

MOTHER INDIA

OCTOBER, 1971

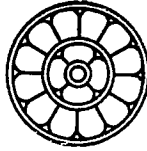
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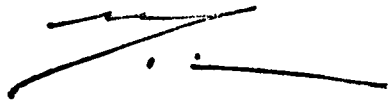


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I **execute**.

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. XXIII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail".

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NOTE

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WORDS OF THE MOTHER

- Q. À l'occasion du centenaire de Sri Aurobindo, beaucoup de gens vont venir à l'Ashram. Que pourrions-nous faire pour leur montrer la réalité de l'Ashram?
- R. La vivre. Vivre cette réalité. Tout le reste: parler etc., cela ne sert à rien.
- Q. Comment nous y préparer?
- R. Par la communion avec l'être psychique, le Divin incarné, profondément au dedans.

Une intense aspiration,
une parfaite concentration,
une constante dédication.

7.9.1971

- Q. On the occasion of Sri Aurobindo's Centenary, a lot of people will be coming to the Ashram. What could we do to show them the reality of the Ashram?
- A. Live it. Live this reality. All the rest: talking, etc.,—all that serves no purpose.
- Q. How shall we prepare ourselves for this?
- A. By communion with the psychic being, the Divine incarnate, deep within.

An intense aspiration,
a perfect consecration,
a constant dedication.

7.9.1971

ON PUBLICITY

A LETTER OF SRI AUROBINDO

I DON'T believe in advertisement except for books etc., and in propaganda except for politics and patent medicines. But for serious work it is a poison. It means either a stunt or a boom and stunts and booms exhaust the thing they carry on their crest and leave it lifeless and broken high and dry on the shores of nowhere—or it means a movement. A movement in the case of a work like mine means the founding of a school or a sect or some other damned nonsense. It means that hundreds or thousands of useless people join in and corrupt the work or reduce it to a pompous farce from which the truth that was coming down recedes into secrecy and silence. It is what has happened to the “religions” and is the reason of their failure.

2.10.1934

Apropos of this letter the Mother remarked that the Aurovillians had a false idea about propaganda and publicity. The remark provoked the questions: “Where does information end and publicity begin? What is Sri Aurobindo’s Action meant to do?” The Mother gave a reply in French. The following is its English translation.

A LETTER BY THE MOTHER

It is a question of mental attitude rather than of physical action. Publicity does not discriminate between the persons to whom one speaks. Publicity means addressing a public which cannot understand.

What we try to do is to carry the Light where it can be understood and received. It is a question of discernment and choice. It is a question of selection: not to spread the thing without discernment. It is to choose which milieu, which people, which conditions can understand and to act there only.

In publicity, to make the ideas comprehensible, one lowers them, while we keep our teachings at the height where they are to be understood. We do not diminish the value of the thing so that it may be understood by all. We keep it at its height so that those who can understand may do so. The teaching should be kept at its maximum height. The selection then takes place of itself. It is the understanding which makes the selection.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of September 1971)

(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.)

MAY 2, 1956

Sri Aurobindo says that the union has a threefold character: first, the liberation from the Ignorance and identification with the Real and Eternal...

That is the yoga of knowledge.

Then the dwelling of the soul with or in the Divine.

That is the aim of the yoga of love.

*Then, identity in nature, likeness to the Divine: "to be perfect as That is perfect."
(The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 149)*

That is to say that not only is there union in the depths, but there is union externally also, in the activities. There is union in knowledge, union in love and union in works. To put it otherwise: the yoga of knowledge, the yoga of love and devotion, and the yoga of works. These are the three modes of approach he speaks about.

Sweet Mother, here Sri Aurobindo speaks of "the soul's native world". What is the soul's native world?

It is the divine Principle.

(Silence)

Is that all?

Sweet Mother, you have said: "The Supramental has descended upon earth."

*What does that mean exactly? You have also said: "The things that were promised are fulfilled." What are these things?*¹

Ah! that, that's ignorance indeed! This has been promised for a very long time, this has been said since long ago—not here only, since the beginning of the world. There have been all sorts of predictions, by all sorts of prophets; it has been said: "There will be a new heaven and a new earth, a new race will be born, the world will be transformed...." Prophets have spoken about that in all the traditions.

You have said: "They are fulfilled."

Yes. And so what?

Where is the new race?

The new race? Wait for something like...a few thousands of years, and you will see it!

When the mind descended upon earth, between the moment the mind manifested in the terrestrial atmosphere and the moment the first man appeared, nearly a million years elapsed. So now this will go faster, because now man expects it, he has a vague idea; he awaits in some sense the advent of the superman. Whilst, certainly, monkeys did not expect the birth of man, they never thought of it—for the good reason that probably they do not think much. But man has thought of that and awaits it, so it will go faster. But faster means still thousands of years probably. We shall speak about it again after some thousands of years!

(Silence)

People who are inwardly ready, who are open and in contact with higher forces, people who have had a more or less direct personal contact with the supramental Light and Consciousness are able to feel the difference in the earth-atmosphere.

But for that....Only the similar can know the similar, only the supramental

¹ The Mother announced the Supramental Manifestation of February 29 in two messages published in the *Bulletin* of April 1956:

"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."

"The manifestation of the Supramental upon earth is no more a promise but a living fact, a reality. "It is at work here, and one day will come when the most blind, the most unconscious, even the most unwilling shall be obliged to recognise it."

Consciousness in an individual can become aware of this Supermind acting in the earth-atmosphere. Those who have developed, for some reason or other, this perception, can see it. But those who are not conscious even of some slightly inner thing, and who would be quite at a loss to say anything about their soul, these certainly are not ready to sense the difference in the earth-atmosphere. They have still a long way to go for that. Because, for those whose consciousness is more or less exclusively centred on the outer being—mental, vital and physical—things need to take on an absurd and unexpected appearance for them to be able to recognise them. Then they call these miracles.

But the constant miracle of the intervention of forces which changes circumstances and characters and has a very broad result, this they do not call a miracle, for only the mere appearance is seen and this seems quite natural. But, truly speaking, if you were to reflect on the least thing that happens, you would be obliged to acknowledge that it is miraculous.

It is simply because you don't reflect on it that you take things as they are, for what they are, without questioning; otherwise every day you would have any number of occasions to tell yourself: "Really, but this is quite astonishing. How did it happen?"

Quite simply, it is the habit of a purely superficial way of seeing.

Sweet Mother, what should be our attitude to this new Consciousness?

That depends on what you want to do with it.

If you want to look at it as a curiosity, you have but to watch, to try to understand.

If you wish that it should change you, you must open yourself and make an effort to progress.

Will people profit collectively or individually by this new manifestation?

Why do you put this question?

Because many people who have come here are asking: "How are we going to profit by it?"

Oh!

And why should they profit by it? What are their rights to profit? Just because they have taken a train to come here?

I knew people who had come here quite a long, long time ago, something like (oh! I don't remember any more, but very long ago) certainly more than twenty years ago, and the first time someone died in the Ashram, they showed considerable dissatisfaction, saying: "But I, I came here because I thought this yoga would make me immortal; but if one can die, why would I have come?"

Well, it is the same thing. People take the train to come here—there were nearly a hundred and fifty more than usual this time,¹ just because they wanted to “profit.” But perhaps this is just the reason why they did not profit! for That has not come to make men profit in any way whatsoever.

They ask if it will be easier to overcome their inner difficulties.

I shall repeat the same thing. What grounds and what right have they to ask that it should be easier? What have they done, these people, on their side? Why would it be easier? To satisfy the laziness and indolence of people—or what?

Because when something new happens, people always have the idea of profiting by it.

No! not only when there is something new: everywhere and always people have the idea of profiting. But that indeed is the best way of not getting anything.

Whom do they want to deceive here? The Divine?...That is hardly possible.

It is the same with those who ask for an interview. I tell them: “Listen, you have come in large numbers, and if everybody asks me for an interview, I won’t have even a sufficient number of minutes in all these days to see everyone. During the time you are to be here I won’t have even a minute.” Then they say: “Oh! I have taken *so much* trouble. I have come from *so far*, I have come from right up there, I have come that far, I had to travel so many hours—and I have no right to an interview?” I say: “I am sorry, but you are not the only one who has done this.”

That is it, you see: it is give and take, bargaining. We are not a commercial establishment, we said we did not do business.

The number of disciples is increasing now day by day. What does that indicate?

But naturally it will go on increasing! And that is why I can’t now do what I used to when there were a hundred and fifty people in the Ashram. If they only had a little sense, they would understand that I cannot have the same relations with people now (there were 1800 of them here recently, my children!). So I cannot have the same relations with 1845 people (I believe, that was the exact number) as with about thirty or even a hundred. That seems to me an easy enough logic to understand.

But *they* want everything to remain as it used to be, and, as you say, they want to be the first to “benefit” (“make a profit”).

Mother, when mind descended into the earth-atmosphere, the monkey had not made any effort to change into man, had it? It was Nature which provided the effort. But here...

¹ Darshan of April 24, 1956.

But it is not man who is going to change himself into superman!

No?

Just try a little! (*laughter*)

It is That, you know, it is something else which is going to work.

So, we are...

Only—yes, there is an only, I don't want to be so cruel: NOW MAN CAN COLLABORATE. That is to say, he can lend himself to the process, with good will, with aspiration, and help as best he can. And that is why I said this will go faster. I hope it will go *much* faster.

But after all, even much faster is still going to take a little time.

(*Silence*)

Listen. If all of you who have heard about this, not once but perhaps hundreds of times, have spoken about it yourselves, thought of it, hoped for it, wanted it—there are people who came here for that, with the intention of receiving the supramental Force and being transformed into supermen, that was their aim, wasn't it?...But how is it that all of you were so unfamiliar with this Force that when it came you did not even feel it?

Can you solve this problem for me? If you have the answer to this problem, you will have the solution of the difficulty.

I am not speaking of people from outside who have never thought of this, never been busy with it, and who don't even know that there is something like a Supermind to be received, you understand. I am speaking of those who have based their life on this aspiration (and I do not doubt their sincerity, not for a minute), who have worked, some for thirty years, some for thirty-five, some a little less, done everything saying: "When the Supermind comes....When the Supermind comes...", that was the refrain: "When the Supermind comes...". Consequently, they were truly in the best possible condition, one couldn't dream of a better. How is it that the inner preparation was so (let us say simply) so incomplete, that when the Vibration came they did not immediately feel with the impact of identity?

Individually, the aim of each one was to prepare himself, to enter into a more or less close individual relation with this Force, to help; or, if they could not help, at least to be ready when the Force would manifest, to recognise it and open to it. And instead of being a foreign element in a world where what you carry within yourself is not manifested, you become *that* suddenly, you enter straight in, fully, into this very atmosphere: it is this Force that is there, surrounding you, penetrating you.

If you had had a little inner contact, immediately you would have recognised it, don't you think so?

Well, anyway that is what happened to those who had a little inner contact; they recognised it, felt it; they said: "Ah! here it is, it has come." But how is it, then, that so many hundreds of people, not to speak of the handful of those who truly wanted nothing but that, thought of nothing but that, had staked all their life thereupon, how is it that they did not feel anything? What can this mean?

Of course it is only the similar that knows the similar. That is an evident fact.

There was a possibility of entering into contact with the Thing individually—that was even what Sri Aurobindo had described as the necessary process: certain number of people who, through their inner effort and aspiration, enter into contact with this Force. That was what we used to call the ascent to the Supermind. And so, even if it were by an inner ascent (that is to say, by freeing themselves from the material consciousness), if in an inner ascent they had touched the Supermind, they should have *naturally* recognised it the moment it came. But it was indispensable to have a previous contact: if they had not touched it, how could they have recognised it?

That is to say, the universal movement is like that (I read that to you some days ago): certain individuals, who are the pioneers, the vanguard, through inner effort and inner progress enter into communication with the new Force which is to manifest and receive it into themselves. And then, as there are calls of this kind, the thing is made possible, and the age, the time, the moment of the manifestation comes. That is how this happened—and the Manifestation took place.

But, then, all who were ready must have recognised it.

I hasten to tell you that there are those who did recognise it, but still....But those who ask questions, those who have come here, taken the train in order to drink this up as one drinks up a glass of syrup, if they have not made any preparation, how could they feel anything at all? And they talk already of benefiting: "We want to profit by it..."

After all, it is quite possible (I am joking a little), it is quite possible that if they are even the least little bit sincere (not too much, for that is tiring! just a little sincere), that will give them a few good knocks to make them go faster. This is possible. In fact, I think, it is this that will happen.

But indeed this attitude...this attitude, which is a little too mercenary, is not generally very profitable. If one aspires sincerely and if one has difficulties, perhaps these difficulties will diminish. Let us hope so.

(*Turning to the disciple*) So this is what you may tell them: be sincere and you will get help.

Mother, a statement has gone round here, very recently—it says: "What has just happened, with this Victory, is not a descent but a manifestation. And it is more than an individual event: the Supermind has burst forth into the universal play."

Yes, yes, yes. In fact I said all this, I acknowledge it. So what?

It is said: "The supramental principle is at work..."

But I have just explained all this to you at length (*the Mother laughs*), this is terrible!

What I call a "descent" is this: first the consciousness rises in an ascent, you catch the Thing up there, and come down with it. That is an *individual* movement.

When this individual event has happened in a way sufficient to create a possibility of a general kind, it is no longer a "descent", it is a "manifestation".

What I call a descent is the individual movement, in an individual consciousness. And when it is a new world manifesting in an old world—as for a comparison, when mind spread upon the earth—I call that a manifestation.

You may call it whatever you like, it makes no difference to me, but we must understand one another.

What I call a descent is in the individual consciousness. Just as one speaks of ascent (there is no ascent, really: there is neither above nor below nor any direction, it is a way of speaking), you speak of ascent when you have the feeling of rising up towards something; and you speak of descent when, having caught that thing, you bring it down within yourself.

But when the gates are open and the flood comes in, you cannot call that a descent. It is a Force which is spreading out. Do you get it?...Ah!

It is all the same to me, the words used. Essentially, I don't care for words, but I explain them to you, and it is better to understand one another, for otherwise there is no end to explanations.

Now, to people who ask you these insidious questions, you may reply that the best way of receiving anything whatever is not to pull, but to give. If they wish to give themselves to the new life, well, the new life will enter into them.

But if they want to draw the new life into themselves, they will close their door with their own egoism. That's all.

(To be continued)

PRESSURE—RECEPTION—ASSIMILATION

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q: For the last three days the pressure on the head continues. Why is it so constant? Does the mind resist the descent of a higher thing?

SRI AUROBINDO: As the force increases, the pressure increases—that is all.
24-I-1934

Q: In the morning you wrote, "The pressure of the force does not bring loss of control." What then is the reason for the loss of control?

SRI AUROBINDO: You had it before, that is, the mechanical thoughts were coming in spite of your not wanting them. There has been some relaxation somewhere that has brought back that condition.
27-I-1934

Q: All the inner experiences seem to be covered up. It is after such hard work that the Mother opens us to these experiences and we lose them by sheer carelessness! But what carelessness? I am not even conscious of it!

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably some quite involuntary relaxation in some part of the consciousness—that often happens. One has to be quiet till one gets back the movement.
27-I-1934

Q: My consciousness gets fatigued at noon, and it needs rest and assimilation.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is often like that—the period of intense activity is limited to a particular part of the day and for the rest of the time there is a lull.
31-I-1934

Q: My being remained in quietude and detached itself from the thoughts. Even the mechanical thoughts, which are difficult to deal with, were dismissed. But it was a blank day, no experiences! Now, just see how our human mind defends itself for the blankness: "Yesterday, you had a very nice experience which continued till late at night. So today the body needs time for relaxation and assimilation." Is this perfectly right?

SRI AUROBINDO: It may be—not that the need of a long period of assimilation cannot be overcome.

One has to go on aspiring quietly and not get disturbed, it is not certain that anything came in the way.
2-2-1934

Q: How to overcome the need of assimilation?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not the assimilation, but the need of long intervals for assimilation that can be overcome. The assimilation is absolutely indispensable.

2-2-1934

Q: Are these long intervals of assimilation to be shortened by our personal effort, like aspiration, etc? Or, in the course of the sadhana, will a time automatically come when it will happen by itself?

SRI AUROBINDO: If left entirely to itself, one might never get out of it. Aspiration is always necessary. 5-2-1934

Q: In a recent letter you wrote: "You must be receptive also." When I am silent am I not naturally receptive?

SRI AUROBINDO: There may be empty silence and peace satisfied with themselves. Receptivity is a separate power. Of course all quietude of the mind makes good conditions for the receptivity to act. 8-2-1934

Q: What do you say about H.C.'s poems?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the inspiration of the Truth that he receives—it develops as his capacity of reception grows. 8-2-1934

Q: How shall I be able to receive what the Mother grants in general?

SRI AUROBINDO: You have only to keep yourself open and whatever you need and can receive at the moment will come. 10-2-1934

Q: It happens that the Light which I receive on a Darshan day like today does not get fixed in me. Its intensity remains for two or three days but afterwards something of it begins to get diffused. How to settle it for good?

SRI AUROBINDO: As much remains as can be assimilated. The being must develop in consciousness for more to be done. 21-2-1934

Passivity must not lead to inactivity—otherwise it will encourage inertia in the being. It is only an inner passivity to what comes from above that is needed—inert passivity is the wrong kind of passivity. 22-2-1934

The true passivity does not lead to inactivity—but the physical may wrongly take the pressure of passivity for an invitation to inaction. 22-2-1934

Q: The physical mind seems to become more and more active and refuses to observe silence. It is difficult to maintain the attitude of reception and aspiration. Any reason behind all this?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose you had drawn to yourself a greater pressure of the force—the intensity of the pressure does not always remain the same. 3-3-1934

Q: Does it mean that I pulled down a force which was too much for me?

SRI AUROBINDO: Too much to keep up without interruption.

It may be that in your present condition you find difficulty in assimilating more.

14-3-1934

Wherever there is resistance in the being or the nervous system, there can be a pressure. 17-3-1934

One can be receptive without being conscious—without knowing exactly what is given. 18-4-1934

I do not see why a pressure on the forehead centre should produce any diffusion—it should rather produce concentration. Unless the consciousness ran away from the pressure, but then that is the fault of the consciousness and not the fault of the pressure. 18-4-1934

Q: I often want intensely to become conscious of what the Mother brings down into me. Is it a good feeling?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. But it will probably bring the pressure on the forehead centre of which you complain.

Q: Since the morning something that I can't understand is going on within me. I don't feel myself at ease as usual.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it makes you uneasy it must be some pressure from outside which should be rejected. 24-1-1934

From NAGIN DOSHI

TALKS WITH SRI AUROBINDO

(Continued from the issue of September, 1971)

(These talks are from the notebooks 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.

We are interrupting the sequence of the Talks with a few that were somehow left out. Once these have been published, we shall resume the usual series.)

DECEMBER 2, 1939

P (*bringing a copy of The New Statesman and Nation, where there was a review of a book of Gerald Heard by Joad*): Nolini says that this author seems to have got some of your ideas.

SRI AUROBINDO: What does he say? I think he contributes to the *Aryan Path* also.

P: I have gone carefully through the article. What he says is that in man alone further evolution is possible.

SRI AUROBINDO: But one can arrive at that conclusion by thought. Nothing special is needed to reach it. And then?

P: This evolution is to take place by a change of consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO: What sort of change? Moral or spiritual? If it is moral, there is nothing new. Plenty of people have said it. However, you can send him a complimentary copy of *The Life Divine* when the second volume is out.

EVENING

N (*while sponging Sri Aurobindo*): It seems Norway and Sweden won't join with Finland against Russia.

Sri Aurobindo began to shake his head, meaning that they would not.

N: But they don't realise that their turn will come next. Is it to have a naval base that Russia has attacked Finland?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is only a pretext. She wants to make Finland a vassal state like the Latvian state and from there dominate over Norway and Sweden. After she has done that and after gaining her position in the Balkans she will become a major power in Europe. She tried to get hold of Turkey but Turkey was too alert, and also bold enough because of the support of the English and French. Moreover, the English have about a million soldiers in Asia Minor; so Turkey could be quite bold.

N: Some say that Russia is occupying these Baltic countries as a check to Germany.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, but the Russians know that one day they will have to come to grips with Germany. Their object is to be a major power in Europe.

N (*when Sri Aurobindo lay in bed*): Professor Mitra has asked me to tell you that his native village is the same as yours: Konnagar.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see, but I went there only once. My village is Theatre Road, Calcutta.

N: Mitra was speaking of a Professor of Shantiniketan who was dissuading him from coming here as he thought the Ashram stood for some particular creed.

SRI AUROBINDO: What creed? Didn't Mitra ask him? And didn't he tell him that we have no creed?

N: Yes, he did, but the man wouldn't listen. Then this Professor read your *Teaching of Sri Aurobindo*. He was startled to discover that we have no creed, and he was very glad. (*Sri Aurobindo began to laugh, showing great enjoyment.*)

N: Mitra says that Devendra Nath Tagore started Shantiniketan for a spiritual purpose, and he made rules, one of which was that idol-worship wouldn't be allowed there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then that is the place where there are creeds, not here.

N: Mitra had two visions here. In one he saw a golden light coming down and condensing into the form of the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is easy enough to understand. The golden light is the symbol of the Divine Truth, and the Mother is the incarnation of this Truth.

N: The other vision was of an intense blue light striking him in the eyes.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is Krishna's light.

DECEMBER 3, 1939

P brought a letter from one Padmakanti whose income-tax had been assessed wrongly and who had appealed against the government. The case is on the fourth of this month.

SRI AUROBINDO: He ought to have written earlier. Not much time to save him. Where is the appeal?

P: In the revenue court perhaps.

SRI AUROBINDO: Are the officers just?

P: At present yes, because of Congress Ministry.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no more Congress Ministry. The mind of a revenue collector is not an easy job. A judge is different.

N (*after Sri Aurobindo's walk*): Did you say Theatre Road was your village?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I was born there in the house of the lawyer Manmohan Ghosh. It was No. 4, I think.

N: Dilip says that that brings about his contact with you. (*Laughter*)

P: Have you read that criticism by Joad of Gerald Heard?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Joad doesn't seem to be much of a thinker. He says that he had the same ideas as the author but he changed them because of objections of philosophical critics. If he changes ideas because of that, his ideas are not worth much. The first business of a philosopher is to see the objections and then meet them.

P: He has written some good treatises on Plato and others.

SRI AUROBINDO: That means he is a good teacher, not an original thinker.

P: He has reviewed one book on Indian philosophy.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I have seen the review. He says he can't believe in Chakras because he has no experience! If one doesn't believe things one has no experience of, there will be too few beliefs. Indian mystics have said that only by Yoga you can have experience, otherwise you have to take such matters on belief.

(To be continued)

NIRODBARAN

SRI AUROBINDO AT EVENING TALK

SOME NOTES OF MAY-TO-NOVEMBER 1926

(Continued from the issue of September 1971)

(These notes were not taken on the spot. They are recollections of the talks at which their author, V. Chidanandam, was present. Whatever in those 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.)

Q: What is beauty? Is it not that in objects which gives delight? Thus, the rose is delightful to all.

But does the rose really delight all? There are many who do not like it. What you say about the rose is plausible, not true. The mind sees beautiful objects, and abstracts from them the idea of beauty. This conception of the mind does not in itself correspond to anything anywhere. Beauty, therefore, as is generally understood by people, is an abstract notion.

Q: Does beauty consist in harmony of line and colour?

Line and colour are only a circumstance for the expression of Beauty, the first support, the earth, so to say. Real Beauty is therefore not your abstract idea, not mere line and colour. As in painting you have line and colour, so there is metre in poetry, it is only a first support to the poets. Each poet has his own rhythm (something that expresses the power within), though all may use the same metre. Every genius breaks the old traditions, the old harmonies, the established rules. Wagner's music was at first ridiculed; so were Shakespeare's dramas; it was said there was no art in them and that if any art was there it was Gothic.

Beauty is one thing and appreciation another. People take delight in ugly things, not only in beautiful ones. Ravi Varma badly imitated Western Art and many people like him nowadays. Indians like such art and think it is what the Westerners appreciate. But even Ravi Varma's art is a part of Universal Beauty, you may say.

Q: Then what is beauty—Beauty in its own Home?

Beauty is still beauty even when it goes abroad. Beauty is of several kinds. There is beauty without form. And there is beauty with form. But all beauty of form

is not beauty of life. In a flower-vase there is beauty of form, but how much life is there in it?

Beauty of life and beauty of form: these two (vital and physical) constitute artistic beauty.

There is beauty of the movement of Ananda. Beauty is the Divine in Ananda seeking to throw itself out in expression.

A thing is beautiful if (i) the expression is perfect, (ii) if the power of God behind the thing is great. There are always these two elements to be considered: whether the Ananda is perfectly expressed, whether the power of God behind what is seeking expression through the thing is great or small. Ananda may descend in its native force, or it may get modified in the descent.

Q: In Bhakti, is beauty of God alone that is sought?

Not beauty alone, there is Ananda too—and there are so many other things besides. In Indian Bhakti alone, God is sought as Beauty. Bhaktas of other countries cry down Beauty. Even Gandhi likes the whitewashed wall better than art.

Q: Gandhi says Renunciation alone is beautiful.

Here is a misuse of words. He may like the ideal of Renunciation and live up to it. But how is it beautiful? We have to consider Beauty from the standpoint of art and not of moral notions.

Q: Is there not something in the object also? Then how is it that one does not appreciate what another does in the same object?

Yes, there is something. But one man's mind may be shut to one kind of beauty and another's may be open to it. In some things there is also what we may call imperfect beauty. Again, some pictures are not beautiful, but you cannot deny that the lines are.

Q: Is restraint or limitation necessary for the expression of beauty?

The Greeks gave form to a narrow perfection. There is restraint in their art. But there is another way which is different from limitation or restraint. It is expansion, the artist throws out, as it were, from himself. Indian art always tried to express something of the Infinite.

Q: In life spontaneousness and transparency of soul seem to be beautiful and restraint and conscious rule not so.

Restraint is as beautiful as the other. Let us not bring in moral notions into the discussion. We are discussing art, so let us look at art. In rhetoric if there isn't something spontaneous, and there is restraint, it is insincerity (though not in the moral sense) and to that extent it is false and not true or right expression.

Q: Does not genius require preparation?

Of course. If, for instance, a poet does not know prosody he can't be a master at writing poetry. The artist must train himself, must learn his technique. Shakespeare did a lot of botching work before he began to write plays.

Q: Milton speaks of Shakespeare as "warbling his native woodnotes wild."

That is poetry and not fact. Shakespeare was wild only in his lyrics. There must be the training. Without good style the thing said may be true, but all the same, from the point of view of art, it is not beautiful.

Q: What is the psychology of the process of artistic creation?

It is a very complicated process. Inspiration comes from above here into the heart. It rises up again to express itself with the aid of the mind, not the conscious mind or intellect but the intuitive mind. And several powers are there. The vital mind gives the first impulse and sustains everything else. The nature of the thing expressed depends on what part of the mind has come into play; for example, in most great poetry the intellect stands apart, but not always and in all poets. In some portions of a poem the intellect may interfere and give its stamp to them.

Q: Are the poets conscious of the process? They say that something has come to them and withdrawn.

They may not be conscious. And in some poets, the power that is seeking expression may retire after some time.

Q: Why is it that in India the people have now lost the sense of beauty?

They have done so for two reasons. Life was on the decline in India some centuries ago. At that time the East India Company brought the English here, and then everything was finished. There was a deliberate smashing of the life-power. The very sources of life that are necessary for nation-building have been smashed by the foreigners. Apart from this failure of life-force, you have the fact that the ruling race was one of the most inartistic in the world. The instinct for beauty which was there through tradition and through heredity was suppressed. There was compulsion everywhere.

Q: In changing the vital being, does the supermind act on it directly or through the mind?

First it acts through the mind to awaken the vital being. Then it acts directly and the mind stands back.

Q: Is the mind conscious of the change?

It may not be conscious of all that is going on behind: the preparation of the vital being. But as one advances in Sadhana, the mind sees what is going on. Powers

develop, such as telling a person what he has done, without seeing him do it, just by feeling his hand. This is not clairvoyance: clairvoyance belongs to the subliminal physical or vital consciousness. It is not organised in all, though it may be organised and used. It belongs to the vital plane. The fact that after illness people lose such powers shows that they are powers of vital force. Yogis must not use such powers because the consciousness tends to be pulled down to a lower level for satisfying others' curiosity or else the action is done out of egoism or lower movements of desire. They must organise, develop the powers from above, whence they came; they must use them from the highest level they have reached and for objects they see to be necessary. To come down to the vital is to descend to vulgarity. Many people who are not yogis pursue these powers on the vital plane without climbing higher. To the yogis they are an obstacle. The yogi must organise the powers from above, the powers he sees as the manifestation of the Divine; such powers cannot be exercised always: that is, they do not come always even to people trained in the use of them.

(To be continued)

V. CHIDANANDAM

LIGHTS ON THE PATH

PASSAGES FROM SRI AUROBINDO FOUND BY THE MOTHER AND SOME DISCIPLES

(Continued from the issue of March, 1971)

(It was the year 1931. At that time there was a special Soup Distribution by the Mother in the late evening in the place now known as the Reception Room. About an hour before it, the Mother used to come to the Prosperity Room, the General Stores, just above. A fixed number of disciples would collect there, and the Mother would spend the time giving talks (later put together by a disciple present and published as the Third Series of the Mother's Talks) or she would play "guessing-games" in which the disciples' powers of intuition would be tested and developed. At a certain period there was a reading of passages from Sri Aurobindo's works. Each day one or other of the disciples would concentrate a little and open a book anywhere with his finger or with a paper-cutter and strike upon a passage for reading. The Mother herself did the same. This procedure went on from March 18 to May 2. A copy of the passages remained with the Editor of Mother India who was one of those attending the happy soirées. We are now publishing them in a series, both for their intrinsic value as lights on the path of Yoga and for whatever subtle side-lights they may throw on the inner movement of those who found them.)

THE Avatar comes to reveal the divine nature in man above this lower nature and to show what are the divine works, free, unegoistic, disinterested, impersonal, universal, full of the divine light, the divine power and the divine love. He comes as the divine personality which shall fill the consciousness of the human being and replace the limited egoistic personality, so that it shall be liberated out of ego into infinity and universality, out of birth into immortality. He comes as the divine power and love which calls men to itself, so that they may take refuge in that and no longer in the insufficiency of their human wills and the strife of their human fear, wrath and passion, and liberated from all this unquiet and suffering may live in the calm and bliss of the Divine.

*Essays on the Gita, First Series, pp. 255-6.
(Found by Amrita, April 4,¹ 1931)*

¹ The Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry.

To know himself for a pilgrim of the heights called on to press ever upwards, to know the principle of his life as a constant self-becoming and self-exceeding of which each step is a present form out of which something higher than it has to be delivered, is the sign of his election. This constant upward will is his true heroism, his true greatness, his sane and sound asceticism. To discover more and more highly and widely the goal and the way his complex and ascending powers of knowledge were given him, to follow it more and more strenuously and indomitably his force of will and infinite aspiration. The spirit within him supports him by its universal delight, by its growing largenesses in his consciousness, by its inexhaustible treasures of will and capacity, by all the vastness of its infinite being. When he tears away the veils of the spirit, when he sees God and delivers his outward nature into the hands of the divinity within, what is now impossible will be revealed as his one possibility and his eternal certainty; his obscure and difficult journey will become a rapid and luminous ascension. Then will he climb to that fulfilment of the apparent and discovery and possession of the real Man which is the meaning of supermanhood.

The Life Divine, The Arya, Vol. V.p.330.
(Found by Purushottam, April 4, 1931)

Put yourself with all your heart and all your strength into God's hands. Make no conditions, ask for nothing, not even for *siddhi* in the yoga, for nothing at all except that in you and through you His will may be directly performed. To those who demand from Him, God gives what they demand, but to those who give themselves and demand nothing, He gives everything that they might otherwise have asked or needed and in addition He gives Himself and the spontaneous boons of His love.

The Yoga and Its Objects, pp. 9.
(Found by Datta, April 5, 1931)

Knowledge does not end with knowing, nor is it pursued and found for the sake of knowing alone. It has its full value only when it leads to some greater gain than itself, some gain of being. Simply to know the eternal and to remain in the pain, struggle and inferiority of our present way of being, would be a poor and lame advantage.

A greater knowledge opens the possibility and, if really possessed, brings the actuality of a greater being...

*
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The knower of Brahman has not only the joy of light, but gains something immense as the result of his knowledge, *brahmavid apnoti*.

What he gains is that highest, that which is supreme; he gains the highest being,

the highest consciousness, the highest wideness and power of being, the highest delight; *brahmanid apnoti param*.

The Knowledge of Brahman, The Arya, Vol. V, p. 247.
(Found by the Mother, April 6, 1931)

An almighty love and wisdom are at work for your uplifting. Therefore never be troubled by the time that is being taken, even if it seems very long, but when imperfections and obstructions arise, be *apramatta*,¹ *dhīra*,² have the *utsāha*,³ and leave God to do the rest. Time is necessary. It is a tremendous work that is being done in you, the alteration of your whole human nature into a divine nature, the crowding of centuries of evolution into a few years. You ought not to grudge the time. . . Artificial paths are like canals hewn by the intelligence of man; you travel easily, safely, surely, but from one given place to another. This path is the broad and trackless ocean by which you can travel widely to all parts of the world and are admitted to the freedom of the infinite.

The Yoga and its Objects, pp.33-4.
(Found by Datta, April 7, 1931)

When the ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and childishness, its power an infant's groping, its virtue a pretentious impurity and learns to trust itself to that which transcends itself, that is its salvation. The apparent freedom and self-assertion of the personal being to which it is so profoundly attached, conceals subjection to a thousand suggestions, impulsions, forces which it has made extraneous to itself. The self-abnegation of the ego is its self-fulfilment; its self-surrender to that which transcends it is its liberation and perfect freedom.

The Synthesis of Yoga, The Arya, Vol. I. p. 370.
(Found by Amal, April 7, 1931)

Apramatta—without losing oneself.

Dhīra—the self-composed.

Utsāha—perseverance, constant alertness—a quality of the vital will.

TOWARDS AUROVILLE

AN APPROACH THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO'S BOOK "THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY"

(Continued from the issue of September, 1971)

THROUGH the centuries Nature has brought about a great change, a change which in principle represents the evolution of society from a natural and organic state to a rational and mechanically organised developing community. Science, commerce and rapid communications have not a little contributed to this consummation of a common mental existence. The idea of a World-State or World-Union therefore seems to be growing in the consciousness of humanity and has its roots in the very necessity of this new common existence. The World-State would attempt the unification of the race by the principle of centralisation, regimentation and uniformity and the World-Union founding itself upon the principle of liberty and infinite variation work for a free and conscious unity of individuals and nations. The task is extraordinary and requires to overcome the obstacles of conflicting national temperaments, interests and cultures through the creation of an overwhelming passion for cosmopolitan internationalism.

This, again, might require the evolution of some sort of World-Parliament, for Parliamentaryism seems to be a necessary stage in the progress of democracy. Provided that it freely expresses the opinion of the majority, and does not confine itself to a modified aristocratic or a middle class rule. Nonetheless, it may mean an immense waste of time, inefficiency and also often the tyranny of a majority, or the despotic rule of an effective minority. These might easily mean serious discontent and disorder among the member-nations or even prove fatal to its very functioning and existence. A World-Parliament must therefore be a united parliament of free nations, constituted freely and out of the centripetal forces born of an increasing sense of psychological and spiritual oneness, aimed at dissolving all inequalities and anomalies.

To have the psychological assent, the moral authority and the active support of all its member nations, such a Parliament must in its constitution and character conciliate the sentiments and interests of the different sections of mankind representing the leading social, political, cultural ideas of the time. A World-Union or a Parliament of Free Nations can come into existence only when all the member nations and particularly most of the leading nations consent to total disarmament which again is possible when national egoisms are eschewed. "Yet such a disarmament would be essential to the assured cessation of war—in the absence of some great and radical psychological and moral change. If national armies exist, the possibility, even the certainty of war will exist along with them."¹ The World-Parliament must be in

effective control of the means of manufacturing arms and implements of war and must hold under its command a sufficient trained army to be able to implement all its decisions. It should therefore be the sole legislator and the final executive authority and not merely an international forum for discussion and arbitration of disputes. "Diffused force fulfils the free working of Nature and is the servant of life but also of discord and struggle; concentrated, it becomes the guarantee of organisation and the bond of order."²

In addition to the military necessity, there are two more components of modern society, the commercial and the industrial which exercise a powerful action and pull on the modern mind. "Commercialism is a modern sociological phenomenon; one might almost say, that is the whole phenomenon of modern society."³ In ancient times these components formed simply the first need and were part of a strong and necessary desire in man's vital being. They never occupied the thoughts of people. Ancient man was primarily religious and then political or social; he preoccupied himself mostly with religious thought, art and culture. "The economic man held an honourable, but still a comparatively low position in the society; he was only the third caste or class, the Vaishya. The lead was in the hands of the intellectual and political classes,—the Brahmin, thinker, scholar, philosopher and priest, the Kshatriya, ruler and warrior. It was their thoughts and preoccupations that gave the tone to society, determined its conscious drift and action, coloured most powerfully all its motives."⁴ Wealth was regarded as a means of political power and greatness and as one promoting cultural and spiritual life and not as an end in itself.

Now everything is changed. The modern world bears the stamp of the commercial and industrial classes, Capital and Labour. The entire outlook of life is changed. Culture and its products have today chiefly a decorative value; 'they are costly and desirable luxuries, not at all indispensable necessities.' Religion itself has a very restricted utility and is considered a by-product of the human intellect. "Politics, government itself are becoming more and more a machinery for the development of an industrialised society, divided between the service of bourgeois capitalism and the office of a half-involuntary channel for the incoming of economic Socialism. Free thought and culture remain on the surface of this great increasing mass of commercialism and influence and modify it, but are themselves more and more influenced, penetrated, coloured, subjugated by the economic, commercial and industrial view of human life."⁵ Such rabid commercialism can only come to an end either by some catastrophic turn in its development or through an intense spiritual renaissance of the human race. The latter is more likely because the secular thought of today is slowly turning idealistic and religion is becoming increasingly revivalistic. For the successful growth of the unity of mankind, we, therefore, need not only military control but also an effective ordering of the commercial, industrial and economic life of the constituent nations through a democratic control of international commerce. This 'voluntary subordination' by the member countries in exceptional and urgent matters must gradually lead to an 'obligatory subordination' in most matters govern-

ing the life of the peoples. Moreover, "Science, thought and religion, the three great forces which in modern times tend increasingly to override national distinctions and point the race towards unity of life and spirit, would become more impatient of national barriers, hostilities and divisions and lend their powerful influence to the change."⁶

A well-unified World-State with the different nations for its provinces, if it has, to succeed, must be in a position to regulate international disputes, economic treaties, exercise an international authority in settling inter-provincial disputes and also be able to frame laws for its effective functioning. It will therefore be an international, military, executive and legislative authority to protect and promote the social, economic and cultural interests of the peoples of the world through democratic methods. The great obstacle to any such international consummation, at present, seems to be the principle of nationalism. It is still the most powerful sentiment in the collective human mind that gives an immeasurable vitality to the nation. But the idealistic and unifying forces of today will certainly become established powers in a not too distant future and succeed in subordinating nationalism to the interests of human welfare. This world-body would effectively deal with local and international crime and disorder through local supervision and international control, as well as through enlightened education, moral and temperamental training, by 'scientific or eugenic methods of observation, treatment, isolation, perhaps sterilisation of corrupt human material' and by 'a humane and enlightened gaol system and penological method which would have for its aim not the punishment but the reform of the incipient and the formed criminal'. To accomplish this task centralised administrative and judicial control becomes necessary; of course most of the grotesque, half-civilised, half-corrupt and unenlightened laws will have to be replaced. But in the choice of their political systems and other spheres of social and cultural life the member-nations might well be left free to follow their own ideals and propensities.

Once nationalism is subordinated to a cosmopolitan human fellowship only the much too important differences of culture and race threaten to linger for a longer period. But here too Science, powerful as it is in the enforcement of uniformity of thought, life and method, is sure to succeed in minimising these differences. Also because of the constant meeting of the minds of the Orient and the Occident a common world outlook and culture will be the most natural outcome and the race-sense too will be removed by the closer intellectual, cultural and physical intercourse which is inevitable in the future. Again, even if a common language fails to become a reality "variety of language need be no insuperable obstacle to uniformity of culture, to uniformity of education, life and organisation or to a regulating scientific machinery applied to all departments of life and settled for the common good by the united will and intelligence of the human race."⁷

The immediate gains of such a World-State would be that peace of the world would be assured and as a result the united intelligence of mankind as well as its vital force would work into more purposeful channels resulting in a great cultural and intellectual efflorescence. Science would fully and wholly organise itself for human

welfare, and creative thought, art and literature would express themselves in new motives and forms. But there also lurks a peril, a hard catastrophe. Amidst the unprecedented ease, splendour and comfort human life would soon cease to be a force, then stagnate, decay and disintegrate. And the soul of humanity would wither in the midst of plenty, rather stifled by its own acquisitions. Even the free democratic structure of the world-body would not be able to rescue the life-force from such an eventuality. For "democracy is by no means a sure preservative of liberty; on the contrary, we see today the democratic system of government march steadily towards such an organised annihilation of individual liberty as could not have been dreamed of in the old aristocratic and monarchical systems."⁸ There will be a deprivation of freedom, which will be more respectable in appearance, 'more subtle and systematised, more mild in its method' because it would have a greater force at its back and for that very reason be more pervading and devastating. For the more formidable tyranny of the whole will leave the peoples of the world a totally self-hypnotised sterile mass.

(To be continued)

MADHUSUDAN REDDI

¹ *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1958), pp. 225-28

² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

PUNCTUATING OUR WORLD-VIEW

AN EXERCISE WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME

WHAT punctuation-mark could better express our state of mind face to face with the modern world and its enigmatic as well as ominous movement from day to day than the sign of interrogation?

Some might be stirred to use the exclamation-sign because every day an unpleasant surprise is in store for us making us sit up straight and evoking from our hearts a desperate "Oh!"

Others might vote for the colon: they would do so on the following ground: each sunrise reveals more glaringly the import of unpleasantness suggested by the previous sunset.

Still others would select the semi-colon; they would like to symbolise their sense of a continual heaping up of disagreeable developments; each such development would appear to add its own new shade to the significance of the last; the new shade in turn leads on to the next frightful *nuance*.

A few might plump for the comma, with the plea that the pause between event and event is a mere seeming, and the same old story of misfortune unfolds itself, piece after piece, without any apparent end, any sign of a new turn.

Perhaps a yet smaller group would pick out the full-stop. They would indicate their impression of a cleavage between one day's evil and another's. They would discern a jerkiness and discontinuity and illogic. It would be as if the world-spirit were in an interminable state of nightmare on abrupt surrealist nightmare.

As an alternative to the full-stop a handful might make a dash for the dash—the cleavage and discontinuity and jerkiness and illogic of events make a headlong series—they give us no time to arrive at a conclusion about anything—the surrealist nightmares take the bit between their teeth and gallop at breakneck speed everywhere to nowhere.

But am I wrong in saying that the large majority of thinking people would favour the question-mark? How well it combines something of all the implications by its very vagueness! And in addition this is what it represents: the tension of undecidedness we have all the time. The tension comes of our long-drawn-out uncertainty about various problems; it is also born of our anxious straining after solutions that seem to keep ever eluding us. All the empty succession, the pointless continuity, the immeasurable monotony of our life is there, with their answer-defying problems. And there is yet something more. The answer-defiance brings us again and again to a halt. And at last—at long last—we feel our hopes dashed—till we begin doubting the value of every position—and the one who questions what will happen to the world tomorrow asks himself "Will even the questioner live beyond today?"

But all punctuation severs to a greater or lesser degree what is really the single indivisible expression of One Existence and One Consciousness and One Delight thrown into everlasting play by that Unity's multitudinous vision of its own truth and if we could pass beyond a punctuated view of the world we should know each today as the enigmatic and ominous appearance worn by an evolving mystery of divine Selfhood which carries the fulfilling sense of an eternal answer to every quivering question of time.

K. D. SETHNA

"ALL LIFE IS YOGA"

A friend's son, reading in our school, is just fifteen. Since the age of five he has been here with us. A couple of days back, he came and told me, quite seriously, that an elderly gentleman in the Ashram had said to him: "M. P. P. has written a book, *All Life is Yoga*. Then, why don't you smoke?" The boy apparently believed in the argument and looked at me for approval. What could I tell him? I could not dismiss the matter as evident nonsense because the young mind needed to be enlightened. I tried to make things as simple as possible and told him in effect:

The right implication of Sri Aurobindo's statement that All Life is Yoga (which I have used for my series on topics of practical import to sadhaks) does not mean that Yoga is to be dragged down to the level of life in the world as it is commonly lived but that normal life is to be lifted up and lived in the same spirit in which Yoga is done. Just as in Yoga each one of our movements is subjected to the test of the norms of the Yoga and whatever promotes spiritual growth is accepted and whatever retards or obstructs is rejected, similarly in daily life the same exacting standard must be adhered to. When this is done, life and Yoga cease to be two different and opposite sectors of existence. As in Yoga so in life everything is harnessed to the central Idea. In due course life feeds Yoga and Yoga transforms life. They both fuse into each other.

The boy, intelligent that he is, asked: "Then can't we do in Yoga whatever is done in life: for example, smoking?"

"Yes, provided it can be made a part of Yoga. Things or movements that are harmful to Yoga cannot obviously be accepted. Smoking, for instance, is tabooed for a serious sadhaka in our Yoga because it has a detrimental effect on the nerves. And with weak nerves one can hardly pursue the path of Yoga."

The boy was satisfied. And I think I even saw a smile on his face anticipating the discomfiture of the elderly well-wisher.

M. P. PANDIT

KARMA AND FREE-WILL

Q: Is it that everything is predestined and there is no place for free choice for man?

A: The truth of the matter is that both Fate and Free-will exist and play their part in the cosmic evolution. The two are the two poles of the creative Spirit in manifestation. It is difficult to say where the working of destiny ceases and where that of free-will begins. Actually they both interact and reveal themselves to be two phases of the Divine Will in this Creation.

Destiny, we may say, is forged by man's actions. But when he acts he acts with a sense of free-will. So from one point of view destiny is a consequence of the exercise of his free-will. But is this will really free? On a closer analysis it will be found that behind a man's will there is a long line of Samskaras resulting from his previous Karma. That is to say, his free-will itself acts as it does because of the push of a previously forged destiny.

To get to the truth of the matter, we have to look beyond both destiny and free-will. So seen a Higher Will (Universal or Transcendent) reveals itself, which acts through this interaction of determinism and free choice.

Note that, though man does not have free choice in the absolute sense of the term, he has a sense of freedom and Nature uses this sense as a lever for her purpose.

Thus in our life on the material plane there is room for the play of free choice. But looked at from a higher plane all is determined from above by a Greater Will.

Q: Is this Law of Karma always operative for all? When can it be said that Karma is no more operative and how to arrive at this result?

A: There are several planes of existence and each plane has its own operations of Karma or destiny. The chain of Karma is rigid on the material plane; but as one ascends to the higher, the subtler planes, the workings of Karma become less and less rigid, they turn more and more supple and elastic. As Sri Aurobindo says, there are layers of destiny. One is bound by the destiny of a plane as long as he lives and participates in the Karma of that particular plane. If, for instance, one seeks to move away from the Karma forged in physical life, one has only to shift his centre of consciousness to a higher plane and live from there. That is to say, he functions in a realm where a different order of destiny prevails. This is the sense in which destiny is said to change when one takes to spiritual life. For thereby he releases himself from the hold of material life and its Karma and moves farther from its operations.

It is evident that to negative the Karma of material life one has to take steps to change the field of one's activity. Not outer activity indeed but the inner activity, e.g. the intentions, the emotions, the thoughts and the like which really contribute more to the Karma than a mere external action.

This is one way: to get beyond the field of a particular Karma by self-effort.

Another and a easier way is to invoke the higher Will, the Divine Grace, to intervene and free one from the meshes of Karma in which one finds oneself. When this higher Agency is so moved, the Karmic chains snap in most cases. The exceptions are cases of certain types of Karma which Providence does not normally wipe off but leaves it to the individual—in his own interest—to work out.

Q: Does not this Law of Karma lead to an irresponsible attitude?

A: No. On the contrary it makes man more responsible and more conscious and therefore more progressive. For if the present is the result of the past Karma, the future will be the result of the present. What I do now will determine the Karma that I am to reap in future.

Secondly, the Karma of the past can be largely negated or mitigated by the present actions. So both with an eye to the past and to the future, man becomes more careful of his actions and exercises his will and choice in such a manner that, while the results of the previous Karma are reduced or offset, the future is built in the chosen direction.

Q: If the Law of Karma is based on cause and effect, how did the first cause arise at all? Who started this Karma?

A: To answer this question one has to go to the beginnings of creation. The whole business started, we are told by the scriptures, with a Desire, *kāma* (in the highest sense), which arose in the being of the Supreme or in the bosom of an eternal Existence. All the sequence started therefrom. So God is the first cause. If God is the cause, you may ask, why should we suffer? Why should man pay the consequences of God's desire? The question really cannot arise because it is God himself in creature and creature that is reaping and 'suffering' the dolorous consequences of his fatal choice!

M. P. PANDIT

THE YOUTH REVOLUTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

(In our issue of February 21 this year we published the paper on "Youth Unrest" read by Mrs. Clair Worden to the Thinkers' Club at Raj Nivas on January 22. Here is another paper—the opening address by Miss Marjorie Brahms at the same meeting.)

YOUR Excellency Governor Jatti, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Tonight we are here to talk about youth—those creatures who form more than half of the world's population and never cease to bewilder and—often—to anger their elders with their outlandish ways. The flashy hippie-style clothes and uncombed hairdo that one sees in New York, London, Tokyo, New Delhi and right here in Pondicherry—the loud, pounding rock music—the seemingly ceaseless protests forever taking place from Bombay to Boston—the use of marijuana, hashish and chemical drugs such as LSD—probably you have asked what it all means. Why are young people all over the world so restless? What—if anything—are they trying to say and to do? Or is it, to quote Shakespeare, a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing?

So let us begin by asking: what makes the youth revolt of today so much more impressive, more critical, more intense than anything we have known before? I think the answer is that the issues are so much greater: war has always been a favorite game of mankind, but today the stakes are world destruction. Today's youth—those in their teens and twenties—grow up under the mushroom cloud of the first nuclear explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the continuing nuclear testing. They are the first generation faced—virtually from the time of their birth—with the threat of complete, utter extinction. And so, they are the first generation to place its highest importance on man's survival—not against nature but against man himself.

Thirty years ago, life moved at a pace that the average, educated man could understand. Today, young people are confronted with change so swift that it often defies comprehension. In the West, youth has been saturated with television and other mass media, and all over the world young people have been brought up on a steady diet of movies and radio. No more is there just the leisurely reading of books and newspapers. Now everything flashes by—and the mind must move with corresponding swiftness. This evolution from the medium of print to the electronic motion has given us instantaneous communication and has made this a small planet indeed. And young people have learned the single most important lesson of their generation that if we can't live together, we may very well die together. Space travel has also given youth a greater sense of the smallness—the unity—of things. Teenagers of the 70s will grow up thinking of space travel as their parents and grandparents think of car travel—as something perfectly ordinary. Youth today knows it has greater

opportunities than ever existed before: for one thing, there is no longer for most of the world the single fact of death at an early age. Science has increased life expectancy to the point where young people no longer feel pressured into immediate achievement. Perhaps because they sense the great potential of life, young people deeply resent such stupidities as unnecessary wars, class hatreds, political treachery and the whole insanity rampant in the industrial world of building a better mousetrap when there are no mice.

India and other developing countries will soon see their youth experience more and more what is now happening in the West and Japan. Because the trends are worldwide. There can be nothing local in this age of the global village—so it is essential for everyone to understand the strains of youth and their aspirations.

The most important force behind the youth revolt—in the West especially—is their strong sense of disillusionment. Youth has always, I suppose, been disappointed in the world it inherited. But today progress has been so breathtaking and the possibilities are so great that when disillusionment hits, it hits very hard indeed. Our parents struggled—they went through the great depression of 1929 and World War II and when it was over, they made a lot of money. We saw all of this material wealth—two cars, two television sets in every home, expensive clothes and fancy furniture—and we also saw that it didn't make them, or us, happy. A good job, money in the bank, insurance policies, conspicuous consumption—young people know how hollow it is.

There is an American song that talks about this materialism and what it breeds. It was written about a California suburb but it can apply to the whole of educated, urban society all over the world:

And the children go to school,
and the children go to summer camp,
and then to the university
where they are put in boxes
and they all come out the same...
and they're all made out of ticky-tacky
and they all look the same.

My sister is 23, she graduated from an American university and she is fairly typical, I think, of this movement away from materialism and this disillusionment with the old values. Recently she wrote me a letter and said: "I am no longer looking for a 'good' job or one place to live. I'm enjoying myself. Also, though, in the last few months I've been finding out and really believe that this whole country is falling apart. A lot of things are disgusting me to the point where I'm just plain hurt by a whole way of life in the U.S. I don't want any part of it. I've realized that I can't just live at home with mother and talk about how bad I think things are. I don't know what I'm actually going to do but it has got to be something. I have to get in

and help where it counts." By the way—she also says that the traditional ways of solving problems—politics, social work, teaching and the like—aren't enough any more. Young people see the mess the world is in very clearly and many of them feel the tried and true methods just haven't worked. Sometimes this disillusionment and frustration leads to frightening events—to the recent spate of bombings in the U.S., to violence so bad that it causes colleges in India, Europe and America to close, to massive and dangerous demonstrations such as those in Japan and elsewhere.

But behind all of this disillusionment, one thing is clear. Young people may be fed up with almost everything—but they care. They are active. Involved. Seeking. And maybe this is what bewilders parents more than anything else: that their children won't be respectable and do what they're told and earn a lot of money. More and more young people—in the West at any rate—are dropping out of university. Some choose to take low-paying jobs rather than enter the rat-race. Others turn toward social action—working for the antiwar movement, for example. An increasing number are experimenting with spiritual disciplines. Many are living communally, to try to develop a new kind of family life, a new sense of community and love. The heavy use of drugs—which seems to be dropping off a little now—was yet another attempt at seeking new ways, new experiences, a wider understanding.

Older people look at all of this activity—so much of it seemingly disrespectful—and they often cry out that the kids are spoiled brats who have been underdisciplined and overindulged, and have no sense of direction. Well, maybe the kids don't know exactly where they're going—in the way a bank clerk, say, knows he wants to be bank president—but they have a very strong sense of where they *don't* want to go. And they don't want to go the way their parents did. Rather than a lack of direction, I could say there is a purposeful refusal to follow the old directions. Sometimes it takes a while to discover a new path. I think that's what is happening now—the search for a new way. So there is a lot of hope.

And while the search is on, there have also been tangible accomplishments. In politics, the role of youth is obvious. This is the era of the youth protest; it can topple governments—as it did with Lyndon Johnson's administration in America in 1968—and force powerful politicians into uncomfortable, even crucial positions: witness the French student-worker uprising of 1968, the Djakarta and Japanese demonstrations, the Spanish student strikes. In personal and social relations, young people have come up with a number of viable alternatives to established patterns: communal living is the most significant. But the most important contribution of youth is its conscious explorations: witness the throngs of young Westerners coming to India to experience the traditional spiritual wisdom that lives here. They want to find—in their words—"where it's at"—and I don't think the search will stop until they know. Perhaps, in the process, their elders may find out—or rediscover—"where it's at" for themselves.

MARJORIE BRAHMS

THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE—AND THEIR ONLY SOLUTION

THE problems of life are age-old problems. They have so far defied any solution by mental, moral and material means. Science and technology have no doubt extended the boundaries of knowledge but they have left the fundamental problems of life untouched. That is why although scientific achievement has culminated in landing man on the moon, a feat deemed impossible even only a decade ago, science has done nothing to change the basic nature of man, his possessive, acquisitive and domineering instincts, his predatory habits, his bellicosity and distrust of fellowmen and, last but not least, his incapacity to control his own nature, the passions, lusts, greeds and desires that dominate him to the end of his life.

What at the best science has achieved is the improvement of man's material life, the many comforts and amenities it has placed at his disposal in his personal, group and social existence. It has, at the same time, because of man's incapacity to control his own primitive nature, brought him face to face with the dangers of fratricidal wars threatening the annihilation, if not of the whole, of a large and the most advanced section of the human race. Science has placed in his hands such lethal weapons, conventional, nuclear, chemical and bacteriological, as, when used on a global scale, may easily bring about the collapse of civilisation and a return to barbarism in course of a few months if not of weeks. And this is no mere speculation but almost a certainty if he fails to bring his erring and animal instincts which govern his relations with his kind into some sort of immediate control. At one end we are going to conquer the moon by our latest scientific and technological knowledge and at the other we are threatened with death and destruction for want of elementary control over our own selves.

Reason, it has been said, is what distinguishes man from animal but this reason turns traitor the moment our so-called self-interest is involved. This interest is not merely material; it is ideological also. Problems of life have always defied the powers of mind and reason because they are only half lights and vitiated by our conflicting notions of self-interest. This accounts for the present cold war which more than once has brought the world to the brink of a hot war between Western Democracy and East-European Communism. Throughout the ages, man on the whole has remained the same ignorant, crude, selfish, narrow and rapacious creature in spite of his vaunted civilisation and enlightenment and the progress of his mental and moral life. Morality is born out of mind which is ever-changing, restless and unstable; and mental ideas, unlike the eternal verities, are subject to constant changes. Morality, on account of the resistance of the recalcitrant life nature, does not touch the roots of existence which is always one though different in the manifestation, in names and forms. "Existence," declares the Veda, "is One; sages call it by different names."

Physically, vitally and mentally men are distinct and different from one another. This is the case all over the world; no two beings and things are the same. But what lies at the base of all these differences in humanity is the one, immutable and eternal Spirit of which mind, life and body are the ever-changing and perishable surface instruments. And it is the life of the Spirit which is unchanging, one and the same everywhere in spite of the differences of race, religion, climate, culture, tradition and history of the various peoples that inhabit the earth,—the life of the Spirit pure, true and perfect in its knowledge, will and workings, that we have to discover if we are to survive as a race.

Real spiritual light comes to man when he is able to stand completely detached from his mental, vital and physical existence and transcend the limitations on knowledge imposed by an ignorant and only half enlightened mind. But a certain mental growth and development in the right direction is necessary as a preliminary condition and it is to live in the mind and be the mental witness of the activities of mind, life and body without being in any way identified with them. Blessed are those who can do it. They have become masters of their nature—are no more its slaves. The ordinary mortal, however intellectual he may be, cannot differentiate in action between his body-mind-life complex, which he calls himself, and the Spirit within which is his real self. This failure to distinguish our true being from its surface instruments lies at the root of all our failures to tackle human problems. Ordinarily it is the vital being or the desire-self in us that rules and governs our conduct. It is the dominance of the crude, ignorant, selfish and dangerous vital nature of man that is at the base of all our troubles and difficulties, perturbations and upheavals both individual and collective; for the vital in us is not concerned with truth, right or justice. It seeks self-affirmation, life-growth and satisfaction of all its desires and impulses. "It tries," says Sri Aurobindo, "to dominate the mind and get from it by dictation a sanction and order of execution for its own will of self-affirmation, a verdict of right and truth and good for its own vital assertions, impulses and actions. It is concerned with self-justification in order that it may have room for full self-affirmation. But if it can get the assent of the mind, it is quite ready to ignore all these standards and set up only one standard, the satisfaction, growth, strength and greatness of the vital Ego." This attitude of the vital is what we generally find in the case of politicians, statesmen and military chiefs whose minds are carried away by and subjected to the demands and insinuations of their desire-selves, and thence follow all the clashes, conflicts and wars between the nations.

No amount of mental and moral teaching, preaching and practice can bring about a change of the human vital nature. Since the time of the Buddha, non-violence has been preached. The emperor Asoka banned all wars and killings in his dominion but human nature has not changed. The frantic efforts made by statesmen and politicians after the First World War did not in the least succeed in bringing about any change of human nature in the direction of peace, amity, concord and harmony. If anything, the conditions deteriorated to such an extent that they not only brought

about the Second World War on a more massive and international scale but are even now threatening the existence of the human race itself by the spread of nuclear and thermo-nuclear armaments. Unless therefore this vital nature of man is changed, there appears no hope for human survival. And that change can come only by self-knowledge, by a change of our present half-enlightened mental consciousness into a spiritual and supramental Truth-consciousness or All-knowledge, All-power, All-bliss. A change of consciousness alone can bring about a change of human nature—from the ignorant separative consciousness of the mind to the illumined unitarian consciousness of the Spirit.

If the phenomena of life have to be seriously probed, we have to go deep down below the surface of existence. On the surface we find constant changes going on every moment both in ourselves and in our environments. In the field of science and technology specially, changes have been rapid and remarkable during the last thirty years or so. The whole world is brought amazingly close together by the discoveries in the methods of transport and communication so that it is no longer possible to live a life of isolation from the rest of the world as in the days of yore. Many of us feel a nostalgia for the past when life was not so busy and hectic in the mere pursuit of living and men and women had leisure for a life of peace, quiet and contentment favourable to the life of the Spirit. What we have to do in our age of speed and science is to find our moorings and secure a basis in the stable and the eternal Spirit and allow ourselves on this basis to participate in all the changes in and around us. Then only can we have real self-knowledge and the peace and happiness which are wholly dependent on it. However much we may try, peace in outer life is impossible without inner self-finding. To run after the satisfaction of the senses in the pursuit of happiness is like running after a mirage. The source of all knowledge, peace and happiness lies within ourselves and not outside. This is the first lesson that we have to learn if we are to progress in life, and not end it where we began, like the animals, in sheer ignorance.

Life is a constant struggle for existence, survival, growth, expansion and perfection. Because of its many imperfections and shortcomings there is no such thing as smooth sailing in it till we reach the Perfect, the Unchanging and the Eternal. It is an ever-changing and ceaseless drama full of strange and unforeseen turns and vicissitudes of fortune. All life ends in death, some partly fulfilled and the rest in hopeless failure. But whatever the differences in the approach as to the ways and means, the ultimate goal of life is the same for all. It is an eternal quest for knowledge, power, peace, harmony and joy and happiness. Only our self-ignorance diverts us from the true path of self-fulfilment by leading us to various bypaths and tangles which only delay the journey and ultimate arrival at the goal. The only rational and supra-rational solution of the problems of life therefore is *a change of Consciousness followed by a change of Nature*. There is no other way.

JIBENDRA

THE KING OF KINGS ON THE SCREEN

A RETROSPECT

ON the open-air silver screen in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram playground there once appeared to the Mother's children Jesus Christ of Nazareth, as delineated by the modern American film industry. The pictures of those two weekends (1-6-1968 and 7-9-1968) were *King of Kings* and *The Robe* respectively. It is proposed to consider here these films in relation to our ideal of integral yoga and integral life in which past realizations pave the way to new achievements and every possible dawn succeeds and fulfils the ancient dawns.

Of course, as spectators of film shows in the Ashram, we take into our long and easy stride all subjects, all topics—sacred or profane, religious or secular, spiritual or mundane—provided they are artistically treated and do not pander to our lower tastes. Squatting on the sandy floor pounded every day by the gymnastic marchers, we thoroughly enjoy these shows in the protective zone of the perimeter wherein Sri Aurobindo wrote the *Arya* and the Mother announced the manifestation of the Supermind on 29 February 1956. We assimilate everything here tuned to a wee bit higher level of consciousness. Naturally, when we got the news that these pictures were expected, we wondered just how the “light of the world” that was Christ would be focused for presentation to the common man through the technically flawless cinemascope and the efficient mental machinery behind it—both usually geared to produce more and more successful box-office hits. And, at the outset of our comments, be it at once avouched that Hollywood and others have not failed in their task: to wit, bringing out popular films for the eager consumption of the public at large. But whether and to what extent all their stage effects have succeeded in providing any real insight into the true role of Christ in the terrestrial evolution is a moot point. In fact, it is highly problematical whether this industry can ever portray even to the intelligentsia and the élite, the profound significance of “Avatarhood”, unless they prepare themselves to think along fresh lines, to break through to pastures new, and to scan “New Horizons”.

A DISTORTED IMPRESSION

Indeed, when I got up after two-odd hours of deep absorption in the bold and imaginative technicolor pageant, the net impression left on my mind and the subtle shades of details gathered by the subconscious self, pointed only to the old half-luminous shadows, and not to any “New Light”. Reflected in the dreams that night were the Huns of Mohammed Ghaznavi, marching through the sandy wastes of Sind to attack, plunder and annihilate the Somnath temple, throwing up to the surface of

my consciousness the Indian scenic counterpart of Pompey's heathen and pagan hordes shown in the film as desecrating and destroying the temple itself (for there was no idol in it), a temple of the one God in the Holy Land.

The spectacle of Roman tyranny and Jewish resistance was well calculated to satisfy the normal socio-political fervours of the cinema fans, even as the miracles and sufferings of the Son of Man culminating in the epiphany after the Crucifixion of the Son of God were all good nourishment to the normal ethico-religious sensibilities and emotions of the average man in the street. But the directors of the film were blissfully oblivious of the fact that the Roman tyranny, supposing it to have existed, was no whit more tyrannous than the Semitic and Hebraic jealousy, cruelty and orthodoxy. "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin," pronounced Jesus about his co-religionists, about the religions and other bigotries in general the world over—may we say, even about the man of today, the man of this hour, puny creature of limited outlook?

FACTS ABOUT POMPEY'S MISSION

The film *King of Kings* opens with Pompey's invasion, his rapacious atrocities on the populace, his entry into the holy of holies, and his wholesale massacre of the entire sacerdotal college and clergy. Then is Pompey shown like an Asura rushing with his sword: "The veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (cited in entirely another context in Mark 38) by Pompey's sword. Indeed, this scene is altogether fabricated on words occurring in the Bible but here in fact calculated to convey a heinous suggestion against Pompey and the Romans; for this actually happened not by sword, but automatically by a miracle much later in time, immediately after Christ's Crucifixion. The film story further portrays Pompey's disregard of the tabernacle and the ark and his rough handling of Moses' covenant with God, until at last Pompey is moved to hand it back to the prostrate, pitiable chief priest across the "Agni Vedi" in the centre of the temple. All this captivating play of imagination, the horrors perpetrated by the Roman legions, can hardly be substantiated by the facts of history. What actually happened was this: Palestine was distracted by a civil war between the two priest-kings, Hypercanus II and Aristobulus II. The succession to office of the high priest was under dispute for ten years, and both sides appealed to Pompey to intervene. It was only then that Pompey subjugated Judea in 60 B.C. As there were rival factions, there was a siege of Jerusalem for three months. Pompey espoused the side of Hypercanus, and at last succeeded in reinstating the latter in the high priesthood. Pompey then returned to Rome. It was only the capitalist magnate, M. Crassus, in the first triumvirate, who plundered the temple much later, and then only for money. Pompey's other achievements of these times, which are equally if not more important historically, included:

- (1) forcing the pirates to the Sicilian coast;
- (2) defeating the insurgent Mithridates;

- (3) crushing the Armenian rebellion;
- (4) defeating the Iberian and Albanian aggressors; and
- (5) deposing Antiochus Asiaticus of Syria and subjugating his Syrian satellites.

Thus, it is crystal clear that Pompey bore no special grudge, ill-will or enmity towards the Holy Land with its temple of the one God, the Jewish people, or their religion. History does not bear out the subtle insinuation that the deeds or misdeeds of Roman imperialism were specially responsible for, or afforded any unique background to, the Avatarhood of Christ.

We do not know what Pompey did in the temple, which he entered solely to reinstate Hypercanus to the high-priesthood. But we know how even the great king David, the illustrious ancestor of Christ, fought his battles, destroyed the places of worship (high places of the pagans) and did short work of his enemies:

“And David brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance. And David brought forth the people that were and put them under saws and under harrows of iron and under axes of iron and made them pass through the brick kiln and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Amon. So David and his people returned to Jerusalem.” (Samuel III. 28)

In fact, the Old Testament abounds in such horrifying tales which can perhaps match only with the atrocities committed by some invaders and rulers of India from Timur to Aurangzeb. They had no truck with any Kshatriya or Rajput chivalry or any other noble Aryan concepts of *Dharma Yuddha*, *Dharma Kshetra Kurukshetra* and the creed of the Aryan warrior. Under such circumstances, it is needless to say that in the interests of the evolution of human consciousness, “The Son of David” (Christ) had perforce to be entirely different from his illustrious ancestor, who was the leader of a national religion “crude, conventional and barbarous enough in the Mosaic law,” as Sri Aurobindo puts it. Hence, the necessity of the three wise men of the East guarding the destinies of the child of Mary.

HISTORY OF THE HOLY LAND BEFORE CHRIST

From Abraham to Augustus is a far cry. We could, no doubt with profit, study side by side the ancient Graeco-Roman mentality which was revived after the Renaissance and the Hebraic ethico-religious temperament revived during the Reformation in Europe. But here at least the chequered history of Palestine since 606 B.C., when the Chaldean emperor Nebuchadnezzar captured Judea, must be cursorily traced and fitted into the context of the entire world history, in order to enable us to view and appreciate the significance of the birth of Christ, and to give us some clue to the positive turn that the spiritual evolution has been taking ever since.

In 598 B.C., Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Chaldeans. Zedekiah was taken prisoner and Gadaliah was appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar in

585 B.C. From 536 B.C., Palestine was a province of Persia, whose emperor Darius I used it as a spring-board for his attacks on ancient Greece. From 444 B.C. Nehemiah was governor of Jerusalem for twelve years under Persian rule. The priest Jehanan killed his own brother Jeshu in the temple itself in 366 B.C. In 320 B.C., Palestine was seized by Ptolemy Soter, king of Egypt. Antigonos of Syria pillaged it once again in 314 B.C., but eventually it was returned to Ptolemy in 292 B.C. In 170 B.C. Jerusalem was captured by Antiochus of Syria who plundered and polluted the temple. Then came Pompey who restored order in the east and returned home. In 40 B.C., after M. Crassus's inept adventure and treacherous murder, Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Parthians. At this time, Herod the Great, Idumean Jew by birth, retook Jerusalem on behalf of the Roman Empire, and naturally the distant rulers appointed him as their governor with the title, "King of Judea." Herod actually began rebuilding and beautifying the temple in 17 B.C.—an auspicious prelude to the birth of Jesus in 4 B.C., by modern calculations. Romans always were instrumental in restoring order to lands ravaged by foreign attackers and internecine strife. It was evident and amply demonstrated that during the Roman Empire, "the Roman's large practicality and his sense for the ordering of life in harmony with a robust utility and the just principle of things," as Sri Aurobindo has described it, were operative.

Why then are the Roman armies riding rough-shod from end to end of Palestine, indulging in arson, looting, massacre and torture on the "chosen race of God" in the "land flowing with milk and honey"? It seems more characteristic of a Chinghiz or a Timur, a Nadir Shah or a Ghaznavi, in their dealings with Asia and India; or shall we say of a Yahya mercilessly ordering similar misdeeds against his own co-religionists and compatriots in the Bangla Desh of today? In both the films, Jesus Christ is shown as shining against the dark backdrop of the Roman reign of terror and the excesses of Roman soldiery, as though the sole *raison d'être* of the Avatar were to challenge Roman imperialism. But the integral approach to these historical events and to the socio-psychological and spiritual undercurrents thereof convinces us that the West owes as considerable a debt to the Graeco-Roman civilisation as do the intolerant iconoclasts—the Jews and Moslems of the Middle East—to the revelations of the son of Mary.

In any case, the Jews learned their lesson, mended their ways and, redeemed after more than nineteen centuries of exile, they are now fast emerging as an enlightened nation. But it seems the Moslems in some parts of the world have yet a long way to go before assimilating the concept of a nation-soul. In the present political context, when Israel is very much on the world map while the mighty Romans have been relegated to oblivion, it is facile and appealing to pick a Pompey or a Pilate as scapegoat for the lapses of humanity. This, however, does scant justice to Emperor Augustus and his deputies, and besmears the fair name of the race of whose glories Virgil once sang:

"Thine, O Roman! remember to reign over every race,
These be thine arts, thy glories, the ways of peace to proclaim,
Mercy to show to the fallen, the proud with battle to tame!"

ROMAN SECULARITY, A GOSPEL TRUTH

About Pompey it is recorded that within the first triumvirate, he was bold enough to break with the aristocracy and became a great popular hero. Pompey declared himself the advocate of the people's rights and promised to restore the tribunitian power. He removed the encumbrances on the rights of initiative and intercession. Justices were previously taken from the senate only, but at Pompey's instance, they were also taken from the equites and Tribuni Aerarii. Pompey's organisation of the provinces and client states in the East was thorough, and thirty-nine new towns sprang to life at his bidding.

About Augustus Ceasar history records that "in the East he contrived to do without war, trusting and rightly trusting to the enormous prestige he had won by overcoming Anthony and Cleopatra and annexing the ancient kingdom of Egypt. The fame of Augustus spread to India and probably even to China with the caravans of merchants who then, as now, passed along fixed routes from Syria and Egypt to the far East."¹

Let us now turn for a moment to the ruler on the spot at the time of the Crucifixion—the much-maligned and unfortunate Pontius Pilate. Here we say nothing of our own, but leave the four gospels to speak for themselves.

Matthew writes:

"Then the high priest rent his clothes saying, 'He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses?' When he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, 'Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?' And he answered to it never a word: inasmuch as the governor marvelled greatly....When Pilate was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, 'Have thou nothing to do with that just man'....Pilate sayeth unto them, 'What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?' They all say unto him, 'Let him be crucified.' And the governor said, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they cried out the more, saying, 'Let him be crucified.'...Pilate took water and washed his hands before the multitude saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.' Then answered all the people and said, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children.'

It is interesting to note that the horrible and cruel doings of the Jewish priestcraft and their followers are nowhere given any attention by the film-producers.

The evangelist Mark thus corroborates Matthew:

¹ Warde Fowler, *Rome*, p. 205.

"The chief priests moved the people, that Pilate should rather release Barabbas unto them:

'What will ye then that I should do unto him whom you called the King of the Jews?'

'Crucify him.'

'Why? What evil has he done?'

'Crucify him!' "

In Luke, the double crime of these hostile chief priests and mobs is graphically portrayed. Having failed to prove anything against Christ, they thus accused him of sedition, and almost accused Pilate of abetting sedition if he were to have any truck with this traitor to their beloved emperor Caesar. Thus:

"We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying he himself is Christ the king....Then said Pilate to the chief priest and the people, 'I find no fault in this man.' As soon as he knew he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction he sent him to Herod....'I having examined him have found no fault in this man, no, nor yet Herod; I will therefore, chastise him and release him.'...And he said unto them the third time, 'Why, what evil has he done? I have found no cause of death in him.' And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed."

John, 'the disciple whom He loved,' is the most categorical, positive and clear in assigning Pilate and the Roman soldiery their proper role as administrators and executives:

"Pilate sought to release him but the Jews cried out saying, 'If you let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.'...The chief priests cried, 'We have no king but Caesar.' Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified."

THE AVATAR COMES FOR WORLD-WORK

Nay, Christ came not to challenge Roman imperialism. That would indeed be a very poor idea of his mission. Those were the times when mighty experiments in human consciousness were under way.

On the one hand, in the East, within the bounds of the ocean and the Himalayas in India—the insular *sanctum sanctorum*—three successive Avatars—Rama, Krishna and Gautama Buddha—had brought to a close their work. This "heaping up of the treasures of the spirit," as Sri Aurobindo calls it, was the result of all the eastern endeavours in aspiration, including the one attempted further north where Confucius

of China and Shinto of Japan left their immense knowledge, harmonic with the gospel of Siddhartha Gautam Buddha. All of this knowledge has been meticulously preserved and studied in the monasteries and libraries situated on the roof of the world—the land of Tibet. Then came the moment for the three wise men of the East to carry to the West the “dynamic principle of the spiritual being, the Compassion” of Buddhism. This had to be presented to the world as “love”, which became the dynamic principle of the spiritual being in Christianity. The Mosaic law had to leap forward in order to blossom forth as the fine flower of spirituality in Judaic Christianity. Or, rather, it was as though the call of love given by the flute-player of Vrindavan, which Siddhartha distinctly heard on the threshold of Nirvana, was first sent out by him to Asia in the echo-word, “Compassion.” It had then to be tuned to global frequency, so to speak. So in one of those unpredictable, undulating cyclic curves in the spiritual evolution of mankind, after much atmospheric disturbance the echo was heard at last by the ignorant, unheeding and hostile world at large, awakening it with a shock through the cry from the cross: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” (“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”) Surely Radha’s cry of separation is poignant enough, but it is neither as tragic nor as heart-rending as the cry from the cross of Christ). Love and separation have their infinite shades and hues. And yet, as sang the young English poet Rupert Brooke, people are seen lamenting mostly:

“O Love they said, and love they said,
The gift of love is this:
A crown of thorns about thy head
And a vinegar to thy kiss.”

They do not understand the significance of a total holocaust—a love that completely gives itself—the cross that may win the crown if humanity wakes up and marches incessantly on the path of spiritual progress.

But on the other side it had to be thus because, in the wider context of the total human awareness, the vitalistic upsurges in consciousness in the West as well as in the East not only disturbed but flooded and inundated the balanced mental harmonies of Hellas. At this point Europe lost something which it regained only after the Renaissance. In Sri Aurobindo’s words, it was “the free curiosity of the Greek mind, its eager search for first principles and rational laws, its delighted intellectual scrutinies of the facts of life by the force of direct observation and individual reasoning.” This tremendously destructive flood of welling vital energies could hardly have been organized and harmonized to good purpose but for some concrete eidolon of an extra-cosmic deity, trampling with fury the petty deities of the idolators and firmly entrenching himself as the One and Only True God of the chosen people in the chosen land. Here not Jews or Romans alone, but Babylonians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Scythians and Persians had to cross swords. And thus was Palestine an arena of combat between the East and the West, the North and the South. In the process, one

God was established by the Semites for a while, but what that one God, or all gods, stood for, was lost. Once again in and around Israel, Africa, Asia and Europe were made freely to throw gauntlets and exchange blows, ultimately to look into the face of Christ.

(To be continued)

VINAYAK SHANKAR GHARPUREY

LONELY FLAME

As burns a lonely flame in Night
Assailed by winds of doubt and fear
And sees alone its lonely shadow
Casting circles faint and pale,
No comrade light within its scope
To gain admittance, widening
The frail and meagre flickering—
The faithful know the awesome truth
Of Night's descending dreadful dark
When the soul that is once touched by Light
Must cross those portals, the doors of death,
And face the reign of blackness square
And know the saving Hands are there
While silent sinks the grasping past.

RICHARD EGGENBERGER

WALT WHITMAN, BRIEFLY CONSIDERED

THERE is a disease that has been wide-spread in America, and still shows little sign of abating: an affliction of seemingly invincible ignorance, in the generous light of which one feverishly and not softly asserts that everything Americans do must be "great", because they are something new and different in the world, and inhabit withal a pretty large piece of land there. Of these, the loudest and most uncompromising spokesman has been Walt Whitman; and he also is the only one who can be called, in some sense, great.

The refined, the cultured, the disciplined have always had a good deal to say against him. That he "brought the slop-pail into the parlor" pretty well sums up the moral objections. For the aesthetic objections, and the philosophical, it is sufficient to cite two names. Sidney Lanier (a careful searching student of prosody, at his best an exquisite poet) was revolted by Whitman's grossness and crudeness, his slashing collops from the rump of poetry, as it were, and serving them up raw, gristly and bleeding—poetry's butcher—all the while assuming (Whitman was good at "assuming") that the breath of the American prairies made debauchery admirable, and the length of the Mississippi made every American a god. The philosopher or perhaps semi-philosopher and minor poet or semi-poet, Santayana, wished that Whitman would be more compendious on occasion, and instead of going on a windy cataloguing spree would simply shout "The United States" and have done with it.

These criticisms of Whitman are not unjust. But if there were not more to him than what they object to, he would hardly, even in America, have the solid reputation that he does; even a growing reputation, if the increased attention of the Modern academics means anything (this being doubtful). The first publication of *Leaves of Grass*, that was greeted with such anguished vituperation, brought a letter of welcome and of high praise from Emerson, and the second edition bore on its cover (vulgarly enough) a quotation from this letter, greeting Whitman at the beginning of a great career; the complete letter being printed in an appendix. This embarrassed Emerson somewhat, and there were certainly things about Whitman to which he could not give his unqualified approval; yet he never repudiated what he had said; and his initial intuition, that disclosed greatness, was not a false one.

But greatness was perhaps never more problematical and perplexed, mixed and weighted down, never more diffuse, undisciplined, and unsure of what and where its real self was. In trying, straining so, to be a poet of The People, of Man *en masse*, of, as he thought of it in his worst moments, the "divine average"—meaning that average humanity, just as it was, was the true divinity—Whitman very nearly abdicated the poet's place for which he made such high claims. And of course he was rather a poet about The People, than of them; for they did not accept him; just because of his greatness, and because they knew nothing of poetry and cared nothing for it. If they

paid any attention to him, it was rather with a hurt self-love, that they should be considered to need any one individual spokesman at all.

(And here might be a contradiction in Whitman's philosophy, if he had one; this and his calling Lincoln his "Captain", too. But Whitman gloried in being contradictory, because, as he said, he "contained multitudes".)

Whitman, whatever he was, was certainly an individual, or rather, a personality, an impressive man, with a strong sense of personal identity. It was this vivid and strong personality of his, in fact, that led him into his universality, into which of course the wonderful average man could not begin to follow him. His self was every man and everything, he was not swallowed up in the universe but he mingled with it, and embraced it: not in a spiritual, but a vital-physical way, a kind of plenary sex-copulation. He had intimations of largeness and liberation, but they met too great an obstruction in the wilds of his unregenerate nature, that was so averse to discipline and real, astringent self-searching. For the most part, he simply sprawled and lounged, "inviting his soul" (which however remained hidden, letting his surface heart flounder); he "loafed", and sounded "over the roof-tops of the world" his "barbaric yawp". For a man who took such pride in being a barbarian, it is a wonder that so much real poetry got through after all.

He was sometimes rather more than "half in love with easeful Death", believing that it would liberate him fully; and during the Civil War that unleashed hatreds that are still alive—called rather by some Southerners, perhaps rightly, the War between the States—he devoted himself to nursing and attending wounded soldiers in the Washington hospitals and easing the path to death of many of them. He was also instrumental in saving many lives, it seems chiefly by his very presence and being. As he said, he gave not just a little charity—he gave himself. That self, by more than one suffering young man, was accepted as a precious gift.

He was a man, and met face to face he was engaging, and not an affront to the sensibilities. But he did not content himself with meeting people, and we cannot meet him now: and however he preferred to look at it, it is not himself that he has left to us, it is his writings; and we must take him not as a man, but as a book.

There are some interesting things in his prose, but it can hardly be called great, either in substance or style, and what gives him his place in literature is his poetry. And this takes its place more by the spirit behind it, than by the execution, more the power instilling the lines than the workmanship; for the power was seldom or never disciplined and channeled to its highest and largest capability. His lack is form, a lack that would have prevented one with less energy than Whitman from being a poet at all.

We have been told that he worked hard over his lines, as if this in itself were some great merit; but some of the worst stuff ever printed has been carefully worked. Whitman's having worked hard only emphasizes the fact that his deficiency is wilful, it is a matter of theory. He proved on occasion that he could write metrically, that is, with measure, and with a well-ordered rhythm; but he did not want to do

this, or did not think he should do it, because it had already been done. He was an American, the spokesman of a new dispensation, and so of course he could not use forms that Englishmen had used before him, or the kind of form that they had discovered to be of the character of the language; he had to be new entirely. It is too bad that he felt himself constrained to use words, and for the most part Englishmen's words, after all. He had to show the world "humanity", and not merely poetry. When Romanticism hit America it became a common view, specious to the poorly educated, that Americans should write in *American* forms, that they should continually sweat and strain, to make their work consciously and self-consciously *American*, never mind the character of the language (which after all is *not* American). Here Whitman labored; and the new form he found for *American* poetry, for poetry of The People, is not a form at all, aesthetically speaking. Of course everything has some kind of form, or at least shape; but more is required for poetry.

(It is perhaps a curious consideration that that very *English* thing, the Victorian idea of "progress", is largely behind Whitman's "revolt". Champions of Whitman who are enemies of "Victorianism" should look to this.)

But Whitman was a poet, and at least an inchoate and stifled feeling for form, and prompting to it, was always with him; and in his best poetry a tending toward form, really great form, is strongly in evidence. He was not so lawless and new as he wanted to suppose (or perhaps did suppose, for he knew little about these matters). I think that, without fear of too much altercation, one may pronounce his best poems to be *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*, and *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed* (this occasioned or prompted by the death of Lincoln); and it is in these poems that he rises highest toward a great metrical dispensation of his powerful but wayward rhythms. The dithyrambic and even Homeric quality, never quite realized, of Whitman at his best has been noted by Sri Aurobindo, who speaks indeed of Whitman's oceanic quality, an Atlantic as compared to Homer's Mediterranean, and he remarks the constant tending toward the hexameter in the two poems above mentioned. This has been remarked also by Paul Elmer More (perhaps the best critic America has had yet, and one that would not be out of place in the company of the best of the world); he sees these poems as something like Homeric epic before its form had been settled—as continually approximating to the hexameter, and sometimes even reaching it—in the way of Homer, not of Longfellow—and continually sprawling away in ignorance.

Though it may be that, as Sri Aurobindo said, even Whitman's best work lacks the final seal of poetic greatness, yet there is greatness there, and Whitman holds his place, and his influence. His large falling cadences, sprawl though they do, touch something in the blood, or the inner being, and one feels that somehow the spirit is greater than the utterance. The influence, indirect though it may largely be, may not be of the best, and Whitman may perhaps be indicated as one of those who corrupt and disintegrate society by teaching the uneducated that anyone is "as good as anyone else", and that ignorance is as good as knowledge, and discipline unimportant; but

still it is hard not to love the man, the man who does beckon us from the book, and one feels that all will come right, after all: that society is and will be one.

But it is not just a dull mass that we must have, a glorification of the average and the mediocre: that is, what we already have today. The better, the superior, must be sought and appreciated. One of Whitman's most ambitious and pretentious productions (if one can speak of a "most" with Whitman, in this connection), is called *Passage to India*. This poem, or semi-poem, is compromised by the fact that Whitman did not really know anything about India; but still it breathes a spirit of more than Victorian aspiration; to a progress, never stayed, in the infinite. It throbs, like all of Whitman's cadences, with the largely dumb yearning of humanity: cadences which promise, however dimly and haltingly, a spiritual regeneration, a finding of the Divinity that is far more than the human, and that alone unites existence. This aspiration and promise Whitman never really brought to utterance; but he tended toward it. His whole work is instilled with a faint perfume and music of it, and it rises, at its best, close to a high fount of true deathless poetry, and brings an influence, something of its light and power, beauty and music, with which to bless humanity. At his highest heights, Whitman gives us intimations of a divine poetry far greater than humankind, or any particular portion of the vast creation: a faint whispering and hinting of the divine utterance that sustains and moulds the universe.

JESSE ROARKE

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE

Sri Aurobindo—The Poet by K. D. Sethna: Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry; pp. 472: Rs. 14.50p.

RECENT years have witnessed a growing interest in Sri Aurobindo the original thinker, the metaphysician of the Life Divine, and the Yogin whose vision of future human unity is being sought to be realized in a seminal way through the "Auroville" experiment near Pondicherry. As his birth centenary (August 15, 1972) is fairly near, special editions, biographical memoirs and facet-by-facet studies on the patriot, the thinker, the Yogi and the poet may be expected in the coming months. The present study may be greeted as one of the earliest—and one of the most authoritative—of such publications.

There are many who, while readily conceding that Sri Aurobindo was a sterling patriot, a revolutionary thinker and a great Yogi, nevertheless express doubts about his unique achievement as a poet. His colossal poetic output (about 50,000 lines in bulk) was entirely in English, and people ask whether it is at all likely that one can accomplish poetic summitry in a language not one's own. (But then, owing to the circumstances of his early life, English was as good as a mother tongue to Sri Aurobindo.) Besides, as Sri Aurobindo himself acknowledged in a letter to Mr. Sethna in 1947:

"It is a misfortune of my poetry from the point of view of recognition that the earlier works forming the bulk of the *Collected Poems* belongs to the past and has little chance of recognition now that the aesthetic atmosphere has so violently changed, while the later mystical work and *Savitri* belong to the future and will probably have to wait for recognition of any merit they have for another strong change."

In the result, Sri Aurobindo the poet has been both praised by some on this side idolatry, and disposed of with a civil leer or dismissed with cheap disdain by others. Mr. Sethna has been among the best informed, the most consistent and the most illuminating among the former, and he has had more than once to break a lance with some of the latter category. In his compact monograph, *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo* (1947), Mr. Sethna concentrated on the two early romances (*Urvashi* and *Love and Death*), on Sri Aurobindo's handling of the Hexameter in *Iliad*, and on his later mystic poetry including *Savitri*. The present volume is more of a mixed dish, being a collection of articles (the earliest going back to 1929), talks, notes, questions and answers and replies to and correspondence with some denigrators and critics of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. The book naturally lacks tightness of structure, but gains in opulence and amplitude. Himself a poet of considerable distinction and a close

student of English and French poetry, Mr. Sethna was also in continuous touch with Sri Aurobindo for over twenty years, and it could almost be said that he was the "only true begetter" of *Savitri*. What he writes on Sri Aurobindo the poet is thus the result of a deep commitment to poetry and to Sri Aurobindo's poetry, and is very different from the general run of what passes today for literary criticism.

As a critic, Mr. Sethna is usually concerned with the inner reality of the poems he examines and in establishing correspondences between the soul quality and the enveloping imaginative cast, emotional mould, verbal shape and rhythmic pattern that in their different ways contain, yet also mediate between, the inner light and the outer world. His methods yield the most satisfying results when he concentrates on a short poem like *Rose of God* or on individual passages in *Savitri* or even on a single line like "Swan of the supreme and spaceless ether...", but he is a good guide even where his canvas is larger as in his essays on *Iliad*, the Homeric poem in Hexameters, or on Sri Aurobindo's earlier work. Occasionally—very occasionally—Mr. Sethna allows himself to be carried away by his enthusiasm, as when he writes of *The Rishi*:

"...the whole makes one of the very rare pieces for which, if at all so unpleasant a bargain were to be struck, one might even exchange the twelve Upanishads."

But normally he is restrained enough in his expression of praise, and his critical comments invariably stimulate interest rather than put the reader on the defensive.

Of rather special interest are the two essays in which Mr. Sethna discusses Sri Aurobindo's poetry in the light of Coventry Patmore's characterization of the Poetic Phrase (that it must have piquancy, felicity and magnificence) and Ezra Pound's classification of poetry under the heads Melopoeia, Phanopoeia and Logopoeia. Mr. Sethna's wide-ranging knowledge and his percipience as a critic of poetry are seen to the best advantage in these essays. As for the pieces warmed up by the spirit of debate, they are no doubt excellent in their kind, but it must be added that one cannot be argued into a condition of love—even of indubitable poetry.

Mr. Sethna's book, the garner of a life-time devoted to the profession of poetry, would prove an indispensable lifebuoy to those who are ready to lose themselves in the flood of Sri Aurobindo's poetry. It is valuable as much for the revealing light it throws on Sri Aurobindo the poet as for the insight it gives into Mr. Sethna's own poetic and critical sensibility. The book is beautifully produced, and is commendably free from printer's mistakes.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

(With acknowledgements to *THE HINDUSTAN TIMES WEEKLY*, Sunday,
25 October 1970, p. ii)

A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE REVIEWER

My dear Iyengar,

Thanks for reviewing my book. I may say that your review is the best that has so far appeared, and I don't think it will be easily outdone. When I say "best" I don't mean that it gives me the best press in the superficial sense of this expression, but that it is the most perceptive. Next to it I may place L. D. M.'s in the *Madras Mail*.

Your remark about my apotheosis of *The Rishi* is correct: I have exaggerated there. And before letting my verdict stand in this first and earliest essay of mine on Sri Aurobindo's poetry, I questioned my conscience several times. I tried one or two alternatives, but they left me with nothing worthwhile, so I finally decided to let the thing be. Let me, however, explain it to you a little bit.

In 1929, *The Rishi* was for me the top of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual poetry: I had seen nothing of *Savitri*, and none of the "Six Poems" and others of their kind had seen the light—or rather, shown us the light. My keenest response to a new type of verse was, at the time, couched in that enthusiastic encomium. It was not only very sincere, but also rather sensitive: something unprecedented was about to be introduced and it would be best introduced by an assertion which would make people sit up and take notice. That is one point.

Another is that a certain striking form is achieved in the statement: here is a memorable exaggeration which will go down alive and kicking to posterity, something like Pope's (I quote from somewhat faint memory)—

Read Homer once and you will read no more,
For all things else will sound so weak, so poor.
Verse may seem prose but still persist to read,
And Homer will be all the books you need.

A similar example is Caliph Omar's sweeping piety *vis-à-vis* the burning of the famous library at Alexandria: "If the books contain what is in the Koran, they are superfluous. If they contain what is not in the Koran, they are pernicious. So let them burn."

A third point: the whole of the essay concerned passed under Sri Aurobindo's eyes. Not that he could have concurred with this statement, but he did not demur either. So I conclude that I must have discerned in *The Rishi* much more than others had—and this "much more" was nearer the truth than what they had perceived. The running away of the enthusiasm was, as it were, a spur to a lagging and neglectful critical opinion. It served an important purpose which Sri Aurobindo must have approved of. This point boils down to, more or less, the very first one in my series, but with the added significance that Sri Aurobindo's seal of approval is involved, giving the hyperbole a sort of halo, with which I may be ill-advised to tamper.

Of course you have not mis-fired in drawing attention to the exaggerated note,

and I am glad you have balanced the judicious praise with this bit of kindly criticism. Your review would have lost something of its value without this gesture. The explanation I have given above is not meant quite to be a defence. Even less is it intended to be a grave objection to your comment. It is just a private view, not altogether befogged, which I have ventured to put before you because of your understanding, sympathy and appreciation.

K. D. SETHNA.

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of September 1971)

YOGA AND THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

The Problem of Money

THE problem of money is world-wide. It is not a crime to possess money. The ideal is that we should possess money and be not possessed by it. Most of the conflict of the world is due to the wrong use of wealth.

Money is a power. “It is indispensable for the fullness of life.” It has fallen into the hands of dark forces and we are consequently being exploited ruthlessly. Yoga demands that it should be wrested and won for the Divine purpose. “If you are free from the money taint you will have greater power to command money,” asserts Sri Aurobindo.

When money is spent for the Divine cause, it takes the form of the goddess Lakshmi.

B was a man of destiny. Whatever new business he undertook it was a success. He was the Director of a number of jute mills. Though a man of several crores he was deeply religious and as a result the whole family had a religious bent. Seeing his end near, B resolved to build a temple. He spent more than a crore in its construction and concluded his earthly career just after the installation ceremony of the deity. The last act of his life gave him great satisfaction.

Such is not the happy lot of all. C inherited a number of palatial buildings situated in the heart of Calcutta. But most of his time was spent in running to court. Litigation was almost a hobby with him. Life was wearing out gradually like an old tree. He fell a victim to paralysis. Four long years he had to remain in bed. No doctor could do anything for him. All he had he left to his wife. One or two people working under him grew rich, that's all he accomplished in his life. As he came into the world, so he left it, empty-handed.¹

People think there is no relation between God and richness of life. Both cannot go together and must remain divorced for ever. Is then all the wealth meant for the devil's enjoyment?

There is another point to be considered. The fullness of life is to be measured not by how materially one is successful but what happiness one derives from it.

¹ A story goes: Guru Nanak gave a needle to Dunichand the millionaire and said with a cynical smile: “Dunichand, keep it with you and give it back to me in the next world.” Dunichand exclaimed: “This needle I cannot carry with me after death. How can I return it to you?” Then Nanak quietly remarked: “If even a needle can't be carried, what use are all your millions to you?”

However rich one is, one cannot escape the toughness of life. We fool ourselves thinking that money is the panacea of all evils. At best money can drug life and lull it to sleep. So long as darkness reigns over the mind there can be no end of life-problems.

For most people, life is hard, very unpleasant and painful. Sri Aurobindo consistently stresses the fact that divine life is not inconsistent with the fullness of life. Our gods are not paupers. Man can turn his thought to the Divine not only in dark moments but in health, happiness and prosperity. It is we who deny Him and suffer. It is we who have made the world awful by acting under the instigation of ego and ignorance.

R came to see me in 1968. We had been in the same line of business in Calcutta. I came to Pondicherry but he, during the boom of World War II, earned six lakhs. But money could not earn for him the joys of life. His only son has lost the power of hearing and his wife is bed-ridden. Off and on he makes pilgrimages all over India in quest of peace.

This shows money alone cannot make life sweet. Happiness comes by the satisfaction of the soul and not by the gratifications of blind desires. True richness is inner richness—the richness of character. It is this that makes life sweet and it grows sweeter to the extent we develop our inner relation with the Divine.

But

“Until life finds him pain can never end.”¹

God can be seen when the heart is clean. Hence the need of Yoga in life

*
**

There are people who think suffering will best please God. The sense of sin, the practice of self-mortification and the act of renunciation occupy a prominent place in certain old religions. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga does not require us to resort to all these to win God. Instead, it wants us always to cultivate a spirit of cheerfulness and have respect for work in the world.

Dara was the name given by the Mother to an inmate of the Ashram who was distantly related to the Nizam of Hyderabad. Once he prayed to the Mother for some work.

“You want work?” very sweetly asked the Mother.

“Yes, Mother!” Dara's face was lit up with expectation.

“All right. I shall give you a work to do. But will you do what I say?”

“Certainly, Mother.”

“Remain always happy,” said the Mother in a loving tone.

Much later he spoke to someone, “O, it is a very difficult job—very difficult to remain always happy.”

¹ *Savitri*, Book VI, Canto II, page 98 (2-vol.ed.).

A seeker of truth has to face a host of troubles. But he must not rely only on his own strength, he must always seek the Divine Aid. Each has his own way of approach to the Divine. Here are one or two instances of the characteristic approaches of religious-minded people.

A high official of the Bihar Government was an ardent devotee of Sri Krishna. Whenever he was confronted with an unfortunate environment he would set his heart to pray in a closed room and keep himself shut up till there was a response.

A student of Varanasi Hindu University is in the habit of reciting the whole of the Ramayana once in a month. He is loved and respected by all the students. Whenever he is placed in untoward circumstances he writes 'Yes' and 'No' on a number of slips and places them before the deity, duly folded. At the close of the recitation, he would pick up one of them and act accordingly. To him this process has proved unfailingly helpful.

N before joining the Ashram would do the same. She would write only two slips one with 'Yes' and the other with 'No' and place them before the Mother's photo. If the chosen chit said 'No' she would not feel dejected but resign herself to the Mother's will.

Let those unable to face the realities of life recall the Mother's strength-giving words:

"Always joyfully accept what is given by the Divine."

The suggestion may be put into action by those seeking the spiritual life. They may make a personal experiment.

Mountainous heaps of letters reach the Ashram from various corners of India and abroad. One or two examples may be given of how the automatic response to these letters helps to solve various problems:

X was a dealer in ready-made goods. He badly needed some money. Where to go? To whom should he look for help? He had heard the name of the Mother and had just started paying visits to a Sri Aurobindo Centre in a suburb of Calcutta. A thought flashed across his mind to drop a line to the Mother.

After a few days a cloth-merchant expressed his desire to give X goods on credit. X could not believe his ears. How could one, unknown to him, agree to offer goods without cash payment! Help came from other sources also and he collected goods worth Rs. 15,000, making a profit of Rs. 5000. This induced him to pay a visit to the Ashram. He came in 1965.

He did not know how to meditate. When he stood before Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi, meditation came pouring in. In that moment of ecstasy he remembered he had written to the Mother for help. At the terrace Darshan he felt he was blessed by the Mother's gracious look twice, moving him to shed tears of gratitude. This is the experience of a fleeting visitor.

Y had received a railway parcel. On opening it he found only bricks and stones. This troubled him greatly as he was passing through hard times. When he spoke about this to N, N hinted quietly, "Why not write to the Mother?"

"What would the Mother do in a case of pilferage? Will she turn stones into gold?" said Y curtly.

"Where is the harm in writing?" N contended.

Before leaving N's office, C took the Ashram address from there, and dropped a letter to the Mother.

After a time an employee in his shop came to him pleading forgiveness. He was unable to keep silent any longer about the theft he had committed. Whatever money he had secured by the sale of the stolen goods he placed before C. This trifling incident not only opened C's eyes but turned the tide of his fate. As days rolled by, the Grace came crowding on him.

These incidents only touch the surface of the problem. The following facts throw some light on what changes Yoga brings even in those who are engrossed in the worldly life.

X, a well-to-do Gujarati lady of Bombay, believes that all the riches that came to her are an act of the Divine Grace. For long she had been in search of one who could read the elements of her destiny and set her feet on the right path. The very first time she stood before the Mother she felt her search had come to an end. Mortal life has since ceased to be a burden.

After her marriage, when she stepped into her husband's house her father-in-law felt that the goddess Lakshmi had graced his house and it literally proved true. X's husband began his career as a store-keeper and is now the owner of a big factory.

Here is a rare example of one living in plenty yet above it. She commands money, power, position, honour as those around her are ever eager to do her bidding but she remains ever unruffled in mind and sweet in manners.

To lead a Yogic life this is not all that is necessary; but, says Sri Aurobindo, "A beginning is enough."

To be materially as well as spiritually rich is a very rare phenomenon. Some instances are there among the followers of Sri Aurobindo. They live as others live in the world but there is a world of difference in attitude between the two—one group leading an egoistic life and the other standing rooted in the spiritual soil.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

SRI AUROBINDO BIRTH CENTENARY: 15th AUGUST, 1972

What did Sri Aurobindo seek to do for India and the world, and how may they receive from him, on his centenary, a fresh inspiration?

A Few Proposals

SRI Aurobindo was a patriot who was a yogi, and a yogi who was a patriot. He gave a whole generation of national workers their deepest lessons in patriotism. He was a great poet and a master of prose style. His writings are making an increasing impact on India and the world. He was an original thinker in the varied fields of truth and reality, social progress, Indian culture and art, the evolution of man and his destiny, and the political future of the world. In Indian and foreign universities, his thought is now a preferred subject of research.

Sri Aurobindo was a great Master of Yoga, an originator of "Integral Yoga", the Yoga of the future evolution of mankind and a concrete possibility of human unity. It is Integral Yoga that is sought to be demonstrated and realised at his Ashram in Pondicherry: a Centre of a new experiment in life to which people from all over the world converge.

But the greatest undertaking of Sri Aurobindo was to prepare man for the profound change that is now taking place in the very fundamentals of cultural life. In the final decade of the last century, he saw that a radical change was coming upon man. He called this change an "evolutionary crisis". His greatest work has been really to guide and facilitate the move in human life to its next step and status in evolution. This work continues under the guidance of the Mother, his illumined collaborator.

In the light of the above, we think it fit that:

(1) There should be departments of Sri Aurobindo studies at least at a few Indian universities so that Sri Aurobindo's profound and varied thought may become fully available to the academic life. This may take many forms: actual teaching of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy at the Hons. or M.A. levels; advanced research on all aspects of his Integral Yoga, and special lectures on special aspects of his philosophy and his epic poetry.

(2) An International Institute of Sri Aurobindo Studies may also be conceived and instituted with the co-operation of The International Council For Philosophy and Humanistic Studies of Unesco or otherwise.

(3) In these distracted times of break-up of accepted moral and spiritual values, readable selections from Sri Aurobindo's writings may be prepared to give to youth at all levels of education a new spiritual vision.

(4) The general public too should be given a chance of the same impact through Mass Media Methods in suitable forms.

(5) Each individual should become conscious in himself of the need of inner integration and the power of the Integral Yoga, which rejects nothing, accepts both matter and spirit, and transforms and unites them in a realised harmony.

Sri Aurobindo's influence has widened and deepened since his passing away. It will increase more and more in the present context of our country and the world. May it be given to us to serve India and the world through a celebration of Sri Aurobindo's birth centenary all over our country. And let us rejoice individually and collectively that a Maha Yogi was born in contemporary India to give inspiration to the modern world in its quest of an integral life leading to the integral evolution of peace and unity among mankind.

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Students' Section

THE FAIRY OF THE GREAT FOREST

A SHORT STORY

ONCE upon a time there was—perhaps still is—a fairy who lived in a great forest. Her name was Mona. She was a modern fairy and rode on a tiny bicycle. Of course it was a magic bicycle. It took her over the roughest roads, the highest mountains and the widest rivers.

One day Mona put her cycle against a huge banyan tree and started walking around it. The forest was full of bird-music. The bulbul was the Primadonna and the cuckoo was her main support. The green parrots joined in with their clarionet notes while the crows beat out a gay and swift rhythm with their cawing. Mona was enjoying the orchestra when suddenly there was a hush and all the birds flew away in a flurry. Mona looked up at the banyan tree and saw a tiny sun-bird coming out of her nest. The bird began to whistle. This is what she said: 'I've found it, I've found it, I've found it.'

Now you must know that Mona was extremely curious about everything. So she called out to the bird: 'What have you found?'

The bird cocked her head to the right and then to the left and said: 'I won't tell you, I won't tell you, I won't tell you.' Then after hopping about a little on the branches, she flew away.

Curiosity got the better of discretion and Mona stealthily climbed up the tree. She had no difficulty in finding the sun-bird's nest. It was no bigger than her palm. But her eyes flew wide open when she saw a strange object in the nest. It was a golden tube with holes in it. Mona wondered what it was. She took it down with her and put it in her pocket. Then she mounted her bicycle and went paddling out of the wood.

Soon Mona came to a small village. An old man was sitting on a bench. He was dozing when Mona saw him. Presently he yawned and stretched himself, then he took out a wooden tube and put it to his lips. As he blew into it, sweet sounds came out. Mona was terribly excited. Now she knew what to do with the strange object she had found.

She jumped on her cycle and flew towards the forest. She got down near the banyan tree and started playing her golden flute. But a strange thing happened. She felt a bit drowsy, so she went to get her cycle. But wonder of wonders, the cycle was no longer a cycle, it was a fawn. Anyway Mona sat on the fawn and it flew like the wind.

Mona crossed so many cities and forests and rivers that she lost count of them. At last the fawn stopped. Mona found herself in a beautiful forest full of green trees and flowers of every colour. All kinds of fruits were there, mangoes, apples, pears, peaches, bananas, etc...Mona had never seen such a forest. She started exploring it. After a few minutes she met a lion with a wheelbarrow. It contained icecream.

The lion bowed politely and said to Mona: 'Would you like to have a cone of icecream?'

Mona was delighted and replied: 'Please, yes.'

While eating her icecream she asked the lion: 'How did you learn to prepare such delicious icecream?'

The lion rubbed his paws, then stroked his beard and said: 'Well, it was like this. When my grandfather was in the circus there was a man who used to sell icecream and sometimes he gave him a little to taste. He liked it so much that he followed him all the time with his eyes and learnt his art. When human beings became brotherly and friendly they found out that we animals are a part of their family and so they freed us all to live as we pleased. Now it is a family trade. After coming to the forest my grandfather decided to make icecream for his fellow-animals. Now the cow gives me milk and the peacock dances in the milk to make icecream. And of course brother man is always happy to help us.'

Mona shook her head and said: 'Are you telling me that man no longer tortures animals?'

The lion looked at Mona with surprise and roared: 'What's the matter with you? Are you still living in the old world? Don't you know that man is now no longer the cruel tyrant he used to be?'

Saying this the lion picked up his wheelbarrow and galloped away.

Just then Mona saw two stars twinkling in the sky though it was daytime. Strange, the stars seemed to be flying towards her. When they nearly touched the ground, Mona discovered that they were human beings. They had no wings.

Mona called out: 'Who are you?'

The men said: 'We are the new human race.'

'Are you different from the old human race?' Mona asked.

'Of course,' said the men. 'We can fly without wings. We can change our dress at will. We can change even our forms at will. We don't grow old. We are never sick. Our life now is full of joy.'

Mona was bewildered and she asked: 'Where am I?'

The two smiled at her and replied: 'In the Land of the Future.'

ANU PURANI

LAST LOOK

AN OLD PARABLE

By beat of drum, sages, saints and scriptures warn us sadhaks—"Beware, beware of Hostile Forces." Why? Because Hostile Forces are powers and they wield their influence to the detriment of sadhaks. It is said that if you talk with them or even think of talking with them you lose your ground and ultimately you are doomed. Hostile Forces wear alluring, charming, enticing, bewitching forms and draw the sadhaks. They do not have red blood-shot eyes, long nails, etc., as depicted in some books. Unless they wear fascinating forms, how can they entice the sadhaks? It is even said that one should not even think of having a last look at a Hostile Force. For, even curiosity means a small opening somewhere, through which we may be seriously struck down.

In this connection I am reminded of a story in the Jain *Kathānuyoga*. Here goes the story.

There was a merchant, a very wealthy fellow. He had two sons, Jinraksit and Jinpalit. Both were intelligent fellows but as their father was a rich man they had very little to do. They were tired of the easy life and they resolved to go on a sea voyage, so that they might see different lands and also gain knowledge. They accordingly informed their father of their resolution. The father first tried to dishearten and dissuade them, by describing the dangers of the sea, but they were adamant and the father at last had to agree. So both the brothers started on the sea voyage on an auspicious day. For some days the voyage was a happy episode but Fate turned against them. A cyclone arose and the ship in which they were voyaging was shattered to pieces. Both the brothers managed to get hold of a plank and they drifted on the waters for a number of days. At last they were thrown on the shore by the waters.

On the shore a beautiful, charming, alluring girl—whose name was Raynadevi—aged about 18 or 20—was standing and she addressed the brothers thus: "Welcome, welcome. Thrice welcome to my place. I had a dream and I saw you coming, so I am waiting for you. Accept my hospitality, myself and all that belongs to me are yours. Enjoy yourselves, your bad days are over."

The brothers who had undergone many hardships were overjoyed to have such welcome and without a word or thought they accepted the hospitality of Raynadevi. They had not seen such a figure of a girl. They were pleased, fascinated. They went to the castle of Raynadevi. It was full of all the luxuries that the world could provide. The brothers found a heaven on earth after so many misfortunes. And they began to enjoy the luxuries with a vengeance. Hours, days and months passed but they did not know it. To them a month was a day, a day an hour and an hour a minute. In

this way they nearly passed a year.

Now every year Raynadevi had to go to her lord's place for 15 days to render service. And that time came. She told the brothers to wait for her for 15 days, asked them to enjoy themselves as they liked and she told them she would come on the 16th day. She gave the keys of the castle to them but enjoined them not to open the northern gate, and she departed.

Now it is the nature of human beings to try to do what is forbidden. The brothers were no exception. They eagerly wanted to open the northern gate but, remembering the injunction of Raynadevi, refrained from doing so. In this way 15 days passed and Raynadevi was to come in the morning of the next. But the brothers could not curb their curiosity and they opened the northern gate in the evening of the 15th day. And what did they find? There was a big garden with a man on an iron pike and a pile of human skulls. When the brothers entered the garden the man on the iron-pike and the skulls began to laugh. The brothers were amazed. They could not understand anything. They asked the man on the iron-pike what the matter was.

The man replied, "We laugh at your ignorance and your credulous nature. You have taken for granted everything Raynadevi told you as gospel truth without a thought as we did. I was her lover before you came and these skulls are the skulls of her previous lovers. Now when some new person will come, you will be on the iron-pike and the new person will be Raynadevi's lover."

On hearing this the brothers were extremely frightened. It was a question of life and death. They entreated the man on the iron-pike to show a way to avoid the calamity. The man said, "There is only one way. Do you see the temple near by? Go and pray to the presiding deity—the Yaksha—to save you. He alone can save you." The brothers took their bath, went to the temple and began to pray earnestly to the Yaksha to save them. All night they prayed. In the dawn the Yaksha was pleased with their devotion and he appeared before them and asked, "What do you want?" The brothers said, "Please save us from Raynadevi." "On one condition," said the Yaksha. "What is it?" eagerly asked the brothers. The Yaksha replied, "The moment I take you on my shoulders and fly, Raynadevi will come and tempt you, even terrify you but you should not even think of looking at her, and, if you break the condition, I will throw you off my shoulders and then Raynadevi will tear you into tiny bits and scatter the bits on all sides. This is the condition." The brothers said, "What business have we even to look at that she-devil? We accept your condition."

The Yaksha took the brothers on his shoulders and began to fly. At this very moment Raynadevi came and saw that her prey had escaped. She began to weep piteously and entreated the brothers to return. Her weeping was so piteous that the wind stopped rustling and even the waters of the river ceased to flow. But the brothers were resolute. Then Raynadevi assumed many bewitching forms and tried to allure the brothers but in vain. Then she wore terrible forms and tried to terrorise the brothers but that also failed.

Then as a last resort she said to the brothers, "All right, you are determined to

go; then depart; who can stop a person who has determined firmly to go? Go happily but hear my last request. You have enjoyed me and mine for a year to your heart's content. In memory of those happy days please cast a last look at me so that I may pass my remaining days remembering your faces. Please do cast a last look at me."

Raynadevi uttered this request in such a humble entreating tone that Jinpalit was moved and said to his brother, "What harm is there in casting a last look at her?" But Jinrakhsit was resolute and did not agree to the proposal. Jinpalit broke the condition imposed by the Yaksha and so the Yaksha threw Jinpalit off his shoulder and Raynadevi caught hold of Jinpalit, tore him to tiny bits and threw away the bits into four corners. Jinpalit had forgotten that "those once mounted on the gigantic flying saviour, who turn to look back for a last, fond view, inadvertently fall to a sorry death in the pitiless sea below".

This is the fate of all who think of having a last look at the Hostile Powers and therefore the warning, "Beware of Hostile Powers." The story ends by saying that Jinrakhsit was put at his father's place safely by the Yaksha.

VALLABH SHETHI

EYE EDUCATION

ART OF SEEING

POOR sight is admitted to be the cause of retardation at school. In many cases defective vision is the result of an abnormal condition of the mind, the mind is under a strain, and therefore the process of education cannot be conducted successfully. By putting glasses on the face of the child we may make the child see better but we are not able to relieve the strain which underlies the imperfect functioning. The result is that the number of the glasses goes on increasing.

When the mind is under strain, memory is first affected. The extraordinary memory and keenness of vision of primitive people were due to the mind at rest. When one is not interested, one's mind is not under control, and without mental control one can neither learn nor see. A teacher reported that one of her pupils used to sit doing nothing all day long and apparently was not interested in anything. After reading the eye-testing card daily his sight improved, he became anxious to learn, and speedily developed into one of the best students of the class. In other words, his eyes and mind became normal together.

Unfamiliar objects always cause strain on the minds of the children. Hence children learning to read, write, draw, or sew often suffer from defective vision and discomforts of the eyes and head. Headache is of frequent occurrence. This is due to the unfamiliarity of the lines or objects with which the children are working. Such children can be greatly helped by reading fine print and eye chart daily with gentle blinking. The art of seeing pictures proves wonderfully helpful in the improvement of eyesight. Games which keep the children in motion become an aid to eyesight.

Lipidas aged 10, a student of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, had good eyesight when she joined the school but after a few months it became quite bad: she could see well neither at a distance nor at a near point, a semi-blind condition manifested. Often she suffered from headache and pain in the eyeballs. Though an intelligent child, yet due to defective vision she was becoming a backward student. Her parents got worried and one day brought the child to the School for Perfect Eyesight.

Defective-eyesight children develop the habit of staring and do not blink. When Lipi was asked to read the eye chart from ten feet, she read four lines without any blink. So she was taught to blink gently at each letter. By this process she could read one line more but there were still three lines to read to bring the sight to normal. She was then given a picture card of the Tajmahal to develop the art of seeing a picture. She should look at the picture in such a way that it appeared three-dimensional. At the first glance the picture seemed flat but within a few minutes it began to appear as a reality, as if she was actually looking at a model of the Tajmahal.

The sun appeared to shine on the doors and windows and on the walls. The trees and flowers and visitors appeared as if actually standing on the ground. She was absorbed in seeing the beauty of the Taj and the surroundings. She exclaimed: "Lovely! beautiful!" Every detail of the picture was coming out sharply, she was finding her eyesight improved. Then when she was asked to read the chart, she could easily read the last line, and her vision was recorded normal in fifteen minutes' time. The child has learnt the art of seeing a picture and the eye chart and now enjoys perfect eyesight.

If we can introduce the plan of eye education without prejudice, our children will be greatly relieved from eye strain and headache and will have perfect eyesight. Their capacity to read and to learn will be greatly increased. The details of the art of seeing may be studied from the book, *Yoga of Perfect Sight*.

DR. R.S. AGARWAL

SCHOOL FOR PERFECT EYESIGHT



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