

MOTHER INDIA

MARCH, 1970

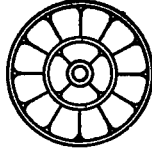
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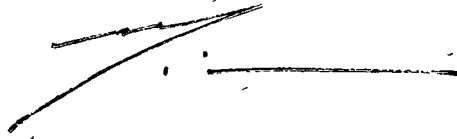


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

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. XXII

No. 2

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
WORDS OF THE MOTHER	... 71
KALI:	
SOME STATEMENTS OF THE MOTHER	... 72
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	<i>The Mother</i> ... 73
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Dr. R. S. Agarwal</i> ... 78
TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO	<i>Nirodbaran</i> ... 79
SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK	<i>V. Chidanandam</i> ... 86
SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE COMES TO AMERICA	<i>Krishan Sondhi</i> ... 90
CHANGE OF CLIMATE IN THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION	<i>Norman C. Dowsett</i> ... 92
WAY UP TO CHEENA PEAK (A Poem)	<i>Naresh</i> ... 95
LIFE, POETRY, LOVE, DEATH:	
A READER'S CRITICISM OF A POEM AND THE POET'S REJOINDER	<i>K. D. Sethna</i> ... 96
DE PROFUNDIS AND KARAKAHINI	<i>Nanda Reddy</i> ... 103
KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN:	
CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET	<i>S. Maharajan</i> ... 109

CONTENTS

		<i>Page</i>
HOMER, HOMERIC POETRY AND THE <i>ILIAD</i>	<i>Jesse Roarke</i>	... 116
GIFTS OF GRACE	<i>A Disciple</i>	... 121
UNTIL I FORGET...(A Poem)	<i>A. Venkataranga</i>	... 125
SWEEDEN, 67 (A Poem)	<i>Amelita</i>	... 125

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION:

SEVENTEENTH SEMINAR, 27TH APRIL, 1969:

—WHY IS OUR YOGA AN ADVENTURE?—

SPEECH BY SURENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN

Compiled by Kishor Gandhi ... 126

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ

LA liberté ne pourra être manifestée que lorsque tous les hommes connaîtront la liberté du Seigneur Suprême.

L'égalité ne pourra être manifestée que quand les hommes seront tous conscients du Seigneur Suprême.

La fraternité ne pourra être manifestée que lorsque tous les hommes se sentiront également issus du Seigneur Suprême et "Un" dans son unité.

9-2-1970

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY

Liberty can manifest only when all men will know the liberty of the Supreme Lord.

Equality can manifest only when men will all be conscious of the Supreme Lord.

Fraternity can manifest only when all men will feel themselves equally born of the Supreme Lord and "One" in His oneness.

9-2-1970

A TOUS CEUX QUI VEULENT VIVRE POUR L'AVENIR

Un travail matériel est aussi indispensable à l'équilibre corporel que la nourriture. Manger sans travailler produit un déséquilibre grave.

Février 1970

TO ALL THOSE WHO WOULD LIVE FOR THE FUTURE

Material work is as indispensable to bodily equilibrium as food.

To eat without working produces a grave disequilibrium.

February 1970

KALI

SOME STATEMENTS OF THE MOTHER

De tous les aspects de la Mère, Kali exprime le plus puissamment l'amour vibrant et actif, et elle porte en elle la splendeur dorée d'un amour tout-puissant, en dépit de son aspect parfois terrible.

24-2-1965

Out of all the aspects of the Mother, Kali expresses most powerfully the vibrant and active love, and she carries in herself the golden splendour of an omnipotent love, in spite of her sometimes terrible aspect.

24-2-1965

Kali n'agit guère dans le mental. Dans les domaines supérieurs elle est une puissance d'amour qui pousse vers le progrès et la transformation; dans le vital elle est une puissance de destruction du mensonge, de l'hypocrisie et de la mauvaise volonté.

Tout ce qui est bon, véridique et progressif n'est jamais détruit par elle. Au contraire, elle le protège et le soutient.

5-6-1965

Kali rarely acts in the mind. In the higher domains she is the power of love that pushes towards progress and transformation; in the vital she is a power of destruction of falsehood, hypocrisy and ill-will.

All that is good, truthful and progressive is never destroyed by her. On the contrary, she protects and sustains it.

5-6-1965

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(This new series of answers by the Mother to questions put by the children of the Ashram appeared for the first time in the Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education but in a somewhat incomplete form. We now give, in a new English translation, the full text as it was taped, with here and there a few special additions or modifications made by the Mother herself at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968).

January 4, 1956

"If we are to attempt an integral Yoga, it will be as well to start with an idea of the Divine that is itself integral. There should be an aspiration in the heart wide enough for a realisation without any narrow limits. Not only should we avoid a sectarian religious outlook, but also all one-sided philosophical conceptions which try to shut up the Ineffable in a restricting mental formula."

Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1955 Ed.), p. 93.

Sweet Mother, what does Sri Aurobindo mean by an integral idea of the Divine?

EVERYONE forms an idea of the Divine for himself according to his personal taste, his possibilities of understanding, his mental preferences, and even his desires. People form the idea of the Divine they want, the Divine they wish to meet, and so naturally they limit their realisation considerably.

But if we can come to understand that the Divine is all that we can conceive of Him, and infinitely more, we begin to progress towards integrality. Integrality is an extremely difficult thing for the human consciousness, which begins to be conscious only by limiting itself. But still, with a little effort, for those who know how to play with mental activities, it is possible to widen oneself sufficiently to approach something integral.

You form an idea of the Divine which suits your own nature and your own conception, don't you? So if you want to get out of yourself a little and attempt to do an integral yoga, precisely you have to try to understand that the Divine is not only what you think or what you feel Him to be, but also what others think and feel Him to be—and in addition something that nobody can think and feel.

Then, if you understand that, you have taken the first step on the path of integrality.

Instinctively, and without even being aware of it, people persist in wanting the Divine to suit their conceptions. For, quite spontaneously, if they do not reflect a

little, they tell you: "Oh! this is divine, this is not divine!" What do they know about it? And then there are those who have not yet set foot upon the path, who come here and see things or people, and who tell you: "This Ashram has nothing to do with the Divine, it is not at all divine." But if they are asked: "What is divine?", they would be hard put to it to answer; they know nothing about it. And the less one knows, the more one judges; that's an absolute fact. The more one knows, the less can one pronounce judgments on things.

And there is a moment when all that one can do is to state; but to judge is impossible. One can see things, see them as they are, in their relations and in their place, with an awareness of the difference between the place where they now are and the one they ought to be in (for that is the great disorder in the world), but one does not judge. Simply one sees.

And there is a moment when one would be unable to say: "This is divine and that is not divine", for there is a moment when one sees the whole universe in so total and comprehensive a way that, to tell the truth, it is impossible to take anything from it without disturbing everything.

And one or two steps further yet, and one knows with certainty that what shock us as being a contradiction of the Divine are quite simply things which are not in their place. Everything must be exactly in its place and, besides, it must be supple enough, plastic enough, to admit in a harmonious progressive organisation all the new elements which are constantly being added to the manifested universe. The universe is in a perpetual movement of inner reorganisation, and at the same time it is growing larger, so to speak, or getting more and more complicated, becoming more and more complete, more and more integral—and this, indefinitely. And as gradually the new elements manifest themselves, the whole reorganisation has to be remade on a new basis, so that there is not a second when *everything* is not in perpetual movement. But if the movement is in accordance with the divine order, it is harmonious, so perfectly harmonious that it is hardly perceptible, that it is difficult to see it.

Now, if one goes down again from this consciousness to a more external consciousness, naturally one begins to feel precisely the things which help one to reach the true consciousness and those which bar the way or pull one back or even struggle against the progress. And so the point of view changes and one is obliged to say: "This is divine, or this helps to go towards the Divine; and that is against the Divine, it is the enemy of the Divine."

But this is a pragmatic point of view, for action, for the movement in material life—because one has not yet reached the consciousness which goes beyond all that; because one has not attained that inner perfection, having which one has no longer to struggle, for one has gone beyond the zone of struggle or the time of struggle or the utility of struggle. But before that, before attaining that state in one's consciousness or action, there is necessarily struggle, and if there is struggle there is choice and for the choice discernment is necessary.

And the surest means to discernment is a conscious, voluntary surrender, as

complete as possible, to the divine Will and Guidance. Then there is no risk of making a mistake, and of taking false lights for true ones.

Sweet Mother, Sri Aurobindo says here: "His is the Love and the Bliss of the infinite divine Lover who is drawing all things by their own path towards his happy oneness." (Ibid., p. 94.)

All things are attracted by the Divine. Are the hostile forces also attracted by the Divine?

That depends upon the point of view, one cannot say that. For there is a potential attraction, but so veiled and so secret that it cannot even be recognised as an existing thing.

In Matter which has an appearance of inertia (it is only an appearance, but still) the attraction for the Divine is a possibility rather than a fact; that is, it is something which will develop, but which does not yet exist perceptibly.

It may be said that all consciousness, whether it knows it or not—even if it does not know it—gravitates towards the Divine. But some consciousness must already be there in order to be able to affirm this.

And even among human beings, who at the moment are the most conscious beings on earth, there is an immense majority who are potentially drawn towards the Divine, but who know nothing about it; and there are even some who deliberately refuse this attraction. Perhaps, in their refusal, behind it, there is something which is preparing; but this is neither voluntarily nor knowingly done.

And so (*addressing the child*) what was the last part of your question?... First you postulate something which is not correct, and upon that you put a question which naturally does not stand straight, for the postulate is incorrect.

I wanted to say...

Yes, yes, I know quite well what you want to say.

In fact, finally, everything will be attracted by the Divine. Only, there are direct roads and there are labyrinthine paths where one seems to be going further away for a very long time before drawing closer. And there are beings who have chosen the labyrinthine paths and who intend to remain there as long as they can. So, apparently, these are beings who fight against the Divine.

Though those who are of a higher kind know quite well that it is an absolutely vain and useless struggle, without issue, yet they take pleasure in it. Even if this must lead to destruction, they have decided to do it.

There are human beings also who indulge in vice—one vice or another, like drinking or drug-injections—and who know very well that this is leading them to destruction and death. But they choose to do it knowingly.

They have no control over themselves.

There is always a moment when everyone has control. And if one had not said "Yes" once, if one had not taken the decision, one would not have done it.

There is not one human being who has not the energy and capacity to resist a thing imposed upon him—if he is allowed to do it. People who tell you: "I can't do otherwise"—it is because in the depths of their heart they do *not want* to do otherwise; they have accepted to be the slaves of their vice. There is a moment when one accepts.

And I am going further; I say, there is a moment when one accepts to be ill. If one did not accept to be ill, one would not be ill. Only, people are so unconscious of themselves and their inner movements that they are not even aware of what they do.

But all depends on the way one looks at things. From a certain point of view there is nothing that is totally useless in the world. Only, things which were tolerable and admissible at a certain moment are no longer so at another. And when they become no longer admissible, one begins to say they are bad, because then a will wakes to get rid of them. But in the history of the universe (one can even say in the world's history, to reduce the problem to our little planet), I think that all existing things had their necessity and importance at a given moment. And it is as one advances that these things are pushed back or replaced by others which belong to the future instead of belonging to the past. So, of things which no longer have any *raison d'être*, one says: "They are bad", because one tries to find within oneself a lever to push them out, to break with the habit. But perhaps at a given moment they were not bad, and other things were so.

There are ways of being, ways of feeling, ways of doing, which one tolerates in oneself for quite a long time, and which don't trouble you, which don't seem to you at all useless or bad or to need to be eliminated. And then suddenly one day, one doesn't know why and what has happened, but the outlook changes, one looks at things and says: "But how is that? This is in me, I carry this in myself? But it is intolerable, I don't want it any longer." And that seems to you all of a sudden bad because it is time to reject them, for they do not harmonise with the attitude you have taken or the steps you have taken in your march forward in the world. These things should be elsewhere, they are no longer in their place, hence you find them bad. But perhaps the same things which seem bad to you would be excellent for other people who are at a lower stage.

There are always some more dull, more unconscious, more evil, more ignorant than oneself. So the state which is intolerable for you, which you can no longer keep, which must disappear, would be perhaps very luminous for those who are on the lower rungs. By what right are you going to say: "This is bad"? All you can say is: "I don't want it any longer. I don't want it, it is not in keeping with my present way of being, I want to go to a place where these things find no place any more; they are not

in their place any more, let them go and take their place elsewhere!" But one cannot judge. It is impossible to say: "This is bad." One can at the most say: "This is bad for me, it is not in its place with me any longer, it must go." That's all. And one leaves it behind on the way.

And this makes the progress much, much easier, to think and feel like that instead of sitting down in despair and saying to oneself all sorts of lamentable things, and how one is, and the misery one endures and the faults one has and the impossibilities which beset you and all that. One says: "No, no, those things are no longer in their place here, let them go elsewhere, there where they will be in their place and welcome. As for me, I am going forward, I am going to climb a step, I shall go towards a purer and better and more complete light; and so all these things which like the darkness must go away." But that's all.

Each time one sees in oneself something which seems really nasty, well, that proves that one has made progress. So, instead of lamenting and falling into despair, one ought to be happy; one says: "Ah! that's good, I am getting on."

(To be continued)

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

6-7-1934.

Q: I have egoistic desires and passions. I pray for their total removal.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a matter of self-discipline and opening of the being to the Divine.

Q: Each move of my life I want to make with the Divine Will. But the question is, how to know the Divine Will?

SRI AUROBINDO: It needs a quiet mind—in the quiet mind turned towards the Divine, the initiation comes of the Divine Will and the right way to do it.¹

8-7-1934

Q: When away from home, I sometimes remember my children and feel a little sorry; but I soon realise that there is nothing in the world to love except the Divine. In spite of this knowledge the struggle goes on. How to get out of it?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is as the love of the Divine grows that the other things cease to trouble the mind.

DR. R. S. AGARWAL

¹ During an interview with the Mother, I had asked a similar question to her. The gist of her answer was something like this: "Sit calmly and offer yourself to the Divine. Put the work before the Divine. Forget the work. The answer will come."

To another question of mine. "How is it some people begin a work in a good way and with a good inclination and still spoil the work?" Her exact words I do not recollect, but what she meant was something like this: "Because they remain fixed in their mental inclination. They do not change the will even if they hear the voice from within." (Dr. Agarwal)

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1970)

(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 Mulshankar. As the notes were not seen by Sri Aurobindo himself, the responsibility for the Master's words rests entirely with Nirodbaran. He does not vouch for absolute accuracy, but he has tried his best to reproduce them faithfully. He has made the same attempt for the speeches of the others.)

MARCH 7, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (to P): Do you know if Bhedabheda and Dwaitadwaita are the same? One I know is of Nimbarkar and the other of Bhaskara.

P: I think they are the same and by the same person. The two names are of one man.

SRI AUROBINDO: Everybody says that what I have said is just their own philosophy. Nimbarkar's followers, the Ramanuja school, the adherents of Appaya Dikshita—all claim they have said the same thing. Somebody in Madras says my philosophy is just what Hegel has said and lastly I am told that it is the same as Shankara's philosophy!

P: Yes, somebody observed, "It is very fine and exactly what Shankara has said." Nagaraja of the *Hindu* says it is pure Adwaita and there is nothing new in it...

Narvik is still in German hands.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and the Allies are closing in.

N: It seems to me they will make a mess of this too.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite likely. It is said there are 130,000 Norwegians in the North. With their help I don't know why they can't take Narvik. The Germans have occupied Namsos and if they send reinforcements to the North it will be difficult for the Allies.

P: Yes, they are already sending troops and the air force.

S: We shall see what Chamberlain has to say.

P: Probably there will be changes in the Cabinet.

SRI AUROBINDO: That depends on the debate.

N: Labour opposition may give in at last.

SRI AUROBINDO: Moreover, they have none to form a Ministry, although there are good organisers among them.

N: Unless they form a National Government with a Conservative Prime Minister.

SRI AUROBINDO: In that case Churchill, Hore-Belisha, Eden and Lloyd George will have to come in. Morrison may be in the Ministry of Information and Greenwood for Labour while Attlee may be given some ornamental post, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancashire.

N: Why has he been made the leader?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps he knows the tactics of debate, that's all.

N: Is Halifax good?

SRI AUROBINDO: No; Eden will do well as Foreign Secretary. Halifax is good and wise and ineffective.

P: The *Hindu* says that the Allies are short of bombers.

SRI AUROBINDO: But they have plenty of fighters with which they can fight the bombers. Bombers are only meant for the destruction of military objectives or ships or towns, etc. Even then it has been shown that German bombers are not so effective, while with whatever bombers the Allies have they have been quite successful at hitting military objectives.

In Narvik they have their Navy with which they can bombard the coast and then with the fleet's air force they can continually bombard the German army till they surrender. I don't know why they can't.

EVENING

P: It seems Bhedabheda and Dwaitadwaita are not the same. The latter is of Nimbarkar.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't think Bhedabheda is of Nimbarkar; I have read so somewhere. Yes, in *Prabuddha Bharata* it was mentioned like that...

Nishtha's friend, the Swami in America, has reviewed *The Life Divine*. He has spent all his energy in defending the Sannyasis and at the end says that I don't believe in the Sannyasis.

P: Is that all he has found?

SRI AUROBINDO: Practically. Of course he deals with some points here and there and says that I am a remarkable man, etc. I wonder whether these people have understood the book. The other reviewer of the Mission also gives the impression that they follow the old conventional ways. But Ramakrishna did not proclaim any system of thinking. They follow Vivekananda perhaps.

P: Vivekananda does not seem to have succeeded as a philosopher.

SRI AUROBINDO: His writings on Yoga are forceful. He made an attempt at writing philosophy and said that all philosophies are on the way to the Truth but Shankara's reaches the final goal.

P: The Ramakrishna Mission doesn't have any outstanding thinker.

SRI AUROBINDO: Its people are good at the exposition of old ideas. Abhedananda had some power.

P: Probably the whole speech of Chamberlain will be relayed. One can hear the shouts and cheers of members.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hardly worth relaying. L.G.'s speech will be more interesting. It seems Stanley and Hoare will reply to the debate and not Churchill.

P: Churchill is said to have some disagreement with Chamberlain.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is why he does not want to reply.

P: Narvik is supposed to be a mountainous country. So there is no scope for air bases.

SRI AUROBINDO: The English people speak of their difficulties and don't know how to overcome them; while Hitler, in spite of difficulties, grapples with them. He does not hesitate to make airfields even in open fields.

MARCH 8, 1940

SRI AUROBINDO (*to P*): Have you seen Chamberlain's speech?

P: No.

SRI AUROBINDO: He says the help to Norway was necessary and the retreat also necessary. (*Laughter*) They knew about Germany's invasion of Norway and provided for it, but they can't foresee everything. They sent to Norway a little more than one division—about 20,000. They could not send more because of fear of blows in other parts, which means that whenever they have such fear they will behave in a like manner. He says they did not want to attack Trondjheim, but because of the call for help by the Norwegians they had to go and get beaten. Now the main thing is not the change of Ministry but more drive and push. Churchill is in command of the war and everything is all right. Attlee says the retreat was a wonderful feat of arms.

P: There may be a change of government.

SRI AUROBINDO: It does not look like it. From his speech it seems that they have a very insufficient army. So they could not spare more. But what does their conscription mean then? They have 40,000,000 people. France has as much—the British can also draw forces from the colonies and India.

P: They don't want to take any risk perhaps?

SRI AUROBINDO: How are they going to win? The English people were never like that. They have always taken risks.

N (*after some time*): A pupil of Sisir went to see Raman Maharshi and asked him two questions about you.

SRI AUROBINDO: About me? How would Maharshi know about me?

N: He asked Maharshi whether you had shut yourself up in passivity or were doing some active work for political uplift.

SRI AUROBINDO: Political uplift? Like Subhas Bose in the Corporation? And what did Maharshi say?

N: He did not give any direct reply. He only said you are like a dynamo and doing work in your own field. The second question was whether you had any chance of going back to politics. Maharshi said the answer would be a prophecy and he does not go in for such things. This man thinks that you are doing some political work here, training people for the revolution of the country.

SRI AUROBINDO: Again, like Bose?

N: No, for the uplift of the country.

SRI AUROBINDO: It comes to the same thing. Bose also prophesies that he would get freedom by means of revolution.

MARCH 9, 1940

N: Chamberlain has a majority of 81 votes. Is it a good majority?

SRI AUROBINDO: A very narrow one, and about 150 have abstained. He has been criticised even by his own people. Amery's voice is the strongest. It shows dissatisfaction in his own party with his policy.

S: Hitler will perhaps consolidate his position in Norway before he makes any other venture.

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps. Unless there is too much economic pressure.

N: The debate has shown how shabbily the whole affair has been carried out.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Some Admiral has said he could have taken Trondjheim if he had been given the command. He is a famous man.

(Later, to P while lying in bed) The *Prabuddha Bharata* has a remarkable article quoted from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Have you seen it?

P: No.

SRI AUROBINDO: See it. It is there on the table. You may find some familiarity in the style.

P: It seems to be from your *Defence of Indian Culture*. (Sri Aurobindo started smiling.) The ideas are taken from there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only the ideas?

P: Some words and expressions also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only some? (*Laughing*) The whole thing is taken from the *Defence*.

P: But who could have sent it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps M. Bagchi, but he may be in jail now. (*Addressing N*) You did not see this article in the *Patrika*?

N: No, I didn't notice it.

P: Others also have done like that. I wonder why they don't mention the quotation.

SRI AUROBINDO: If they did, they won't get the credit for it. Some have made their names by passages from me.

MARCH 10, 1940

P: L.G. has said in his speech what you had said before. He says, "We promised help to Poland and did nothing. In Finland the same story and now in Norway it is repeated."

SRI AUROBINDO: His is the strongest attack asking Chamberlain to resign.

P: Churchill has said that because of fear of communications being cut off by the German air force they had to give up.

SRI AUROBINDO: What does he mean? They did not think of it before? And why did they take up the operations in Southern Norway in that case?

S: Somebody asked, "Can you tell us if we have now an air base in Norway?" Churchill replied, "Now that the enemy knows, we can say Yes." (*Laughter*)

SRI AUROBINDO: The enemy knows; so we need not keep it from the British public?

S: The British officers said that all their movements became quickly known to the Germans.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but Dr. Koht said, "It was not true that the Norwegians betrayed Norway. The fact is that some of them were sympathetic to the Germans." (*Laughter*)

P: Jinnah has admitted that he has no control over the Khaksars. They are quite independent and they have not authorised him for any settlement. Over this the *Hindu* comments that it is very pleasing to see Jinnah's humility, but doesn't he claim that the Muslim League is representative of all Muslims?

N: In Bengal Moslemism is coming to Sports also. The Moslem Sporting Club is claiming reservation of seats in the I.F.A. They have organised a huge meeting, passed resolutions asking the Moslems to boycott football play till their claims are conceded.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, they will next to do it in cricket also?

N: Why not? It seems Bose is going to take up their cause.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see.

S: This is the last activity where they could bring up communalism

N: No.

SRI AUROBINDO: There are plenty of other fields where it can spread.

S: What will Sotuda say or do?

N: His duty is over on informing Sri Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO: You can tell him that God helps those who help themselves. (*Laughter*)

N: I think he will only lament.

SRI AUROBINDO: And want me to lament with him?

S: C is not satisfied with your answer to Sotuda.

SRI AUROBINDO: No? (*Beginning to smile*) .

N: C believes only in Grace. Therefore your answer cannot satisfy him.

EVENING

At about 6.15 p.m. came the news that Germany had invaded Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg.

SRI AUROBINDO: I expected it. (*After a pause*). We will see....

N: Perhaps Hitler has taken advantage of England's ministerial confusion.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, and Churchill's disclosure about their air disparity. I was surprised that he gave it out. It is one thing to say that they had no aerodrome in Norway and another to let out the air disparity.

NIGHT

SRI AUROBINDO: Now the expected blow has fallen. Chamberlain may say that England should be ready for future impending blows. Now they can send forces by land and sea and from the French frontier. The French have more foresight. They extended the Belgian Maginot line against any future German attack.

N: Could this attack be the reason of their withdrawal from Norway?

SRI AUROBINDO: In that case they will have to withdraw from everywhere because everywhere there will be impending blows. If they had attacked Trondjheim I am sure they would have been successful. The Germans would have been bogged there.

N: Churchill was for it, but the military advisers were not.

SRI AUROBINDO: Military advisers are always like that. They go by routine. It is like Napoleon against his generals. They lose in the right way!

P: Now the ministerial crisis will recede.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, Chamberlain is a lucky beggar, but England is unlucky.

N: Hitler is spreading war on many fronts which may not be very convenient for him.

SRI AUROBINDO: He wants to break through the blockade because of economic pressure. And if he gets air bases in the Netherlands he can attack England. He seems to be planning to attack Switzerland too. That will be a tough guy for him as it is a mountainous country.

P: If these neutrals had combined before, they would have been in a much stronger position.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. That shows how foolish humanity is. It does not see beyond its nose.

N: Sweden is allying herself with Russia.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the only thing to do.

S: I hope their idea of neutrality will go now.

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope so.

N: Stalin does not want Sweden to fall into German hands.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously not...For, if Hitler gets Sweden, and if the Allies go down in the war, he is sure to attack Russia afterwards. He will promise independence to Finland and, through her, attack St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg's defence is not strong. What that Theosophist said about World War seems to be coming true.

S: Yes, Sir, he is only seven days behind. He predicted May 17th and today is the 10th.

SRI AUROBINDO: But it is not World War yet. It will be if Italy joins or Russia.

S: If not now, he says it will be next year, and the millennium, he says, will come in 1941 for 1000 years.

SRI AUROBINDO: Whose millennium? Hitler's or Stalin's? And for 1000 years only?

N: Anilbaran believes that something great will happen in 1944.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why?

N: He says that every 18th year of your life has been marked by a notable incident. In 1908 the Vasudeva experience, in 1926 the Overmind descent.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about 1890? I don't know of anything except going to Cambridge.

N: You got a scholarship perhaps.

P: They are fitting facts to theory, like Spengler in *The Decline of the West*.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

CORRECTIONS

In Nirodbaran's *Our Association with Sri Aurobindo* in the issue of February 21, 1970, please read on p. 28, para 3, "St. John" for "St. Paul" and on p. 32, last 2 lines, "very hot water" for "hot boiling water" and "nearly boiling water" for "pure boiling water".

In Punjalal's poem, *The Service Tree*, in the same issue, line 3 of stanza 5 should read:

Your care is a soul-stirring sight.

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF 1920-1926

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1970)

(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.)

You can know the future accurately to a certain extent. Beyond that all is a blank. There are many potentialities in the field and the result which you expect may be modified by them. If you can go very high, you can be more certain. But an unfailing power of seeing the future is rare. You can know things by putting yourself in communication with world-forces. It is not knowledge by identity. ..

Political agitation is different from solid work and the two must not be mixed up. The former goes on hammering at a new idea before the public, waits till it catches the popular imagination and gets connected with the vital interest. Then you have to wait for the psychological moment when you can get to your objective. But solid work is different. In Russia the workers began to settle in villages, some as teachers, some as doctors, and tried to improve the life there, bringing new light and awakening. Solid work is to be done under the law of the physical plane, slowly and patiently. Political agitation belongs more to the vital plane.

The Russians waited patiently, working for years, and then their organization got slowly recognised by the government, and after a long waiting came the Revolution.

Generally people don't want thought. They are carried away by high-sounding words. Anything wordy would always succeed with empty-headed fools. Surendranath Banerjee is mostly words, there is little thought anywhere. People usually get tired of listening to thoughts. If you touch people's vital emotions you can carry them with you. Even if there is thought in oratory, you must dilute it very much and throw it into the emotional vital. Surendranath rarely had to think before making a speech. Burke is different. Every sentence of his is weighty with thought. That is why, though he was a great orator, he did not produce much effect on others.

If the mind is concentrated on the centre of the occult vision between the eyebrows you see a bright round globe of light which goes on increasing; that is not due to anything physical. It is the light from one of the inner centres and you can make it very bright by connecting it with the Brahmarandhra at the top of the head. Every sense is connected like that with the inner centres. After all, the distinctions we make between mental and vital and physical are not quite true. These parts are not so separate. They are all one. The Vedic Rishis found a great truth when they spoke of the sun in the physical as one with the highest Sun....When in Baroda, my occult sight was not yet developed. I was trying to develop it by dwelling upon the after-image and also by attending to the interval between waking and sleep. Then I saw this round circle of light and when I began Pranayama it became very much intensified.

The Hathayogin gets perfect control of vital forces working in the body and also of the physical functions, and it produces some indirect influence on the mind. But I do not think that by Hathayoga pure and simple one can realise God.

The psychic being when not fully awake does not come to the surface generally. It is very much behind in people and when it cannot come fully to the surface we call it weak,—not that there is something weak in the psychic being itself. It has got everything. The Atman is spirit, self-existent being, Chaitanyamaya Anandamaya Purusha. It is the same in all. It is that which is behind all manifestations of nature. It has no features. The only thing that can be said about it is Sat-chit-ananda. Generally it is meant to imply the passive state, but sometimes it is used for both the passive and the active. The psychic being is not the Atman, it is the soul. It is the Purusha seated in *hṛday guhāyām*—the cave of the heart.

The Ishwara in the heart is different from the psychic being. The latter is a direct portion of the Divine here. The Jiva is something more than that. The psychic being is behind the heart or the emotional being. The Jiva is high above connected with the central being. It is that which on every level becomes the purusha, the prakṛiti and the personalities of nature. The psychic being, you may say, is the soulpersonality. It most purely reflects the Divine in the lower triplicity of the mind, the vital and the physical: it is more open to Truth than they. That is why it is indispensable for the manifestation of the Divine. Because the movements of mind are full of defects and mixture, however sincere they may be to transform themselves into Truth, they cannot do it unless the psychic being comes to their help. When the psychic being awakens, one finds it easy to distinguish the mixture of truth and falsehood from within and also to throw out from the inside any wrong movement. It discriminates between the jumble of mental and vital experiences. A real psychic experience often gives a clue in sadhana. A genuine psychic experience is always a reality.

Q. Is the psychic being the same as supermind?

A. What do you mean? The psychic being is not the supermind. If you mean all is the same above, everything is one, it is the old Adwaita. If you accept that, you have to fly into the One it. Really it is not a matter for mind to decide the question of God. It is a matter of experience. In a certain experience you see that all is One, and Shankara is right. But the experiences of Ramanuja are also true. Mind cannot know these things. It only cuts, analyses; *e.g.* you cannot say, "God is that, He can't be anything else." He may be many things. You can't approach Him with thought... Truth is what you *are*... You have the knowledge because you *are* that. That is why I insist on the attainment of supermind as a condition for the attainment of Truth, because the mind cannot really know. In the supermind thoughts conveying the different aspects of the same truth, which are so different indeed that the first is diametrically opposite to the last in the mind, are all thrown into one. There they are not what we understand by 'thoughts'. There is no need of language there. Supermind understands much more than what the words convey. Even on the level of the mind, if you understand merely the words and do not enter into the spirit, you cannot understand the real meaning. And what is true of the mind is much more so of the supermind. Supermind uses language only as an indication and a symbol. It knows the thing behind. For instance, if you have the knowledge by identity you can easily know my thoughts or my meaning. But you see that the same thing spoken carries a different meaning to each. As it is, human nature has not yet the capacity to understand by identity and therefore people try to catch the inner meaning by external signs such as speech.

Psychic feelings are different from sentimental or other feelings; *e.g.* psychic compassion is not sentimental pity. It is much deeper; psychic love also is much deeper and inner than what passes for 'love'. There is no selfishness in psychic love. It is free from all demand; it has no vital claims in it. Psychic unselfishness is not ordinary unselfishness which plays before the world and shows itself as philanthropy. Psychic selflessness sees the need in the other person and just satisfies it.

The psychic being is nothing weak or inert. The presiding deity of the psychic plane is Agni. It is the divine fire of aspiration. When the psychic being is awake the God of that plane is also awakened. And even if the whole being is impure that Agni intervenes and removes the obstacles standing in the way and consumes all the impurities of the being.

All of Abanindranath's pictures are from the vital world. But his latest pictures seem to come from a peculiar layer of the vital world. I felt something like that vaguely but I was not sure about it. Mira pointed out that it was the vital colouring which was responsible for it. In Nandalal you find the background of a strong mental conception, that is why his pictures are less effective than Abanindranath's. Abanindranath's inspiration from Ajanta is not so strong as that from the Moghal and Rajput schools. It is not due to the subjects. For example, his 'Bride of Shiva' is not Shiva's

bride at all, it is a bride from the vital plane. The whole Tagore family is strongly connected with this plane. That is why there are among them people who write poetry and can do painting. The arts, especially poetry and painting, belong to the vital plane.

India may not copy the parliamentary institutions of Europe. It is the European idea that there must be always opposition between the government and the popular party. In India the king could not infringe the rights of the communes; if their rights were interfered with, the people at once made themselves felt. I don't understand why everything should be centralized in the parliamentary form. We must have numerous different centres of culture and power, full of national life, spread over the country and they must have political freedom to develop themselves. The parliamentary form does not suit India. Our people won't be able to take to it. It has succeeded only in England. In France and America it has not succeeded. In Italy and Japan, merely the form is there. We may not have the old forms but we can take the true line of evolution and follow the bent of the genius of the race. In India, freedom of the communities was developed and individual liberty was not there so much. The communities had great powers and the state had no autocratic powers. The state was a kind of general supervising agency of all the communities. Workers must go to every state, province and village, settle down and do solid work. The idea of making each commune self-sufficient is a Utopian idea.

Most of the people who use wine and narcotic drugs never go beyond the vital consciousness. The vital is a great builder. It constructs any number of things, worlds, states. It gives you an idea that you have reached the highest state. One may quiet his mind and get into the vital consciousness and feel some touch of the infinite and think that it is Brahman. There are any number of *siddhis* on the vital plane and if you have the proper knowledge you can get the *siddhis*. Even if one gets the Brahmic consciousness it is not that he has got the highest Truth. The Brahmic consciousness can be on any plane. You can have that consciousness on the mental or vital plane. Further, the general idea that for the Brahmic consciousness one must be always withdrawn into himself is not correct. When I first had the silent Brahmic consciousness at Baroda it came of course to the mental being and then I kept it for about a month. But I was not unconscious of the world. I saw people and things as Maya and the One behind as the Reality.

The experience of Sunyam is very striking. You get into it by a sort of negation even of the Atman. The experience of Atman may be passive, but it is something positive, while the Sunyam is nothing, it is the absence of everything, it is the great Asat from which all things proceed.

There is a plane of Ananda which is self-existent and, if you remain there, you don't care whether the house is falling or your head is breaking.

(To be continued)

V. CHIDANANDAM

SRI AUROBINDO'S MESSAGE COMES TO AMERICA

(We are glad to reproduce this article which appeared in Bharat Darshan of January 1970, published by the India Club of Columbia University, New York City. It was reprinted by The Spectator of the same university. The author, Krishan Sondhi, is majoring in Journalism and Communications Media and will graduate in June this year, when he will come to India to set up a big colour offset Rotary Press to deal with a multi-media complex. He wishes to collaborate with Auroville.)

Is there hope for changing the present soul-killing system of education? Can we avoid the megalopolis with its ghettos, riots, pollution and tension? Can we overcome the alienation of modern living? Is there a way to befriend technology and not have it destroy culture? "Yes," said Mr. Norman Dowsett of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India, speaking to a group of students at the International House,¹ "the answer to all these questions is 'yes' and the answer is Auroville."

But before Mr. Dowsett went on to explain where or what Auroville is, he made certain remarks about the present human predicament which were so profound and incisive that they deserve attention. "Education," said Mr. Dowsett, "is less a system than an environment." "Nothing can be taught." "Education is a transformation, not an accumulation." "Education is being and doing, not listening to an expert." "When a man becomes an expert in his field, he begins to die." "A man is either his own physician or a fool at forty!" But we are so much in the habit of going to specialists.

Auroville reverses the whole picture or, to put it in Mr. Dowsett's words, "there we attempt to marry the inner and outer worlds". And then he went on to explain what Auroville is. It is the great experiment of a World University at Pondicherry in South India. It is the logical extension of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram and its International Centre of Education, which have now been in existence for many years. Sri Aurobindo is one of the great Yogis India has produced in modern times. The Mother, who is French, is one of the greatest Western mystics of the age. The collaboration of these two towering personalities symbolizes the unique fusion of Eastern spirituality and Western thought.²

¹ International House, Riverside Drive, New York on Tuesday, December 9th. Subject of the talk: "World University: The Future Education."

² *Editor's Note:* It may be pointed out that Sri Aurobindo was himself educated in England from his seventh to his twenty-first year and knew the language and culture of several European countries. The Mother, on her side, has never stood as the typical Westerner and, though embodying all that is fine and deep in France, has considered India her soul's country and found her own early spiritual development outside India to have been essentially on the same lines as the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, so that it was the most natural thing for him to put his Ashram in her charge. In both, the East and the West have fused in various ways their collaboration marks a total and all-round fusion of them.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram has been functioning as a spiritual center; now for the first time an attempt is being made at a general experiment in spiritual living. And that is Auroville. It had its birth on February 28, 1968, when international youth delegates from 121 member-nations of UNESCO brought earth from their native lands to mingle as One Earth in the foundation of the new Universal City of human unity. It is estimated that the University will accommodate about 50,000 persons and every nation will have its own separate pavilion. All the techniques known to modern knowledge will be used. These will include mass media, computer systems and the latest professional skills, but the big difference is that these will subserve and not dominate the main object of the institution: the development of yogic insight, wisdom, harmony and balance in the personality. Professors in the academic sense will be replaced by functioning artists, architects, engineers, etc. The whole environment of Auroville will prepare youth for the new age in a fusion of East and West, Spirit and Science. It is for this reason that the UNESCO has embraced Auroville as one of the major programs which fulfill its aims and purposes.

As this writer listened to the talk it seemed to him that Mr. Dowsett embodied in his own person the very virtues Auroville will have. Mr. Dowsett does not sport a beard, he did not look like one who has renounced the world, he did not use the words "spiritual" or "soul" even once, he did not stand on his head, and in fact he wore a well tailored suit and looked perfectly normal. But the quality of voice, the simplicity and gentleness of manner, the diction, the intonation, the timely gesture, the esoteric hints in stray phrases—all these abundantly showed that the "marriage" had taken place long ago; behind this efficient Western man was the soul of an Eastern yogi.

The audience, too, struck the writer as being admirable in ways more than one. The listeners took in literally every little word of the speaker and their final response was one of overwhelming approbation, bordering almost on ecstasy. This reminded me of what the social commentator, Marshall McLuhan, had had to say to me in Canada a few days earlier: "We are now undergoing the great process of the orientalization of the West and the westernization of the East."

This generation of American youth is in the unenviable position of seeing their mighty civilisation decay and crumble right before their eyes. Nowhere is the message of Eastern mysticism more relevant than here; it could not have been better timed and no other people than the American have the practical mindedness required to make these ideals a reality. Mr. Dowsett's visit could not have been more appropriate.

A New York chapter of Auroville and the Sri Aurobindo Ashram is now being constituted and an announcement regarding it will soon appear in these pages.

KRISHAN SONDHI

CHANGE OF CLIMATE IN THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION

It was an extraordinary adventure to leave the bosom of my spiritual *Alma Mater* after twenty-five years of sadhana in the Ashram for the contrasting environmental atmosphere of the city of New York.

I was invited to speak at the New York University on "*Auroville and the Future Evolution of Man*" and to work with those in the United Nations interested in bringing about the Resolution for the study of an International University.

It would not be fair to contrast the powerful spiritual atmosphere of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram courtyard with, say, the entrance halls to the United Nations Building, filled with its cross-currents of conflicting duties and desires, peopled with pleasantries and platitudes but with an occasional pride and purpose issuing even into power.

However, such cogitations on this contrast are not entirely vain because the atmosphere of any given place depends upon the kind of people who inhabit it. And the kind of people who inhabit the United Nations today are probably quite different from those who made up that body we called the League of Nations.

The significance of the change could be very important.

In talking to ambassadors and delegates it was clear that there were two kinds of people. Those who considered themselves professional diplomats and needed only to uphold the *status quo*, and those who were on the lookout for a chance to innovate, who would not be obstinate to necessary change. The latter were perhaps in a slight majority and they were mostly younger and more progressive in consequence.

This more progressive group was alive and open to new ideas and could appreciate the need for a world-wide revolution in education based on a deeper understanding of man rather than on what he would learn or accumulate.

I am reminded of what Sri Aurobindo has said on the type of individuals who would most help the future of humanity in the new age : "*those who will recognise a spiritual evolution as the destiny and therefore the great need of the human being.*"

The young people issuing from the world's universities intuitively feel the urge of the evolutionary movement. However ignorant or wayward the form this urge takes, it indicates the direction of change, an endeavour to extend one's consciousness into inner territories of undiscovered experience. The form is ignorant or wayward through the agency of drugs or rebel experiences, but it breaks down outworn social mores and the hypocrisies of racial dogma.

It appears that the child of today has been precipitantly born into a world unfit or unready to receive him. That we should do something about this is obvious. Obvious also is the fact that it is through education on a completely revised level of thinking

that the answer is to come. But who is to initiate such a revolution in education as would be needed to bring this about?

Only a sufficiently authoritative body like the United Nations, using the awakened auspices of UNITAR or UNESCO to bring about a World University where the most advanced research and practical means to implement research projects on the New Education could be freely worked out, could be successful if it collaborated with those who are aware of the immediate needs.

Where a change is necessary and where change is already taking place, there something quite significant is likely to happen.

This is how I saw the people going about their multifarious activities in the not-uninspiring atmosphere of the United Nations Building.

There is more than a mixing of races and cultures, there is an integration of ideas, and a will to know what makes one man think differently from another.

There is a surprising atmosphere of 'youth' where one would expect to find a staid majority of mature if not aged diplomats, and this atmosphere echoes the very structure of the inside beauty and modern architecture of the United Nations Building.

There is the occasional bored, sophisticated blankness in the face behind the information desk but there is more often to be found a surprising enthusiasm in a guide who finds an interested audience of visitors.

On invitation to attend the closed session of the Second Committee of the General Assembly on December 3rd, 1969, when the Draft Resolution concerning the idea of an International University was passed, I was most agreeably surprised to find an atmosphere of friendly concordance among the various ambassadors and delegates.

It seemed that whatever happened to be the rigid policies of their respective governments these representatives were determined to behave and act on the highest level of civilised co-operation.

As Sri Aurobindo says in his Postscript Chapter to *The Ideal of Human Unity*:

"As regards the actual conditions at the moment...most men nowadays look with dissatisfaction on the defects of the United Nations Organisation and its blunders and the malignancies that endanger its existence...and regard with doubt the possibility of its final success. This pessimism it is unnecessary and unwise to share...progress towards its (UNO's) perfection, even if it cannot be easily or swiftly made, must yet be undertaken and the frustration of the world's hope prevented at any cost. There is no other way for mankind than this, unless indeed a greater way is laid open to it by the Power that guides...or some sudden evolutionary progress, a not foreseeable leap, *saltus*, which will make another and greater solution of our human destiny feasible."

The momentous question to be answered is: Has there come about any significant change in world consciousness to justify considering another and greater solution of our human destiny?

The answer is Yes. It is clearly observed here in the Ashram that a leap in consciousness has been made—the results of which have been seen manifesting themselves

over the years, especially in the very young children. Their sense of values has changed. They have a power to think clearly. The four centres—physical, vital, mental and psychic—are not in chaos as was the case only some years ago. They intuitively know the essential truth in things. The thinker of the past tended to make things and events abstract; the child of tomorrow, like the mystic or the yogi, tends to make thought become concrete. This child of tomorrow is beginning to project thought into feeling and sensation and concrete action.

Communication, these children are finding, need not be confined or limited to one aspect of mental projection but can be enjoyed on several levels. This gives us the hope that the Ashram and the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education will provide the foundation for a new era in education, perhaps in Auroville as a World University where these progressive ideas for the future destiny of man can be worked out on an international and world level of understanding.

The foundation upon which this suggestion stands is the Sri Aurobindo Ashram with its fifty years of research in integral yoga dealing with all the problems of man and the science of living as an individual in a growing and evolving community.

The contribution Sri Aurobindo's works make to this new change of consciousness is the most significant of our age, as they are perhaps the only exegesis of the authoritative spiritual experience which participates in this new Truth Consciousness.

Auroville would be a universal city devoted to the New Education on an international level in an unfolding consciousness.

If a World University is to be at all effective it must itself be a city evolving into the future. Its entire resources must be so structured as to serve the evolving consciousness of man in an expanding universe. The whole city must be the university with all the possibilities of dealing with world problems. Education will be for the whole of life and will have to take cognisance of the whole man, his inner as well as his outer life—his physical, vital, mental and spiritual existence.

The subjective side of man's consciousness may be new to the *parvenu*—the recently educated masses—but to the ever-existent élite it is as ancient as man himself. To the man of tomorrow it is an urgent necessity for survival.

The World University at Auroville could well serve as the prototype or *Alma Mater* for other International Centres of Learning whereby the New Education for the Future of Man could be initiated, fostered and manifested throughout the whole world.

NORMAN C. DOWSETT

WAY UP TO CHEENA PEAK

A ROSY view of the calling peak
Had fired the will alone.
The burden of its winding height
Pressed down on flesh and bone.

The lever that could lift my feet
Was the hill-guide's gripping tale:
One awesome Yogi's figure skimmed
The sprawling woodland trail.

With the penultimate corner turned
There burst upon my eyes
A crescent bower of imperious pines
Perched on some paradise.

Nay, now I stepped in a mystic ring
Where sweet adoration glows
Over ash-bare priestly towers of trance,
And a hymnal magic flows

Through sprightly tops of myriad tongues.
Perhaps some mystic choir
That stood dawn after ancient dawn
With God-love all afire

Lives green-embodied on this ledge
Rooted in abounding bliss—
Nature with soul's deep impress rich,
Soul richer by her kiss.

Senses adrowse, in a timeless spell,
Across this grove I sped—
Past rolling dells to roseate peaks
By one roused Presence led.

NARESH

LIFE, POETRY, LOVE, DEATH

A READER'S CRITICISM OF A POEM AND THE POET'S REJOINDER

A Reader's Criticism

Dear Mr. Sethna,

I read your poem *Love and Death* in the *Mother India* of December 5, 1969.¹ Your first line, "We sign mortality in our marriage-beds" has a fribbling intervention of mund. Marriage is a flame which must have lighted you. The poem is rigged up in 'dense divinity' which presumes an ego to feel with. 'Mating' itself takes lines unknown which are more interesting than becoming 'immortal'.

The writhing movement of 'f'-sounds in the eighth line, "From a fast-failing fire of fearful flesh", takes us to the body's doom which is a self-inflicted doom. There is inevitable defeat in using the word 'hermaphrodite'.

My God, why do you find 'the grave's gape in each kiss'? Does it not lose the sensational potency of a poet? One may have hunger for a woman or for a pound of apricots. I feel that you have pitched all your wits against 'flesh'.

¹ 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-glummer 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 depths where the Perfect lives all dreams
A dense divinity no time-strokes cleave.

The Poet's Rejoinder

Dear Professor X,

Thank you for your letter about my poem. I suppose you expect me to comment on your criticism.

Well, as Gertrude Stein would have said—or perhaps has said—"A poem is a poem..." You are a Professor of English, not of Philosophy or Erotics. So why not give primarily an aesthetic response to my lines? I don't see—except in one place—that you have considered them as poetry at all. And in this one place I am afraid you have caught the rhythm wrongly. You speak of "the writhing movement of 'f'-sounds in the eighth line, 'From a fast-failing fire of fearful flesh'." What you have mistaken for writhing is really the trembling, quivering, flickering movement that is natural to an 'f'-alliteration, as in Shakespeare's

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

Shakespeare has a twofold rhythm—with sibilants accompanying the fricatives—because he wants to suggest not only the "evermore unrest" (as one of his Sonnets has it) of life but also the soothing end of it like a perpetual falling into slumber by a fever-ridden patient. I have kept up the restlessness all through in order to suggest life's process of brief burning and the fear within it that vitality might soon vanish, leaving no trace behind of the body's passionate existence. No doubt, life has other aspects than this, but I am not concerned with all of them: I am concerned with one, and the relevant question from the literary point of view is whether I have expressed it successfully. You don't raise this question. And nothing of the poem's aesthetic gesture and posture has gone home to you. Is it a good poem or not? Has it felicity of word and rhythm, intensity of vision, force of style, the ultimate quality of being felt as a whole? I should expect you to ponder this issue before discussing the "philosophy" of the verses or the element of erotic truth in the imaginative picture.

Let me come now to your quarrel with my attitude and message. You refer to "a fribbling intervention of mind" in my opening sentence:

We sign mortality in our marriage beds.

"Intervention of mind" I admit—in the sense that here is poetry of thought probing the problem of love. Thought surely is legitimate in poetry provided it is not abstract but moves with an intuitive edge. I do not plead guilty to "fribbling". I should say I am doing the very opposite of being frivolous: I am taking the phenomenon of love more seriously than people usually do. I am trying to understand why there is in us the urge to mate, and I say that it is because we are incomplete beings—incomplete both inwardly and outwardly—and one of the marks of our incompleteness is our little span of life, our mortality. To escape this sense of a life ending too soon and putting a *funus* to our hopes and dreams and aspirations, we move towards procreation, a continuance of our beings in the form of our children, a multiplication of our selves beyond the death of the body, a vicarious immortality. And in the act of reproduction there is also a drive of idealism: we have the vague prayer within us that our children may

be wonderful—paragons of beauty, vessels of light, embodiments of happiness. The completion we ourselves lack is, instinctively, sought for in what we create: this is the point of the word “hermaphrodite” which I have used: it symbolises the wholeness that is not ours, the consummation of the fragmentariness which pushes us towards a counterpart. And I have qualified the word with the epithets: “impossible” and “unfading”. The latter implies the overcoming of the death dogging us; the former has the double sense of an ideal perfection and an unrealisable ideal. We fail here: our children prove to be like us—both fragmentary and mortal. Every time we make the vain attempt in our marriage-beds to pass beyond these hallmarks of our existence we confirm them. If we wish to achieve plenitude and perpetuity of being, we must search for their secret in another way.

Much of this import you seem to have missed. You mention “a self-inflicted doom” and accuse me of using words so as to involve “inevitable defeat”. But the doom and defeat are in the nature of things. Against that fact you have only the peeved protest: “‘Mating’ itself takes lines unknown which are more interesting than becoming immortal.” Nobody denies other lines; but my pointers are no mere trifling. And I may add that you are off the mark when you exclaim: “My God, why do you find ‘the grave’s gape in each kiss’? Does it not lose the sensational potency of a poet?” I grant that a poet must have “sensational potency”. But it would be illegitimate to confine it to the enjoyment of kisses or, as you say afterwards, having “hunger for a woman or for a pound of apricots”. No doubt, Shakespeare showed “sensational potency” in the exquisite intensity of love he portrayed in *Romeo and Juliet* and the tremendous immensity of passion he depicted in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Striking indeed is the “sensational potency” of the lines:

O she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear,

or

Age cannot wither her nor custom stale
Her infinite variety,

or

Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows’ bent, none our parts so poor
But was a race of heaven.

Yet is there a poverty of “sensational potency” when Romeo himself agonises in the vault:

And here

Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh,

or when Cleopatra adjures the asp:

Come, mortal wretch,

With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate
Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool,
Be angry, and despatch.

Not life but death is desired in these two passages: the foiled vital current turns awry and abandons the world of the senses. Again, there is disgust with that world in Hamlet's cry—

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!...
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

or in the Prince's recoil—

Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty...

Would you say that "sensational potency" is absent in these outbursts which hardly celebrate the earth as a bed of roses or appreciate the pleasures of the marriage-bed? Macbeth too is surely not lacking in "sensational potency" with such words as:

I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf:
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath...

or—leading on to a line already quoted—

Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

Lear also comes with splendid poetry though his bowels have turned against life and love. He shouts to the storm on the heath—

Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
That make ungrateful men!—

and he castigates women and their passions—

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
Though women all above,
But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiends':

There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit...

Then take Shakespeare of the Sonnets. Has he forfeited "sensational potency" by penning the passages:

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action,

or

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth that disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please,

or

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fooled by these rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay,
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?

To cut a long story short: "sensational potency" for a poet does not lie solely in exalting the sexual desire, praising life and love, pleading the cause of flesh. It can be just as manifest, just as dynamic, just as magnificent in the exact reverse of all these turns. A poet remains a poet, and retains all his "sensational potency", as long as he charges his language with seeing and feeling, as long as his speech is of things proved upon his pulses. If you can show that my poem is not vivid, vision-packed, impassioned in its call beyond physical passion, then I shall admit that I have lost my poetic spirit.

Most probably you will here argue: "Is there not a contradiction in terms when a man talks of sensationally denying the life of the senses? If a poet is a poet only by speaking in the language of sensation, then surely the life of the senses must be understood as being of paramount importance for him. He is going against his own grain by refusing that greatest of sensations: making love to a woman."

There are a number of *non-sequiturs* in the argument. First of all, about the problem we can say from the practical standpoint what was said when Stephenson's steam-engine was put on trial before sceptical theoreticians of science: *soluitur ambulando*, "it is solved by the moving". In other words, the problem here is solved by the very fact that superb poetry has been made down the ages and can still be made for all that may run counter to what you consider of paramount importance for the poet. Secondly, making love to a woman is not of the essence of the sense-life: it is just one mode of it: there are various other modes like Wordsworth's animistic and pantheistic Nature-love, Keats's happy self-identification with every kind of natural energy and form, Rupert Brooks's intimate response of joy to the touch of objects, the craftsman's love of moulding matter, etc. Thirdly, the senses are not, in their origin, merely physical powers. the life of the Spirit is a life of inner vision, inner contact, inner fusion—it is a life of concrete experience of the Divine and of marvellous uni-

verses beyond the physical, it is a life in which the Infinite and Eternal are no abstractions but the uttermost Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, the Heaven of Heavens, the Platonic World of Archetypal Forms, the Supreme Beauty, the Inexhaustible Love. All that we know of the sense-life in the physical universe, including enjoyment of woman and union with her, is a pale shadow of the sensuousness of the Spirit. The shadow, however, has a value and can be used and may be used both for life and poetry. What its origin permits is that it can be used easily and splendidly for an expression of spirituality. If some part of it is found obstructive to the spiritual trend, it can be avoided without the other parts needing to be sacrificed. Even in the doubtful part, there can be a Spirit-helpful aspect which may be sifted from its opposite and a new "sensational potency" established with the old terms brought into a new relation. A man and a woman can be close friends, with a pure passion between them—and that would be a "sensational potency" too, but clear of sex, clear of ordinary excitement.

If you like to believe that, merely because I have seen and expressed the tragic frustration of life behind the ecstasy human beings prize so much and because I look for a greater and intenser fulfilment of our embodied existence, I have pitched all my wits against flesh, you are welcome to do so. But to my mind you will have only shut your eyes to the deeper truths of the divine adventure of the Word made flesh. I have argued that poetry even in a non-vitalistic vein can be fully poetic if the non-vitalism itself has been imaginatively and emotionally experienced and uttered. But, of course, if one lives too ascetically and turns away from

Life that is deep and wonder-vast,
or fails to feel that

The world is charged with the grandeur of God,
and no cry rises in one like

Glory be to God for dappled things—
well, then one may be said to have pitched one's wits against flesh. Very few poets, however non-vitalistic, have lost their keen response to the world's beauty. And a mystic poet of the Aurobindonian Yoga will never do so. It seems to me absurd to contend that by passing beyond the sexual urge one ceases to be thrilled by the colour and shape and pattern of things. Even the beauty of a woman's face and form can thrill one without one's getting into a fever to mate with her or to treat her like a pound of apricots.

Here I may note your fling at me: "Marriage is a flame which must have lighted you. The poem is rigged up in 'dense divinity' which presumes an ego to feel with." I don't know what precisely you mean by "rigged up". I guess you imply some sort of obsession with or unnatural absorption in being "divinised". And you see the ego rampant there. But all idealism, mystic or otherwise, cannot be branded as obsession and suspected of egoism. To dream of and hope for an ultimate divinisation of the body by some super-Yoga may be like what older generations used to call 'crying for the moon'. But to set one's idealism so high need not be

an egoistic movement, nor can we assert, in view of the recent moon-landings, that it is an ache for the unattainable. Your accusation of egoism is too hasty. You hardly know the constant emptying of ego that the Yogic discipline demands. As for the other part of your statement, it is certainly a fact that if my father had not married my mother I would not have been born. I am not a cynical celibate like the one who wanted his own epitaph to be:

I've lived quite glad
Without a dame:
I wish my dad
Had done the same.

I am thankful that I have come into this world, but before I accept "marriage" as the divinely appointed destiny of man at all times I have to inquire what the ultimate purpose of all this evolution through the millennia of earth's history has been. Marriage—or rather, mating—has been Nature's means up to now of bringing souls into the world and of continuing the existence of the race, as well as of making men and women feel less fragmentary for the time being. But even if no substitute means is available at present it does not follow that all humans should go in for marriage and mating throughout their lives. If some exceptional seekers of Perfection feel that by entirely avoiding them they can attain a finer and deeper and wider consciousness, beneficial to themselves and to others, they are quite justified in cutting them out. The race will not come to an end by their *brahmacharya*. Thousands and thousands will always be there to propagate their kind. Of course, to preach to the whole world at present to abstain from marriage and mating at all periods would be an anti-life movement. But to tell the whole world that at some time or other, before all life-powers fail, a person should turn away from his practice so far of procreation and go in for the spiritual experience, the transcendence of desire in a vast Brahmic Consciousness or in a rapturous Bhakti-surrender to the Personal Deity—to tell this is surely nothing anti-life. Rather it is a call to Super-life. Indian Culture has always sent forth this call with its system of the four *āshramas*. I see a great wisdom there and refuse to shrivel up in shame at your jibe.

K. D. SETHNA

DE PROFUNDIS AND KARAKAHINI

THE awakening of the soul to a deeper faith in man and God is the unique feature of all great prison literature. There comes a trying moment in the history of prison life when the man troubled with agony and despair loses the meaning of existence. It is at this psychologically critical moment that people become mad and often end by committing suicide. Here, to use Carlyle's apt phrase, is the 'Everlasting No' that drives away all hope and faith. An utter disillusionment and a 'giant doubt' overwhelm the being. But one who can endure this state understands the inner significance of life. For, essentially it is, as Sri Aurobindo terms it, 'the supernatural darkness' that falls on man when he nears God.

Most of all who suffer passing through such an ordeal are the men sentenced to solitary confinement. It is the worst kind of punishment that can befall anyone for the very reason that it inflicts mental agony which slowly dries up the springs of life and thus debases the being. The monotonous drudgery of daily life, the want of human contact, the complete mental isolation, the physical hardships with a meagre supply of detestable food drive the victim towards insanity.

Perhaps all prisoners confined to solitary imprisonment confront such a critical situation; particularly those who were well-placed in society, poets, artists and intellectuals. Few endure, still less can record, it in adequate and effective words. One of the few whom all have read is Oscar Wilde, who recounts in simple yet exquisite and moving words his prison experiences. He reminds us of Sri Aurobindo who narrates to us in his *Karakahini* the story of his prison life in a manner at once beautiful and humorous—though the resemblance between them is somewhat superficial compared to the vast difference that lies in the nature of the experience as well as in the level of expression. Each of the writers creates his special effect and impact on the reader.

As we go through the pages of Wilde's *De Profundis* we clearly hear two insistent cries different in tone and character: one of revolt and one of submission. They run along, overriding each other till at the end the latter gains the ascendancy. These notes represent the two distinct phases of Wilde's life. The first is based on the kind of life spent before the prison days. The second surged up from the depths of his soul when he underwent an inner conversion in his solitary cell.

Life prior to the imprisonment was spent in 'senseless, sensual ease'. He indulged in all kinds of pleasures. So he confesses with a note of regret: "I threw the pearl of my soul into a cup of wine." He ever trod the sunlit paths of pleasure shunning the darker and gloomier bypaths of sorrow as being modes of imperfection. In contrast to that, the prison life with its physical hardships and mental torture filled his joy-seeking heart with agony and pain. This made him revolt. Besides, he had come of noble stock and occupied a distinguished position in society and in the field of litera-

ture, so he could not bear to be humiliated by the infamous, ignominious treatment. His artistic temperament suffered much. Moreover, his own dear children who could bring sweetness and light into his dry dreadful life were snatched away from him. As a result he revolted against the adamant laws and above all the inhumanity of society.

We find here some parallelism with Sri Aurobindo's life. For he too was a man of noble birth who had a high repute in the social, literary and political fields and was inhumanly treated by the British gaol authorities who considered him to be the most dangerous enemy of their empire. Yet how different is his reaction! No doubt, in him too there was a kind of revolt that was not against society or the Government but against God. For, he who had taken up the service of the country as God's appointed work was very much bewildered and upset by the rude deprivation, as he could not see God's purpose behind it. But the gradual submission to God gave him the right vision. He saw Vasudeva everywhere. This is how he describes his overwhelming experience in simple, vivid and forceful words: "I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover. This was the first use of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies."

Not only did he see God present in all objects, but he also heard His voice assuring him guidance and protection. Thenceforth he accepted whatever happened to him in the understanding that God is the cause of everything and that none of His ways are meaningless. This enabled him to watch the scene with a philosophic eye and obtain spiritual enlightenment. He was highly amused to see how the British Government tried hard to prove him guilty. Wilde was looked down upon by society while Sri Aurobindo had a crowd of angry eyes fixed on him. These were the powerful British officials who were ever on the watch for an opportunity to degrade him. Society had nothing but high regard for his unique self-sacrifice.

Wilde, on the other hand, being filled with self-pity, suffered a lot. He ultimately came to the conviction that the only way to get through such a painful life was by resorting to 'a front of brass and a lip of scorn'. The endless privations and restrictions of prison life made him, as a man and an artist, more and more bitter and rebellious. Ultimately no religion, no morality, no logic could console his suffering soul. Grief-stricken, he even thought of suicide. He would have drastically put an end to his life, had not the saving grace of Christ intervened and shown him a nobler way.

Here we remember Sri Aurobindo, how he too confronted a similar crisis which fortunately lasted for a very short time. The lack of human company, the haunting loneliness in the solitary cell, the cheerless prospects in the prison dragged him to the point of madness. 'Shaking with the terror of being overcome by insanity' he fervently prayed to God to preserve his intelligence. That very moment the mercy of God rained on his being, soothing the torture-stricken mind and filling his shaken heart with bliss. This single moment gave him strength and courage not only to remain untouched by the suffering but to derive joy from it. It is precisely the realisation of Vasudeva and His immanent Presence in all things alike, beautiful and ugly, noble and mean, that enabled him to pass successfully through the dangerous ordeal. From that moment on he had nothing but kindness and sympathy for the victims of human injustice, cruelty and torture.

Wilde too arrives at such a state, but in a different manner; he remains above all suffering for he sees into the inner meaning of pain. He reached a poise after a long time of conscious effort, passing through incessant struggle, revolt and despair. He then began to see things with a calm philosophic mind. Gradually a positive attitude set in, sweeping away the rebellious mood. He took up the fatalistic viewpoint to explain the cause of his imprisonment. In the past, Fate had allotted him his share of sorrow from which he had turned away when there had been springtime in his heart.

The perception of this invisible Justice gave him strength and courage to live. He adopted a stoic attitude and accepted all without any sort of complaint, fear or reluctance. In fact this is the real significance of humility—'a frank acceptance of all experience,' as Wilde defines it. No more did he regret having come to the prison. Instead, he was happy to have found an opportunity to transform all that was base, cruel and degrading 'into noble moods of thought and passions of high import'. Neither was he ashamed of the punishment, for only after it could he think, walk and live with freedom. Otherwise he had to live in perpetual disgrace. So he writes: "...the beauty of the sun and moon, the pageant of the seasons, the music of daybreak and the silence of great nights, the rain falling through the leaves, or the dew creeping over the grass and making it silver—would all be tainted for me, and lose their healing power, and their power of communicating joy. To regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development. To deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life. It is no less than a denial of the soul."

Besides, he felt positively the need to be cheerful and so tried to converse with his friends in a good humour. It is then that he marked within himself a desire for life. He now longed to live so that he might explore the new world of sorrow. He probed deep into the subject to find the significance of pain. He understood how sorrow purifies and chisels man to greatness. Sorrow is the supreme emotion in man and is the type and test of all great art and life. He was happy and thanked society for having sent him to prison and made him pass through the purifying fire of sorrow.

Out of all this a religious sentiment grew. Earlier, Wilde never believed that God had made the world, for the very presence of suffering and misery proved

that it was not so. But now he realised that God alone had created the world out of love. Even sorrow is His creation. In fact it is that which 'remarries us to God'. This being so, one should love everything. His attitude towards the prison's hard bread shows to what extent he realised the fact. For he relished to his heart's content the coarse dry food and ate up even the crumbs not out of hunger but out of love. Nothing should be wasted. So one should look on love. Such is his gospel of love which spurred him on to lead a new life. He was sure that in spite of being penniless and absolutely homeless he could beg and live provided he had love in his heart. And if one really wants love one is sure to find it everywhere. He was convinced that nothing in the world is meaningless. For him, as for Gautier, 'le monde physique existe', but he has to look behind it. This quest for some mystic vision brought him a new vision of Christ whom he puts forward as a supreme example to be followed in life as well as in art. For Christ is himself a supreme artist. His very life is a poem that depicts mystery, strangeness, pathos, ecstasy, love—all the great moods of life. He himself is like a work of art. "He does not teach anything, but by being brought into his presence one becomes something and everyone is predestined to his presence." In fact Wilde expressed his desire to write on two themes : one is Christ as the precursor of the romantic expression in life, the other is the artistic life considered in its relation to conduct.

In spite of the conviction that filled him with courage and faith he was seized with the fear of being rejected by society. So he wanted to retire into Nature "whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, and who will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may trace me to my hearth: she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitter herbs make me whole."

Such is the artist's mystic vision Wilde got out of his prison experiences. He saw things clearly in their right relation and acquired an intellectual attitude towards life. Had he lived long after his release it would have been interesting to see how he translated this attitude in his practical life. But he died just two years after his exit from prison. He was then forty-three years old.

It is with a conscious effort and a constant striving that Wilde had his vision. So we perceive a slow mental development and an evolution in his character which prepared the ground for a higher understanding light. Sri Aurobindo, having been already initiated into yogic sadhana and having attained a spiritual height, harboured an intense desire to know the Lord of his heart, the Supreme Person. Owing to 'worldly pulls' he could not direct all his attention to this sublime call. It is precisely in the prison that he found the opportunity to realise his aspiration. Therefore, right from the beginning of his imprisonment, he channelled all his efforts towards the fulfilment of his aim. With unflinching faith and selfless surrender he got what he wanted. So all the experiences he had were on a spiritual basis. Therefore they are more deep and convincing and have a lasting value since they appeal to the deeper parts of our being.

Things took a different course in Wilde's life. Being a worshipper of beauty and caring for name and fame, he could not not bear the filthy, sordid, inhuman life, still less the humiliating treatment. So he vehemently protested. It was only after a long period of endless suffering of soul that he turned his gaze inward. He saw the profound truth of all things and even of suffering and thus came to know to what extent pain is an indispensable condition of the highest beauty. This inner conversion is far from the spiritual conversion that came upon Sri Aurobindo. It is more of the nature of an intellectual artistic conversion born out of the oppressive circumstances of gaol life.

As the quality of substance varies in both the books so also does the style, which to a large extent is in conformity with the subject matter. The fundamental difference lies in the dominating tones which with equal intensity run through the pages of both the books. Wilde is serious and deeply emotional. In spite of his rebellious mood and grave tone he is calm and expresses his feelings sensitively, subtly, in a highly poetic style. The reader is often swept off by the beauty and the music of the words and by the poetic imagery. He practiced faithfully the doctrine of the aesthetic school of which he was a famous exponent. Out of the depths of his soul he created this book which indeed, as he wished, plucked out 'the tongue of scorn by the roots' and established him once again as an eminent artist.

Sri Aurobindo is extremely humorous. The witty remarks, the pricking irony against the British Government, the use of highly philosophic terms for the simple objects of daily life make the book delightful reading. Especially the chapter in which he describes his unforgettable cell and the priceless multipurpose object that he used and the unique *lufsi*—a rice preparation, which like a sacred trinity takes three forms—sends us into peals of laughter. Wilde makes us merely smile at times Sri Aurobindo makes us laugh again and again. He takes everything in a spirit of play—as a *līlā* wherein he highly enjoys his own part and watches those of others with gusto. The prison seems a stage on which a comedy is being enacted.

But the constant humour does not divert our attention from the true value and depth of his experiences. The unwavering faith in man and in God, the realisation of the Supreme Lord, breathe into us a spiritual feeling. These experiences reveal to him profound truths of the Spirit that have a lasting value for his later life.

However, to begin with, both Wilde and Sri Aurobindo had to suffer though the duration varied. Later, with the intensity of the inner conversion, there came a difference in experience of the higher truth. Sri Aurobindo, destined to show mankind a new light had first himself to realise the fundamental Reality. It is through the signal event of prison life that a number of deeper verities were revealed to him. That is how the Divine Intelligence works; through a minimum of means He achieves a variety of results which are beyond all human comprehension. Sri Aurobindo is one of the very few who endured the seemingly everlasting night and awoke to a brighter dawn of God.

Both Wilde and Sri Aurobindo came out of prison changed beings carrying with them a new light that showed them a nobler way. They grew rich with an

experience and a wisdom that entirely altered their outlooks on life. Wilde got what he wanted—a semi-mystical intellectual vision of Christ in the form of Beauty and Love. It is very difficult to envisage how far this kind of conversion would have an enduring influence on life's activities and on a desire like Wilde's to live a semi-mystic life in Nature's ideal surroundings. Sri Aurobindo realised the Supreme Cosmic Godhead in all His splendour and beauty, the permanent sense of whom he later expressed eloquently and vividly in his Uttara Speech. He emerges as an enlightened yogi, acquiring a deep perception and a spiritual understanding of things which enable him to march 'in front of the immemorial quest'. He was in fact a 'colonist from immortality' destined to lead humanity towards the Divine Life.

NANDA REDDY

KAVI CHAKRAVARTI KAMBAN

CAUSERIES ON TAMIL NAD'S GREATEST POET

(Continued from the issue of January 1970)

XIII

HEAVEN-ON-EARTH

AFTER dismounting from the boat, the Dowager Queens mounted palanquins and continued their journey. But Bharata, whose eyes received a never-failing supply of fresh tears, trudged along on foot. Finally, he reached the hermitage of Saint Bharadwaja, who was mounted high on God-consciousness and who had obtained many a gift from God as a reward for his long and sustained penance. The Sage received Bharata with open arms and blessed him. The Sage asked,

“Why not wear the proffered Crown,
and seize the realm
that's come your way?
Why come hither,
with matted locks, in hermit's weeds?”

Bharata was irritated that this all-seeing Sage should fail to see the justice of his cause. He said,

“Your questions ill become me,”
and added, after a pause,
“Your questions ill become you.”

Repressing his intense anger, he declared:—

“Not for me the lawless Crown!
Should the Lawful One decline it,
the forest shall be my home,
and stay with him I will,
till the end of Time.”

This noble utterance thrilled Bharadwaja, who led him affectionately into the hermitage. The Saint, whose palms had turned crimson by constant tending of the sacrificial fire, announced, “I will entertain this army to a feast.”

Out of the richness of renunciation
the Sage sent out a thought;
at once, Heaven came floating downward
and settled softly upon the Earth.
In this Paradise

the enraptured guests revelled
 oblivious of antecedent cares;
 verily, did they feel reborn
 into a fresh fantastic world.

ROCK-DUST

Leaving Bharata and his retinue in this enchanted Heaven-on-Earth, the Poet takes us to the Chitrakuta Hills, where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are holidaying. One day, as Lakshmana was sitting in the courtyard of the cottage, which he had built with his own hands, he saw something moving hazily in the dim distance.

Close by stood a cliff,
 a cliff, which looked like a tapering tongue of flame
 shot out by the Earth.
 Climbing up this cliff
 and standing on its summit,
 Lakshmana looked northward and saw
 a sea of arches and bows, which laughed
 The sea of billows to scorn.

There was little doubt that it was Bharata's army on the march. Rash, devoted and easily excitable like Guha, Lakshmana misjudged Bharata's motive and lost no time in taking hurried steps to resist the enemy.

Down to the ground he jumped
 and, stamping his feet on the rocks,
 he raised a cloud of rock-dust.
 Rushing to Rama, he roared,
 "Unrespecting Bharata
 is coming down upon you
 with Ayodhya's extensive hordes."

Lakshmana had no time to waste words:

Putting on his sword and battle-anklets,
 bearing on his back his multi-arrowed quiver,
 donning his coat-of-arms and locking it tight,
 he lifted his bow
 and, touching Rama's feet in reverence,
 he spoke:
 "Your heart will presently rejoice
 seeing my solitary valour pitted against
 the bigness of the shoulders of Bharata
 (who has forfeited the Here and the Hereafter),
 and against the majesty of the Army
 created by the King."

In his mind's eye Lakshmana sees an Armageddon, the bloody scenes of which he describes with picturesque and war-like relish.

"And you will see, too,
rivers of blood
flowing and gurgitating into all the seas,
wiping out all Evil,
upturning and rolling those Island-elephants,
sweeping down chariots,
flushing out clotted entrails in their impetuous course,
and you will see many more things."

Kamban, who knows how to turn the smallest detail to dramatic account, would not let this blood-river go to waste. He makes Lakshmana say:

"And you will see
red demons, slit-eyed dwarfs
and headless trunks
swimming and bathing in the surging blood-tide
and dancing gaily, like the Celestials,
and shouting,
'The Kingdom has become yours.'

"By command of the King,
who, out of lust for a woman,
plunged the Earth in agony,
Bharata now rules the World.
And by *my* command,
he will give up ruling the World
and start reigning in Hell.

"Learning of your exile
your mother writhed in agony,
and seeing her,
Kaikeyi gloated in glee.
Now you will see Kaikeyi
falling to the ground
and rending the air
with shouts of grief."

AXLE OF PERFECTION

Rama is distressed to hear these terrible threats. He says.

"Lakshmana!
It needs no saying

that, should you decide to smash up the fourteen worlds,
 it would be hard to stop you.
 But would you listen to a thing
 which deserves pondering over?
 Oh! Warrior, whose shoulders
 compete in shapeliness with a well-turned-out Pounder!
 Numberless are the members
 of our royal clan,
 and spotless in character.
 Think of it,
 which one of them
 has ever departed from Virtue?

"Scriptures, no matter how numerous,
 Can only *talk* about virtue.
 But Bharata *acts* Virtue.
 What he does is Virtue,
 What he does not is not Virtue.
 You have thought not of this,
 on account of your love for me.

"Think you ill
 of that God of lofty Rigitousness,
 that Axle of Perfection?
 He's come, my noble boy,
 as you will discover presently,
 to pay his respects to me."

PORTRAIT OF AGONY

As Rama spoke thus, Bharata took Satrugna and rushed towards Rama in his eagerness to have a close look at him.

His hands uplifted in reverent salutation,
 his body sagging,
 his eyes dissolving in tears,
 Bharata came,
 like a painting done to declare,
 "This is the portrait of Agony!"

Rama gazed at Bharata from top to toe and, turning to Lakshmana said,
 "Look, my bow-twanging brother,
 look with both your eyes,
 at the 'war-thirsty' Bharata

leading the 'martial' battalions!"

The moment Lakshmana looked at the pathetic figure of Bharata, he realized he had rashly misjudged him.

The light on Lakshmana's face
disappeared;
and he stood startled,
his abusive words were stilled,
his tears plunged to the ground
along with his fury and his bow.

Bharata's figure is thin and worn out with grief. Approaching Rama, he complains,

"You have thought not of Virtue;
you have thrown compassion overboard;
you have abdicated the law."

So saying, he falls at Rama's feet as if he has seen, face to face, his dead father come back to life. With his tears Rama drenches the matted locks of Bharata and, lifting him tenderly, presses him close to his bosom. This spectacle moves Kamban to exclaim:

Thus did love-based Virtue
embrace
the Repertory of all that is Just.

Clasping Bharata,
Rama cast many a look
at his strange attire,
and many a wistful thought revolved in his mind.
Then he said:
"You are ground down with grief, my boy;
how fares the mighty king?"

Bharata replied:

"Sire, he's no more:
he's now a denizen of Heaven.
Having vindicated Truth,
which was his monopoly,
he has quit the Earth.
Separation from you is the disease that killed him;
the boon obtained by black Kaikeyi, my begetter,
is the Yama that choked up his life."

The searing words that Dasaratha was dead
entered Rama's ears
like a wound-piercing spear;

his eyes whirled and so did his mind,
 both revolving like a whirligig,
 and down he sank to the ground—
 the one who was greater than the greatest.

He breathed not a whit;
 He lay insensate,
 like a cobra struck with lightning.
 He came to
 at long last, and heaved a long sigh.
 He panted many a time
 and wailed:

“You were like an unquenchable Lamp, oh King!
 Father of the earthlings!
 Lonely Virtue’s Parent!
 Compassion’s Home!
 Oh, my father!
 Lion among chivalrous Kings!
 You have passed away, alas!
 leaving Truth uncompanioned for ever.”

DEATH AND MAN’S DUTY

As Rama was wailing like a lion in regal grief, his younger brothers and their princely retinue lifted him up and Sage Vasishtha uttered words of comfort:

“Death, too, like birth
 is a function of Nature.
 Forget you this truth?

You, that have mastered all the extant scriptures?”

There are countless creatures in the Universe which have no basic reality. They are but appearances, phantoms rising in the mind of God. These phantoms go through weal and woe and subject themselves to pleasure and pain endlessly. Yama, the God of Death, has been for ages observing this never-ending shadow-play and has become insensitive to all this seeming agony. How, then, can we expect Death to have compassion? Vasishtha continues,

“You have seen infants dying
 before they are delivered.
 Why then grieve over the death of a King,
 who has, for sixty thousand years,
 ruled the Earth,
 with the spotless fidelity of a wife?

Grieve not, my son,
perform oblations to his spirit
with your blameless hands."

Deriving comfort from these words, Rama went into a jungle stream nearby, had a bath and, with Vasishtha leading the ceremony, he performed oblations with water thrice. Now says the Poet,

Thus did he offer oblations—
the One who, inhering in every soul,
offers consciousness to them all.

SEA OF MISERY

Then Rama and Bharata go with the Saints, Kings and Ministers towards the hermitage built by Lakshmana.

Arriving there,
Bharata sighted the thatched hut
and sighted lonely Sita emerging out of it
and, pummelling his eyes with his fingers,
he fell flat at her feet and moaned.

Lifting grief-stricken Bharata with his long arms and turning to Sita, Rama announced,

"Father has died of separation from me."

Stunned by these words
she quivered,
turbid tears pouring down from her oceanic eyes,
and, planting her hands
on the Earth (her foster-mother),
she burst into an elegy,
which sounded like melodious music.

Rama's company had till now made the forest appear as gay to Sita as the city of Ayodhya, but with the news of the King's death she put her foot for the first time into the Sea of Misery.

(To be continued)

S. MAHARAJAN

HOMER, HOMERIC POETRY AND THE *ILIAD*

(Continued from the issue of February 21, 1970)

HOMER has more perplexities for some minds than one would think they need burden themselves with; and for all his clarity, in fact in his very clarity, he is sometimes problematical even to one who has not set himself to look for problems. But of course this is because he is a poet, who never yields his full secret, being inexhaustible; the power that animates his world comes from a long way within and above. It may be that he has more of the divine power and the divine beauty of poetry than the divine wisdom; this was the root of Plato's famous complaint against him, but rhythm itself is a great constructive wisdom, and is not wisely eschewed. Great poetry, indeed all genuine poetry, has the divine afflatus: it is lifted by its rhythm, and is not of the earth earthy. And without its surge and roll and thunder, its inexhaustible variety in its regularity, the *Iliad* would be something less than what it is.

Homer is a poet and one of the great benefactors of the race, and we can forget what he does not give or tell us in the enjoyment of what he does. But because he is a poet, and one who uses one of the most formal and exacting and powerful of meters, he cannot be adequately given to us in prose. A good prose version can give us a good working knowledge of the story, but that is all. And because that is all, so long as people respond to poetry there will not be wanting attempts to translate Homer with something approaching adequacy.

For it is not just the story that is important: it is the story and the way it is told, down even to the last apt word and rhythmical turn. We have heard of the man who "knew as many stories as Mark Twain, only he just never wrote them down". The literate know the worth of the assumption that the "mere writing down" is a triviality that anyone could take care of if he "had the time". And the writing down of poetry is not the same as the writing down of prose; an epic is not a novel.

Rhythm, meter, verse have been recognized as necessary to poetry, until just the other day; and the assumptions of the other day are wrong. The genuine poet recognizes the necessity of form, and to him it is an opportunity and a power, not a bondage. The Greek epic language itself was chosen and moulded to suit the meter, and the poets knew what they were about. One may have all kinds of poetical feelings and visions, but if he is to make poetry of them, he must have adequate form, which of course in successful poetry is not separable from the content and the meaning, any more than they are separable from a form that can do them justice.

We may be certain that the *Iliad*, being a poem, cannot be adequately given in a prose translation. Such a translation can of course be valuable; but it will be Homer only at a far remove. And there should be no compromising with the verse, and no

inhibited leaning to prose standards; also no "liberated" tendency merely to sprawl. There must be small regard for the demands of the age if the age is unpoetic; and people who insist that poetry should observe the standards and usages of prose, or should be "free", are people to whom the poet cannot afford to listen, if he wants to do serious work.

Thus, concerning certain recent versions of the *Iliad* in non-verse and broken semi-verse, there is nothing that need be said—except that anyone who finds them acceptable is a long way from even a decent respect for Homer.

We have at least five metrical versions of the *Iliad* that are still not without their value. Chapman's revelation to Keats is well known (a good deal better than his translation, which for all that does have its power); Pope has been praised by more than one sensitive mind,¹ Cowper has not been forgotten, Bryant has done good service, Lord Derby is clear and swift and noble, and to me the most readable of them all. But none of these is sufficient metrically, in form, though Derby comes closest to being so; and each of them works in a tradition that is foreign to Homer. And they have their native faults besides; though again Derby has more of the real heroic feeling and spirit than the others. Chapman sputters and flails, and tangles himself in the worst Elizabethan fustian, Pope has some literary and semi-philosophical ideas that he presents carefully in accordance with the acceptances and the expectations of his unpoetic time, Cowper is doubly ill-advised in trying to be Miltonic, because it does not suit Homer (who is not Vergil), and because it is beyond Cowper's talent; and Bryant is conscientious clear and dull, with no imaginative lift and light, each line of his falling after the other like a leaden bar. But Derby has the feeling and much of the capacity, and while he often cuts and often interprets, it is frequently felicitously and I think never objectionably. But still he does not have the requisite meter.

For surely Matthew Arnold was right in his eloquent insistence that the only meter fit for Homer is his own hexameter; the problem thus becoming, how to adapt this meter to English? There have been many attempts, but with small success; and the whole project has foolishly been called a "pestilent heresy": foolishly, because "heresy" has nothing to do with the matter, and because attempts to add to the riches of English poetry and increase the capacities of the language, even though they may largely fail, are laudable and not pestilential.

I do not consider the attempt at all impossible of achievement. One need only go at it in the right way, with a respect for the natural qualities of English: which way has been unfortunately obscured for many who have tried it, apparently by their very knowledge of Greek and Latin. For the rules of classical prosody cannot be applied to English, which is so strongly accentual that it simply will not modify the quantities of its words to suit a theory or a form. Still there have not been wanting attempts to make it do so, down at least to those so stubbornly perpetrated by Robert Bridges. Such wooden-headed atrocities have probably done more than anything else to throw

¹ Also Pope's preface is one of the best and most brilliant things ever written about Homer.

obloquy on the whole subject; for the hexameters of Longfellow, Clough and Kingsley are at least readable.

An illustration may help to clarify matters. Thus take this line:

Surpassing derelicts went wide of it and to bed in time.

This cannot be read as a dactylic hexameter, though it would qualify according to rules that might be advanced. Thus, if a vowel be decreed long by virtue of its being followed by more than one consonant, and if the final silent "e" be recognized to give a lengthening effect, then the line will scan:

— — / — — — / — — / — — — / — — — / — —

It has a good swing to it, if one reads it in this way; and the meaning of it is quite in harmony with the cogency of the theory; but still it will not do.

A word like "derelicts", though, could give a good cretic modulation to a really quantitative English hexameter.

Leaving aside the aberrations of those more learned than judicious, I think that good hexameter is by no means impossible in English. I think that in fact it has been achieved. We have the Juvenal of Ralph Humphries (though Juvenal does not require and indeed would not support hexameter at an epic level) and we have the great epic fragment *Ihon*, by Sri Aurobindo. Anyone interested in this subject is urged to read this latter work, and the theory of English quantitative verse that is appended to it: also the chapter on the hexameter in K. D. Sethna's acute and profound book, *The Poetic Genus of Sri Aurobindo*. Valuable too in this connection is Paul Elmer More's *The Science of English Verse*, in his first series of Shelburne Essays.

According to the Aurobindonian theory, there can hardly be a satisfactory hexameter in English that does not take quantity fully into account along with stress. Here it is important to remember that, while stress makes quantity, some words or syllables are naturally long and these, when employed without stress, can give a strength and a fullness to the line. Also in quantitative hexameter every trisyllable need not be a dactyl, or be made to sound like one, in violence to the natural rhythm of the language. Modulations are not only possible; they are obligatory, for variation and a subtlety of power. It is a great meter, and requires the full resources of the language. When the natural rhythm is scrupulously respected, as it must be, several modulations are available—of course to be used judiciously, or best with inspiration: cretic, palimbacchios, molossos, tribrach, amphibrach, 1st and 2nd paeon, even major ionic, even others. But there can be no rule, and no attempt to impose Classical usages and conditions on English. Some English words are variable in quantity, and the number and position of consonants seldom has much influence here: and what it has it has individually: not by a law that can be studied up and mechanically applied. Always in English verse the ear is paramount, the supreme judge and the last and indeed the only court of appeal. It is helpful to know the problem, and study the possibilities; but the main thing, the indispensable thing, is to have the hexameter in one's blood, and to flow with its amplitude and power. It is the lack of this qualification, with the cognate

lack of a suitable, a great enough theme, that, before Sri Aurobindo, largely vitiated all attempts to write the hexameter in English.

But I am not the first whom the surpassing great theme of the *Iliad* has attracted; neither do I expect to be the last: for even if I were completely satisfied with my own translation, which I am far from being, I am well aware that there cannot be a definitive and final translation of a great poem; also that the full naturalization of the hexameter is a great challenge and opportunity for English verse, and will continue to attract poets. The field is open, and may we have more and better hexameter.

The attempt has been made to render the *Iliad* in this suitable and correct meter at least six times before. I have examined the versions of Cayley, Dart, Herschel, Murison, and Smith and Miller, and found them interesting, and acceptable in some passages and lines or in small quantities, but positively unreadable overall. Ernle's version I have seen only in the excerpts given by Moses Hadas in his *The Greek Poets* (Modern Library). It seems to be based at least partly on that phenomenon we have briefly examined, the old and really pestilential attempt to force English to abide by Classical rules of quantity, which foolishness one has seen to plague more than one of such scholars as have not drunk deeply enough of the Pierian spring—or of perhaps what is more important for Homer, the fount of the Olympian Muse, who might have taught them that while artificial lengthenings and shortenings are possible and acceptable in Greek they are not in English.

As for my own success, the reader must be the judge. I can hardly tell him the work is good, if he cannot read it. Nor, I fear, can I have much to say to him, if his inability is simply a part of the widespread modern inability to read or appreciate verse at all, or feel its importance. I have not consulted the requirements of my time, if it has any in this respect; and my opinion here is that modern predilections and reactions are insignificant, because they have nothing to do with poetry. I have no interest in any attempt to discover that Homer has "relevance for our time". Such relevance I consider to be of minor, if not of factitious, importance. Homer is valuable for his own sake. And our time does not know how to make great poetry relevant; it has to attempt to lower it to prose: or, frightfully, to lower it beyond even good prose standards. As Matthew Arnold found it necessary to emphasize, one of the qualities of Homer is nobility. But if one translates Homer in accordance with the preferences and preoccupations and terrible ignorances of this present age, the result will necessarily be ignoble. Of this we have more examples than one or two. And so perhaps this is a good time after all, for Homeric translation: precisely because it has no definite or worthy standards that one need feel he has to meet and be directed by. He is free to come as close as he can to Homer. There is no accepted poetic tradition to get in the way, and the road is open for one to make as close an approximation to Homer's own tradition as he can.

There is a dictum, supported mainly by the feeble in a sort of special pleading, that poetry must "stick to the language of its own time" That this notion was assented to by Dryden (if not in fact invented by him) should be a sufficient cause for look-

ing upon it with at least a salutary suspicion; and most of the great poets seem to have ignored it altogether. Such men have a way of making their own language, and their utterance more often than not has little enough to do with what goes on colloquially. Poetry is almost by definition distinct from common language. Certainly Homer acted as if this were so; and his audience, we may be sure, rose to him, rather than demanding that he come down. An age in which people are not willing or able to rise to poetry is an age that is not likely to have any: like Dryden's, and even more, like the present. But the task of translating poetry at least is a different thing from the task of making a really poetical translation acceptable; and one must please oneself, only hoping that he may please others eventually. My attempt has been to give Homer, not Homer-for-today.

To speak of a translation as being "valid for its time" is to combine words without much regard for meaning. An adequate translation of Homer will be valid without reference to the time, as Homer himself is. And as Pope, even in the very midst of his own time, was cogently advised¹, his translation is a pretty poem, but not Homer. Though the accepted language of his time, for poetry, was more or less artificial and "poetic", it was not so in the Homeric way.

Pope and others have been defended on the ground that they gave their time what it required, but there is no real defense here—except perhaps to the thin semi-Hegelianism that passes for thought in some quarters nowadays. Homer is a fact, and his world is different from other worlds: and the worlds of the most considerable translators of Homer into verse have been inferior, in the qualities that make for great poetry, and the appreciation of it. What is, is right, says Pope, in the poor man's philosophy of the time: a time deficient both in poetry and in thought, and concerned mainly with such "reason" as should keep people from taking anything seriously enough to fight a war about it. So, then Pope's *Iliad* being inferior to Homer's and in fact a falsification of it—it is right for this to be. But what of it? We still have Homer, and the problem of putting him into English.

(To be continued)

JESSE ROARKE

¹ By Bentley, the discoverer of the lost digamma: one of the few real contributions to Homeric study.

GIFTS OF GRACE

(Continued from the issue of February 21)

VISIONS AND EXPERIENCES

“Experience in the sadhana is bound to begin with the mental plane” if there is an aspiration for a higher life and a “Godward emotional urge in the heart.” These are “the two first agents of Yoga”.

It should be noted here that there is a difference between a vision and an experience. In a vision we see a thing with the inner eye but do not feel its impact. There is at best only a suggestion. In an experience we feel something—at least there is a touch. It leaves a stamp on the deepest layers of our consciousness. And when we are able to live it, it becomes a realisation. “Vision is vision,” says the Mother, “experience is a gift.”

“The Yogi is one who is already established in realisation—the Sadhak is one who is getting or still trying to get realisation.”

“An experience of a truth in the substance of mind, in the vital or the physical, wherever it may be, is the beginning of realisation. I experience peace, I begin to realise what it is. Repetition of the experience leads to a fuller and more permanent realisation. When it is settled anywhere, that is the full realisation of it in that place or that part of the being.”

(Letters, Vol. IV, pp. 276)

Before coming in touch with the Mother, though I spent hours in Japa, Puja and Prayer, only once did I have an experience, the joy of which is still fresh in my memory.

I was seated in an open field at night doing Japa; all on a sudden my consciousness rose to the sky. For a moment I had no sense of the body and the world. I felt thrilled

Experiences, Sri Aurobindo says, one can always get once the barrier between the physical mind and the subtle planes is broken. When and how the barrier was broken I did not know. But my first contact with the Mother opened the flood-gates of both vision and experience. Then came a time when I had several of them even in the course of a day. Once, on my asking whether so many visions in a day indicated anything, I got the reply :

“A great activity of sadhana in the inner being.”

Q. : “I saw the entire figure of Shiva seated on my head; his whole body was shining like lightning; after that in place of the head there remained a deep, wide space full of white-red light. Was this an experience of the Self in the form of Lord Shiva ?”

Sri Aurobindo : “No—it is an experience of Shiva Power which is at once calm and dynamic.”

Q: "A vision with eyes open, another with eyes closed—is it the same?"

SRI AUROBINDO: "It is the same except that the physical sight takes part in the vision which shows that the physical consciousness is opening to the vision of the supraphysical things."

On another occasion the Master wrote to me:

"These visions are indications of things being done or prepared, or influences working—they must not be taken as the realisations themselves. When the whole being is fully and entirely offered, you will surely know it for you will feel it. At present it is that which is being prepared and worked out." (16.2.1936)

Even visions in common settings have splendid indications. For example:

Travelling by train in dream or in vision "was a symbol of a movement in Sadhana".

A vision of a white deer running fast in the heart indicated "speed of spiritual progress there".

A golden box meant "a formation of the Truth-Consciousness not yet filled".

"A tube must be the occult vision of the third eye—that is the inner vision centre in the middle of the forehead."

A white pillar from the sex-centre to the throat meant: "A pure spiritual connection between physical mental and physical proper."

A white Purusha from above meeting a white woman in the heart indicated: "Purified self-consciousness meeting the purified Prakriti in the Nature" (9.10.1936)

Garuda seen in a vision meant "*Vahana* of the Divine Force" or "an upward flight".

A parrot in pink colour meant "something of emotion psychicised".

A pink carriage indicated "Psychic progress in the mind".

"The statue has the usual significance of solidity in the consciousness."
(25.1.1937)

"White bricks indicate the building of a new consciousness." (23.6.1937)

Daybreak signified: "Beginning of the true consciousness." (28.9.1936)

The offering of the body as a fruit?

"The body here is the physical being and the sense of being a fruit offered indicates surrender."

A *Raj Hansa* (swan) in pink colour meant: "The psychic being."

A tree of white light signified: "The illumined life-force."

A crescent moon seen in the forehead indicated: "Progress under the light of a growing spirituality".

Om stands for "Brahman Consciousness or Cosmic Consciousness. Bindu is the individual self".

Once I saw a globe in the forehead. There was a feeling that it contained the whole world. When I asked whether it was a right vision the Master said, "Yes".

There are visions which hint at the working in the inner being.

Once I saw a house in flames, the fire seemed to be rising from below the earth,

SRI AUROBINDO: "Perhaps the burning of something in the subconscious."

About a dream-vision Sri Aurobindo wrote:

"The 'chaddar' indicates the higher consciousness acting in the sleep and wrapping it, as it were—only there is still something of the physical (subconscious) that still escapes from influence in sleep (both of the feet uncovered)." (19.5.1938)

Q: "Vision of a mirroring of golden light."

"The golden light is the inner mind. The mind is the mirror reflecting all that falls in it. The reflection upon it is a symbol of the mind opening to the inner light." (25.11.1936)

Q: "Vision of a triangle in the sex-centre, with a yellow-red light."

SRI AUROBINDO: "Offering in the whole physical being (physical mind, vital physical, mental physical—this is the triangle) through the physical mind consciousness (yellow-red light). The sex-centre—the physical consciousness."

Q: "Today I saw a sea with white light. At the farthest end I saw the sea very close to the sky as if rising high to meet it. The sky, full of bright white light, reflected itself on the sea. Mother, what does it imply?"

SRI AUROBINDO: "The sea represents the vital, the sky the mental consciousness; both being in the white light, the vital seems to meet the illumined mental." (16.6.1936)

Q: "On one occasion I saw the entire building of the Ashram rising up; it rose two or three times above its existing height; bright yellow-white light was falling upon it like the fall of a stream from the hills."

SRI AUROBINDO: "It is not at all clear what it can mean, yellow might indicate that the mental atmosphere of the Ashram rose up and got inundated with a bright light from the spiritual mind (bright yellow-white.)"

Q: "At one time I saw a huge yellow-coloured building standing where Golconde is being built. It had six or seven storeys. On each storey some sadhaks were standing, except at the top and on the ground floor. In front of the house facing the sadhaks, there was a big sun which seemed to be quite close to the house. What does this indicate? That none has yet reached the goal, etc.?"

SRI AUROBINDO: "Certainly, none has yet reached the goal. I suppose the top is the Supramental and the ground floor the physical and it indicates that none has yet attained what is necessary for the achievement of the one or the siddhi of the other." (22.10.1938)

Once or twice the Master's pen gave a light stroke of rebuke.

In the following letter of May 1938 Sri Aurobindo wanted me to learn the meaning of symbols instead of looking to him for elucidation. Just a few months after, the correspondence with Him stopped. Was it a hint of the coming future?

SRI AUROBINDO: "When the force comes fully into the body it gives a sense of strength and solidity like stone or steel, stone or steel is only a symbol of that. Red because the light of the physical is red—when it is obscure and tamasic and still inconscient then it is black. These things are all symbols and if you fix on your

mind the meaning of the symbols it is easy to understand." (16.4.1938)

At another time he wrote:

"Surely what you experienced was its own indication, so was the vision. If you experience peace, quietness, power, it means these things in the consciousness. It is not necessary to ask what it indicates; so with the vision of the Mother also. The thing that you felt was the greater force with which the realisation of peace, shanti, stillness the working of the power came. It is the stability of these things that has to be acquired." (1.1.1937)

Four months later I had another letter in the same vein:

"...Experiences and descents are very good for preparation but change of consciousness is the thing wanted. It is the proof that the experiences and descents have had an effect. Descents of peace are good but an increasingly stable quietude and silence of the mind is something more valuable. When that is there, then other things can come, usually one at a time, light or strength and force or knowledge or Ananda. It is not necessary to go on for ever having always the same preparatory experiences—a time comes when the consciousness begins to take a new poise and another state." (4.11.1937)

Here also the insistence is on the essential need for a change of consciousness.

It is in this direction the Master now turned the course of my sadhana. Instead of indulging my thirst for experiences I was enjoined to be careful about stabilising them in the consciousness so that they might form a true basis of sadhana. This new turn, given on New Year's Day, carried to me a special significance.

On June 20, 1938 I dreamt that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo had gone to some sadhak's house in a saloon car. Sri Aurobindo remained in the car and the Mother went out to see the sadhak. In the meantime someone came and said, Time is over. When Sri Aurobindo got down from the car I saw a black cooly behind him. A doubt in my mind led me to call people who were within the house, but they didn't care to listen to me. Then I sensed a conspiracy, and began to peep through the window. Just as the cooly was about to lift the dagger at Sri Aurobindo a thought flashed in my mind, "Thousands like me will come and go but his life will save thousands." I jumped out of the window and as the dagger pierced my back my eyes opened. At least in dream I could feel my life blessed. Five months after, the Master had an accident. Was it a premonition?

Q: "Perhaps there was something special in this evening meditation. Along with the rise of a feeling that the descent of the Supramental had taken place, I saw the entire body of Sri Aurobindo white and shining like the Sun. The whole of the surroundings was illuminated like the sun falling upon a white-washed wall. Does my vision augur what is going to happen shortly?"

SRI AUROBINDO: "It may be, but if so, it still belongs to the future." (22.10.1938)

This was the Master's last letter to me.

(To be continued)

A DISCIPLE

UNTIL I FORGET

UNTIL I forget what I have known
I do not know.
The brief bubble of the "I" and "mine",
How can it know?

Knowledge is to breathe the breath of the vast:
Struck by the wind,
The trembling bubble begins to burst
And know the Beyond.

Then is the sea that mirrors the blue—
Love is the link
To a birth without death miracle-true
No thought can think.

A. VENKATARANGA

SWEDEN, 67

Bloodstains on the snow!
Like flat, flimsy, strange,
Unwanted flowers with morning dew.

Bloodstains in the snow?

Crystallised anguish,
Pinkish patch of untold sorrow.
Couldn't pull the dog away.
Am I listening?
...Was it my own heart?

AMELITA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

SEVENTEENTH SEMINAR, 27th April 1969

WHY IS OUR YOGA AN ADVENTURE?

HUMAN life is a progressive movement because there is in man an urge, an aspiration for gaining new dimensions of knowledge, a capacity and an indomitable will to discover the lasting solution of the great and central riddles of life. In the course of his long career on earth man has attempted innumerable adventures to fathom the supreme secret of life. Achievements of past spirituality and of modern science have undoubtedly carried us towards some law of truth and harmony. But these achievements have given us only partial solutions to our eternal problems. Buddha sought to have "peace of nirvana" by the extinction of life. Shankara very strangely turned the world-existence into an unreal Maya and felt the Brahman to be the sole reality. Well, I have not much to say about the gospel of materialism and other powerful but far less effective movements of the modern world which do not know even the basic truths of existence. So we cannot expect them to have given us any concrete truth. Briefly, we can say that in spite of all the adventures made in the past and the present, man has failed to secure the true solution of the problems of life. This is because there was no patience and courage to tackle the issue in its true significance, that is to say, a glad acceptance of life and the world as a manifestation of the Divine and thus real. The idea of transforming terrestrial creation was not at all thought of as an imperative necessity. This great and supreme secret was almost completely hidden before the advent of Sri Aurobindo. So the fundamental problems of existence which have always haunted the awakened human being remained unanswered. The Mother puts them vividly:

Why to be born if it is only to die?

Why to live if it is only to suffer?

Why to love if it is only to be separated?

Why to think if it is only to err?

Why to act if it is only to commit mistakes?

Well, at the present critical juncture in human evolution comes Sri Aurobindo's great and profound "Integral Yoga"—a yoga of transformation which promises to give the lasting solution for which we have always yearned. "Integral yoga begins where other yogas end." For the aim of other yogas is to seek partial liberation and they are limited in their scope and vision. The urgent necessity for them is to seek the quickest possible liberation of the soul and to get away from the worldly existence to some distant plane to enjoy eternal blissful repose. Liberation of nature and transformation of matter into the veritable and glorified mansion of the spirit

which is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's yoga, is a dangerous task and a perilous adventure. It needs an exceptionally arduous Tapasya to accomplish this work. But our yoga, whose central motive is also a logical necessity in accordance with the truth of evolutionary progression, seeks to accomplish this task. Our yoga starts with the truth that the intention of Nature in the evolution of the spiritual man is not only a revelation of the spirit, but a radical and integral transformation of nature. The sadhaka of the integral yoga has always to remember the inspired mantra of the Vedic rishi: "*bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam*;"—there is a height still to be reached, a wideness still to be covered by the eye of vision, the wing of the will, the self-affirmation of the spirit in the material universe."¹ To put it precisely, our yoga seeks to evolve not only spiritual man out of mere mental man, but the supramental being beyond the spiritual man. The Divine Mother invites us to embark on the great adventure of participating in the new creation, establishing in ourselves the supramental consciousness. But this "is a new road, that has never been traced; none went by that way, none did that. It is a beginning, a universal beginning. Therefore it is an adventure absolutely unexpected and unforeseeable."²

But how do we undertake this adventure? What is the principle and process of it? The aim is to scale all the degrees of consciousness from the ordinary mental to a supramental and divine consciousness. And when the ascension is complete, we have to return to the material world infusing into it the supramental force and consciousness so that this earth may be gradually transformed into a supramental and divine world. Thus our yoga seeks its supreme consummation in a supramental transformation and a new creation. It is an adventure for the very simple reason that it seeks to realise, to fulfil an ideal which was never attempted in the past; that is to say, a radical and total change of consciousness in an increasing force and by progressing stages.

But let us not forget that it is not an ordinary adventure. Transformation of nature is a formidable task and demands unflinching strength, courage, inexhaustible patience and an untiring endurance. Difficulties are indeed great and obstinate on the way to the great fulfilment; yet one cannot rest content with a partial result because one might almost say that on this way nothing is accomplished unless all is accomplished. If the aim of integral yoga were to be as that of other yogas—to have some partial spiritual realisations—then it would be no more an adventure. It would be a retreading if not a monotonous repetition of what has already been achieved in the past in the realm of spiritual experiences. The very character and spirit of our yoga expects from its adventurers a daring and fearless leap into the unknown. It does not tolerate in the least a timid and pitiful alliance or compromise with the past however glorious it may have been. Ours is "an endless adventure of consciousness and joy", ever new because the delight of the spirit is ever new.

SURENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Am. Ed.), p. 792.

² *Bulletin*, November 1957.