontus: a region of north Asia Minor. Pontic waters:: Pontus Euxinus:: Euxine Sea.

Poseidon: Greek god of earthquakes and of water, secondarily of the sea. One of the three sons of Kronos, Lord of Horses. With Apollo, he built the walls of Troy for Laomedon, was cheated of his pay, and sent a sea monster to ravage the land.

Priam: son of Laomedon and king of Troy.

Priamid: an epithet of Priam and of his sons.

Prothoenor: a hero king of a contingent of northern Greeks; a prince of Thebes.

Prothous: a Greek warrior.

Pryas: a Thessalian, killed by Pharatus.

Pylians: people of Pylos (*q.v.*).

Pylos: name of three places in the Peloponnesus. Messenian Pylos, referred to here, lay at the north end of Navarino Bay. It was ruled by Nestor.

Pyrrius: an alternative name for Neoptolemus (which means "young warrior"). The Molossian kings claimed descent from him; he was the son of Achilles.

Pythia: the medium and oracular prophetess of Apollo at Delphi. Crowned with laurels, she was seated on a tripod and placed over a chasm whence arose a peculiar vapor. As she inhaled the intoxicating fumes, she was thrown into convulsive ravings, which were thought to be an evidence of divine inspiration and were interpreted by priests and conveyed as intelligible, but usually ambiguous, messages to those who came to consult the oracle.

Pythoness: Pythia. The name comes from Python, a dragon killed by Apollo.

Rhadamanthus (Rhadamanthys): son of Zeus and Europa. He was one of the judges of the dead and known for his justice.

Rhesus: a Thracian ally of Priam. He was killed by Odysseus and Diomedes.

Salamis: (1) an island in the Saronic Gulf, between the western coast of Attica and the eastern coast of the Megarid; (2) principal city of Cyprus.

Sambas: one of Penthesilea's captains.

Sarpedon: commander of the Lycian contingent of Priam's allies. He was a son of Zeus. Slain by Patroclus, his body was returned to Lycia for burial.

Saturnian kingdoms: possibly Etruria. The name of Saturn, a Roman god of agriculture, seems to find its nearest parallels in Etruria. He is often identified with Kronos. However, here it may refer either to the realm of Saturn (agriculture and therefore the "natural" life) or to the merry festival of Saturn, which later degenerated into orgiastic revelry.

Satyr: a spirit of wildlife in woods and hills, bestial in its desires and behavior, and having details of animal nature, either of a horse or of a goat.

Scamander: the modern Menderes, a river in northwest Turkey, rising in Mt. Ida and emptying into the Dardanelles.

Scyros: an island in the north central Aegean, east of Euboea.

Scythia: name given by the Greeks to the country between the Carpathians and the river Don. Its armies consisted of mounted archers well-versed in elusive "desert tactics".

Sebes: a Thessalian hero.

Sidon: a city on the coast of Phoenicia; it had close commercial relations with Athens.

Simois: a small river near ancient Troy; a tributary of the Scamander.

Somaranes: one of Penthesilea's captains.

Sparta: ancient city of the Greeks, capital of ancient Laconia and chief city of the Peloponnesus, on the right bank of the Eurotas.

Sthenelus: a chieftain "of the South", a cohort of Diomedes.

Strymon: Greek name for Struma, a river in southwest Bulgaria and Greece, which empties into the Aegean.

Sumalus: one of Penthesilea's captains.

Supaures: father of Valarus (a captain of Penthesilea).

Surabdas: one of Penthesilea's captains.

Surenas: one of Penthesilea's captains.

Talthybius: Agamemnon's herald. He was the eponym of a herald-clan at Sparta.

Tartarus: deep and sunless abyss, situated far below Hades. Sometimes it is synonymous with Hades. Poets after Homer describe it as a place in which the wicked are punished.

Taygetus: highest mountain range in the Peloponnesus.

Tenedos: the modern Bozcaada, a Turkish island in the northeast Aegean, 12 miles south of the Dardanelles; it was the station of the Greek fleet for its invasion of Troy.

Teucer: an ancestor of the Trojan kings.

Thebes: located on the south edge of the eastern plain of Boeotia, it was the chief Mycenaean city in central Greece.

Themis: akin to or identical with Gaea, an earth-goddess; mother of Prometheus; goddess of Justice or Righteousness. She was Zeus' second consort, "the fixed or firm one".

Thessaly: an area of ancient Greece, north of Boeotia, south of Macedonia, and bordering on the Aegean Sea.

Thrace: ancient region bordering on the Euxine (Black Sea), south of the Ister (Danube), on the Propontis (Sea of Marmara).

Thrasymachus: a Trojan warrior bidden by Deiphobus to waken Troy when Talthybius arrived. He is the son of Aretes.

Thule: northernmost part of the habitable world.

Thunderer: a title of Zeus.

Thyestean: from Thyestes; see *Atrous*.

Tigris: a river in southeastern Turkey, which unites with the Euphrates.

Tiryns: a town on a rocky hill in the Argive plain, a mile from the sea. It was the home of Diomedes.

Tyrnthian: an epithet of Diomedes (who lived in Tiryns).

Titan: one of the older Greek gods, who were before the Olympians; they were the children of Heaven and Earth. They include Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetos, Theia, Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Tethys, and Kronos.

Toiler: a title of Hephaestus.

Tritons: mermen; they are vague figures but one is supposed to have appeared in human form to the Argonauts and given them a clod of earth, a pledge of the future possession of the Cyrene (a port lying north of Great Syrtes, near modern Tunisia and Tripoli).

Troad, Troas: the territory surrounding ancient Troy.

Troezen: a town in southeastern ancient Argolis; it was the home of Theseus, who killed the Cretan Minotaur.

Troilus: a son of Priam; he has already been slain when *Ilion* opens.

Tros: an early Trojan prince; great-grandson of Teucer.

Troy, Troya: the city stood four miles from the east side of the Aegean entrance to the Dardanelles, and in the northeast corner of the triangular plateau between the rivers identified as the Scamander and the Simois.

Tryas: a Trojan prince descended from Teucer.

Tydeus: father of Diomedes and son of Oeneus.

Tydides: an epithet of Diomedes (son of Tydeus).

Tyndareos: husband of Leda and father of Helen, Clytemnestra, and the Dioscuri; king of Lacedaemon.

Tyndarid, Tyndaris: epithets of Helen (daughter of Tyndareos).

Tyre: a town in southern Lebanon on the Mediterranean; it was the capital of Phoenicia and a great commercial center.

Ucalegon: a Trojan senator.

Uranian: or Urania, a title of Aphrodite, particularly Oriental.

Valarus: one of Penthesilea's captains; a son of Supaures; killed by Echemus.

Xanthus: a river in ancient Lycia, southwest Asia Minor, flowing to the Mediterranean.

Zethus: a Hellene chieftain, son of Arithoa.

Zeus: "father" of gods and men. He was the god of weather, courtyard and household, protector of the king and his rights, protector of law and morals. The name signifies "sky".

(Concluded)

ERIC HUGHES

HOMER, HOMERIC POETRY AND THE *ILIAD*

(In our last issue appeared a fine passage from Mr. Jesse Roarke's hexametrical translation (so far unpublished in bookform) of the Iliad. On completing his work the author wrote an Introduction. We are serialising this Introduction for its excellent coverage of its subject. The Editor, writing to the author in an epistolary attempt at hexameters, summed up at the end what he thought to be the merit of this piece:

*Gladly I'll publish your discourse whose length goes winding through many
Pathways of thought with a vivid movement learned yet laughing.)*

CONCERNING Homer, we have no certain and definite knowledge at all. The legends about him are as poverty-stricken as he is said to have been himself, and we are not even sure that a man named "Homer" ever existed. If he did, the name may have been given to him because of his work, and may have the significance of "gatherer", "concorder", "arranger"; as does the Sanskrit "Vyasa", one of the appellations of the man to whose industry are ascribed the *Mahabharata* and other books. But the matter is not of great importance. Surely at least one great poet there was, in the obscure days of the Greek epic; and it is good to have a name to attach to two of our greatest poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. While it is not beyond all conjecture that the problem of their authorship may be settled at some time, the important thing is, and will be, the poetry itself.

It is epic poetry, and it was composed for recitation before an audience. We do not know of what sort the audience was, whether aristocratic or popular or both. In fact the time of Homer is one of the darkest of dark ages, in the sense that we know nothing at all about it. There is one thing, though, of which we may be tolerably certain: that a time in which such poetry was possible, was an age that was not altogether lost to light.

We do not know how the poems were composed, or whether the composer was literate or not: whether indeed the age had writing or not: whether the poems were written down at the time of composition, or somehow and sometime later on. But one thing is certain: they are in the style of oral, and not literary, poetry. And it seems evident that they are the culmination of a long and highly sophisticated tradition; one that, by the labors of many poets, had developed a great meter and a highly poetical style, far removed from anything ever spoken among men. It was a created language, an artificial language, with a mixture of dialects, and the poems recited in it were full of stock phrases, lines, and even lengthy passages. It worked on traditional material, and the mother of its Muse was indeed Mnemosyne, or Memory.

The style is noble, dignified, remote, admirably suited to dealing greatly with a great subject. It requires long training in the poet, and it disciplines him and holds him

to a certain minimum standard in the fitting or stitching together of his lines to tell a story; and it gives a supremely great poet a great opportunity, really to create, bolstered and fed by the whole tradition. This opportunity was obviously taken by at least one poet who was equal to it, and him we call Homer. He "arranged" with a power and probably on a scale not preceded, and his work was recognized to be superior; and was preserved in writing. This written version, whenever and however it was made, may well have been superior to any of Homer's own varied recitations before audiences hardly always at the very peak of attention: it may have been his last and most carefully considered word, as it were. In any case, it was not written down without reason. It was meant to be preserved, to establish a text.

How long something like what we know as Homer may have been recited before a text was established, we do not know. But it may have been for centuries. It used to be thought that such long poems could not be carried in the memory, and this was one of the main things that made scholars doubt the unity of Homer; but we know better now. A strong power of memory would have been necessary, but not a really prodigious power; and much more was required of the Gaelic Filid, also of the scholars and priests of India and China; and there were many people in classical Greece who had memorized the whole *Iliad*.

Whatever the tradition itself may have been, from which all but Homer has perished, it is certain that there is much that is dark and barbarous in what we know of the Greek background; and it is attractive to think of Homer as a gift of the gods, bringing light: a divine poet, working on a great mass of legendary, mythological and ritualistic material, most of it probably crude and savage: creating order from chaos, and dispersing darkness. Indeed he may have been the chief or one of the chief teachers of his age, and brought it all the illumination that it was capable of receiving: as much as was assimilable indeed by most of classical Greece, and even more; for Homer was the Bible of Greece and remained so, for all that some like Plato, Herakleitos and Xenophanes could say against him.

The Homeric poems are great enough, and we need not insist that they are the very greatest in the world. Trying indeed to establish who was the greatest of poets may be a harmless game, but it is also a tedious one; and some poets and poems are great in some ways, and others in others. Of course those whose learning in literature is confined to the Western tradition tend to take it for a fact beyond question that the Greek standards are the best, and Homer supreme, at least in epic. But we need not confine ourselves so strictly. One may gladly and readily admit that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are two of our greatest epics, and yet not care to maintain that nothing equals them. It seems to me that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (still being recited and sung in India today) are at least as good, monstrous though they may seem to those learned only in the classics of the West, and at home only with their methods and ideals and within their horizons; and surely both Greek and Indian classics and all other epic works have been left behind by the great *Savitri* of Sri Aurobindo.

But we are dealing here with Homer, and in what follows I propose to confine

myself mainly to the *Iliad*, which is the work here in hand. And now there is a Question that cannot be ignored: that is, does the *Iliad* really have artistic unity, and can it be considered to be substantially the work of one man, after all? As a preface to my remarks on this subject, I may say that, while the *Iliad* presents certain anomalies, and may be pronounced less perfect than many a lesser work of art, or of poetry, no finite thing is or can be completely and unqualifiedly perfect; and to seek, or expect, or claim to find, a complete and unassailable perfection in any literary work is a mark of an unphilosophical mind, and a mind that moves and is satisfied within unfortunately narrow limits. It is not for his "perfection" that Homer continues to be enjoyed and revered, but for his power as a poet, his story and his characterization, his splendor and fire.

But there are many who have not been able to be content with this; and it must be confessed that it is easy to be exasperated when one pays a minute attention to Homer's text. But it is also possible to be philosophical about it, and to take the large and long view. Bacon remarked that a little philosophy took a man away from religion, but a lot of philosophy brought him back again. Something analogous may happen to the careful student of Homer. After the first flush, in which he is carried away by the poetry, his critical intelligence begins to awaken, and he sees under its cold light the many things that may in some sense be considered faults in Homer, the many points that may be raised against his "unity" or his constructive ability. Then the harder he looks, the more fragmentary Homer appears, and the clumsier the ordering of his several parts, until it seems that the *Iliad* must certainly be the work of several hands or minds, fumblingly put together by some unripe bard, or perhaps some scholar, and then tampered with, or at least added to and perhaps subtracted from, over the years. This view is specious enough, and has a very tenacious character; and it is possible to stick in it perpetually, and never see the wood for the trees. But if he allows the poetry its full scope, and looks even more carefully still, the difficulties become small and finally fade out in the overpowering unity of the poem: and he may even agree with Aristotle, that it is impossible for a work of literary art to be better constructed than the *Iliad*. Then, if certain minor features return to bother him, he can discount them as tampering by a later and inferior hand, or dismiss the whole matter simply by accepting, with Horace, that Homer sometimes nods. With a mind at rest, he will be in a position really to enjoy his Homer.

Of course, there has been much scope for meddling with the text. Indeed, whenever it may have been written down, there seems to have been a long time when there was no universally accepted version. The Sons of Homer, a brotherhood of rhapsodes or bards who lived on "rocky Chios", may have preserved something considered canonical; and then again, they may have varied it as they pleased. It seems to have been from these Homeridai that Peisistratos got the text he established as standard for the Panathenaia, in the sixth century B.C.; but there were variations after that time, all over the Greek world; and it seems that the first text that was accepted by all, or virtually all, was that made by Aristarchos of Samothrace, the head of the Library at

Alexandria, c. 150 B.C.—that is, more than five hundred years from the latest date at which the poems (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*) can be considered to have been written down. It is this which was the basis of all subsequent texts, and those in use now probably vary but little from it. So—as in the case of *Hamlet*, and the rest of Shakespeare—we have a text that we must accept because it is the only one we have.

And we have no cogent reason for refusing to accept it as substantially the work of Homer, after all; and if we do this, we may make certain speculations as to how it came into being. Here experience has not shown that it is impossible to deny the presence of the master hand; but to do so at least is now going out of fashion. I think and trust that no one now believes that the *Iliad* was made by some editor piecing together existing lays, and more or less smoothing away the discrepancies; or that The People did the work, and the accumulated wisdom of the race suddenly flowered, as it were, without the intervention of one particular superior mind. And I hope that there is little lingering suspicion that a group of bards sat down together and decided communally to compose an epic: which idyllic scene reminds me of the excellent joke, "A camel is a horse designed by a committee." (Before any who can think that the *Iliad* is indeed a camel that was designed to be a horse, I will stand silent with awe.) But if a man, a supreme poet, composed a work which, we must remember, was intended for oral delivery; and if he took a long time to do it, and no doubt developed and changed his mind much in the interval; or if the work was largely a piecing together of separate poems of his own, written at different times, or if it incorporated such poems; then something like our *Iliad* may well have obtained; the present version being the original, after the vicissitudes of centuries having neither printing nor copyright nor apparently any strong feelings of personal proprietorship in poetry. Interpolations at least there undoubtedly were, at some time; some may have been made by Homer himself and sometimes when he was not at his highest power, others show unmistakably the inferior hand; but the greatness of the poem remains, and it is a large poem, not just a collection of small ones.

As for anomalies and perplexities, these are by no means absent from works known to be by one hand. As for differences of style, think of Shakespeare. And, as noted before, discrepancies are not so easily detected, when one is listening to an oral delivery and cannot check back. The celebrated objection to the Greek wall, for example, that it seems to appear and disappear as the poet pleases, would be of no importance to anyone listening to a rousing song or chant of battle: indeed it is not important anyway, and a poet is not bound to be constantly and minutely setting the scene for those with little or no imagination.

The *Iliad* takes us into a world in which small discrepancies do not matter even when we note them: that is, if we are able to appreciate poetry; and it seems to me to be people who are not keenly alive to poetry—poetry largely considered, however they may enjoy felicitous phrases—who are most given to finding fault with the *Iliad's* structure. But Homer was a poet, he was not a historian and not a man without imagination. What he does is *poetically* right, and that is what matters. In the *Iliad* we are

not in ordinary space and time.

Thus to maintain, for example, that the duel between Paris and Menelaos, and the identification of the Grecian leaders by Helen, should have come in the first year of the war and not in the tenth, is frivolous and pedantic, and the kind of thing that is not likely to occur to anyone who reads poetry because he enjoys poetry. Then again, to object against Zeus, that he did not turn the tide of the battle sooner, is a thing that would occur only to someone who held the unaccountable opinion that, because Zeus had given a promise, he was bound to carry it out immediately. It may be that the God was wiser and possessed of larger vision than some scholars are, and had good reason in the eye of Fate for proceeding as he proceeded. And the counting of the days of the action is another piece of misdirected effort. One may say that the *Iliad* occupies a period of forty-five days, or fifty-four days, or whatever they do say; but it gives the effect of a much longer period, and that is no doubt what was intended. With Homer one is both within an opulent, undetermined spread of time, and beyond time.

(To be continued)

JESSE ROARKE

A. B. PURANI

SOME IMPRESSIONS AND REMINISCENCES

RARE are the persons who fearlessly take a dip into the unfathomed sea of the future. They need no worldly equipment. Faith, courage and a missionary spirit are their only support. They are always ready to go against the current, they care not for all the whirlpools of the world. They know what they have come to achieve and without looking right or left they go straight towards their goal.

A.B. Purani, who passed away in December, 1965, was one such person. Those who met him could not miss the fire that was burning in this youth of seventy-one years. A call came from America. Some earnest seekers wanted to know something about the great message of hope that Sri Aurobindo has given to humanity in one of its darkest hours. Off went the messenger without caring for his health or his convenience. Whether in America or in England, in France or in Germany, wherever he went he was energy incarnate. He was ever ready to help those who would like to know something about his Master. In the morning he was addressing a gathering in some university, in the evening he was speaking in a church and in between he had to see a dozen intellectuals, and all of them were not sympathetic when they came although each went impressed. They still have a keen memory of that rare ring of sincerity in Purani's voice. This programme went on day after day to be broken only by the hours spent in the motor cars, trains or aeroplanes.

While on his tour he got a mild heart attack. But where was the time to think about it? After finishing his programme successfully he came back to Pondicherry and it appeared as if the serious thrombosis that had been kept at bay for such a long time became active. He had a massive attack. It was a wonder that he survived it. The doctor advised him to take complete rest. The extraordinary patient replied "Well, doctor, I do not want to linger in this body; if I am no longer useful I would prefer to quit it and come back in a new and better equipped body!" Perhaps it was for the first time that the heart specialist was hearing such words.

He lived on. Though he could not get back that same physical strength, his spirit was undaunted and his mind as active as ever. The stream of correspondence that he was carrying on bears testimony to this fact.

Purani's father was a teacher who was well known for discipline and sense of duty. His family had had the privilege of being a host to Swami Dayanand Saraswati. Purani had the good fortune of seeing Sri Aurobindo in 1907 just after the famous Surat Congress. Perhaps this was his initiation in the Path—though still unconscious. Sri Aurobindo's politics caught the imagination of this young man and he decided to work for the uplift of the country. Gujarat was submerged in commerce up to its neck. The

Purani brothers (his elder brother was a member of the Congress in the later days) decided to introduce physical education. This step was unheard of. Who could tolerate that the boys of well-to-do families should go running from one village to another just for the sake of exercise? How could parents look quietly on while their boys clad in a mere *langoti* would go for wrestling, lathi-play, etc.? The Purani brothers had no patrons to finance them, no institution to support them and the parents were set against them. They started a movement for the development of Gujarati youth. They spoke only of physical education but secretly the boys were getting ready for doing 'something' for India's independence. They used to have mock fights on the hills and in the forests. They were trained to bear any kind of hardship cheerfully. Purani had a charm about him. Wherever he went he was surrounded by young men. He would teach them all sorts of exercises. With children he would be a child, with youths he was young and with the elders he had the serenity of an old man. This way he could win over the opponents of his programme.

For Purani body-building went hand in hand with character-building and his aim was the regeneration of the country. When he came to Pondicherry to see Sri Aurobindo, the Master gave him an assurance about the bright future of India and asked him to take up the spiritual life. During his stay in the Ashram he was still in full contact with the physical culture movement in Gujarat. His letters written in this connection have been printed in several volumes. Purani was a prolific writer. He has translated most of the major works of Sri Aurobindo. His essays and other writings give him a high place in the literature of Gujarat.

During his life he gave his all to those who were connected with him. Even in death he did not forget them. Just before he breathed his last he passed his look over all those who were collected around him as if he was saying good-bye to each one. He closed his eyes in an extremely quiet and perfectly conscious manner. As the Vedas would say, all the elements of his being went to rejoin their sources. He left in an atmosphere of serious contemplation unmixed with any sense of bereavement. Torchbearer that he had been in his life, he himself became a torch at his death.

A FRIEND

TIRUVALLUVAR ON ADMINISTRATION

THE *Arthaśāstra* is the first well-written book of Sanskrit verse on the art of administration. It was composed most probably between the years 321 and 300 B.C. by Kautilya also called Chanakya, a minister of the mighty Chandragupta Maurya, whose administration received the admiration and praise of Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador sent by Seleukos to the Maurya court. Another great book much younger in age than the *Arthaśāstra*, written in the beginning of the Christian era, also deals at length, in two-line verses, with the tenets of good administration. It is a Tamil work of 1330 couplets, but it has a place in world-literature. Tiruvalluvar, who lived in Mylapore in Tamilnadu, wrote it. It is the celebrated *Tirukural*.

Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* and Tiruvalluvar's *Tirukural* deserve not only attention as books on ancient Indian polity, but also recognition as useful codes of administration, applicable at all times and in all climes. They are like the versified laws of Solon, the Greek law-giver, written in the year 597 B.C., earlier than the *Arthaśāstra*. Their approaches, to the subject of administration differed in their very fundamentals. The *Arthaśāstra*, for instance, sanctioned licensed liquor shops and centralised gambling dens, whereas the *Tirukural* castigated both as injurious to society. This was because Kautilya was a politician, while Tiruvalluvar was a sage.

The principles of administration (*Kollochal*), the code of conduct for ministers (*Amaichu*), the composition of the army (*Padai*), the role of the police (*Emam or Kappu*), the system of spies (*Ottru*) and the requisites of an ambassador (*Thoothu*), which Tiruvalluvar prescribed for an ideal administration are topics that can fill the pages of large volumes. I have, however, shrunk them into a few pages, touching only the fringe of the subject.

The words “*Mannan*”, “*Mannavan*”, “*Irai*”, “*Venthu*” and “*Kavalan*” occur repeatedly in *Tirukural*. because monarchy was the order of the day of Tiruvalluvar. Monarchy carries an hereditary right to rule. In a democracy, the rulers are chosen by the ruled, while in a dictatorship, the ruler chooses himself and demands obedience and obeisance from the ruled. Whether it is monarchy, dictatorship, the socialistic pattern of democracy or other brands of the same, whether moulded on the anvils of selflessness or selfishness, whether administered by red-tape or green-tape, by the I.C.S. or the I.A.S., whether run on Tottenham system or rotten-ham system, flat file or note file, the basic needs and demands of man remain the same. He only expects a fair administration, untrammelled by petty biases stemming from caste, creed, colour, sex, party or other regional considerations. So the principles of administration (*Kollochal*), which Tiruvalluvar adumbrated for a king can be profitably adopted in a democracy also and, wherever the words denoting the king occurs, they can be safely taken to suit the present context of democracy.

Tiruvalluvar defined an ideal ruler as one who understands the basic needs of his subjects. He wrote,

“குடி தமிழிக் கோலோச்ச மாநிலமன்ன
னடி தமிழி நிற்கு முலகு.”

Kudi Thazhyee Kollochum Maanila Mannan
Adi Thazhyee Nirkuum Ulagoo.

The quintessence of wisdom contained in this couplet can be translated thus:

The world stands soldered to the feet
Of the king who metes out what his people feel is meet.

This was the keynote of the success of Asoka and Akbar. Asoka's rule for a period stretching to nearly forty years over an extensive empire, which cast the burden of a highly centralised government on his shoulders, was guided by the one single aim of meting out what was meet for the religious, the civic and the domestic life of his subjects. Asoka made a great and earnest effort to fulfill the duties of his high office by striving to lessen the sufferings of mankind and increase human happiness by “all the good he could, in all the ways he could, to all the people he could”. Likewise, Akbar, who was also an Emperor (“*Maanila Mannan*”), ruled in such a way that his subjects soldered themselves affectionately to his feet as a single unit. His “*Kollochal*” or “*Kol-lochu*” was calculated to render the maximum benefit to his subjects, irrespective of their diverse religious proclivities. The Chola kings also pursued such a righteous path (*Needhi-Neri*). The name *Manu Nedhi Chozhun* for one of them bears adequate proof of this fact. He followed the code of Manu, a treatise in Sanskrit on righteous administration. Even during the epic period, Dharma was the cornerstone and hallmark of administration. It was given paramount importance and a permanent place in the rule of a country. Dharma is pictured in the *Rāmāyana* as standing behind Prince Rama and lamenting in disappointment when the Prince was led by fate to exile in a forest and, again on his return from exile, as standing in the van of the receptionists and welcoming him to don the crown and rule the realm. It is no wonder that the word *Dharma* finds a place in Chambers's *Twentieth Century Dictionary*. Jesus Christ, the contemporary of Tiruvalluvar, has, in his Sermon on the Mount, laid a stress on this golden truth, when He said,

“How blessed are those who hunger
And thirst to see how right prevails!
They shall be satisfied.”

The *Tirukural* has conveyed the idea that if the people of a country do not get dovetailed and fitted in with their king, knit by a bond of affection, reciprocating his overflowing “*Arul*”, all the prosperity of the kingdom would be futile. It has also laid down that it is the duty of the monarch to protect his people not only against

external aggression and internal deprivations, but also against his own misrule. It has suggested that the well-to-do, the agriculturists and the intellectuals should work in unison to achieve good results for the country. An ideal administrator visualised by Tiruvalluvar should be easy of access and unruffled in temperament. He should promote the country's wealth through agriculture, ensure freedom from disease and thereby usher in an era of happiness. Tiruvalluvar has cautioned the rulers against the influence exerted by the self-interested persons who cling around persons in authority to curry favour at the expense of the legitimate claimants.

It was held by Tiruvalluvar that an administration based on Dharmic concepts would bring in its trail manifold blessings to the King and prosperity to the country. History has adduced overwhelming evidence to show that a tyrant of a monarch always met with decline and fall. Ruin seized the ruthless kings and destruction waited on their banners. Abdication or exile ended their misrule. The survival of an administration in a democracy also depends on justice and fair play. It is doomed to crumble and fall, when it is rooted in injustice, corruption, nepotism and foul play.

Tiruvalluvar has a definition for a Minister also. He is described as a learned man aiding the administration to run on principles originating in *Aram* (virtue), keeping at the same time a cautious eye on the day-to-day demands of the changing times and changing society. An evil Minister with an ill-will against his very king was in the eye of Tiruvalluvar the most harmful and formidable enemy. He wrote,

பழு தெண் னுமந்திரியிற் பக்கத்துட் டெவ்வே
ரெழுபது கோடி யுறும்.

Pazhuthu Ennum Manthiriyil Pakkathul Thevoor
Ezhubathu Kodi Urum

Its English translation could be:

Evil-brooding Minister poised beside a king
Like seventy crores of foes destruction-threatening

The advisers of an administrator are not meant, according to Tiruvalluvar, to aid and abet him in his destructive schemes, but to guide and advise him on the right lines of administration in order to tide over the difficulties that may beset and upset the country's constructive plans.

Good relationship with his counterparts in the neighbouring regions is a vital requisite of an efficient administrator. This need was felt by Tiruvalluvar even two thousand years ago. He has therefore set apart a chapter on the qualities and qualifications of an Ambassador (*Thoothu*). It is laid down in the *Kural* that an Ambassador should possess a good personality (*Urivi*). He must be learned in the art of diplomacy, with a profundity of knowledge on all matters connected with the administration of

both the countries. He must be endowed with the gift of the gab and be pleasant in his manners and conversation. He must also receive training under an experienced Minister, be capable of tact and efficiency, adjustable to the ever-changing times and always on the alert for an opportunity to sponsor his country's cause, even at the risk of his life.

The Police (*Kappu* or *Emam*) is considered by Tiruvalluvar as one of the ornaments (*Ani*) of a country's administration. He suggests that an administrator should countercheck the information obtained by a C.I.D. Officer about happenings in his jurisdiction with that furnished by another. One of the Kurals goes one step forward to say that it would be advisable to set up three different sources to ferret out information on the same subject, so that the truth could be ascertained beyond doubt. Tiruvalluvar has compared the capital punishment meted out by an administrator to the removal of weeds by a peasant from his field in order to save his crop from perishing. At the same time, he utters a warning against punishments prompted by malice or anger being inflicted on any violator of the law. He is very particular that the nature of the punishment inflicted should be commensurate with the gravity or otherwise of the delinquency.

We thus find that Public Administration was a heritage of India. The grains of Indian Polity were sown even during the pastoral civilization of the Vedic age, when the elders of those nomadic groups acted as policemen and judges and brought the cattle-lifters and the roughs of the community to justice. As these nomads settled in small groups, they formed village panchayats to find solutions for their internal disputes. The movement of suspicious strangers received the attention of the village elders. Each head of the family was bound by a rural convention to inform the headman of the group of the visit of a guest to his house. Failure to comply with this was not only questioned in the village panchayat, but the host was also made to compensate the loss to the victim of any theft that had taken place on the date of visit of such a guest. The Rig and the Atharva Vedas speak about this. Even today a register called the "Strangers' Register" is maintained by the Village Headman in Tamilnad and such strangers as sooth-sayers, duck-rearers, sieve-weavers and itinerant ballad-singers are expected to be noted in this register with full descriptive particulars. The Britisher, during his rule in India, evinced great interest in the proper maintenance of this record, as it considerably aided the Police in keeping track of the movements of vagrants and obtaining clues to the detection of crimes.

The epic period also gives us a glimpse of a good administration in Ayodhya. Armed policemen called the "Dandayutha Dharas" and a network of intelligence system, as indicated by Valmiki in his *Rāmāyana*, were in existence and these enabled the King to run an efficient administration. We read that, while making arrangements for the reception of Rama returning from exile, Bharata gave instructions to his officers to post hundreds of policemen all along the road to keep away the crowds. This is similar to the present-day street-lining of policemen during the visits of V.I.P.'s.

This heritage of Indian Polity which had blossomed as a set of rules in some of the chapters of the *Tirukural* has served as a guide-line not only to many South Indian kings but also to many Administrators, Ministers, Collectors of Districts and other heads of departments in South India, who considered the *Tirukural* as the Bible of Administration. The writer has seen how this wonderful book imparted efficiency to many high-ranking officers and secured for them the appreciation of their superiors and carved for them a niche in the hearts of the public. I therefore venture to recommend that at least a series of lectures should be delivered for the benefit of the Administrators-in-the-making at the National Police Academy at Mount Abu and the National Academy of Administration at Mussourie, so that the Dharmic concept of administration adumbrated by Tiruvalluvar may get imbedded in the minds of our budding administrators, who are to be at the helm of affairs of this great country in the years to come.

GEORGE MOSES

“EVEN THIS IS DIVINE GRACE”

A SHORT STORY

HE alone can be called a minister who always has at his finger-tips the accounts of his king's wealth and properties, however wide-spread they may be, and who is all the time concerned about the well-being of the king, the welfare of the kingdom, and the happiness and prosperity of the subjects. King Parantapa enjoyed the service of such a minister. Brave and heroic, mighty and sagacious as the king was, his minister also was worthy of him. The minister had an unfaltering faith in God; his zeal for Him was extraordinary. In his heart of hearts he believed that behind all the fortunes and misfortunes of man there hides an auspicious purpose of the Creator. Always calm and wise, he was as revered by everyone as none other in the whole kingdom.

On just one point, however, the king and his minister differed. That there is an intention of God behind the fate and fortune of man, the king was unwilling to believe because then his manliness was hurt. That Providence is much more potent than personal effort, as his minister held, was to him a proposition which only cowards could accept. However, cautious and taciturn as the king was, he never argued with his minister on this issue. Nor did the discerning minister raise any debate concerning it. He knew for certain that this truth, effulgent like the sun, would, in the fullness of time, wipe away the darkness of egoism and disperse the clouds of disbelief and, at length, enlighten the royal mind.

Suppose the news came one day—in the court—that in a certain area a disastrous deluge had played havoc. The king would glance questioningly at the minister, who would then say softly but unhesitatingly that it was God's Grace. Of course, the minister performed scrupulously his duty by sending the necessary aid to the stricken area; and this was where the sovereign's doubts were heightened—was it really the All-Merciful's Grace?

Suppose one year the royal revenue amounted to a sum far greater than what had been expected, and, happily, the subjects were able to acquire plenty of wealth and grain, and business and commerce thrived. The minister would exclaim before the king, “Your Majesty, know these to be the Lord's Gifts of Grace.”

Then again suppose news came one day from the battle-field—the day had been lost, the enemies had pillaged a lot of military provisions, and the general had died at the front. Softly, as usual, the minister spoke, “O king, even all these are nothing else but Divine Grace. Certainly we shouldn't neglect our duty, we march forward.”

At another time when news arrived that new lands had been conquered, plenty of wealth and innumerable precious things had flowed into the king's treasury, the minister invariably said, “This is but God's Grace, Your Majesty.”

But Parantapa's scepticism would still cling to him—everything that is happen-

ing, is it happening by Divine Grace? Is there truly some auspicious purpose of the Creator behind it?

Years rolled on in this way. One autumn day the king fancied going hunting. He called his minister and told him his intention. The minister promptly said, "May it please your Majesty to know that this too is Divine Grace?" The monarch smiled incredulously.

With his troops and vassals, the self-confident ruler, grand and gay, set out on the hunting expedition. On the fringe of the kingdom spread a dense wood, a sanctuary for a variety of animals. It pleased His Majesty to hunt therein. Having ordered his troops to pitch the tents, he left all his men and, with only his minister to accompany him, entered the wood.

After what seemed a long while, the king discerned that it would darken soon. He thought, something had to be hunted before long, and this became an obsession. "Hunt I must"—thinking in this vein the king quickened his steps. The wood gradually grew more and more dense. Ancient trees, huge and small, abounded in the forest, as also did thorny plants. The king paid heed to nothing.

Try as he might, the minister could not hold pace with him. Still he did not give up, he walked as fast as he could.

The sovereign tried to catch sight of game while the minister tried to keep the sovereign in sight. The latter walked with long and fast strides—crying as he did so, "Where's an animal, where's a prey?"—without looking where he stepped.

While walking under a huge tree the king's right foot knocked violently against a sharp rock and he was overwhelmed with pain. A fleshy portion of the big toe was torn and hanging. Unable to remain standing the king sank to the ground. Holding up his foot to the minister he said in a sorrowful voice, "Look, what a terrible gash!" While tending the bleeding wound the minister dropped the remark, "O king, know that even this is Divine Grace."

But what the monarch had calmly listened to so long, without raising any objection, now at this moment he could not tolerate. Eyes flashing with rage, in a harsh tone he cried, "So even this is Divine Grace? Indeed! Then go, with the Grace of the Divine, there you go!"—whereupon, with his strong arms, he gave the minister such a push that he fell into a pit nearby. It could not be seen to what depth he had fallen.

The king's blood was still up. He felt no compunction even after cruelly hurling the minister into that pit. Distraught as he was, he walked on despite the terrible injury to his toe.

Gradually it darkened. Parantapa's temper too cooled down. He then wondered what to do. Returning to the camp was not possible; in the heat of excitement, he had come quite far searching for game, so he would not be able to make his way about. Seeing no other choice except passing the night atop a tree, he looked here and there for a fairly big one.

The darkness deepened. The wood was covered by a gloom which no gaze could

penetrate. It was a new moon day, the day considered by the tantriks as ideal for the ceremony of human sacrifice.

Coming under the tree that he had selected for his nocturnal refuge, Parantapa stood in a pensive mood. Suddenly he was attracted by a flickering light far away. With curiosity he fixed his eyes on it. When the light came nearer the king saw a group of men approaching him with a lantern. First he thought they were his own people searching for him. But when they came closer he understood—they were a band of thugs. They were about fifty.

The moment the thugs saw the king they shouted, "We have it, we've got a nice sacrifice." Then they firmly tied the hands and feet of the king who had no more strength left to defend himself. They carried him away.

They took him to a huge idol of the Goddess Kali in the deep forest. He remained there for a long time in that tied condition. After the worship in the dead of night, the tantrik priest ordered his men to untie and to wash the king. Washing being over, the priest noticed, while presanctifying the king, a mark of royalty in his face. Filled with glee, he exclaimed, "Oh, Mother Kali has done me a great favour! For in the ceremony of human sacrifice, a king is the best since he is the chief of men."

After dedicating the victim, the scimitar, and the sacrificial post to the deity, the tantrik ordered his disciples to take away the king for immolation at the altar of Kali. But while retying Parantapa's feet they found to their stark dismay that one of his toes had been injured.

That was enough for the tantrik. "Alas, for so small a defect to do away with such a rare offering!" he sighed. Then he shouted, "Let go this man," and turning to the king, "Go, my child, go away. You are free."

The monarch was taken aback. Slowly he dropped down on the ground. He was hopelessly bewildered. He had had his heart in his mouth; the last words of the minister resounded in his ears,—“O king, know even this to be Divine Grace.”

"Death is now unavoidable"—this was what the king had thought so long. He had not protested. Remembering the Divine Mother he had waited for the inevitable hour without any anxiety. Because he himself had been the cause of these mishaps, none else could be blamed.

Words cannot describe the condition that Parantapa experienced during the rest of the night. Benumbed, he lay motionless on the ground in a confounded state of mind. He was awakened to life by the light and the breeze at daybreak. Gathering himself up, he started walking again.

Like an insane person he ran about in the wood shouting, "My friend! Oh, where's my friend? Tell me, where's my friend?"

Morning gave way to afternoon; but the king went on shouting for the minister without any rest. "Oh my minister, where are you? Please answer!" he cried ceaselessly. At long last he heard a voice that said, "I am here. I am still here by Divine Grace." Tracing the sound the king reached down into the pit. With extreme care and with great affection he brought the minister out of the pit to the open air. In a tone

overflowing with sympathy and remorse the king enquired, "My precious friend, did you get hurt anywhere?"

"No, my sire. By the All-Merciful's Grace I am safe and sound!" assured the hoary-headed minister.

The king said, "Now I can understand your words, now after such a long time I can believe that it was by Divine Grace that I got hurt." Then he went on to relate the whole story, what befell him after he had pushed the minister into the pit. Moved with joy, the minister spoke, "My sire, it was by Divine Grace also that I was thrown into this pit. Had I been with you last night then I, no doubt, instead of you, would have had to offer my life at the sacrificial post. The Lord saved my life, insignificant though it be, by throwing me into the pit."

Then the king and the sage minister stood embracing each other for a long time like hearty friends.

And thus Divine Grace expelled the egoism of the king.

PROMODE KUMAR CHATTERJEE

(Translated by Gautam Banerjee from the original Bengali).

THE ART OF SNAKE-CATCHING IN INDIA

AN ASHRAM EYE-WITNESS'S ACCOUNT

I

SOME months ago the Ashram took over an old house with a large garden that had run wild. Thousands of wild-date plants had made the place an almost impenetrable jungle of thorns. The Ashram brought tractors with special implements to clear this growth. The operation lasted nearly two and a half months, killing in the process countless scorpions of a deep black colour, ranging between fifteen and twenty centimeters in length. The local people are of the opinion that one sting from a big member of the species would be enough to kill a man. The "operation-tractor" met very few snakes, perhaps because it was winter-time and they kept themselves hidden in their holes. But at about the end of January daily reports began coming in of the movements of snakes at night and in the early morning.

The Mother had directed that one portion of the garden should be made into a playground for children. The date for the opening of the playground was fixed at February 21, the Mother's birthday. Only a few days were left, but snakes were still in evidence. Particularly as youngsters away from their parents were at work here, our responsibility was great. We wanted to take no chances.

We heard that a band of snake-charmers had just come to town and had been busy catching snakes at several places. Without delay we visited these men. Their physiognomy tallied pretty closely with the description of their tribe by Sarat Chandra Chatterji in his book *Srikanta*. We engaged them for the very next day. Abhaysingh sent out the Land Rover early in the morning to fetch them, so that they might start work by 7.30 a.m.

Various accounts are current about capturing snakes. Some say that the entire procedure is magical: in fact, no snakes are caught, rather the spectators are hypnotised. Others say that the charmers let loose some tame snakes at likely spots the evening before: next day they play on their flutes and catch these snakes. Others again say that snakes are kept hidden in the clothes wrapped round the charmers' loins as well as in the sacks they carry on their shoulders and they are let loose at the opportune moment, then caught after a good deal of dramatic display: often one single snake may be cleverly let loose again and again and caught in different places. All these stories were in our minds and as a consequence we were on our guard against any deception.

In the Land Rover came four snake-men driven by our chauffeur Rangaswami. The men were asked to descend one by one and, as they did so, their clothes were keenly searched to see if they had kept some snakes hidden—none were found to carry

any. The basket was brought out later; it was made of cane wrapped in a four-cornered stitched heavy cloth. No, even the basket contained no reptiles.

We asked the two younger men to wait. With the two elder ones we went into the garden-house to look for possible snakes there. It should be mentioned here that Dhanapatibabu stays there even at night and it was he who had told us that every evening a cobra had been seen to come out from the back portion of the house. The guards saw it every evening, but since it never attempted to harm anyone it was not molested; the guards themselves gave it a wide berth. The courtyard at the back was a paved one, and a little beyond it was the usual place for dumping refuse. In the centre of the yard stood a huge mango-tree. Both the places are walled round, except for gates. The two snake-men were following me, playing on their flutes as they came. They were about four or five steps behind me. Suddenly one of them jumped forward and pushed me back and said: "Sir, there's one here." Then they went on playing their flutes, walking cautiously in circles. Near the entrance door of the refuse-dump one of the chaps suddenly stood still and asked me by signs to approach nearer. The door was still a yard away from the man. I came to him slowly and saw a greyish cobra, with its hood opened out. It was perfectly still, as if mesmerised by the music. With a bound the snake-man caught it by the tail and with a jerk drew it near, while with the other hand he caught its head. Immediately the man pressed on the sac under the fangs and got the venom out, but did not break the fangs. When asked why he spared the fangs, he said that the snakes caught by them were sold to the Haffkine Institute in Madras. The Institute accepts no snakes with the fangs missing. This cobra measured about six feet in length.

After the first catch the snake-men began to talk a lot, boasting of their powers. They also stressed that their work was strenuous and so they must be first fed. We sent all four out with our chauffeur for a good meal.

When they were back, a number of spectators gathered to see the fun. Now all four playing their flutes began to go northwards along the western edge of the tennis court. I, too, went along with one of them, watchful lest any tricks should be tried. This time three of them were successful: two caught a cobra each and the other fellow caught three vipers at once. The fourth saw one in the middle of the tennis court and ran towards it. I also ran with him but we were just too late and saw the snake disappear in a hole. The venom of the cobras caught was squeezed out before they were put in the basket; the vipers were put in as they were.

Now our boys wanted to see and inspect their clothes; at this the snake-men were beside themselves with annoyance and rage. One of them started shouting and said they would undertake no more catches; thus they remained for quite some time and began to talk among themselves in their own dialect. We wanted to understand their indignation. If it was true that they had been trying to hoodwink us and we had caught them at their tricks, then to save their faces they might start a row. But so far they had indulged in no trickery and none of their actions had aroused suspicion.

Three of them were brothers—Arjun, Raman and Lakshman—and the fourth one named Guruswami was a brother-in-law of Lakshman. I took Lakshman to one side and asked him the reason for their anger. It was he who seemed the most sober and quiet of them all. He could not properly explain their outburst. But what I learned from him was to the following effect. When the snake is somewhat bemused by the music, which is the reason for its issuing out of the hole, at that moment if there is a lot of movement around or too much talk the spell on the snake is broken and thus it manages to escape to its hole before there is an opportunity to catch it. Another thing became clear, which was rather the chap's personal standpoint. He was a bit diffident to expound it. I, too, tried to surmise the matter. When too many people gather round—he said—he is likely to lose his concentration and then he cannot bring out the appropriate tune. Moreover, even if the tune is right, he fails to catch the vibration emanating from the snake. Later on he spoke of this vibration. It is easy to understand Lakshman's words if it is realised that in any work of great concentration disturbances do not permit a perfect execution of it. Is it then a question of concentration? Is concentration vital to the playing of the flute?

Soon the unwanted crowd dispersed and there were only five of us left: Bala, Rangaswami, myself who had been present from the morning, and Rothin and Mahendrajī who had joined later. It seems that Rothin had no great belief in the powers of the snake-men. He held that these men would not be able to catch a fresh wild snake; however, he had come with an open mind to see what would happen.

Next we placed the baskets in charge of our Nepali guard. He was to remain all the time near them, where the snake-men would be depositing each snake caught. He should be on the alert to see that, once put in, none was taken out. The Nepali was not very comfortable with his job, being afraid that one of the reptiles might wriggle out and put him in danger. But he was not allowed to shirk it. Rangaswami stayed with the guard for a while and then went away. Thus we four were left behind—Bala, Mahendrajī, Rothin and I. The snake-men too were four in number. Each one of us stuck to our chosen man like a leech. If the chaps hastened we too increased the speed of our steps, or if they lingered we stepped slow with him. All the while we endeavoured to keep our eyes glued to them. The snake-men, too, returned to their normal merry state when the hubbub ceased with the dispersal of the crowd. Then we began walking from the southern side and proceeded along the western. The four snake-men were moving with a gait in rhythm with their flutes and as soon as they spotted an ant-hill a little way off, their music and dancing became more lively. They were not moving all jumbled together but maintaining a distance of 20 to 25 yards among them. We, too, were following them as shadows, enjoying the sweet lilt of the music, but not for long was our pleasure, for in a cluster the snakes began to crawl out at the flute's call. I was reminded of the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin—the difference was that, instead of children, out came reptiles and soon 104 of them were caught. There was the five-foot long milky cobra wearing a white collar; there was too a Chandrabora (cobra) seven feet in length, whose hissing was quite

frightening; anyone's approaching within 10 to 15 metres of it was enough to excite it to spiral up and lash at him. A single snake-man was not enough to catch this creature; two were needed, approaching it from opposite sides and smothering it with the pieces of gunnies they had on their shoulders. Thus was it captured. In our enthusiasm we had quite forgotten the passage of time and even that we had missed our meals. At about 4.30 p.m. we came back to the tennis court and then we were reminded that not even a drop of water had passed our lips all this time although the snake-men had been refreshed twice in the interval.

2

When we came to nearly the middle of the western boundary the snake-men left again very thirsty and hungry. So the chauffeur was again sent out to get the needful. While they were waiting, we got the opportunity at last to talk frankly with them. Rothin not only speaks Tamil well but also reads it. So he was made the interpreter. The eldest brother Arjun was asked: "How do you people know where the snake is? I have noticed that after playing the flute for a short while you affirm, 'There is one here.' Moreover, the notes you play upon your flutes are from three staps, on which you touch one after another in a monotonous repetition. Why so? Is there any particular significance in there being only three notes?"

The reply was translated by Rothin and I shall say here only what was intelligible to me. The eldest brother began to explain the art of snake-charming right from its ancient origin: Lord Krishna. He said that it was Krishna Himself who gave His flute to the ancient Master and Guru of all snake-charmers. The work of catching snakes began from that moment. Most snake-men catch snakes but do not kill them. Previously they used to catch snakes at a locality and later let them loose at some other less dangerous spot. Now they do not have to do that as they can sell them to those who prepare medicines from snake-venom. The flute is fashioned out of a particular variety of bitter gourd found in the Nilgiris. The snake-men all over the land use this same kind of flute as prescribed by the ancient Guru. There are two reeds in the flute so that two notes issue forth at once creating a special kind of vibration. Snakes have no ears but feel the vibration with their entire bodies. This vibration engenders a kind of joy in them. Arjun repeated several times the word 'Ananda' meaning joy. No sooner does a snake feel this joy than it comes out of its lair and, when out, realises immediately that the vibration did not come from another snake but from a flute played by a man, and it tries at once to escape to its own hole or any other. That is the opportune moment to catch it. When the head is already in the hole there is no danger in catching the tail, and when the snake is ultimately dragged out one can grasp the head as well.

When asked why there were *three* notes, he explained that one was for the male and another for the female of the species, while the third was used to pass from the note meant for the male to the one for the female and *vice versa*—a direct passing

from one to the other was taboo. We had our own ideas but did not broach them as that might give rise to unnecessary discussions. At the end he said that a snake feeling the vibration of the flute gave out a vibration through its body and this vibration reached the flute and the snake-man could feel it on his lips.

After listening to all these explanations a modicum of belief came to my mind, although not yet the full measure. One thing became clear to me: there might be some hidden mystery here, an unknown process which was not all fiction.

Now I shall relate how a pair of cobras were captured. The hour was nearly five in the evening and we had all gathered near the south-eastern main gate. Arrangements were a-foot to send the snake-men to their lodgings in the Land Rover.

Just near the main gate stands a big "Prosperity" tree (Nag Keshar), which, rocked by a big storm, had been leaning across the entrance path. Some roots were also exposed. The gate-keeper has often seen cobras here. So the second brother was asked to investigate. I was walking towards the main gate with the second brother following me playing his flute as he came. When he arrived near the tree he jumped forward and dragged me back indicating by signs that there was a snake to be found here. He kept playing his flute with that characteristic rhythmic lilt and went round and round. Soon he informed me that there were two snakes: one lying under the tree, the other approaching from the grove of coconut trees on the north side. The latter I did not see till it was pointed out by the snake-man—a long greyish one coming along in a leisurely manner. The chap was now leaning against the wall and beckoning me to come to him. When I came to him I saw a black cobra standing erect with hood spread out, the tail end of it wrapped round a root of the tree. As I moved away the snake-man caught the tail and, dragging the snake near, caught the head too. In the meanwhile we had forgotten about the grey reptile approaching from the coconut grove. Guruswami, however, had not forgotten and, as soon as the head of the snake was in the hole beside the main gate, with a jump he reached it and caught it.

The snakes were deposited in the basket. And, as we were closing down for the day, there arrived on the scene Shri Suryamurthy, the Chief Magistrate. The snake-men brought out the milk-coloured cobra to show it to him. The moment the cobra was out of the basket, it raised itself in fury to a height of nearly three feet with hood outspread, ready to snap at anything moving nearby. After playing with it for a while the second brother taught us how to bring under control a furious and powerful snake. He pulled out a portion of a root from his bag and held it above the head of the cobra; immediately the agitation subsided and within a couple of minutes the head sank down on the ground. The snake-man then easily lifted it up and replaced it in the basket.

Shri Suryamurthy said that he had seen the same kind of tree in the garden of a gentleman in Coimbatore. Such is the power of its root that not a single snake can be found in and around that garden.

We made arrangements to bring a sapling of the tree.

The day's doings came to an end, we took the snake-men to their lodging and gave a few tips to their wives and daughters.

3

This tale will not be complete unless I relate here what happened the next day. I had learnt to hum the tune that calls the male serpent out. Although mine was not a very able rendering, yet by trying repeatedly I could manage to imitate the tune. When I came to the garden next day at about 2 p.m. I could not resist the temptation of testing the effectivity of my newly acquired talent. I inspected carefully the holes through which eleven vipers had come out the previous day. There were twenty-eight holes; they looked empty. I brought my mouth close to the holes and essayed to hum the tune. Soon I saw some movements and quickly stopped. Was it the same magic that the four snake-men had shown yesterday? Then I fetched Dhanapatibabu and Shambhuda and made them inspect the holes; nothing was visible. Once again I hummed the tune and within 3 or 4 minutes a viper brought its head out of the hole. But, at this, we put an end to our probing and departed after a respectful salute to the snakes.

VIRBAHU

(Adaptation in English by Kalyan Choudhury from the original in Purodha)

NOTE: Photographs connected with this account will be found on the inside back-cover.

A WORD OF SCIENCE ON SNAKES

“Snakes are not only almost blind, but they are all but deaf into the bargain. Knowledge of their surroundings reaches them by way of their forked tongues which are sensitive to vibrations of which the human being is quite unaware.”

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

THE VISION AND THE REALISATION IN SRI AUROBINDO'S YOGA

(Continued from the July issue)

CHAPTER XII

METAPHYSICS OF LIFE AND DEATH

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

Savitri, Book X, Canto IV.

Who thinks he sees difference, from death to death he goes.

Katha Upanishad, II.1.10.

When every desire that finds lodging in the heart of man has been
loosened from its moorings, then this mortal puts on immortality.

Ibid., II. 3. 14.

Forms on earth do not last...because these forms are too rigid to grow
expressing the progress of the spirit. If they become plastic enough to do that
there is no reason why they should not last.

Sri Aurobindo, *On Yoga II*, Tome Two, p. 333.

WE have had occasion to mention before that, viewed through the eye of the spirit, life appears to be a "universal Force working so as to create, energise, maintain and modify, even to the extent of dissolving and reconstructing, substantial forms with mutual play and interchanged of an overtly or secretly conscious energy as its fundamental character."¹ But what is the basic nature of this Force whose other name is Life ? In order to unravel the mystery of life and death, we must first comprehend the sense and significance of this great Cosmic Becoming.

The self-creation, *ātma-kṛiti*, and a progressive unfoldment of a supremely transcendent and luminous Reality "with the multitudinous relativities of this world that we see and those other worlds that we do not see as means and material, condition and field",² is the secret meaning of the universe. This transcendent Reality that has thus

¹ *The Life Divine*, p. 174. ² *Ibid.*, p. 42

thrown itself into forms and is even secretly present behind the appearances of the universe, being indeed "the origin, the continent, the initial and the ultimate reality of all that is in the cosmos,"¹ is Sachchidananda, a triune principle of Existence Consciousness-Bliss—an infinite and absolute Existence, an infinite and absolute Consciousness, an infinite and absolute Bliss, all rolled into one. Consciousness has a double aspect—an aspect of absolute self-awareness, *chit*, and an aspect of absolute self-force, *śakti*,—by which being possesses itself whether in its static condition or in its dynamic movement. The creative action of Sachchidananda has its nodus in a fourth divine principle, *turiya dhāma*, that has been given by Sri Aurobindo the suggestive name of Real-Idea or Supermind, and in which is "a divine Knowledge one with self-existence and self-awareness and a substantial Will which is in perfect unison with that knowledge."²

Thus, "Consciousness that is Force is the nature of Being and this Conscious-Being manifested as a creative Knowledge-Will is the Real-Idea or Supermind."³ This Supermind that is the divine Gnosis has created and arranged the cosmic order, but arranged it indirectly through three other subordinate and limiting terms, Mind, Life and Matter, which form by some sort of refraction in this lower hemisphere of existence a triple aspect of the divine quaternary, and work, "so far as our universe is concerned, in subjection to the principle of Ignorance, to the superficial and apparent self-forgetfulness of the One in its play of division and multiplicity...Mind is a subordinate power of Supermind which takes its stand in the standpoint of division, actually forgetful here of the oneness behind though able to return to it by reillumination from the supramental; Life is similarly a subordinate power of the energy aspect of Sachchidananda, it is Force working out form and the play of conscious energy from the standpoint of division created by Mind; Matter is the form of substance of being which the existence of Sachchidananda assumes when it subjects itself to this phenomenal action of its own consciousness and force."⁴

Life is thus seen to be the putting forth of the Conscious-Force, *chit-śakti*, of Sachchidananda, which is in its own nature "infinite, absolute, untrammelled, inalienably possessed of its own unity and bliss."⁵ But the central circumstance of the cosmic process as it is constituted now, in the involution of the triune Reality in the apparent nescience of the material universe and in its slow evolution therefrom, is the dividing and darkening faculty of mind, itself obscured by ignorance. And since our Life is subservient to "the divided mortal Mind, parent of limitation and ignorance and the dualities",⁶ it becomes in its turn "darkened and divided and undergoes all that subjection to death, limitation, weakness, suffering, ignorant functioning of which the bound and limited creature-Mind is the parent and cause."⁷

This disabling perversion whose consequence for the individual being is a 'state of mortality', *mrityu*, has its source and origin in the self-ignorance of the individual

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183

³ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

soul, because of which it suffers a "limitation and self-division from the One who is all and in all and beyond all",¹ and has its idea of self fixed to "a single formation in Time and Space of body, life and mind,"² thus excluding from its view "all that it verily is with the exception of a mass of experiences flowing out from and in upon a particular centre and limited by the capacities of a particular mental, vital and bodily frame..."³

Thus, through this essentially separative action of the ego-centre in the mind, the soul in its self-ignorance considers itself as a separate self-existent individuality—although in reality it is never so—and "regards all cosmic action only as it presents itself to its own individual consciousness, knowledge, will, force, enjoyment and limited being instead of seeing itself as a conscious form of the One and embracing all consciousness, all knowledge, all will, all force, all enjoyment and all being as one with its own."⁴

However, consciousness and force being essentially one, we can expect to have some real power only over something with which we are one in our self-awareness. Hence, the separative ego, attributing to itself only a certain fragmented portion of the play of Consciousness-Force, becomes in the process the possessor only of "a certain limited capacity of force of consciousness which has to bear all the impact of what the soul does not regard as itself but as a rush of alien forces; against them it defends its separate formation of individuality from dissolution into Nature or mastery by Nature. It seeks to assert *in the individual form and by its means* its innate character of Ish or Lord and so to possess and enjoy its world."⁵ (Italics ours.)

But in the very nature of things this cannot happen, since by the very definition of the term, the ego possesses but a limited capacity. And the difficulty of the individual life arises from this original sin of the separative mind-ego. For the "universal life in us, obeying this direction of the soul imprisoned in mind, itself becomes imprisoned in an individual action. It exists and acts as a separate life with a limited insufficient capacity undergoing and not freely embracing the shock and pressure of all the cosmic life around it."⁶ But because of the inherent limitation of individual life cabined in the confines of a rigidly static material frame, the life-being in the poor individual existence cannot but succumb sooner or later to the inexorable nemesis of disintegration and death.

We must try to be more specific and enumerate the different situations that the limited individual life has to confront and that have for their cumulative effect the inevitable decay and dissolution of this life.

(To be continued)

JUGAL KISHORE MUKHERJI

^{1, 2, 3} Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, p. 101.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, p. 176.

⁶ *The Life Divine*, p. 176.

⁵ *Isha Upanishad*, p. 102.

LOVE AND DEATH

WE sign mortality in our marriage-beds.
Brief bliss alone cries out for the unborn child
To carry a little farther man's flickering heart;
That kiss of creation proves death's seal on our life.
Immortals need no mating: dawns to come
Laugh ever already in their sun-stream blood.
They strive to sow the future with no sparks
From a fast-failing fire of fearful flesh.
O soul, clasp not in love the body's doom.
Let love be a largeness never called to leap
Breathless for kindling from two death-bound halves—
Man that must perish, woman that must fall—
An impossible unfading hermaphrodite.

Lain under vast-hung mystery at night,
Make the heart's throb count, star by lonely star,
The myriad moments of one breakless peace—
Void whose infinity nowhere needs to run
To keep the whole cosmos a-glimmer within.
Moved by that huge hush as by one beloved
Whose secret will is a brightness in your pulse,
You shall be free of the grave's gape in each kiss
And of the future's fret in your small veins...
If all life's slaves to the hunger-that-is-death
Found this enraptured endless liberty,
The flesh, now strained to a breath beyond its own,
Would draw from deeps where the Perfect lives all dreams
A dense divinity no time-strokes cleave.

K. D. SETHNA

TWO POEMS

THE LOWER MIND

O SMOKE-HUED bird, imprisoned in your haven of storm and strife,
Nibbler of the gleaming fruit of murmuring dim desire,
Why tune eternally jarring notes of coiled doubts?
O artful imitator, grown ruddy in your rusty vanity,
Devourer of Light and all that is bright,
Why tarnish the crystal radiance from the Golden Fount?
O Lilliput, ever running along curves of shifting shadows,
Sulky lad, looming large in your erring gloom,
Why mar the cooling breeze that comes from the Vast Deep?
O captivator of the meek, sovereign in thy desert empire,
Great is the hero who escapes your gates unscathed.
O proud knight, supreme in your realm of chaos and conflict,
Great is the hero who has conquered your citadel unburnt.

THE MIRACLE

The Earth is parched up with thirst,
The four corners are lit ablaze with the fires of passion,
Darkness upon darkness grows,
The Being writhes in agony in the coils of the Serpent.
But lo the miracle!
It rains a golden flood,
The dark soul wears the garb of white infinity,
A divine birth is hushed into the crawling clod,
And the throbbing atom is transformed into the blossoming godhead.

KODANDA RAMA RAO

THE SECRET SELF IN THE YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the October issue)

CHAPTER TWO

RIGHT-ACTION

ORDINARILY, people think that *right-action* would mean *to act in the right way*. And, no doubt, that would be the correct interpretation to put on the term on the ordinary level of consciousness. But for one entering the Path of Sadhana, there is a more significant interpretation, a more demanding construction which we have to put upon the term *right action*, and that is—for *whom* and for *what purpose* do we act? Is it for ourself, for someone we love or someone we fear? Is it for gain, for profit or to please? Is it for the nation, the earth, or humanity? In sadhana, none of these would be right unless it was *first for the Divine*. Right-Action is that which leads one to a higher state of consciousness, leading one to an ultimate union with the Divine. Any action which tends to aid progress towards that end can legitimately be called "*right*"; any quality contributing towards such a movement can be called "*good*," any movement which furthers the evolution of the being can be called "*progressive*."

That is the first consideration; the second would be to understand the meaning of the term "right-action" in regard to one's *svadharma* and *svabhāva*.

Right-action in relation to *self-law*—one's own law of action: according to the dynamic control or the inner governance of the Spirit or the Divine within one. To act according to the true purpose of one's existence and in consonance with the true purpose for which one was born into this particular life.

Right-action in relation to *self-being*—one's own true lines of heredity and nature.

While man lives in ignorance it is necessary to have laws: a law of love, a law of justice, a law of truth. These laws have to be imposed on us so long as there is in our being an opposition to oneness with others, the imperfection and conflict of our nature, the force of separateness and division. Sri Aurobindo tells us:¹

"To grow into this nature of our true being, a nature of spiritual truth and oneness, is the liberation attained by an evolution of the spiritual being: the gnostic evolution gives us the complete dynamism of that return to ourselves.... All becomes a self-flow of spiritual self-nature, Swadharma or Swabhava."

As Krishna enjoined upon Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra:²

¹ *The Life Divine*, Chapter XXVII, "The Gnostic Being", p. 885 (American Ed.).

² *Bhagavadgita*, Lesson the Third, sloka 30.

"Casting off all thy works upon me with thy mind on the One Over-Self—Adhyātmā—be thou without craving and without thought of a 'mine', and put away thy fever, and fight."

In other words he, Arjuna, the warrior, the *Kshattriya*, was to act in conformity with his true nature and the law of his own being—a warrior-king with the Divine as his charioteer. Is this not the lesson of the Gita—that it is the Divine who guides the ultimate destiny of our being and does so victoriously if we understand this and cooperate by surrendering to His Will which is the law of *right-action* and the true law of our own being? Right-action is not of our petty virtues and moralities, but in the larger luminous movement of a divine living, for it is by his actions in a world of action that man attains to his true status; man cannot deny the world nor can he cease to take part in the action of the world since he must breathe and eat and occupy a place.

"There is a birth and growth of the self. According to his actions the embodied being assumes forms successively in many places; many forms gross and subtle he assumes by force of his own qualities of nature."

Swetaswatara Upanishad, V.II. 12

To reach right-action some have to pass from the state of consciousness which is the ordinary action of impulse into a contemplative state of non-action; but if they would follow the law of progress and evolution they too must, eventually, put into action the ideal and the knowledge of introspection. Love and devotion can only be utterly expressed and thereby fulfilled by action and knowledge.

The ideal, unexpressed in action, remains merely a chimera, a subjective formula. Wisdom, not acted upon, becomes as still-born as a hardboiled egg, it will never manifest life.

An ideal has to be lived if it is to fulfil itself, and to fulfil ourselves is the ever-constant pressure of the soul.

That is right-action which ever points the way to a wider and higher fulfilment of our being, towards the perfection of unity, a unity in which the individual finds himself one with God, the universe and all men.

Right-action depends upon right-attitude, which is made up of right-thinking and right-feeling. We *can* choose the thoughts we want, accept the thoughts beneficial to our purpose and reject those which would be detrimental to the work we propose. By virtue of our will-power, we *do* have a say in the choice of our feelings, we *can* accept and allow those feelings which would help and enthuse our purpose and refuse those which would weaken our resolve or lead us away from the fulfilment of our ideal. And if our attitude is further strengthened by an exclusive dedication, a devotion to the work for the sake of its perfection with no thought for self, no ulterior motive, we enter into a 'Joy' of right-action which liberates us from the insecurity and anxiety of the world, a joy that surpasses all acquisitive pleasure; a joy of action that only wants to give, for the delight of giving and of ultimate fulfilment.

So right-action is all that which takes us out of bondage into freedom, out of grief and pain into bliss, out of confusion into orderliness, out of weakness into strength, out of darkness into light, out of imperfection into perfection, out of self-division into unity, out of falsehood into truth.

There is also a more prosaic manner of understanding this ideal, which, prosaic in the beginning, yet ultimately carries us beyond the ordinary status into a sublime one.

To start at the ordinary, we can take the experience of any good mechanic who has a love for his job and a due respect for fine workmanship. He will tell you that all machines have their moods, good and bad, a highest point of running perfection and a lowest point of laboured function. We need not enquire into the molecular structure of the machine or its probable fluctuations according to time and temperature or thermal reaction to extraneous conditions, but we have heard of those instances when the love and sympathetic concern of a good mechanic has a definite influence on the machine whereas an unsympathetic hand will more than likely have the opposite effect.

This manner and attitude towards a supposedly inanimate object has an even greater significant reaction on animate things and persons, and especially on one's own person. Our attitude towards the workings and functions of our own bodily actions and behaviour in relation to our mental and emotional states is a step in self-analysis which we all must take if we wish to climb out of the state of animal ignorance in which we were born.

The body prays through dedicated action; through work done and offered to the Divine. If an action is done with an awareness of the joy of action, a striving for perfection in the act of offering, a joy of execution and a delight in giving something created or accomplished by you, which takes no cognisance of the size or importance of the work or the action, but is conscious of a spontaneous joy of offering the best one can produce—then such right-action truly is a prayer.

In doing the gymnastic marching in the playground, I have had the experience of first trying to formulate each movement into a sequence of purification and offering; taking each breath as if it were the breath of God entering me to purify the being—expelling the breath with energy as if breathing out all the accumulated impurities of the day. The rhythm of breathing became a delight, each step became a great joy which I wanted to shout out aloud to all. I felt ten times stronger than I really was, as if I could quite easily have jumped clean over a twelve-foot wall without effort and all the time I had the feeling that each step, each breath I took was holy and sacred, echoing throughout my being a constant prayer for purification and perfection and with this all a great joy which was offered up on high to the Divine.

There can never be any doubt about whether a thing is right-action or not once one has had such an experience because something (most probably the psychic) wants always to return to the experience and is ever somewhat sad if it does not.

The ordinary movements of our daily life are much more difficult to assess because the action is, first of all, not considered as very important and therefore the feeling and the remembrance is less, the feeling of consecration, of dedication, the

remembrance of being an instrument in the sacred hands of the Divine; then secondly such ordinary actions are usually a very mixed function which might at first have the spontaneity of the psychic, utilized by the mind for some ulterior motive, taken advantage of by the vital for its own satisfaction, agreed to by the physical because it may conform to a greater ease or comfort—all of which can make up the sum total of our usual ordinary daily actions and reactions, to which the average man hardly gives a moment's thought.

Right-action, like most of all the other of the twelve Principles we aspire to, has also this difficulty to contend with: mixture. Man is a complex being or, indeed, he is many beings which quite often do not agree.

To know these aspects of our nature, to know the many people we are within, is the first important step towards self-mastery and self-discipline.

It is almost impossible to act rightly if we do not know from where we act and to what purpose.

(To be continued)

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

LOPAMUDRA'S HUNT FOR THE SECRET TREASURE

HEAVY WATER AND SOLAR-FIRE: FISSION AND FUSION

A TECHNO-SPIRITUAL TREATISE

"That splendour of Thee, O Fire, which is in heaven and in the earth and in the plants and in the waters and by which Thou hast spread out the wide mid-air, is a vivid Ocean of light which sees with a divine seeing."

Rig Veda (English rendering by Sri Aurobindo)

"...O splendid Agni, Thou who art so living in me, I call Thee, I invoke Thee that Thou mayst be still more living, that thy brazier may become more immense, Thy flames more high and powerful, and that my whole being may no longer be aught else than an ardent conflagration, a purifying pyre. ..."

Prayers and Meditations of the Mother

WITH the advancement of nuclear science and space-technology many apparently queer terms are coming into prominence. 'Heavy water' is one such term which is gaining tremendous momentum with the development of atomic energy.

Now, what is heavy water and what is solar fire? To understand them, we must first understand something about the intra-atomic structure. It is by now practically common knowledge that the inside of an atom more or less resembles a miniature solar system (microcosm) with some negatively-charged and extremely light particles, called electrons, moving in different orbits (or shells or layers as they are called) around a nucleus mainly consisting of comparatively heavier particles, called protons (positively-charged) and neutrons (electrically neutral), cemented together by some other particles called mesons. These are chiefly the fundamental particles; there are of course other particles like positrons (positive-equivalent of mobile or planetary electrons), etc., but they are more or less unstable and hence play a somewhat secondary role. All these are called subatomic particles. They constitute the atoms of the elements (a little over one hundred in number discovered up-to-date) of matter. Hydrogen is the simplest element having only one proton in the nucleus and one planetary electron. The chemical symbol of hydrogen is H_2 . One H_2 -atom minus the one planetary electron is the H_2 -ion. Two atoms of H_2 and one atom of oxygen (O) form ordinary drinking water (H_2O). There are mainly three types of H_2 -atoms (called isotopes), namely, (1) light (2) heavy (or deuterium oxide) and (3) tritium (combination of two heavy H_2 -atoms.)

Heavy water is a compound of 2 atoms of heavy hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. It is found in ordinary drinking water in an extremely meagre quantity (only

about 0.015 percent or 1 part in every 6,500). It is heavier than ordinary water (1.1 kg. per litre in place of 1.0 kg. per litre as in ordinary water). It has a comparatively greater density (mass per unit volume); its boiling (steam) and freezing (ice) points are also different.

In India, a plant in Nangal is producing heavy water which is being imported to countries like Belgium, and which is also being extensively used as a moderator in atomic reactors in Trombay, Rajasthan, etc. It is rather costly—about Rs. 300/-per kg. Moderation means slowing down. Atomic reactors which are now used in India for peaceful purposes (viz.,—generation of electricity, etc.) essentially require two things, namely, (1) fuel and (2) moderator. Uranium is used as a fuel. In the atomic reactor fissionable materials like uranium atoms are split up (fission) when neutrons inside the bombarded and split-up nucleus fly at a very high speed in the space inside the reactor. These flying neutrons cannot naturally come in collisional contacts with the neighbouring atoms in order to be able to split them up as well. In other words, the neutron-bombardment is somewhat ineffective; something must be done to make such bombardment effective and this is done by slowing down the movement of the neutrons—this is called moderation and heavy water is used as a moderator.

There are also other uses of heavy water. Heavy hydrogen atoms have the same behaviour-pattern as that of the lighter ones and in chemical, bacteriological and biological processes follow the same path. These, being comparatively heavier, have a comparatively slower rate of movement and hence are used as tracers to trace the movement of the lighter ones whose movement cannot be easily traced.

Heavy water is also used in the process of fusion. Fusion involves forcible combination of two comparatively lighter atoms to form a heavier one. Two deuterium oxides (heavy hydrogen) are forcibly combined together or fused to form a still heavier tritium isotope as has been stated previously. This fusion gives rise to a very great release of energy called thermonuclear energy with a tremendous rise of temperature (hundreds of millions of degrees centigrade). This is known as controlled thermonuclear process practised for peaceful purposes, about which researches are going on in India and elsewhere. It is still in the experimental stage.

The colossal source of energy radiation and tremendous rise of temperature are the secret of thermonuclear fusion constantly occurring in the Sun which is the 'Symbol of the Divine in physical nature' (The Mother) and which is the sustainer of Life on our little planet,—The Sun-God, Surya-Savita with His Pure Being (Sat) coupled with His Consciousness-Force (Chit-Tapas) and the Divine Delight (Ananda) of Light: this mighty source of fire is called the solar fire, the key secret of which was known to the Vedic Seers some five thousand years ago. This may sound somewhat silly but nevertheless it is on record that long before anything of atomic fission and fusion was known, Sri Aurobindo, in one of his discussions with a foreign scientist, commented on these fires and their inevitable outcome on the material plane of cosmic existence. The gist of his remarks is more or less as follows:

In accordance with the Hindu Scriptures and the Vedic Seers there are mainly

three types of Fire (Agni)—(1) Jada Agni or Inert Fire (2) Vaidyuta Agni or Electric Fire and (3) Saura Agni or Solar Fire. Physical Sciences have discovered only the first two, they have yet to discover and know anything about the third one which, when discovered, may bring about many unforeseeable and radical changes in the domain of material Science.

Now the question obviously arises as to how it was possible for Sri Aurobindo, who was no physicist or chemist, to know or even comprehend anything about these rather ultra-modern phenomena of fission and fusion when the scientists themselves the world over did not know anything about them? The answer is to be found in the Vedas. In his monumental works on the Vedas (*On the Veda, Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, etc.) Sri Aurobindo has shown that these things were known to the Vedic Seers and some of their wives as well. They did not think it probably necessary to go ahead with these material key secrets simply because they got the clue, and were in search, of a still greater Truth in the spiritual domain—the Secret of Transformation and Divinisation of the gross physical on an individual basis. (*Yenāhamnāmṛtasyām tenāhem Kim Kurjām?*—"What shall I do with that by which the Nectar of Immortality is not obtained?"—this is the famous utterance of the Truth-enamoured wife of a great Vedic Seer, Yñāgyavalka).

It is interesting to note what Lopamudra states in this connection. Lopamudra happened to be the wife of Seer Agasthya, the first Uttara-Yogi (the Yogi from the North) of legendary fame who went to the south and is said to have established his Ashram called Vedapuri at the place where, many thousand years after, the Ashram of the second Uttara-Yogi, Sri Aurobindo, has its headquarters (where the Mother resides and where the Maha-Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo is located under the 'Service'-tree). Is it a mere coincidence or else a myth? How am I to know? But, to Sri Aurobindo at least, such apparently 'fortuitous coincidences' are 'the seal and sanction of the Divine' for the Work which he, and before him, the Vedic forefathers and other Avatars came to do. (*Vide*: Remarks of Sri Aurobindo about August 15 being his birth-date and also the date of Indian Independence. It is also the date on which, as an unconscious counter-move to human evolution, Hitler, the modern representative of Asuras like Sumbha, Nisumbha, Mahisasura, etc., had planned to proclaim the birth of greater Germania from the top of Buckingham Palace in England.)

Lopamudra says that she has been digging and digging many an autumn day and night and the days of her life are fast disappearing but, alas, the goal is still far off. What has she been speaking about? What is this business of 'digging and digging'? What is, after all, *her* goal?

Sri Aurobindo explains—from the standpoint of his own personal realisations and experiences gained long before he had even a cursory acquaintance with the Sanskrit language, not to speak of the Vedas—that she had been digging and digging in the heart of the Inconscient rock-bottom of matter to be able to go to the root of it—the imbedded and involved Superconscience (the other side of the same divine coin) in

the very heart of seemingly inert and gross Matter. It was indeed a veritable race between the two very formidable Powers—her own conscious action of ‘digging’ and the natural forces of death and disintegration. Probably some diabolical (hostile) Power intervened and there was an abrupt stoppage (if not actual failure) of such ‘excavational’ activities. ‘Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed’, but then ‘the divine afflatus, spent, withdrew,/Unwanted, fading from the mortal’s range’ because, ‘only a little the God-Light can stay’ (*Savitri*).

We find a corroboration of Lopamudra’s statement in the following lines of Sri Aurobindo wherein the words ‘digging’ and ‘fire’ actually appear as if in exact correspondence with Lopamudra’s digging operation and solar fire.

‘I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river’s song,
A home for the deathless fire.’
(*A God’s Labour*, Stanza 6)

A more or less identical race is going on today both in the material and the spiritual domains. In the material domain, a race between the two ‘super-Powers’ as to who, hurtling through outer spaces at incredible speeds, can first reach not only the Moon but Mars and Venus and other planets. In the spiritual domain, a race between the two formidable Powers of Integration and Disintegration as to who shall win—perhaps in the semi-divinised body of the Mother herself.

Fixed habits have the tendency to repeat the same vibrations *ad infinitum* like a gramophone record. Once the negative and disintegrative material vibrations of what Sri Aurobindo termed the Cellular Mind (mind of the bodily cells which are the very basic ingredients or bricks of the human super-structure) are eliminated and replaced by a set of positive and integrative Supramental Vibrations (the ‘Gold Dust’, as the Mother terms it!), the cells will go on repeating these as well *ad infinitum* and thereby a stable divinisation of the gross physical, the secret key of material transformation, is brought about.

Who shall win—Lopamudra’s Secret-Treasure-Hunt (Gupta-Dhon Sikar) or the Forces of Doom and Destruction, Savitri or the Lord of Death, Yama—‘to be or not to be’,—that is the BIG QUESTION, now and always, before and after.

‘...A day may come when She must stand unhelped,
On a dangerous brink of the world’s doom and hers;
Carrying the world’s future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge. ...’

(*Savitri*)

MALAY KUMAR SINHA

THE LAST DARSHAN—AND AFTER

SOME PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

THE memory of the last Darshan of the Master on November 24, 1950, will ever remain imprinted in the shrine of my heart. I felt his calm eyes resting full on me when four or five people were ahead in the queue. We were asked not to halt before him but file past as quickly as possible. When I came up to him I could not resist halting and gazing at him with all my being. I could not move till the "divine sweetness" that flowed from those eyes had quite filled me. When the person on duty requested me to make a move, I obeyed but my hungry eyes remained fastened on the Master and his eyes too seemed to remain turned in my direction till I had to make a curve for an exit. How little then did I know that the strong and radiant vibrations received at that momentous moment would sustain me all my life, especially after December 5, the same year, when Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body.

It was most difficult to recover from the shock of that event. K.D. Sethna's article, *The Passing of Sri Aurobindo: Its Inner Significance and Consequence*, was the first to unravel in explanatory detail something of the mystery of his withdrawal. But the heart was still disconsolate.

In the midst of my concentrated work on an article in my mother tongue about his "Sacrifice" I had the vision of his glorious figure as on Darshan days. And with this vision dissolved all my sorrow and my article proved a voice to my pent-up depths. After this, the meditation came pouring in and all thought of the Master's absence disappeared from the mind.

The most striking experiences were at the Samadhi. Standing before the Samadhi or on putting my head on the wall of the Samadhi, I felt a subtle current passing into my whole frame from the head down to the ankles. This kept me motionless like a statue for more than half an hour. Often concentration would follow by itself and all play of thought would stop. Later whenever I was unable to stop the train of thoughts I found this means to be the most effective. The mind would fall vacant without any effort and remain so as long as I could continue sitting in one position.

Once in the evening while I was at the Samadhi there was a heavy rain-storm. At the time I was fully withdrawn. My memory threw up the fact that saints and sages remained unmindful of rain and storm in jungles. Was that possible here also? Could one remain inwardly withdrawn on such occasions?

In order that the attention might not be distracted, an automatic repetition of the Mother's name followed within and I stuck to the Samadhi as, during the Darshan days before 1939, I used to keep embracing the Master's feet. It was a massive down-pour and I got fully drenched but the inner part was not in the least touched or disturbed. When more than half an hour had passed I felt some pain in the waist. As I

changed the pose I saw X looking at me. He said sympathetically, "You are suffering from rheumatism, don't you remember?" The moment my consciousness was drawn outward I began shivering from the cold. As long as I had remained within there had been not the least sense of cold or pain.

After the passing of Sri Aurobindo the oneness of the Mother with him became more and more concrete to my experience. Before the photo of the Mother I would go on praying to the Master and *vice versa*. So was the case at the Samadhi. Several times I had the vision of the Mother at the Samadhi, her face lit up with smiles. And this has kept recurring up to now. I may give one concrete instance. Just one day before the first "anniversary" of the Golden Day (February 29, 1956, when the Supramental Manifestation in the earth's subtle atmosphere is said to have taken place) I got an acute pain in the throat. Gradually the pain grew so severe that it seemed it would be impossible for me to attend the function. Wrapping a muffler round the throat I went to the Samadhi. While offering Pranam the enchanting figure of the Mother, enveloped in white-blue light, emerged before my eyes. And all pain was gone within a few minutes. There are many such instances.

It was in the later part of 1951 that I found I could station my consciousness on the crown of the head without much effort. There at the summit I sat like a king unmindful of anything, absolutely carefree.

During this period I saw the glorious figure of Lord Buddha four or five times, in a very luminous form in different poses. It came as a little surprise to me that even after two thousand years Buddha could be seen so vividly. One day I saw him very close to my eyes. Slowly his luminous figure drew nearer and then entered my body. For a few moments I found myself lost in him.

Once when I was passing through a crisis, at dead of night, while fully awake, in a vision, I saw a lance being hurled at me. I saw it coming towards me from a few yards off. And then it pierced my left eye. When another was hurled I saw Buddha, the compassionate, giving his protection with his right hand stretched out.

A seeker of truth wants to remain loyal to the one he has chosen as the ruler of his life, the Master of his destiny. Since coming here I have hardly worshipped any god of the popular religions. Perhaps with the fervour of remaining loyal only to the Mother a cry rose to my lips, "If I am to be saved I may be saved by the Mother alone." Since then I have not seen Buddha again.

As a result of the lance piercing the left eye, I lost its sight from the very next morning. When the Mother came to know of it I recovered my vision.

Now about a new kind of experience. It began like this: I wrote a letter to the Mother and sent it through a relative. While awaiting his return, all of a sudden my consciousness began to rise higher and higher in the sky. The body lay inert. Thus passed the whole midday. In the evening while resting in an arm-chair I saw a shadowy figure grinding its teeth at a distance. At its sight the conquering spirit in me awakened. Covering my body with a number of the Mother's photos as a shield I told the figure in a challenging tone, "Do whatever you like, you can't do me any harm." I

requested a friend of mine to utter the name of the Mother to my ears. A little after, I saw a circle of light round my chair. From then onward I was fully withdrawn. When the Mother was informed in the Playground about my state she said, "Don't disturb him; he is fully conscious." At about 9 p.m. she sent some water through a sadhak, which looked lime-white to my inner eye and nectar-sweet as I drank it. Later I learnt it was pure water.

At the time of which we are speaking the Mother used to come for our Pranam four days a week. As the pressure was beyond my capacity to assimilate I sought the Mother's protection and went to the Pranam with a bunch of "Protection" flowers hidden in my pocket. For more than a minute she remained looking at my eyes, flooding me with her smile and divine touch. I still remember the graciousness she poured into me then. After my turn, I stood in the verandah with my eyes fixed on her and drinking the sweetness of her presence. At that supreme moment her body appeared to me a "living body of God". I had had no such experience before of her love and sweetness. Was it due to the momentary opening of the psychic being?

Several times I have seen the opening of a door in the mind and heart. Is this what is termed *Devadwar*, "God's Doorway"?

(2)

Let us now turn to some outer events that came to my notice.

After the passing of the Master a fear was expressed in different quarters about the future of the Ashram. Though the Mother had been the light of our life even when the Master had been there, everything had remained centred round his luminous and creative personality. For about a year we were almost cut off from the outside world. Remittances of offerings from outside came almost to a standstill. Very few new faces were seen even on Darshan days.

There were a few, only a few, who were led to think, "Now everything is over." One among them was Y. He openly declared he had been here only for Sri Aurobindo. And he left for good. A few others too like him wavered and disappeared. The rest drew closer to the Mother with their faith in her reinforced. There were so many for whom it was but natural, for the Master himself had taught us to receive him through the Mother. And for them the Mother became their All-in-all. So we were prepared for all eventualities.

Now let us see how things took a turn by the Mother's invisible influence and subtle working, resulting in the Ashram emerging as a world-embracing centre: "A Power worked, but none knew whence it came" (*Savitri*, Vol. I, p. 42).

Before 1950 we had to depend on the market for the supply of our staple food. The only garden in the possession of the Ashram was "Cazanove" from which the first year's yield was only nine bags. Since 1954 we have been self-sufficient.

When the Master left us I was told there was practically no stock of rice. Exactly on the day the Master's Samadhi was to take place a ship from Rangoon brought us a

consignment of rice weighing, according to Dyuman, 10 tons. He remarked that even while leaving us the Master gave us food, which meant we would never be in want of food and it proved so true.

It came to all of us as a pleasant surprise when the Mother herself distributed apples to each of us in the playground on the next August Darshan Day (1951), increased the monthly wages of the Ashram labour by four rupees per head per month and acquired houses, one after another, each costing more than a lakh of rupees.

A big house was hired for K and his family. I saw in a vision Sri Aurobindo walking in its courtyard. Within a few months it came into the Ashram's possession.

So far as I know, the first breakthrough from the ordinary world into Ashram life in this period was X's. I was very much attached to him. Not only for him but for the whole community to which he belonged I had a soft corner in my heart. When I first came, for a year and a half, there was no one with whom to speak in my mother tongue. I had a happy relation with many of that community in several places, and hence I felt very much for them. When would there be some awakening in them? Would they ever be the last in everything? This feeling was intensified by an episode.

A well-to-do person, well connected with the Gita Press, came to visit the Ashram. I was asked to take him to the Mother at the Pranam time. When I took him to the Pranam Hall he was so upset that he slipped away without even informing me. Perhaps he found the Mother in sharp contrast to his preconception.

Often a silent prayer arose from my heart, especially for X. He had a great aspiration to serve the cause of the Ashram but Himalayan obstacles came in his way, one after another. Whenever he wrote I approached the Mother to save him but no sooner had one crisis been over than he was overtaken by another and there was no end to it.

Yet I had the feeling that he would be a man of crores one day. At last the day of victory came in his life, and I felt so happy for the service he rendered to my Guru. It must be said to his credit that the more he earned, the more grew his humility, devotion and feeling of surrender. It seemed that it was his devotion to the Mother that flowed in his veins rather than his blood. My admiration for him grew more than before though we met very rarely.

DHRUVA

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Gleanings From The Upanishads: By *M.P. Pandit*. Pub: Dīpti Publications, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 2. Pages: 229. Price: Rs. 10/-

THE main charm of this book lies in the successful achievement of a useful though limited goal. It is not a long commentary or a philosophical treatise on the Upanishads. Here all their famous phrases are collected under relevant headings and these in turn are alphabetically arranged. Under each quotation the author supplies a small explanatory note in the light of Sri Aurobindo's general thought and philosophy. On many such phrases Sri Aurobindo has himself provided a clue or a fuller explanation in the course of his writings.

Ours is an age of the technician and the economist—an age in which material values have come very much to the fore and have largely possessed human thought and activity. For a layman to know Sanskrit is rare and then to find time and energy to extract beautiful and inspiring mantric utterances from a mass of Upanishadic verses, often tiresomely repetitive and didactic, is rarer. This volume does much for the common seeker, unequipped as he is to launch independently on such a study. A reader leafing through the book would have the same feeling as a neat and well-kept public park gives us average men today—namely, that of savouring pleasures previously reserved for the privileged patricians. The book may be allowed to rest in some oft-frequented place where one can pick it up in short moments of leisure or when one is saturated with things mundane and longs for a touch, a flash of the Beyond. Then one can read a few quotations at random and draw a fresh lease of energy to renew the daily rounds of life. It could also be a beautiful companion in hours of solitude when one is inclined to look within or look beyond these too solid walls of the senses.

The notes are inviting because they are short, direct and clear, and rewarding because they are illuminative. The quotation is often puzzlingly brief and the reader may find himself unable to get at the meaning. It is here that the note helps by acting as a paraphrase, explanation and elucidation. Thus while the intensity of the verse is maintained, the reader does not feel that he lacks the context.

In passing we may observe that the volume is quite useful as a reference book also. We are often aware of some upanishadic thought though not with its exact wording. In such a situation we have only to look for the few key-words of the idea and in a short while we can have the precise verse as well as the reference, the latter permitting the fulfilment of a keener and completer interest. For instance, we often come across the Purusha being described as “a thumb-sized entity lodged in the heart”, but if we want to have the very words of the verse we need only to look up under either P or T for “Purusha” or “Thumb” and have the quotation along with the reference.

There is also an inspiring and perceptive note on this mantra which I shall quote as a case in general. The author refers to the Purusha in question:

“It is likened to the thumb of a man to indicate how small it is compared to the rest of the being which it is intended to rule. It is to be cherished and nurtured into growth by movements conducive thereto, *viz*: cultivation of harmony, joy, purity, knowledge, devotion and adoration.”

~ PRASHANT KHANNA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SIXTEENTH SEMINAR

23RD FEBRUARY 1969

(Continued from the issue of September 1969)

I. THE GOD OF THE RELIGIONS AND THE ONE DIVINE

II. ASCETICISM AND TRUE AUSTERITY

THE passages from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, pertaining to the two subjects of the Seminar, which were read at the end, are reproduced below:

I

(1)

“The conception of the Divine as an external omnipotent Power who has ‘created’ the world and governs it like an absolute and arbitrary monarch—the Christain or Semitic conception—has never been mine; it contradicts too much my seeing and experience during thirty years of sadhana. It is against this conception that the atheistic objection is aimed,—for atheism in Europe has been a shallow and rather childish reaction against a shallow and childish exoteric religionism and its popular inadequate and crudely dogmatic notions. But when I speak of the Divine Will, I mean something different,—something that has descended here into an evolutionary world of Ignorance, standing at the back of things, pressing on the Darkness with its Light, leading things presently towards the best possible in the conditions of a world of Ignorance and leading it eventually towards a descent of a greater power of the Divine, which will be not an omnipotence held back and conditioned by the law of the world as it is, but in full action and therefore bringing the reign of light, peace, harmony, joy, love, beauty and Ananda, for these are the Divine Nature. The Divine Grace is there ready to act at every moment, but it manifests as one grows out of the Law of Ignorance into the Law of Light, and it is meant, not as an arbitrary caprice, however miraculous often its intervention, but as a help in that growth and a Light that leads and eventually delivers. If we take the facts of the world as they are and the facts of spiritual experience as a

whole, neither of which can be denied or neglected, then I do not see what other Divine there can be. This Divine may lead us often through darkness, because the darkness is there in us and around us, but it is to the Light he is leading and not to anything else."

(*On Yoga* II, Tome One, p. 188.)

Sri Aurobindo

(2)

"This world of our battle and labour is a fierce dangerous destructive devouring world in which life exists precariously and the soul and body of man move among enormous perils, a world in which by every step forward, whether we will it or no, something is crushed and broken, in which every breath of life is a breath too of death. To put away the responsibility for all that seems to us evil or terrible on the shoulders of a semi-omnipotent Devil, or to put it aside as part of Nature, making an unbridgeable opposition between world-nature and God-Nature, as if Nature were independent of God, or to throw the responsibility on man and his sins, as if he had a preponderant voice in the making of this world or could create anything against the will of God, are clumsily comfortable devices in which the religious thought of India has never taken refuge. We have to look courageously in the face of the reality and see that it is God and none else who has made this world in his being and that so he has made it. We have to see that Nature devouring her children, Time eating up the lives of creatures, Death universal and ineluctable and the violence of the Rudra forces in man and Nature are also the supreme Godhead in one of his cosmic figures. We have to see that God the bountiful and prodigal creator, God the helpful, strong and benignant preserver is also God the devourer and destroyer. The torment of the couch of pain and evil on which we are racked is his touch as much as happiness and sweetness and pleasure. It is only when we see with the eye of the complete union and feel this truth in the depths of our being that we can entirely discover behind that mask too the calm and beautiful face of the all-blissful Godhead and in this touch that tests our imperfection the touch of the friend and builder of the spirit in man. The discords of the world are God's discords and it is only by accepting and proceeding through them that we can arrive at the greater concords of his supreme harmony, the summits and thrilled vastnesses of his transcendent and his cosmic Ananda."

(*Essays on the Gita*, American Edition, pp. 339-40.)

SRI AUROBINDO

II

(3)

"It is almost universally supposed that spiritual life must necessarily be a life of ascetic sparseness, a pushing away of all that is not absolutely needed for the bare maintenance of the body; and this is valid for a spiritual life which is in its nature and inten-

tion a life of withdrawal from life. Even apart from that ideal, it might be thought that the spiritual turn must always make for an extreme simplicity, because all else would be a life of vital desire and physical self-indulgence. But from a wider standpoint this is a mental standard based on the law of the Ignorance of which desire is the motive; to overcome the Ignorance, to delete the ego, a total rejection not only of desire but of all the things that can satisfy desire may intervene as a valid principle. But this standard or any mental standard cannot be absolute nor can it be binding as a law on the consciousness that has arisen above desire; a complete purity and self-mastery would be in the very grain of its nature and that would remain the same in poverty or in riches: for if it could be shaken or sullied by either, it would not be real or would not be complete. The one rule of the gnostic life would be the self-expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that will, that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity or through extreme complexity and opulence or in their natural balance,—for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness and laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also powers and expressions of the Spirit. In all directions the Spirit within determining the law of the nature would determine the frame of the life and its detail and circumstance.”

(*The Life Divine*, American Edition, pp. 944-45.)

Sri Aurobindo

(4)

“I agree that asceticism can be overdone. It has its place as one means—not the only one—of self-mastery; but asceticism that cuts away life is an exaggeration, though one that had many remarkable results which perhaps could hardly have come otherwise. The play of forces in this world is enigmatic, escaping from any rigid rule of the reason, and even an exaggeration like that is often employed to bring about something needed for the full development of human achievement and knowledge and experience. But it was an exaggeration all the same and not, as it claimed to be, the indispensable path to the true goal.”

(*On Yoga II*, Tome One, p. 193.)

Sri Aurobindo

(5)

“Our renunciation must obviously be an inward renunciation; especially and above all, a renunciation of attachment and the craving of desire in the senses and the heart, of self-will in the thought and action and of egoism in the centre of the consciousness. For these things are the three knots by which we are bound to our lower nature and if we can renounce these utterly, there is nothing else that can bind us. Therefore attachment and desire must be utterly cast out; there is nothing in the world to which we must be attached, not wealth nor poverty, nor joy nor suffering, nor life nor death, nor greatness nor littleness, nor vice nor virtue, nor friend, nor

wife, nor children, nor country, nor our work and mission, nor heaven nor earth, nor all that is within them or beyond them. And this does not mean that there is nothing at all that we shall love, nothing in which we shall take delight; for attachment is egoism in love and not love itself, desire is limitation and insecurity in a hunger for pleasure and satisfaction and not the seeking after the divine delight in things. A universal love we must have, calm and yet eternally intense beyond the brief vehemence of the most violent passion; a delight in things rooted in a delight in God that does not adhere to their forms but to that which they conceal in themselves and that embraces the universe without being caught in its meshes.”¹

(*On Yoga I, The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 376.)

SRI AUROBINDO

(6)

“It is true that the mere suppression or holding down of desire is not enough, not by itself truly effective, but that does not mean that desires are to be indulged; it means that desires have not merely to be suppressed, but to be rejected from the nature. In place of desire there must be a single-minded aspiration towards the Divine.”

(*On Yoga II, Tome Two, P. 493.*)

SRI AUROBINDO

(7)

“Your theory is a mistaken one. The free expression of a passion may relieve the vital for a time, but at the same time it gives it a right to return always. It is not reduced at all. Suppression with inner indulgence in subtle forms is not a cure, but expression in outer indulgence is still less a cure. It is perfectly possible to go on without manifestation if one is resolute to arrive at a complete control, the control being not a mere suppression but an inner and outer rejection.”

(*On Yoga II, Tome Two, P. 494.*)

SRI AUROBINDO

¹ *nirlipta*. The Divine Ananda in things is *niskāma* and *nirlipta*, free from desire and therefore not attached.

EYE EDUCATION

STRAIN AND RELAXATION

It is evident that all persons conscious of imperfect sight have a mental strain. Myopia is caused by a strain or an effort to see distant objects. It can always be produced in the normal eye temporarily by trying to see distant objects. Myopia is never continuous. At frequent intervals, lasting for a fraction of a second or longer, the patient is conscious of flashes of better vision. It is also a fact that when the mind is at rest and the eyes relaxed by the memory of a letter or some other objects, the myopia is lessened or disappears. Every myopic person has to maintain a mental strain with all its discomforts, in order to maintain a degree of myopia.

These facts suggest successful methods of treatment. Since mental strain or an effort to see distant objects is the cause of myopia, mental relaxation or rest is followed by benefit. By closing the eyes for five minutes or longer while letting the mind drift from one thought or memory to another, slowly, easily and continuously, rest of mind is obtained, and when the eyes are opened, the vision is usually improved for a short time, or for a flash.

Myopic patients can always demonstrate that closing the eyes and covering them with the palm of one hand or with those of both hands for half an hour always improves the distant vision temporarily. They are temporarily cured when their sight becomes normal at some distance; when they read fine print with perfect sight at four inches without glasses, they accommodate to just the same extent as a normal eye does when it reads perfectly at four inches.

Palming can only accomplish relaxation when the patient does not try to see or imagine while palming. Some cases are able to palm more successfully than others. Some people can let their minds drift from one thing to another quite easily. A little girl was greatly benefitted when the story of a black ant was told her. The black ant came out of the dark soil and climbed up the stem of a beautiful rose. It was slow work with the ant, but it kept on climbing, going on to the extremity of first one twig and then another, crawling to the extreme tip of every leaf until finally it located the flower. It crawled with great labour over the petals, until it found deep down in the centre of the rose a little white cup filled with honey. The patient could picture the ant carrying off some of the honey, crawling to the top of the flower, and then down back to the stem, finally meeting another ant on the ground. Then the second ant started off on the same journey.

The patient, while palming, listened very attentively to this talk which took about fifteen minutes. When she removed her hands from her closed eyelids, and opened the eyes, the vision was unusually good on the Snellen Eye Testing Card.

The story of the ant, with its successive mental pictures, suggests other stories of other things with other mental pictures, as a boat floating on a river with a varied scenery around. A mental trip to the seashore is also very restful when one imagines the waves flowing in and out.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL, *School For Perfect Eyesight*