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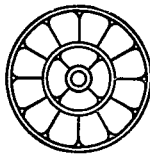
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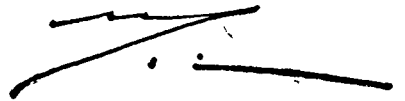


Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute.

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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Vol. XXVI

No. 5

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail."

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1974)

(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 the 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 at the time of its first publication in French in February 1968.)

DECEMBER 12, 1956 (Contd.)

I have a question here which is a bit childish. Someone has asked:

“Why are some people intelligent and others not? Why can some people do certain things and others can’t?”

It is as though you asked why everybody was not equal! Then that would mean that there would be only one single thing, one single thing repeated indefinitely which would constitute the whole universe I don’t know, but it seems to me that it wouldn’t be worth the trouble to have a universe for that, it would be enough to have just one thing!

But the moment one admits the principle of multiplicity and of not having two similar things in the universe, how can you ask why they are not the same? It is just because they are not so, because there are no two similar things.

Behind that there is something else of which one is not conscious, but it is very simple and very childish. It is this: since there is an infinite diversity, since some are of one kind and others of a lesser kind, well (of course here one doesn’t say this to oneself but it is there, hidden in the depth of the being, in the core of the ego), why am I not, I, of the best kind? There we are. In fact that comes to complaining that one happens not to be of the best kind! If you look attentively at questions like this: “Why do some have much and others little? Why are some wise and others not so? Why are some intelligent and not others?” etc., behind that there is: Why don’t I have all that can be had and why am I not all that one can be? ... Naturally, one doesn’t say this to oneself, because one would feel ridiculous, but it is there.

There, then. Now has anyone anything to add to what we have just said? ... You have all understood quite well? Everything I have said? Nobody wants to say

(A teacher:) The use we make of time seems to us a little “impossible”.

Well, wait for a century or two and it will become possible! *(Laughter)*

You are told that today's impossibility is the possible of tomorrow — but these are very great tomorrows!

(*Silence*)

I have another question about what I told you the other day, when we discussed the distinction between will and “willings”. I told you that “willings” — what Sri Aurobindo calls “willings” — are movements arising, not from a higher consciousness coming down into the being and expressing itself in action, but from impulses or influences from outside. We reserved the word “will” to express what in the individual consciousness is the expression of an order or impulse coming from the truth of the being, from the truth of the individual — his true being, his true self: you follow? That we call will. And all impulses, actions, movements arising in the being which are not that, we said were willings. And I told you in fact that without knowing it or at times even knowing it, you are put into movement by influences coming from outside which enter in without your even being aware of them and raise up in you what you call “the will” that this particular thing may happen or that other not happen, etc.

So I am asked:

What is the nature of these influences from outside? Could you give us an explanation of their working?

Naturally these influences are of very diverse kinds. They may be studied from a psychological point of view or from an almost mechanical standpoint, the one translating the other usually, that is, the mechanical phenomenon comes about as a sort of result of the psychological one.

There are very few people in whom the will of the being expresses that deeper inner truth, and even in the very best this happens very rarely.

(*After a silence the Mother continues.*) The individual consciousness extends far beyond the body; even the subtle physical, which is yet material compared with the vital being and in certain conditions almost visible, extends at times considerably beyond the visible limits of the physical body. This subtle physical is constituted of active vibrations which enter into contact or mingle with the vibrations of the subtle physical of others, and this reciprocal contact gives rise to influences — naturally the most powerful vibrations get the better of the others. For example, as I have told you already several times, if you have a thought, this thought clothes itself in subtle vibrations and becomes an entity which travels and moves about in the earth-atmosphere seeking to realise itself as best it can, and it being one among millions, naturally there is a multiple and entangled interaction as a result of which things don't take place in too simple and schematic a fashion.

What you call yourself, the individual being enclosed within the limits of your present consciousness, is constantly imbued with vibrations of this kind, coming from outside and very often presenting themselves under the form of suggestions, in the

sense that, apart from a few exceptions, the action takes place first in the mental field, then becomes vital, then physical. I want to make clear that it is not a question of the pure mind here, but of the physical mind; for in the physical consciousness itself there is a mental activity, a vital activity and a purely material activity, and all that takes place in your physical consciousness, in your body consciousness and bodily activity, goes in first under the form of vibrations of the mental kind, hence under the form of suggestions. Most of the time these suggestions enter into you without your being in the least conscious of them; they go in, arouse in you some sort of response, then spring up in your consciousness as though it were your own thought, your own will, your own impulse; but that happens just because you are unconscious of the process of their infiltration.

These suggestions are very numerous, manifold, various, each with very, very different qualities, but they may be classified into three principal orders. First (and these are hardly perceptible to the ordinary consciousness; they become perceptible only to those who have already reflected much, observed much, studied well their own being), these are what could be called collective suggestions.

When a being is born upon earth, he is born perforce in a certain country and a certain environment. Due to his physical parents he is born in a social, cultural, national, sometimes religious group; a group of habits of thought, of understanding, of feeling, conceiving; all sorts of constructions which at first are mental, then become vital habits and finally material modes of being. To put things more clearly, you are born in a certain country, and that society has a collective idea of its own and that religion has a collective "construction" of its own which is usually very hard set. You are born in it. Naturally, when you are very young, you are altogether unaware of it, but it acts upon your formation — that formation, that slow formation through hours and hours, through days and days, experiences and experiences, which gradually builds up a consciousness. You are enclosed in it as beneath a bell-glass. It is a kind of construction which covers and in a way protects you, but in other ways limits you considerably. All this you absorb without being even aware of it and this makes the subconscious basis of your own construction. This subconscious base will act upon you throughout your life, if you do not take care to free yourself from it. And to liberate yourself from it, first of all you must become aware of it; and it is this first step that is the most difficult, for this formation was so subtle, it was made when you were not yet a conscious being, when you had just fallen altogether dazed from another world into this one (*laughing*) and all that happened without your participating in the least in it. Consequently, it does not even occur to you that there could be something there to know, and still less something you must get rid of. And it is quite remarkable that when for some reason or other one does become aware of the hold of this collective suggestion, one realises at once that a very assiduous and prolonged labour is necessary in order to get out of it. But there the problem does not end.

You live surrounded by people. These people themselves have desires, stray wishes, impulses which are translated in them and have all kinds of causes, but take

in their consciousness an individual form. For example, to put it in quite practical terms: you have a father, a mother, brothers, sisters, friends, comrades; each one has his way of feeling, willing, and all those with whom you are in relation expect something from you, even as you expect something from them. That something they do not always express to you, but it is more or less conscious in their being, and this makes formations. These formations, according to each one's capacity for thought and the strength of his vitality, are more or less powerful, but they have their own little strength which is usually much the same as yours; and so what those around you want, desire, hope or expect from you enters in this way under the form of suggestions very rarely expressed, but which you absorb without resisting and which suddenly awaken within you a similar desire, a similar will, a similar impulse That happens from morning to evening, and again from evening to morning, for these things don't stop whilst you are sleeping, but on the contrary, very often are accentuated, because your consciousness is no longer awake, watching and protecting you to some extent.

And this is quite common; so common that it is quite natural and so natural that you need special circumstances and quite unusual occasions to become aware of it. Naturally, it goes without saying that your own responses, your own impulses, your own wishes have a similar influence on others, and that all this becomes a marvellous mixture in which the reason of the strongest is always the best!

If the problem stopped there, one could yet come out of the mess; but there is a complication. This terrestrial world, this human world is invaded constantly by the forces of the neighbouring world, that is, of the vital world, the subtler region beyond the quaternary earth-atmosphere;¹ and this vital world, which is not under the influence of psychic forces or the psychic consciousness, is essentially a world of ill-will, of disorder, disequilibrium, indeed of all the most anti-divine things one could imagine. This vital world is constantly entering the physical world, and being much more subtle than the physical, it is very often quite imperceptible except to a few rare individuals. There are entities, beings, wills, some sort of individualities in that world, who have all kinds of intentions and use every opportunity either to amuse themselves if they are small beings or to do harm and create disorder if they are beings with a greater capacity. And these latter have a very considerable power of impregnation and suggestion, and wherever there is the least opening, the least affinity, they rush in, for it is a game which delights them.

Besides, they are very thirsty or hungry for certain human vital vibrations which are for them a rare dish they love to feed upon; and so their game lies in exciting pernicious movements in man so that man may give out these forces and they be able to feed on them as they like. All movements of anger, violence, passion, desire, all these things due to which you throw out certain energies abruptly from yourself, are exactly what these entities of the vital world like above all things, for, as I said, they enjoy them like a sumptuous dish. Now, their tactics are simple: they send you just a little

¹ Consisting of the four principles physical, vital, mental and psychic

suggestion, a little impulse, a small vibration which enters deep into you and through contagion or sympathy awakens in you the vibration necessary for you to throw out the force they want to absorb.

There it is a little more easy to recognise the influence, for, if you are the least bit attentive, you become aware of something suddenly awakened within you. For example, those who are in the habit of losing their temper, if they have attempted ever so little to control their anger, they will find something coming from outside or climbing from below which really takes hold of their consciousness and arouses anger in them. I don't mean that everybody is capable of this discernment; I am speaking of those who have tried to understand their being and control it. These adverse suggestions are easier to distinguish than, for instance, your response to the will or desire of a being who is like you, another human being, who consequently acts upon you without your getting a clear impression of something coming from outside: the vibrations are too alike, too similar in their nature, and you have to be much more attentive and have a much sharper discernment to realise that these movements which seem to go out from you are not really yours but come from outside. But with the adverse forces, if one is in the least sincere and observes oneself attentively, one becomes aware that it is something in the being which answers an influence, an impulse, a suggestion, even something very concrete at times, which enters the being and produces similar vibrations.

There, then. That is the problem.

The remedy?... It is always the same: good will, sincerity, clear-sightedness, patience — oh! an untiring patience and a perseverance which assures you that what you have not succeeded in doing today, you will succeed in doing another time, and makes you go on trying until you succeed.

And this takes us back to Sri Aurobindo's sentence: if this control seems to you quite impossible today, well, that means that not only will it be possible, but that it will be realised later.

THE MOTHER'S STATEMENT ON HOW PAVITRA (PHILIPPE BARBIER ST.-HILAIRE) PASSED AWAY ON MAY 16, 1969

It was very interesting, the experience I had that night. Nothing like it I ever had in my life. It was the night before the day he passed away. The time was 9 o'clock. I felt he was withdrawing, withdrawing in an extraordinary manner. He was coming out of himself and gathering and pouring himself into me. He was coming out consciously and deliberately with the full force of a concentrated will. He continued to do so steadily, ceaselessly for hours. It ended at about 1 o'clock, I looked at the time.

There was no slackness or interruption or stop at any moment. It was throughout the same steady continuous flow, without a break, without a diminution in the strength. Such a concentrated undiminishing stream it was. The process continued until he was wholly within me as though he was pumping and exhausting all he was in the body till the last drop. I say it was wonderful — I never experienced such a thing. The flow stopped when there was very little left in the body: I let the body remain as long as it was needed for the work to continue, till long, quite long after the doctors declared it dead.

As he was in life, he could not have done the thing, I did not expect it of him, it must have been some past life of his that was at work and did the thing. Not many Yogis, not even the greatest among them could do such a thing. There he is within here, quite wakeful, looking in a rather amused way at what you people are doing. He is merged in me wholly, that is dwelling within me, not dissolved: he has his personality intact. Amrita is different. He is there outside, one of you, one among you people moving about. At times, of course, when he wants to take rest and repose he comes and lodges here. A remarkable story. A great and very difficult thing Pavitra has done.

25.5.1969

A HIPPIE'S LETTER AND THE MOTHER'S RESPONSE

THE LETTER

January 30, 1973

My Beloved Mother,

I am writing on behalf of my brothers and sisters, the young men and women of the West. Your latest message, that the Ashram Guest Houses should not "shelter Hippies", hurt deep in my heart. How often I have heard these words from those of a different generation and consciousness in Europe and the United States, whose tendency to fear and destroy anything new, anything that threatens their old patterns, has only alienated more the youth to whom they apply this term. What is a "Hippie"? — someone who has long hair, who wears unconventional clothes, who takes drugs, who is not clean? Is it a state of consciousness or merely an outer appearance? And how is it determined whether a person is or is not one?

Mother, I write from my heart because if this attitude had been taken one year ago I would not have been here now, nor would many people I know in Auroville and Pondicherry. Young people of America and Europe are often so discouraged and sickened by the life around them, by the blindness of their society, their governments, that in a desperate attempt to dissociate themselves from all that they feel within is false and unloving, they adopt unconventional life styles, and deliberately break the old codes; they even may take drugs because they believe this may help them find the new consciousness which they innately know is manifesting on earth. Within, many are sad, lonely and confused, for although they see that the old ways must go, they are unable to find new ways that are lasting and satisfying. I speak from my own experience, Mother, this sickness eventually drives one to leave country, family and security, and go out seeking the true Home — and for some, India beckons strongly and intimately. Perhaps they arrive on these shores still carrying the trappings of their rebellion and confusion, probably many will never find their way out of the darkness, but some — and not few — carry the flame in their hearts and are only waiting to be opened, to be shown the straight of the true path. Mother, if these refugees of a sick Western culture, this generation born with something different inside, cannot find shelter in Your arms, then where can they go?

Of course, certain ways of behavior cannot be sanctioned, and maybe today's youth know only how to abuse the new freedom allowed to them. But what saddens me is this broad use of a word which throws millions of uniquely different individuals into one negative category, and encourages narrowness on the part of those who, for whatever reasons, want to close all doors to these lost but seeking young.

Should one be judged by what he seems, or by his willingness and ability to change?

I pray to you, Mother, do not let begin here the reactionism that has perhaps irrevocably separated the generations in the West. We are all Your children; no matter in what condition we come to You, Your Grace can transform the entire being, and make the spirit within stand forward, clear and strong and purified.

All my love and devotion,
At the service of Truth.

THE RESPONSE

Conveyed by M. P. Pandit

The question has been raised: "Who is a Hippie? And why should he be kept out of the Ashram Guest Houses?" It is asked whether one is a Hippie if he has long hair, wears unconventional clothes, is unclean or takes drugs. The Mother is categorical that for our purposes those that are unclean, those that take drugs, are to be kept out. Those that are not unclean, do not take drugs, are welcome, even if they have long hair, even if they wear unconventional clothes. Even those who are unclean and take drugs, but promise to become clean and stop drugs, will be received in Her open arms, given a chance.

The Mother objects to uncleanliness for reasons of safety. For in this country, one may catch any serious disease — even leprosy — in that condition.

The Mother objects to drugs because they lower the consciousness while our object is to raise the consciousness. Drugs induce vital experiences which people mistake for spiritual experiences and then they go astray.

The wearing of unconventional clothes was questioned by some Sadhakas on the grounds of decency. The Mother said, "No, I am not concerned with that. I am out to break conventions." She also said that She was concerned with drugs and cleanliness only for the reasons She had stated and for no others.

Those who want to change will always be given a chance

I-2-1973

SOME TALKS OF SRI AUROBINDO BEFORE 1926

(FROM OLD NOTES)

I SHOULD like to have more information about the fact that Swamī Ramalingam built a temple symbolic of his path and the aim in his Sadhana. The temple had no image in it but seven screens of seven colours: black, blue, green, red, gold, white and mixed (Mayashakti, Kriyashakti, Parashakti, Ichhashakti, Jnanashakti, Adishakti and Chitshakti)¹ indicating the seven planes of consciousness. On a fixed day in the year a crowd of pilgrims assembled there to see the temple opened screen by screen, ultimately revealing an effulgent sun. The meaning is that when the Sadhaka passed through the seven planes the last one perfected in him the golden body by changing the physical body into light. I was talking to Mirra² about Ramalingam. She said her teacher in occultism, Théon, also had the same system of the seven planes of consciousness though he gave them queer names for instance, one, perhaps of Ananda, he called Pathétique (Plane of Feeling). He had a remarkable intuition about the coming down of the Supermind and about the new race of Supermen. He also believed that when you reached the seventh plane you would get the *corps glorieux*, the glorious or illumined body — the supramentalized body. According to him, the radiant body has a certain something which he called elasticity — something similar to the Yogic siddhi of *animā*. I got the intuition about this *animā* when I was in jail, not by becoming small but by being endowed with a certain subtlety in the physical body — the power to throw away automatically all oppression, fatigue, disease, discomfort of heat and cold, etc. When we are in a high poise in Sadhana, something of this comes into the body — a faint glow of it and not its fullness. If the fullness were there, then the whole work would be done.

Death is only a mechanism for further development of the being in its transformation. You can throw away the body voluntarily instead of death being forced upon you. The real thing is to make disease impossible. Merely curing diseases is not the aim, though it has some utility until you attain the *animā* in order to preserve the body.

Théon's wife was a great Sadhika with a vast knowledge of the psychic planes and with large psychic powers. Théon had a very wide and elastic mind, but, like most Westerners, was poorly developed in the control of the vital plane. With his rich and plastic mind and the psychic knowledge gained through his wife, he could develop and help others develop certain psychic faculties to their utmost. Théon knew that he was not meant to succeed but had only come to prepare the way to a certain extent for others to come and perfect it. But afterwards the disciples around him made him believe himself to be the man destined to bring down the Supermind

¹ Editor's Note The last-named is possibly "Sukharambha Chitshakti" (according to information received from Tulsiram who has helped to fill two or three gaps in this part of the Notes)

² The name by which the Mother was known at that time (Editor)

into the physical plane, and naturally the whole thing came to a smash. The wife saw that the Supermind was not to be attained by them and that the venture had failed for the time and so she gave up her body. It was she who had been supporting Théon with her knowledge and powers; without her he was nothing and naturally after her death the entire project suffered shipwreck.

The intuition about bringing down the Supramental into the physical body is a very ancient one. But the ancients do not seem to have had knowledge of the necessary conditions for its coming down. The mental being has been very largely, almost exhaustively, worked upon by the old Rishis, Siddhas and Yogins. The vital being also, though not, I think, in the right way. They developed the vital being for its own sake. They do not appear to have prepared it as a passive channel for the Supramental to come down and manifest itself.

What I find is that it is not necessary to have a rich and full development of the mental, vital and physical beings for bringing down the Supramental. It is enough if there is a sufficient basis to start the higher working. Too rich a development is an obstacle sometimes. I find that what the mind attains with great effort is easily attained after it is accompanied by the Supramental. Whatever is necessary is brought down with the descent, because the Supramental carries with it its fullness. In my own case I found the mental development an obstacle, but I had to go through it in order to get the needed knowledge. Mind is like an infinite snake coiling round and round in infinite ways.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

I

THE first conditions of this Yoga are

(1) A complete sincerity and surrender in the being. The divine life and the transformation of the lower human into the higher divine nature must be made the sole aim of all the life. No attachments, desires or habits of the mind, heart, vital being or body should be clung to which come in the way of this one aspiration and one object of the life. One must be ready to renounce all these completely as soon as the demand comes from above and from the divine Shakti.

(2) A fundamental calm, peace and purity in the mind, vital being and all the nature.

The hours of meditation should be devoted to the formation of these two conditions in you, by aspiration and by self-observation and rejection of all that disturbs the nature or keeps it troubled, confused and impure. Aspiration if rightly done, quietly, earnestly and sincerely, brings the divine help from above to effect this object.

As to the hours devoted to work, needs, family, etc., they can be made an aid only on the following conditions.

(1) To regard all these things as not belonging to yourself, your inner being, but as things external, work to be done so long as it remains on your shoulders to the best of your ability without desire or attachment of any kind.

(2) To do all work as a sacrifice without any egoistic motive.

(3) To establish and deepen the inner calm and quiet. If that is done, all these things will be felt more and more as external and the falling off of desire and attachment will become possible.

For getting rid of passion the same condition. If you separate yourself from these movements and establish calm and peace inside, the passions may still rise on the surface, but they will be felt to be external movements and you can deal with them or call down the divine aid to get rid of them. So long as the mind does not fall quiet, it is not possible to deal finally with the vital being from which these forces rise.

20-5-1927

2

As long as one has the sense of duty to family or person or institute or country one ought to fulfil the duty. It is only when the duties have been discharged or all sense of responsibility for them has been renounced that one is free to practise and progress unhindered in the Yoga.

December, 1927

AUROVILLE — A CITY FOR THE MEN OF TOMORROW

WHEN THE PAST AND THE FUTURE EXCHANGE THEIR PROMISES

(With grateful acknowledgments to Figaro Littéraire of Saturday, 9 March 1974, we are publishing an English translation of the article by André Brincourt, a major journalist and editor. The rendering had to be a little free in one or two places in order to make the sense of the original pass effectively into the new language.)

Monsieur Brincourt came to India particularly because of his keen interest in Sri Aurobindo's thought and work no less than in the traditional spirituality of this country. He stayed for over a week in an Ashram Guest House. His main object of study was Auroville against the background of the Ashram. Figaro Littéraire is one of the most widely read intellectual and artistic weeklies in France. And M. Brincourt's article was its front-page feature, accompanied by several pictures — some from photographs by Dominique — with pointed write-ups under them

It is both interesting and suggestive to see a modern Westerner's reactions to the living ideals of the Ashram and Auroville, whether the reactions be positive or semi-critical. The writer links up the new life here with the general awakening both in India and the world)

TEN kilometres from Pondicherry, youngsters who have come from all the corners of the world participate in one of the most amazing adventures of our time. Inspired by the doctrines of the great Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo (whose Birth Centenary was celebrated two years ago), they are building the City of the Future: Auroville. Is it a mirage? An act of faith in man? Towards which civilisation do they turn while refusing ours? It is to try to answer these questions that I came to see and listen on the spot.

Yesterday they said, "The Indies." The passage from the plural to the singular erases in no way the vertiginous diversity of this country of contrasts and contraries; but how can one not fail to see there, on the difficult way which leads from independence to unity, an admirable will to synthesis?

The spirit of synthesis is the light and hope of India, its gods' most generous lesson, the true source of energy where past and present exchange their promises — it could be the answer of the most advanced technology to the most profound spirituality.

I was in Bombay visiting the buildings of that impressive centre of Fundamental Research of the Tata Foundation, created in honour of the great physicist Homi Bhabha, to whom Science and Art asserted themselves in modern India, under the pressure of imagination, as a new form of Humanism. And it was during my talk

with J. R. D. Tata — pioneer of Civil Aviation, master of the vastest industrial empire in India — that I understood the meaning that could have in it a real philosophy of action: the philosophy which, answering to the millennial anguish, could permit one to escape from the endless Wheel of vicissitudes.

However, the most conspicuous social successes of J. R. D. Tata (the iron-and-steel complex of Jamshedpur, employing 400,000 workers) only answer these ambitions in the measure that, according to his “ethic”, wisdom joins hands with dynamic push.

Because, in his deepest self, and probably because, enthusiastically and generously playing Nehru’s bet, he wanted to shake off the immobilism, the fatalism and the paralysing system of castes, J. R. D. Tata realises that India does not expect A Solution from the West but must find once more, by Some Inner Solution, its own image.

Vivekananda said: “Each nation, like each individual, has in its life a fundamental note, around which the other notes of the harmony come to group themselves. If it rejects the principle of its vitality, the guidance transmitted through centuries, a nation dies. In India, religious life is the tonal key of the whole accord.” And did not Jawaharlal Nehru, the Socialist, the Rationalist, confide to André Malraux: “Humanity lacks something essential — a kind of spiritual element which holds in harness the scientific power of modern man”?

We were having a Whiskey at the bar of the Taj Mahal Hotel of Bombay and J. R. D. Tata confided to me, amongst other examples of the researches pursued now in his Chemical Centres, that the treatment of cow-dung could allow one to envisage new sources of energy capable of bringing, in addition to fertilisers, heat and light.

I perhaps surprised him somewhat by answering him that it was a sign of the gods. But the sacred cow poses a grave enough problem for us not to smile — and the word “cow” in Sanskrit (*go*) means also light. (Govinda, the name of Krishna, means the keeper of the cow and the holder of the light.) Let us beware of symbols: they are here the expression of synthesis.

Upon coming back that very day from the island of Elephanta, one of the holiest spots dedicated to Shiva who, in the light hidden in the heart of shadow, reveals his three faces, I made a strange discovery: the “lingam”, the phallic symbol of the vital force of Shiva, god of energy and destruction, has exactly the same form as the cupola of the atomic reactor one can see on the mainland. It is not such a mad thought to have, that this could be an Indian truth.

In any case it is in that state of mind that I approached one of the most astounding experiments “active” India presents today to our thought. I mean Auroville, that city of the future which is, first of all, a profession of faith.

Resignation and non-violence were and are still today an Indian reality, yet they express in no way the deepest currents in which, to the contrary and according to the Vedic law, action manifests itself. But the Bhagavad Gita calls us to the highest tradition: it is indeed to fight that Arjuna the hero is drawn, in spite of his protestations, in the chariot driven by the divine Krishna.

Is it an accident that the greatest thinkers were also the greatest revolutionaries? The principles of action of Sri Aurobindo are the other side of the truth taught by Mahatma Gandhi in his principles of non-violence.

Dreamers are not passive Yogis, for their dreams take shape — whether we talk of Ram Mohan Roy, the first promotor of the religious awakening of nationalist inspiration destined to liberate India from social injustice and foreign domination; of Dayananda and his victory over illiteracy in the northern provinces; of Vivekananda, disciple of the great mystic Ramakrishna, and his struggle against all forms of superstition; of Vinoba Bhave, obtaining two million hectares of land to distribute to the poor (which the bureaucracy will not know how to use), or of Sri Aurobindo giving birth to the major Utopia: a city built by men come for their self-discovery and building their own selves.

It is not without reservations that I came to see, if not to judge upon the spot, this strange experiment. I had promised myself that I would discriminate between illusion, folklore, goodwill, defiance and renunciation. The problem is put quite differently.

First, let us recall the facts.

Auroville is directly inspired from the doctrine of Sri Aurobindo which is taught at the Ashram of Pondicherry, one of the most radiating spiritual hearths of India.

A Spiritual Reality

“Here thought is action.” To conduct us towards this “adventure of consciousness”, spirituality refuses none of the most modern technical acquisitions and in its philosophy it opens to the theory of evolution which leads man to surpass himself in order to attain unity. In this sense, he meets — by another path, with another language, but by the same “energetics” where matter and spirit are reconciled — Teilhard de Chardin.

Sri Aurobindo is truly the man of syntheses; his teaching, like that of “the Mother” who succeeded him in the direction of the Ashram, can indeed appear, according to his own expression, as “the Indian answer to the questions put by the West”

It is 10 kilometres from Pondicherry, in the barren red soil of the Tamils, that the city named Auroville is taking shape little by little — according to an architectural plan of marvellous audacity (owed to the French architect Roger Anger and his team) — but more surely thanks to the inner *élan* of those who participate in the adventure and, doing so, give a new sense to life and to self-discovery.

The Contrary of Refusal and Refuge

We are very far from the simple fascination of the East — even if fashion or, worse, a certain snobbism finds in it today a certain means of mind-perversion. I have

not seen any *de luxe* hippies, and I did not seek the Mediterranean Club of the Gurus.

I have seen Louis, son of a hotel-keeper of Nice, directing the polyester workshop where the young Tamilians chop and cut mica to decorate and give a soul to objects of "design" style: I have visited the Press where one utilises the sumptuous paper hand-made by women in saris; I have seen Piero, a Florentine architect who participates in the construction of the "Matrimandir", the spherical temple around which the city must blossom; I have met Thomas, the German baker; Françoise who works at the publicity office; Barun, Rabindranath Tagore's grand-nephew, who looks after the Auroville publications; Jacques, a Paris journalist, who from now on dedicates himself to the educative experiment of "free progress" with the Ashram children; Swapna, the pretty twenty-year old Tamilan, sitting amongst carnations with Henri Michaux's poems in her lap; I had a talk with Christiane, ex-professor of Forbach, who now enlivens the kindergarten — and I rather quickly understood that in any case I had just discovered the city whose princes are the children.

Let us admit that Auroville is an act of trust in the Future Man. It is indeed difficult to analyse sociologically a phenomenon as yet so limited. But already it is not without interest that we can note how certain problems set by the very freedom of behaviour — for instance, that of drugs — have been easily surmounted. In fact, the experiment is original not only because it implies an inverted *rapport* — one does not submit to the environment, one creates it; it is original also because it favours a "new communication" between beings and objects. I was struck by a quality now become so rare in the West that it is being designated by an old-fashioned word: "kindness." It is a natural gift from the Indians.

On the Centenary of Sri Aurobindo's birth, two years ago, Monsieur Maheu, Director of Unesco, reminded us that "the common objective (the foundation-stone of Auroville was laid in 1968 in the presence of representatives from 65 countries) was to propose to humanity an experiment capable of enlightening it, elevating it, and bringing to it with the irreplaceable instruments of knowledge and research the means and the will of spiritual freedom".

Partly subsidised by the Indian Government, living upon the meagre benefits of its handicrafts and mostly upon the gifts of the Ashram, the city of Becoming obeys reason less than faith. Faith in man.

It is the contrary of refusal and refuge.

A Sage Called Satprem

Nevertheless I am afraid that, from this point of view, Auroville has fallen victim to a false interpretation and rather superficial impressions. Let us not forget that this "inner city" — this city promised to men who do not yet exist — is in a certain way the materialised satellite of the Ashram of Pondicherry, a veritable laboratory of spiritual researches.

It is Sri Aurobindo's doctrine that is the cause of it. But it is also a whole language

that we must confront, an imagery — and not always in the best of tastes — a devotion that verges on fetishism. “The Mother”, who has just left the body at the age of 95, had not eliminated magic. We shall find again contradictions and paradoxes: pure art (nothing is more beautiful than Sunil’s music heard in the silence of the meditative nights of the Ashram), but also the degradation of popular taste to which we owe here religious trappings, as elsewhere the loud colours of papier-maché temples and Indian cinema posters dirtying the walls of Bombay or New Delhi.

Doubtless, now that Sri Aurobindo and “the Mother” are reunited under the stone slab of the Samadhi constantly covered with fresh-cut flowers, the Ashram must project far from it the best of itself. Auroville is but the first stage. Yet already the forms of art, the forms of education and of communication prove to be of the rarest audacity. Beauty then becomes optimism. It is enough to see the models of the architectural workshop of Roger Anger to be convinced of it.

It is on that scale of value that we can ask: Can we find here an answer, the beginning of an answer “to the questions put by the West”?

In order to know this, I wanted to have a talk with a sage. Under the name of Satprem a Frenchman has consecrated twenty years of his life to the thought of Sri Aurobindo. Since the passing of “the Mother,” he can be considered as one of the most living constituent forces of the Ashram. Though he is retired “into silence”, Satprem was willing to see me.

I expected of him that he should define, or give me a perception of, the new order of things and beings. I remembered that passage from his book, *The Adventure of Consciousness*: “We have arrived, says Sri Aurobindo, at a new crisis of transformation, as crucial as must have been the crisis which marked the appearance of Life in Matter, or the crisis which marked the appearance of Mind in Life. And our choice is also crucial, for, this time, instead of letting Nature operate its transmutations without much care for living contingencies, we can be the conscious collaborators of our own evolution, we can accept the challenge.”

The West has indeed become conscious of the extreme point where man finds himself today, man the victim of his own “technical victories” and of a civilisation founded on progress. The signs cannot be mistaken. the disordered attempt of escape towards the Moon or towards drugs, the divorce from natural forces, acceleration and asphyxiation, the pollution of the body and of the spirit.

These truths which here are dinned into our ears we should be mistaken not to heed when repeated whisperingly to us, but in the heart of a real experience of reconviction.

The fundamental theory of Sri Aurobindo about the “Supramental” Becoming of man belongs no more to poetry, but finds today its echo in science. Satprem is not ignorant of the recent biological discoveries that I recalled to him about the persistence in man of “the ancient” brains, notably the reptilian brain which in each of us keeps alive an “animal past”.

Evolution will keep its promises. The “passage” from the hominid to *homo*

sapiens announces for man, arrived at the mental stage, another “passage not towards superior man, not towards improved man, but towards ‘man of another nature’, holder at last of his spiritual potentiality, the being that Sri Aurobindo calls ‘supramental’”.

Satprem tells me: “The ape has not become man by jumping higher, but perhaps thanks to a few ‘privileged moments’ when it ceased to act according to its law — for instance, by contemplating the beauty of a tree or of the sky. It is those moments of ‘absent-mindedness’, objectively considered as wasted moments, that led it to sublimate itself.”

I think that Satprem has just given me the key-word: “absent-mindedness.” Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, said Jesus. But here it is in the name of the species.

Thus meditation is a path Not the only one. Auroville is an action and a hope — and surely there exist in India other living forces in which the irrational finds its reasons

During the whole interview on the terrace of a bungalow, dominating this idyllic garden bathed in mauve light, in silence and in peace, Satprem had a flower in his hand.

I may cite the story of Louis Armand: the caterpillar which dreams of having a few feet. It does not know that it should not dream in terms of progress, but of metamorphosis.

Change man? At the Ashram of Pondicherry I went to consult another Frenchman, a follower of Pavitra,¹ who has been working at an “educative revolution” by setting into practice with children the astounding method of “free progress”.

The principle leading Tanmaya rests on this thought of Sri Aurobindo: “Nothing can be taught which is not already hidden knowledge All teaching is a revelation.”

Therefore it is a question of **psychic education** which consists in awakening the spirit and allowing to the child a kind of auto-teaching in the living surrounding of work. “All can be built upon this receptive joy open to all the marvels of life Upon this joy that is not yet checked by those leagues of prohibitions which, among other things, force a child to divide play from work”

And again: “Little by little the educator will also cultivate in the child discrimination and the aesthetic sense, the capacity to choose and to adopt what is beautiful and harmonious, simple, healthy and pure — for as ‘the Mother’ remarked: ‘There is a psychological health as well as the physical health.’”

Tanmaya, with his luminous face, adds: “It is with confidence that I throw myself into this adventure, and now after years of meditation I am resolved to go as far as possible. We must make a clean sweep, find tomorrow’s order in today’s anarchy, or what we consider as such; we must get out of the paths that we have traced to reassure us, to persuade ourselves, that ‘we behave well within our prisons’.”

¹ Philippe Barbier St.-Hilaire

The two French children of the "Guest House" where I stopped were moulded by the "free progress school": Sushama the girl (12 years old) speaks three languages, dances and paints; Kartik the boy (14 years old) is mad about mathematics, plays the flute in the evenings after his two hours of physical education. Better than that: they breathe *la joie de vivre*.

Where are the illumined ones? In the vapours of gasoline or in the vapours of incense? In our societies of degradation, of negation of both pleasure and quality of being, or in that small human fire that leaped up in a corner of red soil at the end of the world? Let us not hurry to smile and to mock.

The message broadcast on the 15th of August 1947 for the declaration of Independence announced that one of the most beautiful dreams would be "the spiritual gift of India to the world"

I have just learnt that President and Madame Edgar Faure, during a recent private visit to the Ashram at Pondicherry, were very interested in the experiment of Auroville — notably on the educational plane.

André Malraux once said that "our civilisation has constructed neither a temple nor a tomb". Does Auroville want to pick up the gauntlet?

Already the new city is the tomb of certain values to which we cling vainly and desperately; and soon we shall see the temple of Hope, "the Matrimandir" — a grandiose golden ball — which is at once the first construction, the core of the city, its reason of being and becoming.

That could be the answer to the first question: not so much men to build the town as the town to build men — a town "whose centre is a round temple to a nameless God".

The great lesson of Sri Aurobindo's **Synthesis of Yoga**, which gathers together the spiritual and material energies, poses perhaps the second question: the men of action in the most modern sense of the word, like J. R. D. Tata in the industrial and social world, or like the minister Karan Singh¹ in the intellectual and political world, are perhaps the modern incarnations of Arjuna led — not without reservations, nor without fears — by this inner call in which reason challenges reason.

The return to France at an altitude of 10,000 metres is favourable to meditation (one must "think upon the wings of the wind"). Seeing the smile of the sari-clad Indian on a Boeing 747 and riding my fabulous "flying carpet", the ultimate achievement of technical perfection, I lost all notion of space and time. Was it not again a symbol — and synthesis?

If from the depth of ages the cows of light signal to us; if the theory of evolution and of the Supramental is reinforced by recent biological discoveries; if from the "lin-

¹ Minister of Health and Population, President of the Committee of Sri Aurobindo's Birth-Centenary

gam'' of Shiva to the atomic cupola the most ancient mythology blends with the most advanced technology and science unites with the Song of the Gita — then perhaps it is time to think that India, keeping her promise, will uplift man, through action, to a new consciousness.

ANDRÉ BRINCOURT

DON'T FORGET YOUR PROMISES TO HER

O TRAVELLER, this is no time for thee to rest,
 Lest slumber fall a heavy weight upon thy being.
 Keep kindled thy spirit's flame and thy path follow best
 As dictates thy soul. Keep ever awake thy eagle-seeing.

Thy road thy feet must tread on tireless, thy lived life
 Reflect thy God-dreams. Vigils within thee thy bright Guide.
 Thy courage is thy own, not only the Mother's. Thy fife
 Play bold and lively. Give colour to thy poise and thy stride.

There's no short cut to achievement, no easy velvety way.
 A full-length journey must be covered before thy goal
 Is in sight. Thy inmost core must only have its say.
 In this world-maze, to move on heightward is thy true role.

Be wakeful to thy soul and obey its secure sure Lead;
 Thy faith, thy sincerity and The Mother's Grace shall succeed.

HAR KRISHAN SINGH

STRAY THOUGHTS

WHILE SEARCHING FOR THE MISSING PAPERS ON SRI AUROBINDO'S ACTION AGAINST BRITISH RULE IN BENGAL IN 1906-1910

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1974)

4

SRI Aurobindo's acquittal by Beachcroft had an interesting sequel in Government and Judicial circles.

In the past, Bengal Government had asked that Sri Aurobindo be deported, a simple, straightforward solution. The Government of India then had demurred. Morley would not like it. Let the ordinary law take its course. Briefed and encouraged by Halliday, the Commissioner of Police, the DIG Crime, Bengal, the IG himself, the Crown solicitors Orr and Dignam and last but not least Mr. Norton, famous then in Indian and in Australian High Courts, Bengal Government thought they had Sri Aurobindo "in the bag". And here Beachcroft, a fairly junior ICS officer, with a good record, specially appointed to try the case, found that he had to acquit Sri Aurobindo!

It was a bitter pill to swallow, expenses apart. Mr. Norton who had an Australian case was persuaded to stay on and was compensated since Government intended to file an appeal against Sri Aurobindo's acquittal. They desired that Mr. Norton should raise the matter of the 'sweets letter' at the High Court to test the "reaction of the judges" to Beachcroft's position. Any hint that the judges did not completely side with Beachcroft on that issue would have meant immediate filing of the Appeal.

In fact fifteen days after the acquittal, Bengal Government, then furious and bewildered, was determined to file an appeal as advised by the solicitors and Norton.

In connection with the proposed appeal, after the Crown solicitors Orr and Dignam had prepared their exhaustive study of the case against Sri Aurobindo, Mr. Chapman, the Legal Remembrancer to Bengal Government, wrote to the Chief Secretary (extracts from File No. 205 of 1909, Confidential).

Obviously a cultivated man, the manuscript note is in beautiful writing. It reads:

"The following facts about Aurobindo are indispensable —

- (a) His declared aim was the absolute independence of India. He expressly discarded the ideal of colonial self-government.
- (b) He avowed the principle that this aim could not be attained by a gift from the English and that it must be attained otherwise.
- (c) He worked with others towards the attainment of this aim.
- (d) His contribution was to preach that the aim might be attained by the deve-

lopment of spiritual force. If every individual directed his 'will-power' (I use the intelligible word: Aurobindo would have called it the 'God within') in that one direction, the resultant force would accomplish the ideal.

- (e) The Manicktollah Garden was an institution framed on these principles and by the youths gathered there Aurobindo was regarded as the Karta (the head) and by some as a sort of High Priest or Guru.
- (f) From December 1907, his mind was in a state of unusual tension and in the spring of 1908 the Bande Mataram newspaper which he managed was anticipating an immediate violent revolution."

The note of Chapman continues:

- “(1) To a certain extent he deprecated violence. He pretended that the use of will-power (the God within) was a better way.
- (2) Apart from Barin's confession to the police which is NOT admissible in evidence, there is nothing to show that Aurobindo ever went to the Manicktollah Garden itself.
- (3) There is nothing to prove *directly* that he knew of or sympathised with bombs except two papers (the 'sweets letter' and the scribblings in a book found in his house).

Both these papers are open to some criticism and it could not certainly be predicted what view an Appellate Court would take of them."

Next, Chapman comments on Beachcroft's judgement:

"Mr Beachcroft's judgment is assailable on several *material points*. In saying this I do not wish to derogate from the reputation which Mr Beachcroft has justly earned for his patience, fair-mindedness, and industry . "

These "material points" are then mentioned in detail. Chapman goes on:

"On several minor points the judgment is open to criticism. I will not mention these now.

To sum up on the question of appeal against the acquittal: —

- (a) I am disposed to think that if I had tried the case, I would have convicted.
- (b) Mr. Beachcroft's judgment is assailable on very material points.
- (c) BUT the issue of such a case especially in the form of appeal against acquittal cannot be otherwise than doubtful ..."

Chapman concludes with:

"Aurobindo is a hero of a spiritual type. Shall we gain much by getting him sentenced to imprisonment? He is then likely to develop into a myth. If we leave him loose *now*, he may be actually less dangerous. In the wear and tear of actual life his unpracticality is certain to disclose itself and possibly he may be a safeguard. For it will be consistent with his theories now to believe that the way of violence is not the way of God or God would have permitted it to succeed.

On the whole my advice is against an appeal."

(Sd.) E. P. CHAPMAN

21st May 1909.¹

The Chief Secretary was not impressed. Extracts of his notes (dated 29-5-1909) to H. H. the Lt. Governor read:

"H. H.

I do not attach any importance to Mr. Chapman's reason for letting Aurobindo alone. If he was privy to the conspiracy at all, he was the brain, not perhaps to plan the details, but the fountain of moral and intellectual energy. If we were convinced of this, and that we could convict him, it would be political suicide to fail to do it:

But I certainly would not proceed on less than a two to one chance in our favour."

Here is the origin of the phrase "two to one chance in our favour." Easily understood by racegoers in Calcutta and Bombay, no one, being cautious, would take less than these odds. Still, before we leave the Chief Secretary, let us note a few more sentences of the same note (dated 29-5-1909):

"Mr. Withall (of the solicitors) I feel sure would be strongly in favour of an appeal. Mr. Norton expressed a strong opinion in favour of appealing immediately after the acquittal, but suggested that as his opinion would no doubt be regarded as prejudiced, the opinion of Invararity of Bombay should be taken. I think that the proper course would be for Mr. Chapman and Mr. Withall to carefully state the case for appeal and submit it to the Advocate General, if one has been appointed, or otherwise as suggested by Norton to Mr. Invararity ..."

The Governor, however, was not very enthusiastic for political reasons, and ordered on 29-5-1909 as follows:

"The course proposed by C. S. (Chief Secretary) should be adopted for there is the off-chance that Counsel may advise that an appeal would bear a strong pro-

¹ Fifteen days after the acquittal

bability of success. In that case we should be failing in our duties if we did not proceed with it.

But if Counsel advises that the success of the appeal is doubtful, it would be most unwise to take action. The quick filing of an appeal would revive the popular feeling against Government, which seems to be dying down, and if we failed to justify our action by success we should have drawn this upon ourselves for nothing."

Sir Edward Baker was indeed a pragmatic British governor.

As desired by Bengal Government, Mr. Chapman next sent the papers to Bombay under the escort of Mr. Denham, Special Assistant to DIG, Intelligence Branch, for advice by the Advocate General, High Court, Bombay. (Mr. S. P. Sinha, Advocate General, High Court, Calcutta, in 1906 does not appear in the picture.)

On 10th August 1909, Mr. T. J. Strangman, the Advocate General, Bombay, wrote to "the Hon'ble the Legal Remembrancer, High Court, Calcutta". His views were as follows:

"I have considered the papers forwarded to me by you, and have had the advantage of consultation extending over one day with Mr. Denham.

On the whole I am of the opinion that there is a fair chance of a conviction against Arabindo Ghose being obtained in appeal.

You ask me to say whether there is a two to one chance of success.

This is a question I cannot possibly answer: so much depends upon the personal equation of the Court and the manner in which the case is put before the Court ..."

Here follows in detail how the case against Sri Aurobindo should be presented.

"The whole of the evidence should be put before the Court in historical sequence ... if this is done, items, which taken alone may seem meaningless, will no doubt be found to support the points indicated .. .

Care should be taken to bring out prominently the fact that Arabindo Ghose was looked upon as a leader or Guru by the rest of the conspirators. This is a point which I gather was not made much of before the Sessions Judge"

Reputation of Norton's professional efficiency, so highly praised and prized in Calcutta till then, got its first jolt. Against Sri Aurobindo, Norton was more of an official of the Rulers than a professional cool-headed counsel concerned solely with law, its procedures and technicalities.

After receiving Mr. Strangman's opinion, and following a conference the Governor held on 18th August 1909, Bengal Government under their letter No. D561D communicated to Home Department, India, their decision *not* to file an appeal. Extracts of this letter are given below:

“ . . I am now to report, for the information of the Government of India, the conclusion at which His Honour has arrived, after a perusal of this opinion (Strangman's) and in consultation with the Legal Remembrancer ...

In Sir Edward Baker's judgement Arabindo Ghose is one of the most dangerous factors in the present situation. The Lt. Governor is himself disposed to believe that Arabindo Ghose was guilty of the offences charged against him, and if there were a good prospect of obtaining a conviction, he would have been ready to prefer an appeal. Such a course would, however, certainly cause a revival of public feeling against Government and in favour of the accused, a feeling which at present shows signs of dying out; and if the appeal should fail, that price would have been paid for nothing.

For these reasons, I am to state that Sir Edward Baker has decided not to prefer an appeal against the acquittal of Arabindo Ghose.”

This letter was signed by the officiating Chief Secretary, the Hon'ble Sir Charles Allen, C.S I., ICS.

The Government of India from Simla agreed that no appeal should be filed “at present”, but advised Bengal in a telegram of 26th August 1909, that “on the High Court disposing of the general appeals now being heard by them, the question of Arabindo should be *reconsidered*”. Also, they said:

“The Government of India express the desire that when Mr. Norton is arguing the case against Barindra Ghose, he should be instructed to press the ‘sweets letter’ with the object of ascertaining the opinion of the High Court on the genuineness of that document and on the aspersions cast on the police by its rejection by Mr. Beachcroft. The Government of India hold that, in the event of the ‘sweets letter’ being accepted, there will be a strong case for the filing of an appeal against the acquittal of Arabindo Ghose.”

Norton was so briefed by the Legal Remembrancer, and as late as 8th September 1909 Norton felt “he was making an impression on the Court”, as he told Mr. Richardson, then officiating in place of Chapman.

Mr. Norton tried to test the High Court's reaction on the 31st day of the Appeal towards the end of September. He referred in Court to the “sweets letter”, and submitted:

“Although Barin has withdrawn his confession statement, I emphasise that his confession was true. He never denied this document. Barin was a man of great resolution, with considerable moral force.”

He then read out the opinion of the Assessors as well as the judgement of the Sessions Judge, relating to this point. He emphasised that the evidence was conclusive and

that the letter was not a forgery.

Here is how the Chief Justice Sir Lawrence Hugh Jenkins then reacted, the “sounding” that Government of India wanted, the opinion that destroyed all of Norton’s beliefs and negated any hope of the “two to one” odds in favour of a successful appeal:

“The Chief Justice (to Mr. Norton): — What strikes me is this. It seems you have a fairly strong case against Barin; you are now giving us the impression that we will have to rely upon this letter and disbelieve the opinion of the Assessors and the Sessions Judge on the point.

Mr. Norton: — Is it not a strong point?

The Chief Justice: — If your case against Barin rests upon this letter I can understand your argument. If it is merely for the purpose of showing that the Assessors and the Sessions Judge were wrong in their view as to Arabindo, then you are in mistake ”

The hearings in the High Court had commenced from 9th August 1909. The 31st day of hearing would probably be about the end of September. The sounding of the Judges, as desired by the Government of India, produced the unexpected result mentioned above. In the meantime, the solicitors were getting frantic. 5th November 1909 (Friday) was the last day for preferring the appeal as per a letter to the Chief Secretary from Mr. J. W. Orr of the Crown solicitors.

Government, however, decided to wait for the High Court Judgement, for finding the reasons of the High Court’s rejection of the ‘sweets letter’ against Sri Aurobindo. Here is what the then officiating Legal Remembrancer (Mr. Richardson) wrote to the Crown solicitor, Mr. Orr, on 2nd November 1909

“The grounds for the appeal against the acquittal of Arabindo have been drawn up and are in order, but it is not proposed to file the appeal (if it is ever filed) till after the Judgement is delivered; and there may be a difficulty about limitation. I think the six months expire on November 5th and it would be well perhaps to apply to the Alipore Court for a certified copy of the Judgement so as to get the benefit of the days required to obtain it

The matter is strictly confidential.”

Yet simultaneous attempts were going on to penalise Sri Aurobindo, if possible, in three other ways: by a case of conspiracy involving him and Mr. C. C. Dutt, ICS; by a case of sedition over his speeches; and, independent of either, by consideration being given to his possible deportation.

The High Court Judgement of 23rd November 1909 held that convictions under S121, IPC, “to wage war”, etc., could not be upheld on technical grounds. It rejected Norton’s pleas. In fact, the Chief Justice’s remarks were very adverse to a counsel

of Norton's standing, about his improper use of leading questions, etc., at Sessions. The absurdity of utilizing documents as evidence in which the handwriting was not proved in the recognised manner nor the contents proved to have been known to the accused, destroyed once for all the value of the "sweets letter" as a trump card against Sri Aurobindo. Mr. C. R. Das was particularly complimented on the Defence.

Thus no appeal against Sri Aurobindo's acquittal was filed after all in the Alipore Bomb Case.

(To be continued)

LT. COL. G. L. BHATTACHARYA

ELEGY

A MOMENT of Love is not to be cast
on the shores of oblivion
where dusk sets in and night enshrouds
the tenderness that once was,

A moment now past yet ever present
embraced in expectancy,
with hopes of renewed joys,
of laughter that once was,

A moment and nothing more,
now stolen by the night that never returns
and pities not the blindness
it leaves behind,

Gone what once was
yet what is to be knows no time,
the past expires leaving only a soft sigh
to greet tomorrow's cries

PATRIZIA

SELF-PORTRAIT FROM THE PAST

Do we live more than one life on this earth? This is a question which has intrigued men for ages, but few have come across stronger evidence of pre-existence than Dante Gabriel Rossetti, poet and leader of the pre-Raphaelite school of Art in 19th-century England.

Rossetti, at 22, had already written his most famous poem, *The Blessed Damozel*, and decided to put on canvas the face of this creature of his imagination. He found his model in Elizabeth Siddal, recommended by the poet Swinburne as a girl of "matchless loveliness, courage, endurance, humour and sweetness". Rossetti soon fell in love with her and she with him.

The finished painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London and was much admired by critics and the public. Then one critic noted that there was a marked resemblance between Rossetti's portrait and a painting of St. Agnes of the Intercession hanging in a museum in Bologna, Italy.

Not long afterwards Miss Siddal fell ill of tuberculosis. Rossetti wedded her, vowing to nurse her back to health. For two years he cared for her, but in 1862 she died.

Seeking solace, Rossetti set out for Bologna to view the painting of St. Agnes. When he found it, he was surprised to see that, although the model's posture was slightly different from that of his Elizabeth, her features and expression were the same.

Thrilled almost to tears, Rossetti looked through the catalogue to see if there might be some note about the model. There was none. However, the catalogue mentioned that the artist — a man named Angiolieri who had lived in the 15th century — had painted his own portrait, which hung in the museum.

Fear came over Rossetti as an attendant led him to the gallery where the self-portrait hung. Darkness had fallen when they reached the spot. The old attendant held up a lamp and, by its flickering light, Rossetti saw that the portrait was of a grave, black-bearded man exactly like himself.

Suddenly Rossetti remembered these prophetic lines, written to his wife eight years before she died:

You have been mine before —

How long ago I may not know ...

For the rest of his life Rossetti was haunted by an uncanny sense of pre-existence. Could it have been, he wondered, that he had been Angiolieri 400 years before, and that his beloved wife had posed for the portrait of St. Agnes?

PATRICK MAHONEY

TWO EXPERIENCES

JUST ONE PLUM

I WENT out for a walk in a hilly place

There are young pine-woods and groves of birches and oaks just marvellously coloured and offering a gorgeous view especially when being kissed by the sunrays . . .

I climbed the hills up and down to the murmuring brooklet and again up to the groves, admiring those unique beauties of Nature — singing cheerful songs — enjoying all immensely . . .

On one of the hills there is an orchard with different kinds of fruit-trees, of course already quite bare in so advanced a Fall.

Yet, being rather thirsty, I decided to try my good luck and to look for some plums in the grass under the trees .

It was a kind of gymnastic — a great excitement .

I went from one plum-tree to another, searching and searching patiently among fallen leaves and already brown grass . .

After a while it looked foolish and quite vain, but I continued and continued . . .

It was a good exercise for the eyes, for the whole body and I could well practise.

“Cancel in your mind:
disagreeable — impossible!”

I already made jokes about myself — but deep in me there was a little spark of hope shining and shining . .

And, when at the end of my search, there looked at me a dark-blue, big and healthy plum — I couldn't believe my eyes. It seemed to be a “Fata Morgana” — a hallucination.

“What a miracle!” — I exclaimed. “Such wonderful fruit of my Faith and Patience!” — “Am I to pick it up and eat — or be satisfied with the achievement?”

The plum said as in a Fable:

“Just taste me! You will see that you have never eaten something so delicious, having not only a material but also an inner juice.”

And it was wholly true. It was an enchanted plum. And I understood that I would succeed in every other thing too, by being hopeful and patient,
really e n d l e s s l y ...

PUBLIC ROSE-GARDEN

A PUBLIC rose-garden
with many benches which are all alike —
but people sitting on them are individual human beings

of unlike physical appearances —
 of unlike expressions in their eyes and faces —
 each one following his own way of thinking —
 either harmonious or disturbed — restless — irritated
 for one or another reason, sometimes real, sometimes only imaginary,
 not worthwhile to think over ...

There are roses of all possible colours — shapes — perfumes —
 which everybody can enjoy —
 but most people talk and talk
 about their personal interests and cares . .
 They do not observe anything.
 For them the beauty of roses, well, e x i s t s
 but only as the decoration of a stage.
 For them it has no deeper meaning.
 They are not enriched, lifted up — exalted.
 Yes, it depends on each woman and man,
 on their own interest, abilities —
 how much attention she or he pays —
 how grateful she or he is for countless gifts
 which life offers at every step
 quite selflessly, abundantly

“Rich, beautiful public rose-garden,
 you are offering your all
 without demanding anything.
 So it should and could be
 with every woman and man, with the whole human species

“I just love you!
 Your buds and fully open roses
 are inspiring — irradiating — the Bliss of Peace
 so very longed for —
 regenerating ...”

RICHARD SPACEK

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE FUTURE

A SEARCH APROPOS OF R. C. ZAEHNER'S STUDY IN SRI AUROBINDO AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1974)

6 (Contd.)

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TEILHARD'S FAITH: THE TRUE NATURE OF HIS CHRISTIANITY — WHAT IS BASIC TEILHARDISM? — WHAT PLACE HAS HIS CHRISTIANITY IN IT? — TEILHARDISM AND THE MODERN RELIGIOUS INTUITION

(h)

WE have tried to show Teilhard's "apologetic" in its proper bearings. We have distinguished it from the classical form with which it is equated by admirers who wish to assimilate him into traditional Christianity. True, Teilhard has a missionary aim inasmuch as he wants to bring the modern world to Christ. But we must never forget that the Christ he preaches is one who is in accord with the demand of that world and differs from the traditional version of the God-Man of Judea. And his missionary aim back-fires on the Church to which he belongs, for he wants just as earnestly the traditional version to change in the light of the religious intuition prompted by modernism.

Emile Rideau, who keeps insisting on Teilhard's assimilableness to the Church's basic stand, is yet forced to admit difficulties in him for Roman Catholics. But he tries to play them down by adducing certain reasons for them. After mentioning the marked originality of Teilhard's thought as one difficulty, he¹ adds: "It is not surprising, too, that so original a thought should be embodied in a *style* that is coloured by personal emphasis and prepossessions." Then he² comes to the final explanation, namely, that Teilhard's message "is addressed primarily to the Gentiles and uses language deliberately adapted to the modern world". Rideau's suggestion³ is that the difficulties are linguistic and that if "the deposit of faith", "the Word of God", could merely be re-expressed in consonance with new historic factors Teilhardism would hardly be considered "a shattering revision". But, when he⁴ tells us of the project that inspired Teilhard — "the gulf between the Church and the modern world must be closed" — we get a hint of the back-firing we have spoken of, and are emboldened to ask: "Why should the Teilhardian use of language create difficulties unless what is addressed to the Gentiles is at the same time a criticism of the terms in which Roman

¹ *Teilhard de Chardin: A Guide to His Thought* (Collins, London, 1967) p. 244

² *Ibid.*, p. 245 ³ *Ibid.*, p. 243 ⁴ *Ibid.*

Catholic theology still expresses itself and of the old dogmas it still retains in face of the modern world?" The Church evidently finds it difficult to accept Teilhard as its missionary. This means that the manner in which he attempts to convert the Gentiles cannot be taken, always and mainly, as suiting the Church. It has to go against the Church's position and attitude as he sees them. We are therefore under no obligation to interpret Teilhard's apologetic to be no more than linguistically anti-traditional.

Something in his thought itself sheers away from the orthodox line. And Rideau, despite his aversion to doing so, has again and again to write in a regretful vein when particular points are evaluated. For an example, take the subject of Redemption in Teilhard's hands. Rideau¹ informs us: "He looks at it in a way that is more faithful to the logic of his thought than to the biblical evidence It would certainly seem that because he wished to present his apostolic message in a form acceptable to the modern world Teilhard did not develop the full depth of the traditional teaching of sin whose gravity (involving a divorce and a rupture of friendship between God and man) called for a tragical redemption, God's passage through death."

Rideau's words definitely attest to Teilhard's fundamental non-orthodoxy: else he would not speak of the "logic" of Teilhard's "thought" as ignoring the evidence of the Bible. But he endeavours at the same time to make this non-orthodoxy look like a matter of missionary convenience — a strategic disguise in order better to impress the modern world and win acceptance by it. The truth is not that Teilhard, while addressing the Gentiles, has orthodoxy up his sleeve: he presents his message as he does simply because neither he nor the modern world whose product he is has any need of a Christianity that fails to chime with the heterodox implications of an evolutionary universe. All we can affirm on the other side is. Teilhard, in the midst of his modernism and his heterodoxy, firmly holds that the evolutionary universe which is basic to his thought is fully provided for in his double-aspected formula: "an apologetic based on evolution but whose spirit seems to me to be truly and equally Christian."² Evolution, not Christianity, is the basis of Teilhard's missionary project: nevertheless, in his view, Christianity is well served by such a basis if we get simultaneously at the true drift of the evolutionary phenomenon and the true version of the Christian faith.

What is the former's true drift and what the latter's true version? The whole of Teilhardism would be contained in the answer to this question. We have already treated the theme from various angles. Now we may concentrate the answer in a few excerpts and then proceed to the precise reconciliation proper to Teilhard's sense of the true drift and the true version. Thus we shall get at the true revelation of Teilhardism itself

On the evolutionary phenomenon we may take the pronouncement:³ "Our world contains within itself a mysterious promise of the future implicit in its natural evolu-

¹ *Ibid*, p. 171

² Letter of August 21, 1925, to Auguste Valensin, quoted in Christopher Mooney's *Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ* (Collins, London, 1966), p. 199

³ *Writings in Time of War* (Collins, London, 1968), pp. 55-6

tion." On the Christian faith let us pick out the utterance:¹ "If Christianity is to keep its place at the head of mankind, it must make itself explicitly recognizable as a sort of pan-Christism."...

A commentary on the two statements comes in a letter of August 13, 1948:² "The fundamental question really at issue is whether or not official authority is willing to accept (and to integrate into the Christian faith) a 'faith' in a future (i.e. a super-evolution) of Humanity on earth."

Here we are given to understand that evolution points to a higher state of itself in the future, the development of a Super-Humanity on earth by the very drive of the process which has developed through millennia an increasing complexity of biological structure and an advancing interiority of consciousness. Also, we receive the impression that this terrestrial fulfilment is the object not only of the modern scientific vision truly interpreted but also of the most authentic religious intuition possible today. There is a "faith" involved and to this "faith" Christianity has to adjust itself by finding in its heart of hearts a response it can identify as natural to its own revelatory drive. We cannot have integration, on top of acceptance, of the new "faith", without such a discovery.

A further gloss on the critical religious situation in which the Church is placed meets us in a quotation from Teilhard by Rideau:³ "The neo-humanist mysticism of an ahead clashes with the Christian mysticism of the above: it is precisely in this apparent conflict between the old faith in a transcendent God and a young 'faith' in an immanent universe that we find the modern religious crisis: here we touch the inmost essence, expressed in a form at once scientific and social. The whole progress of the kingdom of God depends at the moment on the problem of reconciling with each other not superficially but organically these two currents" (*International Conference of the Society of Jesus*, Versailles, 1947).

An organic and not a superficial reconciliation: this is Teilhard's call *vis-à-vis* Christianity's "transcendent God" and Evolutionism's "immanent universe" — that is to say, a universe inwardly activated by its own nature towards an ultimate self-fulfilment in a Super-Humanity, towards a final convergence — an "Omega Point" — of all reflective consciousnesses to form a totalised Super-Consciousness. Teilhard's own solution of the crisis is what he terms "pan-Christism", the religion of the Cosmic Christ. But he appears to be in two minds as to how cosmos and Christ are related. What is the real meaning of making Christ a universal presence by which the transcendent God and the immanent universe are linked in a living way, conjoined in an internal manner?

How intensely Teilhard would like to permeate the cosmos with Christ is evident from the very start of his religious career. To be convinced we have only to read a

¹ *Science and Christ* (Collins, London, 1968), p. 124

² *Letters to Two Friends 1926-1952* (Collins, Fontana Library, Theology and Philosophy, London, 1972), p. 106

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 315

passage Rideau¹ cites from one of his earliest writings: "In my own small way, Lord, I would wish to be the apostle and (if I may be so bold) the evangelist of *your Christ in the universe*.... To bring Christ, in virtue of interconnexions that are specifically organic, to the heart of realities that are considered the most fraught with danger, the most philosophically naturalistic, the most pagan — that is my gospel and there lies my mission" (*Le prêtre*, 1918, in *Écrits du temps de la guerre*, p. 298). Rideau² rightly sees as basic to Teilhard "the experience of the conjunction or coincidence of the universe and Christ", and adds: "As has been demonstrated by Madame M. Barthélemy-Madaule, it is from this intuition that the whole body of Teilhard's work is derived."

But Rideau³ is careful to stress a feature of Teilhardism which poses a challenge to the synthetising mind: "Throughout his life he was to strive to unite, while still keeping them distinct, two absolutes: 'that of experience (the universe) and that of Revelation (the transcendent God)' (*Mon univers*, 1916, in *Écrits*, p. 278)." The suggestion here is that God and the universe must never be identified, and that no Pantheism such as Spinoza's should be entertained; but there is also the suggestion that we have "two absolutes", which must signify that to Teilhard the universe has in some sense as much primacy, as much sufficiency, as much reality as God: the position is as if there were not only a transcendent divinity but also a Pantheos, and the two godheads — each existing in its own right — were to be organically reconciled. Obviously, Teilhard's religious sense is pretty complicated. And nothing short of a strong suspicion of there being a Teilhardian Pantheos leads Pastor Crespy to remark, as Rideau⁴ notes: "Teilhard tries to make evolution say what only faith can say."

Teilhard himself often makes no bones about the absolutism of the universe for him. "I am possessed," he⁵ says, "by a certain demon or angel of the All and the Universal." Again, he⁶ confesses to "a certain enthusiastic vision of the immensity and promise of the World, a certain relish, a certain intoxication with real concrete 'being' as it is revealed to us in the Universe". As a Christian he cannot circumscribe himself with the cosmos, however drunk with it his religious heart may be: he needs must turn his eyes to the Transcendent. But even the Transcendent is, for him, a *summum bonum* continuous with the Universe's revelation of "real concrete 'being'". To his friend Léontine Zanta he⁷ writes from China: "It looks as though mankind will never regain its passion for God until God is presented to it as the term of a movement which extends our worship of the concrete Real (rather than tearing us away from it). Oh how tremendously powerful the Real would be for lifting us out of our egoism if only we knew how to see it in its prodigious greatness."

"Worship of the concrete Real" which is the physical cosmos, and this worship extended (rather than diverted) to God, the Transcendent, who thereby is definable as the Super-Real, the Ultra-physical, the Hyper-cosmic: here we have the Teilhardian

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

² *Ibid.*, p. 329.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 648-9.

⁵ *Letters to Two Friends*, p. 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷ *Letters to Léontine Zanta* (Collins, London 1969), p. 72.

bedrock. This bedrock may be felt also through an expression of Teilhard's¹ like: "the Saint ... *loses his materiality*. Everything is God for him, God is everything for him, and for him Christ is at once God and everything." Hence the concrete Real, the physical cosmos, must in the last resort be, to Teilhard, the outer expression or the expressive body of a World-Soul, and the World-Soul must be the transcendent God Himself expressed or embodied in cosmic terms. Hence, again, the Cosmic Christ must be the Transcendent self-projected as the Soul of a universe which is that Soul's concretely real form moving evolutionarily onward to manifest this Soul completely and join it with its transcendent counterpart. Hence, finally, pan-Christism must be a new pantheism differing from the old sort, as understood by Christianity, in only one particular: Pan-Christos, as the Soul of the cosmos, is a Being who has an aspect of Self distinct from all the selves or beings or entities He manifests out of His own plenitude, so that He can be loved as the Personal Other at the same time that He is known as one's own deepest Within. But this pan-Christism is like the pantheism abhorred by Christianity insofar as the cosmos is a manifestation of Christ Himself and not a foreign substance, however often the manifestation may be a veil rather than a "transparency" or — to use a still more typical term of Teilhardian mysticism — a "diaphany".

Christianity, unlike ancient Vedanta, knows nothing of such a many-sided vision. As a Christian, Teilhard shares his co-religionists' anti-pantheist shudder. However, while the doctrinal mind in him tends to shy away, his intuition cannot be frightened off. In consequence we see him expressing his "cosmic sense" in several modes, some of them running counter to those where the conscious Christian is unmistakably intended to have his say. Facing the unconventional modes, Henri de Lubac² observes. "He tried to show in Our Lord Jesus Christ 'the synthesis of the created Universe and its Creator': did he not sometimes seem to establish this synthesis at a too accessible level and thus, in spite of the qualifications and corrections we have noted, and against his unmistakable intention, to some degree naturalize Christ?"

We may ask in return: "How can Christ help being naturalized to some degree by a worshipper of the concrete Real?" Simultaneously we must admit that Teilhard the Churchman would act as censor to his instinctive World-adoration, his spontaneous touch on the World-Soul through the "prodigious greatness" of its cosmos. The Churchman Teilhard is bound to look upon the World as gross Matter, as Godless distracting dust, to which the human psyche must never give its love and to whose glitter it must always rise superior. Especially the physical universe of modern science, with its intoxicating immensity and unity, is the snare *par excellence* for stealing the heart away from the Christian pursuit of the "above", the transcendent Perfection beyond cosmic life. Yet Teilhard the modernist can hardly shut his eyes to this universe. How then to be a genuine Christian as well as an authentic modernist — how

¹ *Writings in Time of War*, p. 108

² *The Religion of Teilhard de Chardin* (Collins, London, 1967), p. 202.

to keep Jesus as "Our Lord" even while leaping to the call of science's divine-seeming cosmos?

In order not to look worshipfully at this World in spite of thrilling to its wonderfulness, Teilhard seeks to combine a Personal Creator God with a Divine Universal Presence in the creation. To do so he has to oppose a common practice of Jesus's partisans. They emphasise how sweetly and virtuously a Man lived in Galilee twenty centuries before us rather than emphasising how superhumanly he rose from the dead, assumed a body of glory, took his place in heaven to oversee the entire universe and reveal himself as the terminator and gatherer-up of all things. In a passage we can cull from Rideau¹ we get a passionate appeal by Teilhard to Jesus to disclose his real being: "Sometimes people think that they can increase your attraction in my eyes by stressing almost exclusively the charm and goodness of your human life, in the past. But truly, O Lord, if I wanted to cherish only a man, then I would surely turn to those whom you have given me with the bloom of their charm here and now. Are there not with our mothers, brothers, friends and sisters, enough irresistibly lovable people around me? Why should I turn to the Judea of two thousands years ago? No, what I cry out for, like every being, with my whole life and all my earthly passion, is something very different from an equal to cherish: it is a God to adore. Tear away, O Jesus, the clouds with your lightning! Show yourself to us as the mighty, the radiant, the risen! Come to us once again as the Pantocrator who reigned alone in the cupolas of the ancient basilicas! Nothing less than this Parousia is needed to counterbalance and crown in our hearts the glory of the world that is coming into view. So that we may triumph over the world with you, come to us clothed in the glory of the world" (*Le Miheu Divin*, pp. 127-28).

What directly concern us are the last two sentences. Teilhard wants Jesus to come in such a manner as both to prevent the glorious universe of science from outweighing him in our eyes and to allow this universe to get its fullest response from us, the utmost justification of its splendour. Teilhard wants the manner of Jesus's coming to be itself cosmic and still personal: he must appear as a Universal Presence and yet as substantially different from the Universe — the wonderful world must be seen to be a tremendous beauty with which he has adorned himself but with which he is not identified — it is divine by being his decoration and not divine in its own right.

Thus does Teilhard strive to be a genuine Christian no less than an authentic modernist and to proclaim pan-Christism without succumbing to what Christianity considers the danger of world-deification in pantheism. But has he really subdued the glory of the world that science has overawingly laid bare and has he rendered valid a Pan-Christos without bringing in a Pantheos?

If the wonderful world still remains substantially different from Christ, its power must always stand over against him: such a world, by its alien glory, will continue to demand our worship. It must be related to Christ as an emanation of his own being: we must be able to see Christ himself in it — not merely by its clothing him but by its

¹ *Op cit*, pp 613-4

forming his outer self — an evolving and developing self, no doubt, but nonetheless essentially his own being.

Nor is Teilhard always bound down to the metaphor of “clothing”; he is capable of exhibiting a more plastic vision. In a recent book R. C. Zaehner¹ has some quotations from him which lead on from the sense of the All to the question of this All’s relation to God. Zaehner has Teilhard saying: “When one reads the accounts of certain Christian or pagan mystics or indeed the confidences of many apparently quite ordinary men, one has to ask oneself seriously whether there is not a sort of cosmic consciousness in our soul more diffused than individual consciousness, more intermittent, but perfectly well defined — a sort of feeling of the presence of all beings at once, not perceived as multiple and separate but as sharing in the same unity — at least in some future time . . .” Zaehner remarks: “In 1923 Teilhard thought that this experience of the All must necessarily point towards God. ‘The All,’ he then wrote, ‘with its attributes of universality, unity, and infallibility (at least relative), could not reveal itself to us unless we recognized God in it — or the shadow of God. — And can God, on his side, manifest himself to us except by passing through the All, by assuming the figure, or at least the clothing, of the All?’”

Here Teilhard is ready to go beyond Christ’s coming merely “clothed in the glory of the world”. He entertains the possibility of Christ taking on the world’s very figure — nay, he even conceives of Christ passing through the world, which means that the world would be Christ himself not only assuming the look of the world for the sake of self-manifestation but actually charging the world with his own being and getting transmitted by it as if its glory were his outer self, though under the conditions of a developing process. To the Teilhard of this passage the “clothing”-metaphor is the minimum necessary rather than the maximum possible. The latter takes Divinity to be making the All “the shadow of God”, a reduced reflex or image or duplication of Divinity in spatio-temporal terms, the being of Divinity transposed and exteriorised in an evolving universal form.

The solution Teilhard has offered in the passage from *Le Milieu Divin* is not the whole solution even he is capable of offering. It is a superficial, not an organic reconciliation between “the old faith in a transcendent God and a young ‘faith’ in an immanent universe”. The true solution glimmers out only in those parts of his writings where in presenting through Christ “the synthesis of the created Universe and its Creator” he seems, as de Lubac marks, to “naturalize Christ” to some degree even while unmistakably intending to preserve Christ’s supernatural status.

And, after all, if Teilhard wishes to build a living bridge between Evolutionism and Christianity, he cannot but do as we have suggested. The very terms in which he poses the religious situation brought about by Evolutionism require him in some measure to “naturalize Christ” and thereby Christify Nature. To be convinced we

¹ *Drugs, Mysticism and Make-believe* (Collins, London, 1972), pp 177-8 The reference Zaehner gives is. “*Comment je crois* (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1969), pp 75-6 Written in 1923” — and *Ibid*, p 77.

have only to look at the picture he paints time and again of this situation. Rideau provides us with several glimpses of it, some of them carrying also Teilhard's hints of his fond belief that the picture does not call for a rejection of Christianity but, on the contrary, for a readjusted Christian frame to lend it proper definition.

Teilhard speaks of "the Soul of the world" having "spontaneously disclosed itself" to the consciousness of our contemporaries and of its appearing "to them as an 'extra', or antagonistic, or stronger absolute" than Christ — "a new Messiah more desirable than the old" (*L'âme du monde*, 1918, in *Écrits*, p. 227).¹

We also read: "Some reasonable reconciliation must be made, I am sure, between God and the world, between the detaching mysticism of Christianity and the ineradicable passion that makes our whole being vibrate when we experience something of the soul of the mighty whole of which we are undeniably a part" (Letter of 2 February, 1916, in *The Making of a Mind*)²

Then we have: "For every modern mind (and the more modern the mind the truer this is) . . . a sense is born — the sense of a universal, completely specific, movement, by virtue of which the totality of things shifts as one whole, from top to bottom, and in one block, not only in space but in a space-time (hyper-einsteinian) whose particular curvature has the faculty of making what moves within it progressively more organized" (*Du cosmos à la cosmogénèse in L'activation de l'énergie*, p. 264).³ The idea of evolution is the perception of "this fundamental unity" (*Ibid.*).⁴

Once again: "What is happening to the world now is that it is being spontaneously converted to a sort of natural religion of the universe that is mistakenly turning it away from the God of the Gospel; and it is in that that its unbelief lies. We must carry that conversion one degree further by making our whole lives show that only Christ *in quo omnia constant* ['in whom all things hold together'] is capable of inspiring and directing the universe's newly appreciated line of advance; thus from the very thing that produces modern unbelief, there may emerge the faith of tomorrow" (*L'incroyance moderne. Cause profonde et remède*, 1933, in *Science et Christ*, pp. 152-3).⁵

"It has become a commonplace to speak of Western civilization — the home of the new mankind — as materialistic. Nothing could be more unfair. The West has overthrown many idols, but by its discovery of *the dimension of the universe and of its forward progress*, it has stimulated a powerful mysticism. The whole question now is to determine the truth of the Presence we believe we feel behind the fire of the universe, and to give it a name" (*Le Christianisme dans le monde*, 1933, in *Science et Christ*, p. 136).⁶

"In future, the only religion for man is the religion that will teach him *in the first place* to recognize, love and serve with passion the universe of which he is a part" (*Le sens humain*, 1929)⁷ The idea of "a unity in convergence is *the only one that can be the basis of the morality and religion of a universe which is being built on research and progress*. No conversion accordingly (if we may so express it) will be so deeply rooted

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

² *Ibid.*, p. 315.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 602-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 305-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

as that which is now coming about under the disguise of modern unbelief" (*La route de l'Ouest*, 1932).¹

Then: "The humanist pantheisms we see around represent a completely youthful form of religion — a religion that (apart from Marxism) has little or no exact formulation: a religion with no apparent God and no revelation. But it is a religion in the true sense of the word, if by religion we mean contagious faith in an ideal to which one's life can be devoted A rapidly increasing number of our contemporaries are agreed, from now on, in recognizing that the most important thing in life is to devote oneself body and soul to universal progress — that progress being expressed in tangible developments of mankind This can only mean that under different names (communist or national-socialist, scientific or political, individual or collective), for the last hundred years we have been witnessing the positive birth and the building up of a new faith: the religion of evolution" (*Comment je crois*, 1934).²

Finally: "Contrary to an over-popular preconception, it is in Christianity (provided it is understood in the fullness of its Catholic realism) that the pantheist mysticism of all times, and more particularly of our own day (when it is dominated by creative evolutionism) can reach its highest, most coherent and most dynamic form, the form which is most instinct with worship."³

What we can gather from these delineations of the contemporary temper does not admit of any doubt. The modern religious intuition springs from the scientific vision of a universe which is known to be a colossal unity advancing in its complex wholeness towards a super-organisation of consciousness and which is thus felt to be a blaze of beauty and power on the move as if it were a divine phenomenon evolving through the ages its potentialities of perfection. "The religion of evolution", "a sort of natural religion of the universe", "a powerful mysticism" teaching man "in the first place to recognize, love and serve with passion the universe of which he is a part", "undeniably a part" of "the mighty whole" whose secret "soul", "the Soul of the world", has made itself perceptible to us and made "our whole being vibrate" with "passion" to its forward-calling convergence-effecting "Presence" for which we have yet no "name" but which is "antagonistic" to a "detaching mysticism" like Christianity and tends to turn the world "away from the God of the Gospel" and, by setting the universe afire to manifest it through "tangible developments", proves to be a "stronger absolute" than "the old Messiah" — how can a religious intuition that comes alive in terms stressing the progressive "totality of things" and inspiring the devotion of "body and soul" to the world itself and taking form, however vaguely at present, as "humanist pantheisms" or as a "pantheist mysticism .. dominated by creative evolutionism", be ever fulfilled by a Christ such as Teilhard suggests when he tries not to break clean off from the

¹ *Ibid*, p 308

² *Ibid*, p 306

³ "Introduction to Christianity" (1944) in *Christianity and Evolution* (Collons, London, 1971), pp. 171-2

Roman Church — a Christ in whom all things are said to hold together but who still is entirely different in being from the natural world and with whose divinity this world is in no essential sense continuous? The “over-popular preconception”, which Teilhard wants to contradict, is obviously correct. Christ — to be “capable of inspiring and directing the universe’s newly appreciated line of advance” and of converting, by himself becoming cosmic, “modern unbelief” to a religion of his own universality and supplying it with a “form most instinct with worship” — has to stand, for all his aspect of transcendence, under the aspect also of “an immanent universe” and present himself “as the term of a movement which extends our worship of the concrete Real (rather than tearing us away from it)”. Teilhard, in those moments when he dares to dub himself not Catholic but “irreducibly ‘hyper-Catholic’ ”¹ and is ready to flout orthodoxy, evokes the kind of cosmic Christ who could produce a Christianity-coloured “faith of tomorrow” which would at once remedy the shortcomings, and answer to the truth-sense, of “our generation, essentially pantheist because evolutionist.”²

But will this kind of Cosmic Christ be anything more than Christic in name? Can he correspond in any fundamental to the Saviour-figure emerging from the New Testament? Do we not need to reckon with only a novel Pantheos — one who Vedantically is the universe-constitutive aspect of a transcendent Reality and is the All even while being more than the All? If so, why should basic Teilhardism, with its root-function to save humanist pantheisms from remaining vague-visioned about their God-sense and to give their central truth a revelatory name, be tied up with Christianity?

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Letters to Léontine Zan'á*, p. 36

² *Human Energy* (Collins, London, 1969), p. 67.

PROBLEMS OF ENGLISH IN INDIA

A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

(This is the Presidential Address by Dr. Sisir Kumar Ghose at the All India English Teachers' Conference held at Patna in January this year.)

I

THE problems of English in India today are many, some of these beyond our control. Issues like the official language and the medium of instruction are decided in political meetings and not in the class room

However, to begin where the trouble starts, the epicentre, there is the unhappy question of language teaching at the primary and school level and the qualifications and aptitude of related teachers. Most of us are university or college teachers and could not care less. This is not an honest or helpful attitude, since it is these students, broken and bruised by a stupid system, who gravitate, in ever larger numbers, to our so-called colleges and universities. It has long been an open secret that our universities are engaged in the mass manufacture of quasi-illiterate or even totally illiterate graduates. Is this our contribution to national integration? Instead of death, English (or Indish) the leveller? The fault may not be wholly ours. But what have we done to prevent the disaster? In spite of the well-intentioned, well-equipped Central Institute at Hyderabad, and its auxiliary branches, the results are not reassuring. Whose fault it is, is not easy to say. But there is much more to be done, especially in the earliest stages. Where is the will and where are the teachers? Unless, however, we are able to tackle the problem at its source our agonies will linger and prevent our higher flight and ambitious projects. As it is, we have to deal with fairly divergent groups, a multiple audience. There are the convent or English-medium school students and there are the indigenous non-English medium products, a majority underprivileged for no fault of their own. The contrast between the two groups can sometimes be shocking. And since we are teachers, I would like to raise the inevitable question, sharp as a dagger pointed at our breast: How much do we care for our students? The answer, if truthful, cannot be flattering. If there is a communication block, the generation gap, the fault is largely ours. The unwanted majority, faced and fed up with an irrelevant syllabus, ineffectively taught, with outmoded methods of instruction, followed by a questionable system of examination, and with no prospect of a job at the end of the long-drawn farce, feels naturally frustrated and furious. They would be less than human if they did not. Since this is an English Teachers' Conference I have mentioned the student, for whom we live but with whom for the most part we have lost contact. It is not surprising that our tinkering and stylised agonies mean less and less to him.

But to continue with our saga. At a slightly higher level we are faced with the syllabus muddle. In some cases the trouble starts earlier and goes deeper. English or no English? In more than one benighted State, thanks to political *diktat*, failure in English is easily condoned. A populist decision, no doubt. But even where generosity is not so grand or opposition to English less loud-mouthed ("Angrezi Hatao"), the support, such as it is, is little more than mealy-mouthed. What can the poor teacher of English — who in any case will be suspected of perpetuating a vested interest — do to set the balance right? How many have the courage of a Dr. Sunitukumar Chatterjee who told me to tell you "from the rooftop that by giving up English we shall soon revert to savagery"? As befits a Bengali, a little exaggerated but the meaning comes through beautifully.

The syllabi at every level — school, P.U., Honours and M.A. — reveal anomalies. There is a gap not only between region and region but also among universities in the same State. For the M.A. course at one university there may be a whole paper on Wordsworth or, if you are modish, on T.S. Eliot. Another cheerfully skips Old and Middle English only to fall, later, for Linguistics. University X opts for Practical Criticism implying thereby that what they do elsewhere is neither practical nor critical. There are places (on the increase) where the study of Eng. Lit. is an antechamber or *via dolorosa* through which you pass on to Am. Lit. Many of us are practising bigamy on the sly without perhaps being faithful to either. But, joking apart, even those who believe in pluralism and self-determination will agree that there should be a minimum parity, if not broad-based uniformity, throughout the country, that will not leave us with rival areas of darkness.

Our efforts at education end with a degree or a job. Often the two go together. It seems only the other day when research or thesis-writing was *non est*. Where is the scope or need of doing research in India? said the wise sceptics and there it rested. Now we have changed all that, *nous avons changé tout cela*. The Thesis (with a capital T) is now a flourishing campus industry. You might even call it a cottage industry. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the workings of the industry cannot but be struck by the valiant efforts at being non-critical. In some cases of course little effort is needed. Most theses are approved, it is clear, on compassionate grounds and the ingenuity expended in revalorizing sick doctors — I am myself one, so please don't be angry — seems worthy of a better cause.

What explains the craze, which is not confined to scholars only? Elementary, Watson, elementary. Doctorate is status. In a hierarchically-inclined society like ours its popularity is not hard to explain. But there is a simpler, a more pathetic motivation too. The thesis is a biological weapon for survival as well as for climbing. Without a doctorate you are doomed or very nearly. Also it makes it so much easier to go abroad. At the present rate of exodus the U.S.A. might have to tighten the immigration laws lest there should be as many Brown Indians as Red. Soon the only Indians that Matter — critical as well creative, Rajan as well as Raja Rao — will be Indians Abroad. For some of our lost leaders "too long in the West" is never, never too long. The

motives of most of our scholars, at home or abroad, budding or faded, may not bear scrutiny.

No one denies the advantage of specialization (where it is genuine) or of training (where it is strict). But in India there is often neither and a half-baked, mushrooming Ph.D. may do more harm than a good old M A. In any case, some of the best men in the profession, then as now, have done without the dubious decoration. Not only are most of our universities wanting in research facilities and guidance (who will guide the guide?), there is hardly anywhere the intellectual stimulus basic to this kind of inquiry. Perhaps not every Indian university should be allowed to go in for a Ph. D. programme. Also we might think over Professor Gokak's suggestion that a good translation, with Notes and a critical Introduction, of an Indian classic, ancient or modern, may be adequate qualification for such a degree. We might also one day hope for an English Research Studies Centre. But whatever we may or may not do, let us weed the rabbits and not reduce the highest academic distinction to the level of, say, B.A. Pass. Please excuse these candid remarks; take them or leave them, as you please.

A word or two about critical journals in English. There aren't many. Some, perhaps most, Indian universities publish Bulletins or Annuals with a varying fare. But usually these have but a local habitation and name and not even the affiliated colleges take any notice. The subscribers' list of the university journals should be revealing. And yet some of these contain interesting, even outstanding contributions which perish not because these have been published but because these have failed to fertilise dialogue. The fault may not be the writer's.

In this connection one cannot but admire Professor C. D. Narasimhaiah's nearly single-handed effort to keep *The Literary Criterion* afloat, a model of courage, conviction and careful husbandry. Nor can we forget the trans-creating Professor P. Lal and his pals, a class by itself. There are also journals like *Quest* which try to maintain a high standard and are usually generous to the Eng. Lit. tribe. As for the *Indian Journal of English Studies*, kept going chiefly by its chief editor, Professor B. Das, the range of topics is as varied as one might wish for. There is a splurge of talent, mostly young. But how many of us have preserved its fourteen volumes, consult or refer to them? The sad fact is, we ourselves do not care what our colleagues are doing by way of thinking and writing. We seem to have insufficient intellectual regard for the fraternity (perhaps not without reason!). In such an eroded atmosphere, where we are only too ready to pick on others, dialogue has no chance. In spite of the history of more than a hundred years we are still not a community. Not even this annual meeting of a few lost souls, nourishing the forlorn hope in a social situation where our viability has shrunk from the reflected glory of imperial splendour to a drab, native, socialistic anti-climax, can do anything about it except to scatter as best we may. No one expects much out of us, perhaps not even we ourselves. Reporting last year's deliberations a perceptive *Link* article has said the unpleasant truth: writing about a conference of Teachers of English in India was, it said, like writing an obituary notice.

And yet . .

II

There are deeper issues, another dimension to the problem of English in India, it could as well be an experiment in self-discovery. I know other views exist. Here is mine, a sort of confession of faith. Behind our championing of Indian writing in English and the reaching out towards Comparative Literature lies what I would like to call a Search for Identity and the conditions of true creativity. This means that we do not, to use David McCutcheon's tart phrase, "encourage Indian writing in English to be regarded as a dog walking on its hind legs." Since this short submission depends upon certain premisses, let me state these first, which will make a lengthy exposition unnecessary.

First, at the risk of being branded a heretic, what know they of literature — especially "phoren" — who only literature know? Art and literature, like myth and ritual from which they derive, are always part of a wider context, of man's growing awareness, the ontological refinements of being. Secondly, what you are determines what you can and shall be. As Krishna said, it is better to die following one's own nature than to follow an alien rule. This should teach our neo-literates, in love with the latest lost cause, the lesson they are loath to learn: the need for a radical self-examination. Patriotism may not be enough, but to pose as the elite because one has elected to be an expatriate at home is a stance that should be seriously questioned. If we think we can fool others and continue to be the bogus elite with plenty of privileges and no function, we shall continue to be just bogus, no longer elite. The moral is plain: "Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain." This does not mean asking everyone to become, overnight, a Hindu or a Vedantist. No, not that and India is not Hindu only. What we say is that, placed as he is, the Indian teacher of English needs, along with his own discipline, a sense of life, a sense of values and the past which may not be wholly past. It cannot be helped if this calls for an understanding in depth of the foundations of our culture. It is not asking for too much and would, in any case, be obligatory anywhere. Literary studies are not for the uncultured, ignorant armies brandishing withered branches. Yet how many — alas, how few — of us have even a passable, much less an intimate knowledge and feeling for our arts and rituals, the iconography, aesthetics and anthropology, all of which separately and together are among the most telling revelations of a self-conscious and continuing civilisation? The neglect, inexcusable as it is, has boomeranged. If our *raison d'être* is now suspect, we have largely to thank ourselves. However cosmopolite, you cannot disown your environment. Or, maybe, you can, at your peril. By trying to do so, by isolating himself from the larger life of the people, the regional literatures as well as the classics, by his extra-territorial loyalties, the Indian teacher of English has hurt himself. His total irrelevance in the cultural context is its most telling comment. The least he can do is to look sharp, admit a wide and natural relationship, realise the aesthetic possibilities of the life and thought around him, including that of the tribals. If this involves a little labour, he should not mind the price for learning. Responsible living is a har-

vest of tragedy, demands its pound of flesh. After all, his *Angst* cannot be greater than the Buddha's.

Instead of pining to go and publish abroad — or achieve the infantile immortality of being mentioned in a foreign footnote — let us accept our bilingual and dual role in the encounter between civilisations. There *is* a paradox in the situation: How to remain Indian in spite of acquiring English? The thing is not so hard as we think. We have a long tradition of users of English — better English than obtains today — who did not find it necessary to barter their birthright or rootedness. Think of Radhakanta Dev of the *Sabdakalpadrum* fame. His English was as good as his Sanskrit. To believe Professor Gokak, "It was in the English class room that the Indian literary renaissance was born." How to be at once critical and creative in a language not our own and yet our own is the paradox that we have somehow to sort out. There is no ready-made solution and today the quarrel of continents, cultures and categories is outdated. We cannot be 'ourselves alone', but we can be ourselves. Fortunately, the Indian mind is not only tolerant, it is easily drawn towards the universal and the permanent behind the fleeting and the illusory. If this involves a little metaphysics, that cannot be helped. Here you cannot avoid it. It is part of the landscape, our ethos, semantics, phenomenology and that higher dream whose other name is a sense of values. East or West, the laws of being are not too different and a knowledge of these laws or principles is not a mean acquisition. What these principles are, the Great Tradition beyond and behind the many little traditions that have their day and are heard no more, it is not for me to spell here and now. Enough to say that it exists and its admission does not in any way condemn one to the past tense. On the contrary. *Sanatana wa nitya nutanah*, the Eternal is for ever new. This follows naturally from the perennial philosophy: The Self is one, the forms are many.

Spirituality, I confess, is the essence of sensitivity. Alas, there is no known method for the imparting of sensitivity. Then what shall we do? All that we can do is to want this holistic awareness, a total commitment to a total environment that is not exhausted by the local and the immediate. In other words, we are but looking for authenticity instead of the hybridism and parasitism that has invaded the profession of Indian teachers of English who are often neither Indian, nor teacher, nor, perhaps, English-teaching. (For their part the English do not care a damn for what we do or do not do.)

I hope this thinking aloud of mine does not scare you. Here are no ready-made recipes but the gropings of a mind for over three decades which I have thought fit to share with you since I may not have another chance. Correct me, if I am wrong. Help me, if I am right. Whatever our personal preferences or limitations, we serve a great cause, not English language and literature only. Let us do it together and honestly, give our best to the common pursuit.

Another factor, sadly neglected in the English faculties, is aesthetics. In our syllabus as well as private reading we lump criticism from Aristotle to Allen Tate but rarely is there any criticism of criticism. I plead for Indian, Oriental and Compa-

rative Criticism and mention, at random, four elders of the tribe: Ananda Coomaraswamy, Brajendranath Seal, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. I am not asking you to accept them and their kin, any of them. But even a slight acquaintance with their wide and subtle thought will give you depth and direction. True, a smattering of aesthetics will not turn you into a critic. But it might give you legs to stand on, self-conscious values. And where it is really comparative, an enlarged awareness. This does not mean crude amputation, indefensible parallels. No, it means a free play of the mind, choosing among possibilities, including the possibility of insight. For this it is not necessary to be a pundit. Take the following from one who was not a pundit but whose resurrection of insights and contribution to critical theory remains *terra incognita*. Speaking of Shelley he wrote: "If the idea of a being not of our soil fallen into the material life and still remembering his skies is admitted as an actual fact, then Shelley was certainly a living example of one of those luminous spirits half obscured by birth ... The spiritual truth which had possession of Shelley's mind was higher than anything that had opened to the vision of any of his contemporaries, and its power and reality which were the essence of his inspiration can only be grasped, when it is known and lived, by a changed and future humanity." Lest you think this a string of idealised generalisations — what's wrong with idealism, anyway? — here is another that goes to the heart of the matter: "But the one thing that is wanting (in him) is a more ascetic force of *tapasya* economising and compressing its powers." To be an Indian is not to be an antiquarian. The critic whom I have quoted spoke of "a changed and future humanity." Listen to a younger, but not too young, voice. He is writing on Wordsworth. "Wordsworth may have misunderstood his function. He is not a folk poet of simple villagers and backwoodsmen, but the first modern poet of disinherited minds." Are these criticisms to be ignored because they did not originate from or have their *première* abroad and did not receive the imprimatur of the Oxford or the Princeton University Press? For the sake of common sense and self-respect let us not play second fiddle all our lives. It would be much better to be ourselves, to care for our own, create a community and start a dialogue. There can be no question of turning our backs upon the West. Only there should be a spinal cord somewhere. By being rooted, only by being rooted, can we interpret and assimilate the West better. Look homeward, Angel.

We have our inheritance, responsibility and rationale that goes beyond literature, even if English language and literature are our immediate and special field. In that field we must stand up for standards at all levels at any cost. But we are not to use this expertise only in a subservient way, only in the restricted milieu of a few privileged professionals on the way out. We have other duties, a larger loyalty to a world of values where there is neither Indian nor English, neither Jew nor Philistine but Man. It is this out-reach of Man, of many Epiphanies but only one Passion, that our life and literary studies must clarify and celebrate. In the poet's words, the God of Humanity has arrived at the ruined gates of the temple of the tribe. Here is a tradition not in the sense of a musty heirloom handed down by ancestors at ease on Zion but

something you painfully earn for yourself, write with your heart's blood. This is the faith of a teacher of English in India, as I understand it, his pact with the cosmos. Macaulay's "clerks" could also turn themselves into *clercs*. The English language which linked us to the world has still nobler uses open to it. It has served us well, it can serve us even better, if only we know how.

Or who can tell for what great work in hand
The greatness of our style is now ordained?
What powers it shall bring in, what spirits command?

Kulam pavitram, janani kritartha, fare forward, voyagers.
Greetings of a fellow-traveller.

SISIRKUMAR GHOSE

MY OTHER FRIEND

WITHIN me smiles that other me
who knows in you that other you
who though you speak with harshness now
looks through darkness and archaic main,
and while your outer lips curl with disdain
and loveless shape their cruel row of words that hiss
and sear into my heart
behind the words there smiles my friend, my friend,
who looks his love
sweet-wounds me with a mystic kiss.

MAGGI

LOTUS-FLAME

OR

SURYAMAN

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1974)

BOOK I, CANTO II *(Contd.)*

EXECUTOR of the Summit's unmeasured birth,
Suryaman rose forgetting all his gloom
That masked his soul, his godhead in thorned chains,
Remembering vaguely all his origin's past,
A secret recalling of his golden source,
The white and bourneless eternity of his soul.
The earth too rose unaware within his breast
And remembered too its primal fulfilling skies
And meteor-suns from where its body came
Flaming untame, the rhapsody of God.
A groping hand touched now a forgotten key,
A hidden ache came back of all it had been,
Recalling the seed, the flame, the whispering star.
Where was the sun it had seen in other births,
The face, the eyes of a far enchanting dawn
That drew his soul to an undying chant
And roused in him the infant of the vast?
All came back slow, in a call, and in a thought,
A smile became the harbinger of a birth
Like a finger pointing to immortal shores,
Petals opening to unveil the deathless rose.
Cramped, shut, his eyes sought the elusive flare,
The ray that moved all things, the ancient seas.
A lightning struck his sleeping night, his breast;
A call echoed in the pit of inner spheres;
A conch pealed from a viewless sanctuary's shrine.
Recalling here all he had been and lost.
A soft memory stirred his placid lake,
His mind's self-lost incoherent trance of the past
Was broken by the incoming morning's spell,
The white surprise of an awakened rose,
A lotus thrilling to the dawn's outpour.
The vacant screen was lit by elusive sparks

From other shores of revelations of birth
Casting its fugitive glow upon his soul
With mystical ingathering of his dreams
In the dumb chalice of his awaiting clay.
Above all was unveiled, a burning peak;
All was ready above the dormant sense
And supine lay his consciousness and the earth's
Essaying to recover all his birth had wrought.
Gradual like a slow incoming tide
All returned to his homing bosom's core
Those streams and dreams from his lost banished heart.
Upon the earth a new advent was close
A dawn of self-knowledge's resplendent spell,
The inner unbarring of a mystic door
To spaces far beyond the grasp of the hours.
Now woke a bud of Godhead and of Flame
Dispelling the chill and torpor of the past.
A morning here unveiled the undying face.

(To be continued)

ROMEN

SEVEN LIVES

A SAGA OF THE GODS AND THE GROWING SOUL

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1974)

CHAPTER VI

Part 4

Now for both sides the days dragged out. The Fort continued to hold and the Turks remained entrenched upon the plain. Spring opened into summer, and the countryside surrendered itself to the imperious sun like a vanquished woman, while the breezes at the summit of Deogarh verged on warmth at midday. But for Malik Kafur on the plain the weather and the waiting had become all but intolerable. He glowered up at the high crest of the rock with its royal eyrie and fretted with frustration, for he had looked to a quick victory, an easy hot season in the bowers and palaces of Deogarh's vanquished king, and a possible triumphant visit to Delhi by autumn if circumstances favoured it. But this Rajput rajah had turned out to be a stubborn brute, and his men seemed to hold to him with that sticky loyalty that made traitors and spies difficult to come by.

Yet well into the middle of May Kafur ran across a piece of luck, meagre though it was, and exploited it to its full advantage. His men had caught a servant girl trying to make her way through the alleys of the ruined and pillaged city in the early hours of the morning. When she was brought before him in his tent, her clothes were already drenched with the sweat of her fear, and they drew blood from her body with the tips of their swords only twice before she began to talk. Her errand had been a simple one and she had carried it out almost daily before the Turks had come. Her father performed the function of healer at the Fort, being an expert in wounds and fevers. Her work was to gather the herbs for his medicinal preparations, and these she collected from the fields around the Fort; but only in desperation had her parent allowed her to go out this morning, for a few gangrene cases had developed among the soldiers and the stock of the required herb had been exhausted several days before.

Kafur asked her next about the manned strength of the Fort, its wealth, its livestock, and its armoury about which she gave approximate answers, for as a maid-servant she had not accurate knowledge of these things. And finally he had her stripped and searched in his presence, partly for further information and partly for his own pleasure. They found nothing on her, not even a piece of gold jewellery, but they did discover hanging on a silver chain around her neck a heavy, box-shaped amulet with a tiny, hinged door. This Kafur tore from her with his own hand, and with his own hand pried it open. Inside he found only the picture of an exquisitely beautiful girl, and his eyes, that were those of a beast of prey, fastened upon it and

softened for one flash instant. Then as suddenly, with a rumble of words, he was Malik Kafur again — “Who is this?”

The servant girl, beyond all dissimulation now, answered promptly, “Queen of Deogarh, Kamal Rani.”

“And why do you keep her picture around your neck?”

“Because ... because she gave it to me herself and because . . she is like a goddess!” the simple girl blurted out.

“Infidel!” her tormentor roared. “There are no goddesses — only women and sows. Take her out. Whip her till her goddess comes to her rescue.”

“Almighty Allah,” he muttered to himself as his men dragged out the half-fainting girl.

He was alone now and the amulet was still in his hand. Idly, he sat down and started to look at the picture, and something stirred in him. The briefest image of a childhood remembrance flashed through his mind, a remembrance of a field in the sun, that had no visible meaning either in terms of possession or conquest, or of utility or fodder or cropland — just a field that existed for itself and for the light that shone upon it. Similarly a face came to him, a face as without meaning to him as the field, for he had seen it when he had not yet acquired the terrible visage of a full-grown man. It had been the face of a six-year-old Afghan girl fresh as the dew on an unopened rose, and it seemed that that face had been created for no man, for no purpose except the joy of its unseen creator, who must have awoken one morning and on a sudden impulse of inward felicity blown it out as spontaneously as a wave throws up foam.

Then suddenly, the strangest compulsion of all overtook Malik Kafur. He felt he wanted to weep. The dark, habitual anger in him, the grey labyrinths of intrigue and calculation, the yellow veins of treachery, all parted, and through the gap he felt a self within him that strove to cry out, that strove in its own dream-mute way to tell him ... to tell him.... But it was a silent voice and the shriek was stifled. Only the tears of a wild, insensate frustration finally struggled to his eyes, and he fought them back with a savage choking roar. The tenderness that had so briefly welled within him sank back again and left in its wake a single idea. He would have the woman whose picture was in the amulet. He would have her not only because she was marvellously beautiful, but because she had shamelessly humiliated him. She had exposed and disrobed before his own lynx eyes that which the world did not know he possessed and that which he would gladly have suffocated on his own account, if he could have done so without unbearable pain. But Kafur was not endowed with a heroic nature. He was a man who ran from many things, from the deeds of his own hand too terrible to contemplate, from his own desires that drove him as maddened wolves drive a stag through a black forest, and from that which the picture had just uncovered in him and for which he felt a shamefaced, ever-so-secret love, as well as a violent distaste and intense sense of mortification. For the man and beast within him waged a constant war with one another, a war in which the man sought to incarnate

in the heart and body of the beast. And the pain of the struggle between the two was the factor Kafur wished to escape with the most desperate urgency, yet could not. Now, the voice of the man — or was it more a younger, tenderer boy?—was telling him that he wanted the Rani of Deogarh that she might touch his hand and flood him with the beauty for which he yearned, while the beast was rebutting that he wanted her for the sweet pleasure of revenge, and for the still sweeter pleasure of possessing or destroying with fury all that exceeded its beasthood.

His mind made up, Kafur shouted peremptorily and three men appeared instantly at the opening of his tent. "Prepare to send a message to the dog of Doegarh," he rumbled. "Bring the scribe." Scarcely a few minutes passed before a thin, stooped individual holding pen and parchment arrived and seated himself. His pen moved rapidly as Kafur composed the following lines:

"I have seen the face of your wife, King of Dogs, and I have made the necessary arrangements to take her at my pleasure. In fact, she had continued to remain at your side only by my indulgence, but now my patience is at an end, and I must have her at once. Surrender her to me as a token of your goodwill and I shall end the siege. My army will depart for Delhi immediately with the remuneration due to us and you shall be left in peace. If not, I will arrange to have your wife brought to me, as I can send for her whenever I like, and shortly afterwards you yourself will lose your Fort, your wealth, your kingdom and your own jackal's head. Your days are numbered and surely you must have whatever little sense it requires to know it. My men will be awaiting your answer outside the walls by this same time tomorrow morning."

The message sped on its way from beneath the battlements bound around the shaft of an arrow and was hastily snatched up by Shankardev's men. Ten minutes later, panting with the exertion they arrived with it at the closed door of the room by the parapet of the royal quarters, and handed it to their lord. Stunned by its contents, he nevertheless remained speechless for only a few seconds. Then he barked out two brief orders: "Send my lieutenants to me and check the personnel of the Fort immediately to see if anyone is missing, either man, woman, girl or boy."

The men hurried off while the King wheeled and strode toward Kamal Rani's apartments. He found her in her sleeping chamber and sank down on the rich, soft floor covering beside her before she could rise to greet him. For some moments he did not speak and then slowly as he gazed at her he took her hands in his. The paper with Kafur's message lay in his lap, while he looked into the beloved face and seemed unable to find words. She too, hypnotized by his aching anxiety, remained silent until she couldn't bear it any longer.

"My Lord, has something happened?" she whispered at last.

"Not yet, beloved ... not yet."

He put the paper into her hand and she read it haltingly, word by word.

"Is there a traitor in the Fort — among my women?" she asked under her breath when she had finished

"We will know shortly, but in the meantime — we can trust no one." The words

were bitter in his mouth, as bitter as acid on healthy flesh, for Shankaradev had known no traitors among his people, and his heart rebelled most violently at thinking evil or ignominy of those whom he saw and depended upon each day, and who had sworn their very lifeblood for him and his queen.

"Then it is better to die," she said echoing his unexpressed thought. "We live by the grace of those who serve us and whom we serve in turn, but in mistrust there can be no service and no life."

"You speak the truth, Kamal, but you speak the truth of a king or queen. And to be that? In the end what is it but an occupation in life? At this moment we can die as rulers of Deogarh, because somewhere a link of trust has been broken and we have been betrayed. But, my love, we need not at the same time cease to react as simple human beings. So long as I live I shall be a human being with an overpowering love, and I will protect that love till my eyes no longer see and my pulse no longer beats in my veins. No person will I allow to come near you save myself, nor will anyone serve you food or sweep your rooms unless I am present. These precautions I must take as a husband and lover, for to lose you by whatever ruse Kafur has in mind would be infinitely greater agony to me than to lose Deogarh or to die the most terrible death. For the body has its limits, Kamal, the heart and soul have none."

She fell upon him and buried her face in his neck, her eyes dry with the numbing impact of the new fear of Kafur's threat, while at the same time her whole body raged with a cool but ferocious ecstasy, for she felt such a love to have been kindled between herself and her lord that it could flame in the face of death and win. Thus she felt supremely triumphant. He too sensed the white fire of that love, and the delight of her body as it rested against his coursed through him until he drew her face away from his shoulder and looked into it with such cascades of the love goddess's passion that she drew her breath in and hid her face in his hands.

In that single instant and gesture, all the poison of Kafur's message was swallowed up, and the air in the room became clear and fresh again — clear of bitterness, clear of fear, clear of mistrust, and most of all clear of the taunting phantoms of separation and death.

Five minutes later a rap sounded on the outer door and Shankaradev sprang to his feet. He found Vikram Singh, his seniormost general, waiting for him at the head of the stairs and called him onto the parapet. The general, a calm, competent, middle-aged man, spoke straightforwardly and without preliminaries as was his habit.

"In pursuance of your orders," he began, "I have seen personally to the check of our people in the Fort. It is almost complete by now and we have indeed found one person missing. I doubt if there will be any others because the rest are either too old or too young to have come or gone anywhere. The missing one is the daughter of the Fort Vaidya — the Queen knew her well — and I have brought her father with me for questioning. Would you like to deal with him yourself?"

"Yes, call him in."

The Vaidya, grey, spare and slightly bent with his sixty years was escorted by a guard into the king's presence. Shuffling forward, he uttered a choked cry and fell in an ignominious heap at his monarch's feet. His body shook with sobs and it became clear that it would be difficult for him to speak coherently for some time. But his young nephew had come with him and presented himself to speak in his uncle's place. His voice trembled with emotion as the words tumbled from him.

"Sire, please believe us. The old man is blameless. Since your great father's time he has served the court and men of Deogarh, as have his forebears for six generations. No breath of complaint have any ever dared to make of him. His daughter too, my cousin, was brought up by him alone, her mother having died long since and, from the time Her Highness Kamal Rani arrived at Deogarh, has looked upon her and worshipped her as a goddess. She even carried about her neck an amulet with the Queen's picture in it and would not take it off even to sleep. As for her leaving the Fort, my Lord, it happened like this. It is well known to all that since the siege began not even a needle has passed in or out of the Fort, what to speak of a man or woman. And yet in no way have we so far lacked for the main items of food or water, necessary to stay alive. But by this last week, the Vaidya had completely used up his stock of the herb that is needed for curing festering wounds. A number of our men had to have only this to carry them from the scales of the dead to the scales of the living but the doctor could do nothing to help them. The burden pressed on him and his daughter, Sadhana, until two nights ago the brave girl decided she must do something. She said she would slip out of the Fort in the dark hours before dawn, collect the herb and return by daybreak.

"With great reluctance her father agreed and the guards on watch let her pass through the side portal, because it was their comrades who lay dying. Besides, Sadhana swore to them that she would not fail, for she was as nimble as a cat."

"The black panther on the plain is greater and nimbler," Shankaradev broke in. "For him to catch a kitten even in the dark is the work of a scant half hour."

The old Vaidya had collected himself by now and was crouching on his knees. His face still glistening with tears, he looked up at the towering figure above him and said in a voice that cracked and tripped over itself, "My Lord, Sadhana — she is my daughter.... She cannot be a traitor. It was courage and pity that made her go into the night — not treason, my Lord — not treason...." And he fell to the ground again weeping bitterly. "May the gods already have taken her life, before she and her house ... are defiled forever."

A long pause followed during which there was no sound but that of the old man's sobbing. Then Shankaradev spoke.

"Faithful Vaidya, it is true that the royal house of the Yadavas of Deogarh have known you and your father and your forefathers to be above complaint or suspicion. Nor do I have any complaint or suspicion of you and your daughter now. You have done your duty without remission and Sadhana acted with a courage all too tragically great for her years and her skill. It is no easy matter to escape the eyes and

hands of a trained army. My suspicions have been laid at rest and my heart swells to know that the spirit of Deogarh and her people still survives intact."

An assenting murmur ran through the gathered courtiers. "Yet, dear friends," Shankaradev went on, "there is no need to hide from the truth. Our days of trial have begun and this is but the first harbinger. Today we are short of medicines, tomorrow it shall be grain and water. But as Rajputs we must see, as we always have, that our bodies do not surrender our spirit, our honour, and the truth of our existence as free men."

"You have nothing to fear, my Lord." It was Vikram Singh speaking. "We shall endure to the end, each man among us. Let us fling Kafur's message away with its treacherous lying as one throws off a poisonous snake, for it drips of his venom — and not ours."

"Excellent," Shankaradev replied. "Prepare a message for Kafur then, saying that the King of Deogarh is not a merchant, but a warrior and a monarch. Kafur may expect him to act as such, as indeed the men of Deogarh do. Taking these factors into consideration, Kafur may do as he likes. At what time he returns to Delhi, or what he can take back with him, is his affair. The affair of the King of Deogarh is to defend his land, his people, and his family; and barter does not enter into his conception of defence. Have the scribe write it out in Kafur's own tongue and let the arrow to which it is tied fly from the battlements at the appointed time tomorrow morning."

He looked down at the Vaidya who was still kneeling at his feet. "Come, faithful one," the King said raising up the old man. "Fear my anger no longer, and know that I share the grief of your daughter's loss. The Divine One shall reward her courage and support her in her pain. Depend upon him, for He is the only one who can and must unflinchingly help. Now go and light the incense burners in your room. Dispel your sorrow with the Divine peace and healing joy. Refresh yourself with the sweetness and fragrance of the incense sticks you light for those who are recovering from the deepest wounds, and not only will you feel revived, but your child may also have an easier passage by virtue of your tranquil, God-illumined thoughts."

The old man listened enchanted, for it was as though the King had cast a spell with his soothing words that seemed to come not merely from the Lord of the Fort but from some deeper and more ancient source. For a moment it appeared that in his emotion the Vaidya would rush forward and embrace his master like a child, but he restrained himself and simply dropped down to touch the King's feet one final time before departing.

The next day Shankaradev's answer was carried back to Kafur by his men and the same evening Sadhana's mutilated body was dragged to the battlements by a Turkish cavalryman, cut loose and left to be picked clean by vultures in full view of Shankaradev's men.

(To be continued)

BINA BRAGG

“LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL”

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1974)

MASS EDUCATION

THOUGH the subject of mass education does not quite fit in with the scheme of our series, yet it claims a place of its own.

The Time-Spirit demands the resurgence of Spiritual India. The mass mind today is moulded by the thought and action of the West, especially America and Russia. Anything spectacular done there at once attracts the notice of all. If there is any attraction for anything Indian, it is philosophy, yoga, spirituality. We find today that the voices of yogis are heard and followed more intently than those of the politicians. The light of ancient India captured the head and heart of the East, but the spirituality of renascent India is slowly, imperceptibly penetrating into the affluent lands of the West.

The emerging consciousness must be allowed free play. The very method of people's thinking must undergo a change and the mass mind must be prepared. This speaks for the utility of mass education.

There is no diversity of interest in our students. No big project in life. The idols of our youth are not Vivekananda or Ramatirtha, Nehru or Subhas Bose, not even Tagore or Tata. All they hanker for is a job. At most to be a professor, a scientist or an engineer is their aim. Poor indeed is the evolution of the consciousness of our younger generation. Our boys and girls have forgotten what Nehru used to tell his daughter Indira: “Always think big”

Mass ignorance is the greatest weakness of any nation. What is urgently needed is a change in our mental attitude. This has to be done by imparting proper education to the people at large. These must be prepared to take up new ideas. The Mother has gone but She lives in Her ideas. They will be her true children who take up Her ideas and live the ideal, become the ideal.

You cannot contribute anything that is not in your character. Not long back (September 28, 1973) in broad daylight (at 10 a.m.) the driver of the cash van of the Union Bank of India was shot in his abdomen and thrown out of the vehicle by two bandits in New Delhi. Not one of the hundreds of witnesses made a move to help the wounded man for fear of being involved. The ruffians made away with Rs. 600,000 worth of currency notes but none chased the van.¹

How apt was Sri Aurobindo's reading of our national character as it has degenerated today! Defining the difference between the English and ourselves in the contemporary world he wrote once in his political days that if there was an accident and someone was knocked down by a car, the passers-by in India would cast a curious

¹ Rs 480,000 were later recovered by the police.

look and move on, but if an Englishman happened to be there he would rush to give him first-aid or take him to the nearest hospital.

The same idea has been brought out by an eminent writer in these ironic words:

“A Hindu means a philosopher. Two Hindus means a debate and three Hindus means confusion and quarrel. While one Englishman means one idiot, two Englishmen means two idiots and three Englishmen means one of the greatest forces in the world.”

In the India of today, there is also lack of unity as between the different parts of the country. Bengalis and Biharis fall out; Maharastrians and Kannaris are at loggerheads. The atmosphere of the land is vitiated by provincial discrimination and suspicion. Who is to be blamed for all these faults of our present national character?

Once somebody complained to Rajendra Prasad: “Government officials are all immoral and corrupt.”

Rajendra Prasad held the nation in general responsible. His reply was sharp:

“If you all improve so that you become perfect gentlemen with sound principles and large-hearted natures, your officers and leaders also will improve. There is no other way to correct them.”

Now, how are we to improve the character of both the people and the officers? Can yoga give some practical hints?

He who does not want to mend his ways is not fit to take up Yoga. The building of character is the first demand of Yoga.

It is always character that makes or unmakes a nation. A change in any field is possible only if there comes a change in man's method of thinking and mode of living.

What was the state of affairs in Chinese society as a whole?

The white-collar class, once it had succeeded, either by inheritance or by the benefit of a college degree and successful civil examination, refused to associate with the blue-collar proletariat. There was an ancient tradition that the educated civil servant need not dirty his hands with physical labour but now even faculty members are forced to spend sometime teaching in rural areas or working in factories, some of them small enough to be run by the universities themselves. This plan is designed to spread education among the people and keep the professors in touch with the masses, learning from their needs and experiences. It is too early to measure the ultimate value of the novel educational approach but the logic behind the mass education is understandable.¹

Yoga proclaims that in each man there is God and that man can realise Him. Another salient feature of Yoga is that it asserts the spiritual basis of the world. Yoga wants each of us to discover himself and grow divine. The only condition for making life successful and beautiful is to make God a life-and-death question.

India being a secular state there are educationists who hold the view that religion should have no place in the field of education. This interpretation of secularism is

¹ Adapted from an article, “New Approach to Education in China”, by C. L. Sulztergar

not valid. Secularism simply means tolerance — it affords equal opportunity to live together whatever religion one professes.

To those in whose estimation Yoga has no place in education Sri Aurobindo's straight reply is that then there can be no all-round growth. Certain qualities can be developed only by the practice of Yoga. For instance, it is Yoga which can free the human heart from hate and horror and establish there true peace and harmony. So long as man does not realise this truth, life is bound to be a pawn of the dark forces which will not allow the world to be free from fear. So all depends upon the system of education into which a child is initiated.

We claim ours to be a Welfare State. Then its aim should be the raising of the standard of living of the unprivileged masses. But, instead, all the benefits are enjoyed by the privileged few. This is because the Indian masses do not know how to assert themselves in the right way. There is no master-mind to awaken their sleeping soul.

If we don't want to remain worthless pigmies each of us must probe and ponder: Must we reach the end of life in endless search for happiness or “hunting for happiness in the heart of pain”, as Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*?

Bertrand Russell writes in his book, *The Conquest of Happiness* :¹

“In adolescence, I hated life and was continually on the verge of suicide, from which, however, I was restrained by the desire to know more mathematics. Now, on the contrary, I enjoy it more. This is due partly to having discovered what were the things that I most desired and having gradually acquired many of these things.”

Likewise each of us should discover himself and then he will find a new force developing in him. One should go through life and learn by experience. Care should be taken that one is not torn by envy, lust and greed. Among the subjects Russell deals with in his book are envy, fear, sex, sin and the like. Regarding envy at one place he says:

“I am earning, let us say, a salary sufficient for my needs. I should be content, but I hear someone else, whom I believe to be in no way superior is earning a salary twice as great as mine. Instantly, if I am of an envious disposition, I begin to be eaten up with a sense of injustice. For all this the proper cure is mental discipline, the habit of not thinking profitless thoughts.”²

All these are priceless stories but how to bring about a change in the outlook of the people at large?

A mortal becomes immortal when he lives an ideal. Let at least one teacher, one student in a school take a vow to dedicate himself to the cause of the country and he will be an example to the masses. The world today needs cultural and spiritual heroes.

The pessimist might say, “How poor is man! How little his capacity and scanty his resources! What can a man do single-handed?” But history testifies how great are the deeds of men of action and character. Do the great discoveries of the world

¹ P. 15

² *Ibid*, p. 53.

not sing the song of such men? These are instances of the gifted ones, the born leaders. Let us come to the level of the common man.

I happened to read the life-story of a Christian Missionary. He used to preach in a street-corner every day. He preached in this manner for forty years. One day someone asked him, "How many Christians have you made till today?"

"One," was his small reply. When asked, "Forty long years and one disciple! Was it worthwhile?", he replied smilingly. "After my death there will be at least one to carry on my work of preaching the message of Christ."

Can literature play a part in the education of the masses?

Each nation has its own ingrained tradition. In Western countries, when someone earns a lot or inherits a big property, so great is his love for the country that he gives away his all for the well-being of the nation — for some research work or for the development of an educational institution. Here in India if people earn a lot of money they build temples or *Dharamsalas* — free lodgings for pilgrims. Few think about the publication of mass literature as well.

If it is true that French literature did the groundwork for the French revolution and Russian literature for the Russian revolution, then the role that literature plays in making and unmaking the character of a race cannot be denied.

Today the Russians and Chinese have flooded their countries with their literature to express their cherished ends and have done all in their power to impress people with the efficacy and brilliance of their ideology.

The world is hungry for spiritual food but we are not able to mass-produce healthy and life-giving literature. The mass-mind must be prepared by the production of such literature — one that warms and uplifts. Is it without significance that the Sikhs worship their religious book, the *Guru Grantha* as the Guru himself? And invariably they draw inspiration and timely help when tossed by the roaring sea of life.

In 1969 an idea came to a devotee of the Mother that the Hindi version of Sri Aurobindo's books should be available by the Birth Centenary Year of Sri Aurobindo. He had bought a piece of land and thought of starting a factory for electrical goods. But he changed his plans. There now stands a fine building housing the "All India Press" with a photo-composing machine — of which kind there are only two or three in India. The photo-composing of Bengali and Gujarati is done for the first time in our country.

He earned the gratitude of us all by bringing out 30 volumes of Sri Aurobindo in English, 20 volumes in Hindi, 10 volumes in Bengali, 8 volumes in Gujarati and 3 in Marathi. His press often receives printing orders from foreign countries and books are shipped abroad earning valuable exchange.

In the Fourth National Book Fair held in Madras in December, 1970, under the aegis of the National Book Trust, the Ashram Press received National Awards for two consecutive years for the excellence of printing and binding of the De Luxe Edition of *Savitri* and other Centenary volumes.

The All India Press volumes came to be known as the Popular Edition. Even those who would not like to spend Rs. 50/- on books, felt inclined to go in for the whole set worth Rs. 500, drawn by the love of Sri Aurobindo's literature.

It was due to the spread of Sri Aurobindo's literature at a very low price that Sri Aurobindo's words have reached even the lower strata of society. One man in Orissa, a professor, may be said to be responsible for the existence of nearly 3000 Sri Aurobindo Study Circles in Orissa. Two schools are running there. A Student Youth Association is formed, an attempt is being made to open a Sri Aurobindo University. Navajyoti — a quarterly in Oriya — has its own building and Press in the Ashram.

The professor leads a celibate life and seems to be immune from those lower elements that make a man mean and selfish. It is by the force of character that he rules the hearts of the man-in-the-street, as well as the élite of Oriya society, even Government officials. He is always ready to lend a helping hand to anyone from his province who intends to stay in the Ashram. Orissa — considered the most backward of all the provinces — has set an example for others to emulate.

(To be continued)

NARAYAN PRASAD

POEM FROM THE SEA

LIKE many small waves which rise out of the sea
And arrive the same time at the shore,
Overlapping and merging in harmony,
Becoming one sea as before,

Each of us flows on our way,
Receding into our own
And coming together, our play.
The need of our oneness is shown.

Our direction is one no matter how high
Individual nature may rise.
Each drop of the ocean peacefully lies
Reflecting the limitless skies.

LORETTA

Students' Section

THE NEW AGE ASSOCIATION

TWENTY-NINTH SEMINAR

24 February 1974

SCIENCE, REASON AND YOGA

(Continued from the issue of April 24, 1974)

SPEECH BY MAURICE SHUKLA

WE find ourselves today on the threshold of a New Age, tantalizingly near to a new order of existence, of which the key is held by our groping fingers. A stage has been reached where the human mind has been suddenly arrested in the midst of its dazzling display of scientific achievements and its extraordinary extension of the knowledge of the material universe around us. But this triumphant and all-dominating materialistic Science of the present century and its staunch ally Reason find themselves dangerously on the brink of getting toppled by some Force beyond Matter, a mysterious Force which they can neither apprehend nor combat — the Force of spirituality, which in common parlance is known as Yoga.

The tendency towards spiritual seeking and a quest for a consciousness beyond mind came into prominence as a result of a disappointed recoil from the 19th-century Rationalism and Materialism, a marked dissatisfaction with the pretended omniscience and omnipotence of Reason and Mind and a consequent “feeling out for something deeper”. Previously all phenomenon was looked at in a very dogmatic scientific perspective. The scientist’s criterion of Reality demanded a physical actuality and objectivity and a capacity of its becoming an object of our outer consciousness. The phenomenon had to be acceptable to that part of Reason or Mind which builds and depends on the external data acquired by the physical senses and considered by it as the one solid reliable source of knowledge. Any phenomenon that did not fit into these narrow preconceived bounds was branded rather suspiciously as “metaphysics, mysticism and moonshine”

However, the truly scientific mind whose very essence is a seeking for true knowledge, even if it be through zigzags of error and a confused semi-lit power of perception, could not ignore the intimations from the mysterious Unknown Realm beyond, and troubled by the pressing persistence for ascertainment the scientist has been helplessly hurled into discovering a new dimension of Reality. Awakened from a state of numb indifference to the awareness of an acute dissatisfaction with its own

methods and results, Science has been driven to hunt for something more satisfying, more permanent, more luminous.

The latest discoveries in Psychology and the new developments of Science have brought about a tremendous change in modern thought. Psychology has come to recognise the existence of a consciousness beyond the mind and the intellect, more refined and powerful in its influence and subtly determining our actions, and Science is reluctantly admitting that it has, as yet, explained only processes and has been unable to tackle the fundamental Reality. Sri Aurobindo, however, points out the flaws of Science even in its attempt to explain the process. He says: "Science, like most mental and external knowledge, gives you only truth of process. I would add that it cannot give you even the whole truth of process; for you seize some of the ponderables, but miss the all-important imponderables; you get, hardly even the how, but the conditions under which things happen in Nature."¹

Further, he remarks on Science that "the scheme it has built up of the evolution not only of this rich and vast and variegated material world, but of life and consciousness and mind and their workings out of a brute mass of electrons, identical and varied only in arrangement and number, is an irrational magic more baffling than any the most mystic imagination could conceive".²

The emergence of spiritual truths and ideas and supernormal yogic experiences has frankly surprised and confounded Science and Reason, as the ground on which they stood so firmly seems to be giving way. The scientists and rationalists are disconcerted by the fact that their own theories, based on a complete exclusion of all notions of subjective spiritual Reality, are gradually disintegrating into ludicrous fallacies.

It is only a matter of time before there is a complete "reversal of our view both of the subjective mind realities and objective physical realities so that they are seen as things phenomenal, secondary, dependent upon the truth of self and the realities of the spirit".³

In spite of this, the rational mind clings on to its old moorings. It is too arrogant and self-confident to accept the Higher Knowledge which delves deep into the very source of existence and arrives at a profound revelation of the fundamental spiritual Reality by a total identity with it. It insists on interpreting the Higher Knowledge in its own mental way and by its own mental standards. It still wallows in the comfortable delusion that it has a passport and a right of entry into every sphere of universal existence.

Now the question we may ask ourselves is whether this claim of Reason is valid.

To answer that basic question, a review of the nature of the higher spiritual knowledge attained through Yoga, and the capacity of Reason and Science in relation to that knowledge, is essential.

¹ *The Riddle of This World* (1933), p. 42.

² *Ibid*, p. 43.

³ Sri Aurobindo *The Life Divine* (American Edition), p. 423

The spiritual view of existence regards body, life and mind not as ends in themselves but “as first instruments of the soul, the yet imperfect instruments of an unseized diviner purpose”.¹ The mind is an instrument of man’s inner spiritual being, of which in fact everything is an expression. This deeper view sees the Infinite pervading all finite things in the universe. These things are to be judged in relation to that deeper truth of the Infinite, of which they are the “imperfect translation” and towards which, by a more luminous expression of that truth, they are all labouring to arrive. The spiritual man sees a greater and more comprehensive Reality than the phenomenal and the physical, “not only behind man and the world but within man and the world”.

Now let us consider the nature of the mind’s working on which Reason and Science depend for their knowledge. The value and content of all knowledge — subjective or objective — rests on the manner of knowing and on the nature of the particular instrument used for attaining that knowledge. Reason and Science start from a certain amalgamation of sense-perceptions which are received, then classified in a coherent system. From this systematic classification emerge certain deductions or conclusions which are formulated as laws on which are based the possibilities of prediction. An unprejudiced view of these constituent elements of the mental way of knowledge would reveal their inherent limitations. Observation, for instance, can never be wholly objective. Reason sees the world through the “prism” of the observing faculty which is never free of bias and predilections. The inferences from sense-experience that Reason draws vary with the observer. Since the way of seeing and observing a thing can never be identical in two persons, Science has been compelled to recognize “the necessity of personal equation and has created an imaginary observer, a ‘mean man’ as the standard of reference”.² Another limitation of mental observation is the limited scope or field and the limited amount of data on which it has to base itself, its tendency to look at things in “segmented divisions” and selecting “one segment of the whole as if it were the whole Reality”. The classification and the consequent deduction, derived from such a narrow range of facts and valid only in their immediate relation and in a restricted bound of space and time, thus alienate themselves further from Truth and certainty.

The very foundation of Science is shaky and insecure as it excludes the fundamental truth of the Divine Reality. Says Sri Aurobindo: “There is no fundamental significance in things if you miss the Divine Reality; for you remain embedded in a huge surface crust of manageable and utilisable appearance. It is the magic of the Magician you are trying to analyse, but only when you enter into the consciousness of the Magician himself can you begin to experience the true origination, significance and circles of the Lila.”³

So vast and infinite is the knowledge of that Divine Reality that to it “all science put together is a bagatelle”.⁴

¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (1949), p 281

² Nolini Kanta Gupta, “Rationalism”, in *Collected Works*, Vol I, p 10

³ *The Riddle of This World* (1933), p 44

⁴ *Ibid*

Sri Aurobindo expresses a similar idea very vividly in an aphorism: "To see the composition of the sun or the lines of Mars is doubtless a great achievement; but when thou hast the instrument that can show thee a man's soul as thou seest a picture, then thou wilt smile at the wonders of physical Science as the playthings of babies."¹

The whole issue between Science and Reason on the one hand and spiritual knowledge on the other rests upon what Sri Aurobindo calls one simple question: "Is mental consciousness with its groping inquiry, endless argument, unquenchable doubts, stiff and unplastic logic something superior or even equal to the Divine Consciousness or is it something inferior in its action and status?"² If it is superior or equal then all seeking in spirituality for the Divine is meaningless and superfluous, but "if it is inferior, how can it challenge, judge, make the Divine stand as an accused or a witness before its tribunal, summon it to appear as a candidate for admission before a Board of Examiners or pin it like an insect under its examining microscope?"³

With the limited finite consciousness of our rational mind it is not possible to arrive at a true realisation of the Infinite Reality.

But it is necessary to note that along with these drawbacks, Science and Reason have also a brighter and more positive side to them and in any integral view of life this will have to be taken into account.

One of the most important conclusions reached by Science is that the world as we see it is an illusion; things are not what they apparently seem to be. It is the construction of our sense-organs that puts us in relation with the world in a way which is totally superficial, illusory and unreal. This conclusion of Science is entirely valid and conforms to the view of Yoga about our normal perception of the external world.

Further, the indispensable and priceless service rendered by rationalistic and scientific Materialism to humanity cannot be ignored. Reason has helped man to rise above a purely vitalistic barbarian existence by its higher control and government of the vital and physical parts of his nature. It has uplifted, refined and subjected them to a disciplined obedience to the enlightened intellect and will, and it has succeeded to some extent in making life the instrument of the aesthetic, ethical and rational ideals — in a word, Reason has lifted man from sheer barbarism and infused into him a more illumined consciousness.

Another great service rendered by Reason and Science to the forward progress of humanity has to be noted. The mysterious occult and spiritual worlds and powers which are beckoning us, can be safely integrated into our life only if the "intellect has been severely trained to a clear austerity". For, seized on by unripe minds they lend themselves "to the most perilous distortions and misleading imaginations and actually in the past encrusted a real nucleus of truth with such an accretion of perverting superstitions and irrationalising dogmas that all advance in true knowledge was rendered impossible".⁴

¹ *Thoughts and Aphorisms* (1958), p 18

^{2,3} *On Yoga*, Tome One (1958), p 184.

⁴ *The Life Divine* (Centenary Edition), p 10

To evade any possibility of this happening, a clear, disciplined, discriminating intellect is indispensable as a basis for that greater knowledge. The rationalistic tendency of Materialism has rendered this great service to humanity by insisting upon such a disciplined intellect in its search for truth.

"It is necessary," affirms Sri Aurobindo, "that advancing Knowledge should base herself on a clear, pure disciplined intellect. It is necessary too that she should correct her errors sometimes by a return to the restraint of sensible fact, the concrete realities of the physical world. The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a supraphysical Knowledge 'Earth is his footing' says the Upanishad whenever it images the Self that manifests in the universe. And it is certainly the fact that the wider we extend and the surer we make our Knowledge of the physical world, the wider and surer becomes our foundation for the higher knowledge, even for the highest, even for the Brahmanvidya."¹

The rationalistic scientific mind can transcend itself and become a conscious instrument of the Spirit only when it recognizes that true happiness and fullness of being does not lie in the use of Reason and Science for preparing a life of utmost comfort and prosperity but much more and essentially in a luminous self-knowledge which will make us conscious and victorious in all the ranges of our existence, in an enlightened mastery of the outer as well as the inner worlds. This honesty and intellectual sincerity can come only when Reason and Science shed their obscurantist shell of mental prejudices and materialistic short-sightedness. Signs are already visible on the horizon towards such a change. Sri Aurobindo gave this prophetic assurance when he said about modern Materialism: "Since its very soul is the search for Knowledge, it will be unable to cry a halt; as it reaches the barriers of sense-knowledge and of the reasoning from sense-knowledge, its very rush will carry it beyond and the rapidity and sureness with which it has embraced the visible universe is only an earnest of the energy and success which we may hope to see repeated in the conquest of what lies beyond, once the stride is taken that crosses the barrier"²

It must, however, be clearly understood that if the materialistic mind obstinately clings on to its natural methods and is unwilling to come out of its grooves, it will not be able to fathom these inner discoveries and experiences of self-being and cosmic consciousness, not even the true mystery of telepathy and clairvoyance and all other supraphysical phenomena. Because the physical mentality does not have any experience of these things, all its attempts to sound the supraphysical Reality will prove futile, inevitably leading humanity into an embarrassing *cul-de-sac*.

"To know," says Sri Aurobindo, "to use rightly we must go beyond the truth of physical phenomenon and process, we must know what is within and behind it. For we are not merely embodied minds; there is a spiritual being, a spiritual principle, a spiritual plane of Nature. Into that we have to heighten our force of consciousness to widen by that still more largely, even universally and infinitely, our lower life and

¹ *Ibid*, p 11.

² *Ibid*, p 13

use it for greater ends and on a larger plan, in the light of the spiritual truth of existence.”¹

This is the true and right method of subjective knowledge which Yoga makes available to us — an Integral Yoga taking an integral view of existence, uplifting Mind in its all-embracing sweep and making it an enlightened sincere servant of the suprarational truths of existence and the spiritual knowledge and action. Supraphysical knowledge enhances and illumines world-knowledge, while world-knowledge culminates in the supraphysical behind the world. A Yoga that does not reconcile the two in a supreme transcendence, but exclusively concentrates on the Spirit and considers all else as an unreal spectre of the Self, will lead us into a “radical ascetic spiritual realisation” but not to a catholic integral and satisfactory solution of the truth of cosmic and individual existence.

The ideal solution of the problem would be in a reaffirmation of the eternal truth of the Self which embraces but also surpasses the truth of Reason and Science. Philosophy then would become the handmaid of the Supreme Truth that underlies all existence, and its aim and function would be to arrange the data given by the various means of knowledge, excluding none, and put them into their “synthetic relation to the one Truth”, supreme and universal, and eventually, to prepare a basis for spiritual realisation and the growing of the human being into his divine nature.

Science would preoccupy itself with throwing an additional light on the Spirit of the universe and the Divine’s way in things and with new psychical research which will start from Spirit as the first and fundamental truth, and which will finally act upon life and matter with the pure power of mind and of that which surpasses it.

The Integral Yoga would eventually find the right harmony by developing “the most profound and vital methods of psychological self-discipline and self-development so that the mental and psychical life may express the spiritual life through the utmost possible expansion on its own richness, power and complexity”² and finally by “pouring the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us we have issued”.³

I end my speech by reading a short poem of Sri Aurobindo which points to this evolutionary ascent in words of revelatory significance:

ELECTRON*

The electron on which forms and worlds are built,
Leaped into being, a particle of God.
A spark from the eternal Energy spilt,
It is the Infinite’s blind minute abode.

¹ *Ibid*, pp 731-2.

² *Ibid*, p 7

³ Sri Aurobindo, “Our Ideal”, in *Arya*, Vol II, p 79

* *Collected Poems* (Centenary Edition), p 130.

In that small flaming chariot Shiva rides.
The One devised innumerably to be;
His oneness in invisible forms he hides,
Time's tiny temples of¹ eternity.

Atom and molecule in their unseen plan
Buttress an edifice of strange onenesses,
Crystal and plant, insect and beast and man, —
Man on whom the World-Unity shall seize,

Widening his soul-spark to an epiphany
Of the timeless vastness of Infinity.

SRI AUROBINDO

MAURICE SHUKLA

¹ to

EYE EDUCATION

PALMING

WHEN the eyes are tired, closing the eyes for a moment clears the vision and a kind of relief is felt in the eyes. But as some light still comes through the closed eyelids, a still greater relief can be obtained by excluding this light as well. This is done by covering the closed eyes with the palms of the hands in such a way as to avoid pressure on the eyeballs. This practice is called 'PALMING'. When the eyes with normal sight are closed and covered so as to shut out all light, the retina of the eye does not receive any light and the result is that one sees or experiences a perfect black. Palming is one of the best methods for relieving and securing relaxation to improve eyesight.

While palming it is good to imagine something black as a letter of the Snellen eye chart, a piece of black velvet, black paint, a curtain, coal-tar, etc. For some people it is difficult to recall the memory of a black object but they find it easy to recall the memory of pleasant and familiar objects, e.g. a boat floating on a river, a flower, etc. Girls like to imagine their dolls, boys like to imagine a game of cricket or table-tennis, mothers like to imagine the faces of their children. When the imagination is perfect according to the reality, one sees a perfect dark before the eyes while palming.

Some patients while palming see all sorts of colours but not black. This is due to an effort to imagine or see something. Such patients may try the following method:

Take a piece of black velvet and put it on a cushion which is being used to rest the elbows while doing palming. Look at the black velvet for a second and immediately close the eyes for about half a minute; repeat this ten or twenty times till you find that the imagination of black can continue.

(To be continued)

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