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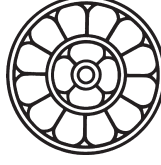
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,  
A new light breaks upon the earth,  
A new world is born.  
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXX

No. 9

*“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”*

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## KAMADEVA

When in the heart of the valleys and hid by the roses  
The sweet Love lies,  
Has he wings to rise to his heavens or in the closes  
Lives and dies?

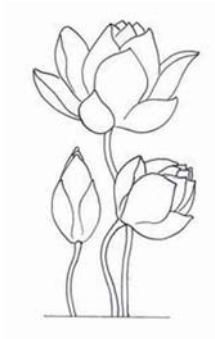
On the peaks of the radiant mountains if we should meet him  
Proud and free,  
Will he not frown on the valleys? Would it befit him  
Chained to be?

Will you then speak of the one as a slave and a wanton,  
The other too bare?  
But God is the only slave and the only monarch  
We declare.

It is God who is Love and a boy and a slave for our passion  
He was made to serve;  
It is God who is free and proud and the limitless tyrant  
Our souls deserve.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 540)*



# EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA

(Continued from the issue of July 2017)

## PART FOUR THE FUNDAMENTAL REALISATIONS OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

### SECTION FOUR THE SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

#### Chapter Eight Descent and the Lower Nature

##### The Resistance of the Lower Nature

If the habit of the ordinary nature is not any obstacle to the descent, then what is the need of sadhana? What prevents the whole higher consciousness from coming down and changing you into a superman in one second? It is because the things of the lower nature offer an obstinate resistance that long sadhana is necessary.

\*

An uneasiness of that kind is always due to a resistance somewhere — something that remains closed and does not open when it is touched by the Force. It is due probably not so much to yourself as to other conflicting influences that are acting upon you.

\*

If one brings down more force or light than some part of the being is ready for and that part resists — or if there is a struggle between descending and adverse forces in the body, then these things [*a burning sensation etc.*] can take place.

\*

The feeling of resistance [*to the descent of the Force*] may be the result of the effort at response. When there is the free flow there is neither effort nor resistance.

\*

8

The experience of the action in the three centres is perfectly all right (the opening to the higher consciousness and its characteristic action and results already beginning there) except for the pains which mean a resistance. These experiences are quite sound and according to the divine schedule. But the pain at the bottom of the neck indicates that in trying to pass from mind to higher vital towards the heart, the Consciousness encountered an obstruction. However that too is in the day's work. It will be overcome in due time. So nothing to grumble — there at least.

The concentration is all right — since it is proceeding so well, the concentration in the higher centres should continue, but as the consciousness comes down or to help its coming down to the vital centres, more concentration in the heart may be necessary hereafter.

\*

What usually comes is a descent of the Divine Power to work upon the nature and prepare it for the Divine Presence in the heart. There is much in human nature that has to be changed before it can hold what descends — incapacity and limitation of the mind, insufficient purity in the heart and elsewhere, restlessness etc. To contain the descent a quiet mind and pure heart are needed. That is why there is the restlessness and sense of incapacity in her. That is a quite common experience. If she wants to go farther, she must aspire for calm, peace, purity, etc. in the mental and emotional being and allow what is descending to establish it in her.

\*

It must be the vital-physical that is in action. It is under the pressure of the Force that the resistance recedes lower and lower down and manifests so as to have the pressure brought there also specifically for its expulsion.

\*

The Power that is above your head has not only to be in connection with you, but to occupy the consciousness with its influence. The restlessness is due to a resistance of the lower consciousness which is not accustomed to the process by which this is done and probably feels uneasy — as you say you feel everything unsure. The body becoming unreal and all of one seeming to disappear are very usual results of the higher consciousness taking hold of the mind and they are very good signs — so too the sensation spreading from the head to the body is probably only the Power coming in. There should be no apprehension, for these things are quite normal in the transforming process. Probably the sense of unsureness is due to the part of the nature which founds itself on the body consciousness and feels nothing sure or

solid except the body. In the new consciousness on the contrary what will be felt as sure and solid is the wide spiritual consciousness not limited by the body, in which the body is only a small circumstance hardly felt, an instrument only. The losing all consciousness must also be due to the consciousness going entirely inside as soon as the restlessness is forgotten or is no longer active.

\*

That is good progress. As for the resisting part, there is for a long time a resistance from some layer of the physical — one layer opens, another beneath remains obscure. But if the pressure from above is continuous, the resistance gets exhausted at last.

The stillness of which you speak in the meditation is a very good sign. It comes usually in that pervading way when there has been sufficient purification to make it possible. On the other side, it is itself the beginning of the laying of the foundations of the higher spiritual consciousness.

\*

You speak of a struggle (*yuddha*) beginning when the Force comes down, but such a result is not inevitable — it is not necessary that the progress should be through a struggle. That rather takes place before the Force is there in the being, while one is still making efforts to open oneself to it or when it is still pressing from above or has taken up something of the nature but not the whole. When the Force is there at work, the imperfections and weaknesses of the nature will necessarily arise for change, but one need not fight with them; one can look on them quietly as a surface instrumentation that has to be changed. It is not with “indifference” that one has to look at them, for that might mean inertia, a want of will or push or necessity to change; it is rather with detachment. Detachment means that one stands back from them, does not identify oneself with them or get upset or troubled because they are there, but rather looks on them as something foreign to one’s true consciousness and true self, rejects them and calls in the Mother’s Force into these movements to eliminate them and bring the true consciousness and its movements there. The firm will of rejection must be there, the pressure to get rid of them, but not any wrestling or struggle.

When you felt the Force, the concentration, the peace, it meant evidently the true consciousness coming; that could not produce the restlessness at night. If the restlessness were the result of the Force coming, it would follow that the more the Force comes down, the more the restlessness must increase. But that would be absurd and is not the case. What happened was simply that with the Force came a beginning of the inner or spiritual peace; in the nerves the old restlessness which was lying dormant rose up as a resistance, trying as all these habitual things of the



nature do to prolong itself. As the peace enters the vital and the nervous being, these things naturally diminish and are eliminated. One has only to remain quiet and detached and let the Force in its working bring in the peace there also. If the difficulty persists, you will let us know so that we may see to it.

### **Descent into the Mind and Vital**

The danger of the mental forces is that when the higher consciousness descends they tend (unless there is a deep silence) to become active in the consciousness for forming ideas of a mental type which can always be misapplied. First, there should be a basis of entire calm, peace and silence — if there is activity, it should be that of a knowledge coming down and the mind silent receiving it accurately. This you can easily have, provided the mind is quiet.

The danger of the vital is that of taking hold of love, Ananda, the sense of Beauty and using it for its own purposes, for vital human relations or interchange or else some kind of mere enjoyment of its own.

\*

The wideness is that of the higher consciousness, golden being the colour of the light of Truth, and the Cow is the symbol of the Light of the higher consciousness descending, turning all into the Truth light.

The state of wideness and of quietude unaffected by anything that happens is the natural result of the descent which you saw in this figure. The impartial condition towards work or not work is also a result of this descent. Usually it is the vital that pushes to work and without this vital push one can do very little. When the higher consciousness descends into the mind and vital, this push becomes silent, but the faculty of work remains, — afterwards when the new consciousness is settled it takes up the work and carries it on with another force which replaces the push of the vital and is much greater.

\*

In the first condition you are receiving through the mind and it is drawn back upon itself to receive the Presence and grow in the Light and Power from above. The body or external consciousness is probably not sharing in its outward-going parts, there is no effectuating energy for any work other than what the external consciousness is habituated to do.

In the second the vital is receiving directly and transforming immediately into kinetic energy; for it is the direct reception by the vital or else the active participation

of the vital in the Light, Power or Ananda that makes externalisation, effectuation, all kinds of work and action possible and easy.

\*

The opening of the vital mind (or any part) does not mean that the vital mind is absolutely open or wholly converted so that there shall never again be any darkness or ignorance or error or resistance or anything else but the higher consciousness there. It only means that the higher consciousness is able to come down there and work and establish something of itself there — as has been done in the thinking mind. Each plane, one after the other, has to open initially in that way down to the physical. So long as this initial opening is not made in all the parts, there can be no complete and final descent of the higher consciousness anywhere. If the nervous being and other physical parts are not open, even the thinking mind cannot be finally open, for it can be affected by resistance, darkness etc. from below. If the vital mind is open, that does not mean that it is open so wholly that it is already divine and is not feeling pride or other wrong movements.

As for the nervous being, it is part of the physical consciousness, below the physical mind and not above it — the nerves are part of the body.

\*

The attitude which he describes, if he keeps it correctly, is the right one. It brought him at first the beginning of a true experience, the Light (white and golden) and the Force pouring down from the Sahasradala and filling the system; but when it touched the vital parts it must have awakened the prana energies in the vital centres (navel and below) and as these were not pure, all the impurities arose (anger, sex, fear, doubt etc.) and the mind became clouded by the uprush of impure vital forces. He says that all this is now subsiding, the mind is becoming calm and in the vital the impulses come but do not remain. Not only the mind but the vital must become calm; these impulses must lose their force of recurrence by rejection and purification. Entire purity and peace must be established in the whole *ādhāra*; it is only then that he will have a safe and sure basis for further progress.

The reason why the force flows out of him must be because he allows himself to become too inertly passive and open to everything. One must be passive only to the Divine Force, but vigilant not to put oneself at the mercy of all forces. If he becomes passive when he tries to see God in another person, he is likely to put himself at the disposal of any force that is working through that person and his own forces may be drained away towards the other. It is better for him not to try in this way; let him aspire for the Peace and Strength that come from above and for entire purity and open himself to that Force only. Such experiences as the feeling of the Divine everywhere (not in this or that person only) will then come of themselves.

\*

It is when the true contact and the Light and Force can be steadily brought down *into the whole being* (including the lower vital and body) that the basis and organisation [*of the being*] can be founded and settled.

### **Descent into the Physical Consciousness and Body**

This is a very great progress — to be able to receive the higher consciousness while doing external things with the physical mind and body — it shows that the physical consciousness is fast opening. What you feel is indeed the Grace coming down and bringing the higher divine or spiritual consciousness with it with all that is there. All that (peace, power, Ananda) will develop afterwards more clearly.

\*

It [*the descent of the higher consciousness into the most physical*] brings light, consciousness, force, Ananda into the cells and all the physical movements. The body becomes conscious and vigilant and performs the right movements, obeying the higher will or else automatically by force of the consciousness that has come into it. It becomes more possible to control the functionings of the body and set right anything that is wrong, to deal with illness and pain etc. A greater control comes over the actions of the body and even over happenings to it from outside, e.g. minimising of accidents and small mishaps. The body becomes a more effective instrument for work. It becomes possible to minimise fatigue. Peace, happiness, strength, lightness in the whole physical system. These are the more obvious and normal results which grow as the consciousness grows, but there are many others that are possible. There is also the unity with the earth-consciousness, the constant sense of the Divine in the physical, etc.

It is, of course, not easy to make the physical entirely conscious in this way — for it is the seat of unconsciousness and obscurity and inertia — but a partial and sufficiently effective introduction of the higher consciousness can be established as a basis and the rest of the ground conquered as its force increases in the body.

\*

Your recent experiences are of considerable importance: the triple condition of the being, the sense of the Divine everywhere, that of the Divine Child in the universe. The last two are self-evident in their significance. As to the triple condition it indicates the proper direction of the realisation of the sadhana in three parts of the being. The mind has to merge in the one infinite consciousness of the silent self which will then envelop the whole being; the heart has by adoration and love and surrender to live

in the dynamic Divine and be its dwelling place; the vital and physical (below the navel) have to be the instruments of the Divine Will, instruments pure, surrendered, expressing nothing but that Will.

The Blue Light coming below the level of the Muladhara means that it has entered into the physical (physical mental, physical vital, material) consciousness. The two main obstacles here are the mechanical mind with its memories and desires of the past and the most outward sex movements; these have to be overcome (especially the mechanical mind, for the other may be easily overcome if not supported by the vital proper) for the Light to possess all the physical consciousness. It is probably why it rose so strongly when the Light came to these parts.

\*

That is to say, [*when there is sometimes stillness and sometimes mechanical thoughts*] the Power is still working on the physical consciousness (the mechanical mind and the subconscious) to bring stillness there. Sometimes the stillness comes but not complete, sometimes the mechanical mind reasserts itself. This oscillation usually takes place in a movement of the kind. Even if there is a sudden or rapid transforming shock or downrush, there has to be some working out of this kind afterwards — that at least has always been my experience. For most, however, there comes, first, this slow preparatory process.

\*

It is not a question only of the force working — but of the force descending into the body. The force descends in order to establish quietude, peace, light or whatever else comes from the higher consciousness. When the force comes only to do some work it comes and goes after doing its work. But this is a question of establishing something in the mind, vital and body.

\*

It [*how the body receives the higher dynamism*] depends on the condition of the body or rather of the physical and the most material consciousness. In one condition it is tamasic, inert, unopen and cannot bear or cannot receive or cannot contain the force; in another rajasic predominates and tries to seize on the dynamism, but wastes and spills and loses it; in another there is receptivity, harmony, balance and the result is a harmonious action without strain or effort.

\*

Probably the accumulated Force became more than the physical being could receive. When that happens, the right thing to do is to widen oneself (one can learn to do it by a little practice). If the consciousness is in a state of wideness, then it can receive any amount of Force without inconvenience.

\*

It was the descent of the higher consciousness not only into the mind but the whole body and the whole being. That is what you must get fixed in you, having it not only as a descent but as your normal consciousness. Of course that does not happen in a day (except in rare cases). The descent repeats itself until it is strong enough to hold the whole body.

\*

What will happen when the supramental consciousness takes hold of the body fully, can be decided only by the descent itself — there must be no premature attempt to do it or decide it with the Mind, before the Descent is an accomplished reality — for that would only retard the Descent and perhaps spoil the body.

### **Experiences in the Subtle Body and the Physical Body**

It [*the higher consciousness*] can come into the physical consciousness direct in the sense that the rest can remain passive, but it must pass through the subtle to reach the material.

\*

All experiences that penetrate the centres are recorded in the body and seem to be the body's experiences,<sup>1</sup> but one has to distinguish between the reflection of the experiences there and the experiences that belong to the physical body consciousness itself. It is a matter of consciousness and fine discernment. There is no absolute law about the time.

\*

It can be a rushing of Force into the subtle body which the physical records and feels the effect. When Force descends into the head it means that it has come down

1. *The correspondent wrote that he sometimes felt peace or silence or force as "tangibly present" in his body. — Ed.*

into the mind, when it is felt in the heart it means it has entered into the emotional vital, when it is in the Muladhara and below it means it is acting on the physical consciousness. The centres are all in the subtle body although there are corresponding parts in the gross physical.

\*

I spoke [*in the preceding letter*] only of the fact that what one feels recorded in the physical body may be actually taking place only in the subtle body. Whether in a particular case it is that or a direct experience in the physical body also, is a matter to be seen in each case. One must distinguish for oneself which it is.

\*

Any reflection or outflowing [*of the Force*] from the subtle body into the physical would also be felt as tangible.

\*

Why “mere” record? If you think the experiences in the subtle body are feeble vague things, you are mistaken — they can be quite as intense, swift, palpable, massive as those of the body.

### **Descent into the Subconscious and Inconscient**

It [*the correspondent's experience*] is the approach of the higher consciousness to the subconscious through the psychic and vital which are the connecting links. Without the vital the action would not be complete, without the psychic it would not be possible.

\*

I do not see what is your difficulty. That there is a divine force asleep or veiled by Inconscience in Matter and that the Higher Force has to descend and awaken it with the Light and Truth is a thing that is well known; it is at the very base of this Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga – III*, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 487-97)

## THE FUTURE POETRY

[*The Future Poetry* was first published serially in the monthly review *Arya* between December 1917 and July 1920 in thirty-two instalments. The starting-point for these chapters was a book by James H. Cousins, *New Ways in English Literature* (Ganesh & Co., Madras, preface dated November 1917). A copy of this book was sent to Sri Aurobindo shortly after its publication for review in the *Arya*. He began a review (see Appendix I) but soon abandoned it in favour of a larger work drawn, as he wrote later, from his “own ideas and his already conceived view of art and life”. — Ed. Note in *CWSA*, Vol. 26, p. 399]

### THE FUTURE POETRY

#### Part One

#### CHAPTER I

#### The Mantra

It is not often that we see published in India literary criticism which is of the first order, at once discerning and suggestive, criticism which forces us both to see and think. A book which recently I have read and more than once reperused with a yet unexhausted pleasure and fruitfulness, Mr. James Cousins' *New Ways in English Literature*, is eminently of this kind. It raises thought which goes beyond the strict limits of the author's subject and suggests the whole question of the future of poetry in the age which is coming upon us, the higher functions open to it — as yet very imperfectly fulfilled, — and the part which English literature on the one side and the Indian mind and temperament on the other are likely to take in determining the new trend. The author is himself a poet, a writer of considerable force in the Irish movement which has given contemporary English literature its two greatest poets, and the book on every page attracts and satisfies by its living force of style, its almost perfect measure, its delicacy of touch, its fineness and depth of observation and insight, its just sympathy and appreciation.

For the purpose for which these essays have been, not indeed written, but put together, the criticism, fine and helpful as it is, suffers from one great fault, — there is too little of it. Mr. Cousins is satisfied with giving us the essential, just what is necessary for a trained mind to seize intimately the spirit and manner and poetic quality of the writers whose work he brings before us. This is done sometimes in

such a masterly manner that even one touch more might well have been a touch in excess. The essay on Emerson is a masterpiece in this kind; it gives perfectly in a few pages all that should be said about Emerson's poetry and nothing that need not be said. But some of the essays, admirable in themselves, are too slight for our need. The book is not indeed intended to be exhaustive in its range. Mr. Cousins wisely takes for the most part, — there is one notable exception, — writers with whom he is in close poetical sympathy or for whom he has a strong appreciation; certain names which have come over to our ears with some flourish of the trumpets of renown, Thompson, Masfield, Hardy, do not occur at all or only in a passing allusion. But still the book deals among contemporary poets with Tagore, A. E. and Yeats, among recent poets with Stephen Phillips, Meredith, Carpenter, great names all of them, not to speak of lesser writers. This little book with its 135 short pages is almost too small a pedestal for the figures it has to support, not, be it understood, for the purposes of the English reader interested in poetry, but for ours in India who have on this subject a great ignorance and, most of us, a very poorly trained critical intelligence. We need something a little more ample to enchain our attention and fix in us a permanent interest; a fingerpost by the way is not enough for the Indian reader, you will have to carry him some miles on the road if you would have him follow it.

But Mr. Cousins has done a great service to the Indian mind by giving it at all a chance to follow this direction with such a guide to point out the way. The English language and literature is practically the only window the Indian mind, with the narrow and meagre and yet burdensome education given to it, possesses into the world of European thought and culture; but at least as possessed at present, it is a painfully small and insufficient opening. English poetry for all but a few of us stops short with Tennyson and Browning, when it does not stop with Byron and Shelley. A few have heard of some of the recent, fewer of some of the contemporary poets; their readers are hardly enough to make a number. In this matter of culture this huge peninsula, once one of the greatest centres of civilisation, has been for long the most provincial of provinces; it has been a patch of tilled fields round a lawyer's office and a Government cutcherry, a cross between a little district town and the most rural of villages, at its largest a dried-up bank far away from the great stream of the world's living thought and action, visited with no great force by occasional and belated waves, but for the rest a bare field for sluggish activities, the falsest possible education, a knowledge always twenty-five or fifty years behind the time. The awakening brought by the opening years of the twentieth century has chiefly taken the form of a revival of cultural patriotism, highly necessary for a nation which has a distinctive contribution to make to the human spirit in its future development, some new and great thing which it must evolve out of a magnificent past for the opening splendours of the future; but in order that this may evolve rapidly and surely, it needs a wide and sound information, a richer stuff to work



upon, a more vital touch with the life and master tendencies of the world around it. Such books as this will be of invaluable help in creating what is now deficient.

The helpfulness of this suggestive work comes more home to me personally because I have shared to the full the state of mere blank which is the ordinary condition of the Indian mind with regard to its subject. Such touch as in the intellectual remoteness of India I have been able to keep up with the times, had been with contemporary continental rather than contemporary English literature. With the latter all vital connection came to a dead stop with my departure from England a quarter of a century ago; it had for its last events the discovery of Meredith as a poet, in his *Modern Love*, and the perusal of *Christ in Hades*, — some years before its publication, — the latter an unforgettable date. I had long heard, standing aloof in giant ignorance, the great name of Yeats, but with no more than a fragmentary and mostly indirect acquaintance with some of his work; A. E. only lives for me in Mr. Cousins' pages; other poets of the day are still represented in my mind by scattered citations. In the things of culture such a state of ignorance is certainly an unholy state of sin; but in this immoral and imperfect world even sin has sometimes its rewards, and I get that now in the joy and light of a new world opening to me all in one view while I stand, Cortez-like, on the peak of the large impression created for me by Mr. Cousins' book. For the light we get from a vital and illuminative criticism from within by another mind can sometimes almost take the place of a direct knowledge.

There disengages itself from these essays not so much a special point of view as a distinctive critical and literary temperament, which may be perhaps not so much the whole mind of the critic as the response to his subject in a mind naturally in sympathy with it. Mr. Cousins is a little nervous about this in his preface; he is apprehensive of being labelled as an idealist. The cut and dried distinction between idealism and realism in literature has always seemed to me to be a little arbitrary and unreal, and whatever its value in drama and fiction, it has no legitimate place in poetry. What we find here is a self-identification with what is best and most characteristic of a new spirit in the age, a new developing aesthetic temper and outlook, — or should we rather say, inlook? Its mark is a greater (not exclusive) tendency to the spiritual rather than the merely earthly, to the inward and subjective than the outward and objective, to the life within and behind than to the life in front, and in its purest, which seems to be its Irish form, a preference of the lyrical to the dramatic and of the inwardly suggestive to the concrete method of poetical presentation. Every distinctive temperament has naturally the defect of an insufficient sympathy, often a pronounced and intolerant antipathy towards all that departs from its own motives. Moreover contemporary criticism is beset with many dangers; there is the charm of new thought and feeling and expression of tendency which blinds us to the defects and misplaces or misproportions to our view the real merits of the expression itself; there are powerful cross-currents of immediate attraction and repulsion which carry us from the true track; especially, there is the inevitable

want of perspective which prevents us from getting a right vision of things too near us in time. And if in addition one is oneself part of a creative movement with powerful tendencies and a pronounced ideal, it becomes difficult to get away from the standpoint it creates to a larger critical outlook. From these reefs and shallows Mr. Cousins' sense of measure and justice of appreciation largely, generally indeed, preserve him, though not, I think, quite invariably. But still it is not a passionless, quite disinterested criticism which we get or want from this book, but a much more helpful thing, an interpretation of work which embodies the creative tendencies of the time by one who has himself lived in them and helped both to direct and to form.

Mr. Cousins' positive criticism is almost always fine, just and inspired by a warm glow of sympathy and understanding tempered by discernment, restraint and measure; whatever the future critic, using his scales and balance, may have to take away from it, will be, one would imagine, only by way of a slight alteration of stress here and there. His depreciations, though generally sound enough, are not, I think, invariably as just as his appreciations. Thus his essay on the work of J. M. Synge, "The Realist on the Stage", is, in sharp distinction from the rest of the book, an almost entirely negative and destructive criticism, strong and interesting, but written from the point of view of the ideals and aims of the Irish literary movement against a principle of work which seemed entirely to depart from them; yet we are allowed to get some glimpse of a positive side of dramatic power which the critic does not show us, but leaves us rather to guess at. Mr. Cousins seems to me to take the dramatist's theory of his own art more seriously than it should be taken; for the creator can seldom be accepted — there may of course be exceptions, rare instances of clairvoyant self-sight — as a sound exponent of his own creative impulse. He is in his central inspiration the instrument of a light and power not his own, and his account of it is usually vitiated, out of focus, an attempt to explain the workings of this impersonal power by motives which were the contribution of his own personal effort, but which are often quite subordinate or even accidental side-lights of the lower brain-mind, not the central moving force.

Mr. Cousins has pointed out clearly enough that art can never be a copy of life. But it is also true, I think, that that is not the secret object of most realism, whatever it may say about itself; realism is in fact a sort of nether idealism, or, perhaps more correctly, sometimes an inverse, sometimes a perverse romanticism which tries to get a revelation of creative truth by an effective force of presentation, by an intensity, often an exaggeration at the opposite side of the complex phenomenon of life. All art starts from the sensuous and sensible, or takes it as a continual point of reference or, at the lowest, uses it as a symbol and a fount of images; even when it soars into invisible worlds, it is from the earth that it soars; but equally all art worth the name must go beyond the visible, must reveal, must show us something that is hidden, and in its total effect not reproduce but create. We may say that the artist creates an

ideal world of his own, not necessarily in the sense of ideal perfection, but a world that exists in the idea, the imagination and vision of the creator. More truly, he throws into significant form a truth he has seen, which may be truth of hell or truth of heaven or an immediate truth behind things terrestrial or any other, but is never merely the external truth of earth. By that ideative truth and the power, the perfection and the beauty of his presentation and utterance of it his work must be judged.

Some occasional utterances in this book seem to spring from very pronounced idiosyncrasies of its distinctive literary temperament or standpoint and cannot always be accepted without reservation. I do not myself share its rather disparaging attitude towards the dramatic form and motive or its comparative coldness towards the architectural faculty and impulse in poetry. When Mr. Cousins tells us that "its poetry and not its drama, will prove to be the thing of life" in Shakespeare's work, I feel that the distinction is not sound all through, that there is a truth behind it, but it is overstated. Or when still more vivaciously he dismisses Shakespeare the dramatist to "a dusty and reverent immortality in the libraries" or speaks of the "monstrous net of his life's work" which but for certain buoys of line and speech "might sink in the ocean of forgetfulness," I cannot help feeling that this can only be at most the mood of the hour born of the effort to get rid of the burden of its past and move more freely towards its future, and not the definitive verdict of the poetic and aesthetic mind on what has been so long the object of its sincere admiration and a powerful presence and influence. Perhaps I am wrong, I may be too much influenced by my own settled idiosyncrasies of an aesthetic temperament and being impregnated with an early cult for the work of the great builders in Sanskrit and Greek, Italian and English poetry. At any rate, this is true that whatever relation we may keep with the great masters of the past, our present business is to go beyond and not to repeat them, and it must always be the lyrical motive and spirit which find a new secret and begin a new creation; for the lyrical is the primary poetical motive and spirit and the dramatic and epic must wait for it to open for them their new heaven and new earth.

I have referred to these points which are only side issues or occasional touches in Mr. Cousins' book, because they are germane to the question which it most strongly raises, the future of English poetry and of the world's poetry. It is still uncertain how that future will deal with the old quarrel between idealism and realism, for the two tendencies these names roughly represent are still present in the tendencies of recent work. More generally, poetry always sways between two opposite trends, towards predominance of subjective vision and towards an emphasis on objective presentation, and it can rise too beyond these to a spiritual plane where the distinction is exceeded, the divergence reconciled. Again, it is not likely that the poetic imagination will ever give up the narrative and dramatic form of its creative impulse; a new spirit in poetry, even though primarily lyrical, is moved always to seize upon and do what it can with them, — as we see in the impulsion which has driven Maeterlinck, Yeats, Rabindranath to take hold of the dramatic form for self-expression as well as

the lyrical in spite of their dominant subjectivity. We may perhaps think that this was not the proper form for their spirit, that they cannot get there a full or a flawless success; but who shall lay down rules for creative genius or say what it shall or shall not attempt? It follows its own course and makes its own shaping experiments. And it is interesting to speculate whether the new spirit in poetry will take and use with modifications the old dramatic and narrative forms, as did Rabindranath in his earlier dramatic attempts, or quite transform them to its own ends, as he has attempted in his later work. But after all these are subordinate issues.

It will be more fruitful to take the main substance of the matter for which the body of Mr. Cousins' criticism gives a good material. Taking the impression it creates for a starting-point and the trend of English poetry for our main text, but casting our view farther back into the past, we may try to sound what the future has to give us through the medium of the poetic mind and its power for creation and interpretation. The issues of recent activity are still doubtful and it would be rash to make any confident prediction; but there is one possibility which this book strongly suggests and which it is at least interesting and may be fruitful to search and consider. That possibility is the discovery of a closer approximation to what we might call the *mantra* in poetry, that rhythmic speech which, as the Veda puts it, rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the Truth, — the discovery of the word, the divine movement, the form of thought proper to the reality which, as Mr. Cousins excellently says, "lies in the apprehension of a something stable behind the instability of word and deed, something that is a reflection of the fundamental passion of humanity for something beyond itself, something that is a dim shadowing of the divine urge which is prompting all creation to unfold itself and to rise out of its limitations towards its Godlike possibilities." Poetry in the past has done that in moments of supreme elevation; in the future there seems to be some chance of its making it a more conscious aim and steadfast endeavour.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Future Poetry*, CWSA, Vol. 26, pp. 3-10)

## APPENDIX I

[Appendix I is an incomplete review of James Cousins' book *New Ways in English Literature*. Written in November 1917, the review was abandoned when Sri Aurobindo decided to make his consideration of Cousins' book the starting-point for a presentation of his own ideas on poetry. The two paragraphs of the review were rewritten as the first two paragraphs of the first chapter of *The Future Poetry*. — Ed. Note in *CWSA*, Vol. 26, p. 309]

### **New Ways in English Literature** (Review)

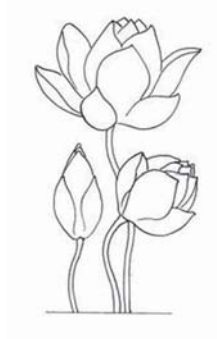
Amid the commonplace, vapid and indiscriminating stuff which mostly does duty for literary criticism in India, here is at last a work of the first order, something in which the soul can take pleasure for the beauty of its style, its perfect measure, its insight, its subtle observation and just appreciation. Such a book would be a miracle in its environment, but the miracle disappears when we know the name of the author; Mr. James Cousins is one of the leading spirits of the Irish movement which has given contemporary English literature its two greatest poets. This book therefore comes to us from Ireland, although it is published in India. One would like to see a significant link in this circumstance of Mr. Cousins' presence and activities among us. For Ireland is a predestined home of the new spiritual illumination rising in Europe from the ashes of the age of rationalism and she has already, in literature at least, found the path of her salvation: India, that ancient home of an imperishable spirituality, has still, Rabindranath and the Bengal school of painting notwithstanding, to find hers, has yet to create the favourable imaginative, intellectual and aesthetic conditions for her voice to be heard again with the old power, but a renewed message. The atmosphere is at present raw and chill, thick with the crude mists of a false education and a meagre and imitative culture. Mr. Cousins' work is avowedly part of a movement intended to make a salutary change and bring in the large air and light of a living culture and education.

Mr. Cousins deals here with the contemporary and recent English poets, a subject for the most part quite unfamiliar to the Indian mind. He treats it with an admirable sympathy, an illuminating power of phrase and a fine certainty of touch; but for the purpose for which these essays were put together, his criticism has one great fault, — there is too little of it. The first part deals with four contemporary poets, three of them of the first importance, and a group; the second deals with five recent poets and a dramatist and of these writers three again are of the first importance; but this slender volume of 135 pages is a small pedestal for so many figures. To catch the eye of the Indian reader [he tries] to give the greater of these something

like life size, while putting the rest in smaller proportions — after a convention familiar to Indian art. Each essay is indeed excellent in itself; that on Emerson is a masterpiece of fullness in brevity, for it says perfectly in a few pages all that need be said about Emerson the poet and nothing that need not be said; others are quite full and conclusive enough for their purpose, for instance the admirable “defence” of Alfred Austin; and in all the essential things are said and said finely and tellingly. There is quite enough for the experienced reader of English poetry who can seize on implications and follow out suggestions; but the Indian reader is inexperienced and has not ordinarily a well-cultivated critical faculty or receptiveness; he needs an ampler treatment to familiarise him with the subject and secure his permanent interest. The essays do act admirably as finger-posts; but finger-posts are not enough for him, he needs to be carried some miles along the road before he will consent to follow it.

SRI AUROBINDO

*(The Future Poetry, CWSA, Vol. 26, pp. 311-12)*



## **‘A LOVE ALL MADE OF COMPASSION AND DEVOTEDNESS’**

**May 29, 1914**

O my sweet Lord, those who are in Thy head, that is, to speak more intellectually, those who have identified their consciousness with the absolute Consciousness, those who have become Thy supreme Knowledge, can no longer have any love for Thee, since they are Thyself. They enjoy that infinite bliss characteristic of all awareness of Thy supreme Essence, but the devotion of the adorer who turns with ecstasy to that which is higher and above him can no longer exist. So, to him whose mission upon earth is to manifest Thy love, Thou teachest to have this pure and infinite love for all the manifested universe; the love which at first was made of adoration and admiration is transformed into a love all made of compassion and devotedness.

Oh, the divine splendour of Thy eternal Unity!

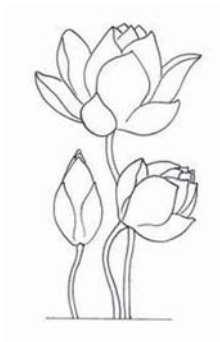
Oh, the infinite sweetness of Thy Beatitude!

Oh, the sovereign majesty of Thy Knowledge!

Thou art the Inconceivable, the Marvellous One!

THE MOTHER

*(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, p. 161)*



## THE GODS — PURANIC, GREEK, EGYPTIAN

*Do the gods of the Puranas and the gods of Greek and Egyptian mythology have any real existence?*

Between the gods of the Puranas and the gods of Greek and Egyptian mythology, all kinds of similarities are found; it could be an interesting subject for study. To the modern Western world, all these divinities — the Greek gods and other “pagan” gods, as they call them — are simply a product of human imagination and correspond to nothing real in the universe. But this is a gross error.

To understand the mechanism of universal life, even that of terrestrial life, one has indeed to know that all these are real and living beings, each in its own realm, and have an independent reality. They would exist even if men did not exist. The majority of these gods existed before man existed.

In a very old tradition, probably dating before the Chaldean and Vedic traditions, which are its two branches, the history of creation is narrated not from the metaphysical or psychological point of view, but from an objective point of view, and this history is as real as our history of historical epochs. Of course, this is not the only way of looking at the thing, but it is quite as legitimate as any other; and in any case it recognises the concrete reality of these divine beings.

These are beings who belong to the progressive creation of the universe and have themselves presided over its formation, from the most ethereal or subtle to the most material regions; it is a descent of the divine creative Spirit. And they descended progressively, through realities more and more — one cannot say dense, because it is not dense, one cannot even say material, because matter as we know it does not exist on those planes — through realities more and more concrete.

According to traditions and occult schools, all these zones of realities, these planes of realities have got different names; they have been classified in a different way, but there is an essential analogy, and if you go back far enough into the traditions, you see only the words changing according to the country and the language. Even now, the experiences of Western occultists and those of Eastern occultists offer great similarities. All who set out on the discovery of these invisible worlds and make a report of what they saw, give a very similar description, whether they be from here or there; they use different words, but the experience is very similar and the handling of forces is the same.

This knowledge of the occult worlds is based on the existence of subtle bodies and of subtle worlds corresponding to those bodies. They are what the psychological method calls “states of consciousness”, but these states of consciousness really correspond to worlds. The occult procedure consists then in being aware of these



various inner states of being or subtle bodies and in becoming sufficiently a master of them so as to be able to go out of them successively, one after another. There is indeed a whole scale of subtleties, increasing or decreasing according to the direction in which you go, and the occult procedure consists in going out of a denser body into a subtler body and so on again, up to the most ethereal regions. You go, by successive exteriorisations, into bodies or worlds more and more subtle. It is somewhat as if every time you passed into another dimension. The fourth dimension of the physicists is nothing but the scientific transcription of an occult knowledge. To give another image, one can say that the physical body is at the centre — it is the most material, the densest and also the smallest — and the inner bodies, more subtle, overflow more and more the central physical body; they pass through it, extending themselves farther and farther, like water evaporating from a porous vase and forming a kind of steam all around. And the greater the subtlety, the more the extension tends to unite with that of the universe: one ends by universalising oneself. And it is altogether a concrete process which gives an objective experience of invisible worlds and even enables one to act in these worlds.

There are, then, only a very small number of people in the West who know that these gods are not merely subjective and imaginary — more or less wildly imaginary — but that they correspond to a universal truth.

All these regions, all these domains are filled with beings who exist, each in its own domain, and if you are awake and conscious on a particular plane — for instance, if on going out of a more material body you awake on some higher plane, you have the same relation with the things and people of that plane as you had with the things and people of the material world. That is to say, there exists an entirely objective relation that has nothing to do with the idea you may have of these things. Naturally, the resemblance is greater and greater as you approach the physical world, the material world, and there even comes a time when the one region has a direct action upon the other. In any case, in what Sri Aurobindo calls the overmental worlds, you will find a concrete reality absolutely independent of your personal experience; you go back there and again find the same things, with the differences that have occurred during your absence. And you have relations with those beings that are identical with the relations you have with physical beings, with this difference that the relation is more plastic, supple and direct — for example, there is the capacity to change the external form, the visible form, according to the inner state you are in. But you can make an appointment with someone and be at the appointed place and find the same being again, with certain differences that have come about during your absence; it is entirely concrete with results entirely concrete.

One must have at least a little of this experience in order to understand these things. Otherwise, those who are convinced that all this is mere human imagination and mental formation, who believe that these gods have such and such a form because men have thought them to be like that, and that they have certain defects

and certain qualities because men have thought them to be like that — all those who say that God is made in the image of man and that he exists only in human thought, all these will not understand; to them this will appear absolutely ridiculous, madness. One must have lived a little, touched the subject a little, to know how very concrete the thing is.

Naturally, children know a good deal if they have not been spoilt. There are so many children who return every night to the same place and continue to live the life they have begun there. When these faculties are not spoilt with age, you can keep them with you. At a time when I was especially interested in dreams, I could return exactly to a place and continue a work that I had begun: supervise something, for example, set something in order, a work of organisation or of discovery, of exploration. You go until you reach a certain spot, as you would go in life, then you take a rest, then you return and begin again — you begin the work at the place where you left off and you continue it. And you perceive that there are things which are quite independent of you, in the sense that changes of which you are not at all the author, have taken place automatically during your absence.

But for this, you must *live* these experiences yourself, you must see them yourself, live them with sufficient sincerity and spontaneity in order to see that they are independent of any mental formation. For you can do the opposite also, and deepen the study of the action of mental formation upon events. This is very interesting, but it is another domain. And this study makes you very careful, very prudent, because you become aware of how far you can delude yourself. So you must study both, the dream and the occult reality, in order to see what is the *essential* difference between the two. The one depends upon us; the other exists in itself; entirely independent of the thought that we have of it.

When you have worked in that domain, you recognise in fact that once a subject has been studied and something has been learnt mentally, it gives a special colour to the experience; the experience may be quite spontaneous and sincere, but the simple fact that the subject was known and studied lends a particular quality. Whereas if you had learnt nothing about the question, if you knew nothing at all, the transcription would be completely spontaneous and sincere when the experience came; it would be more or less adequate, but it would not be the outcome of a previous mental formation.

Naturally, this occult knowledge or this experience is not very frequent in the world, because in those who do not have a developed inner life, there are veritable gaps between the external consciousness and the inmost consciousness; the linking states of being are missing and they have to be constructed. So when people enter there for the first time, they are bewildered, they have the impression they have fallen into the night, into nothingness, into non-being!

I had a Danish friend, a painter, who was like that. He wanted me to teach him how to go out of the body; he used to have interesting dreams and thought that it

would be worth the trouble to go there consciously. So I made him “go out” — but it was a frightful thing! When he was dreaming, a part of his mind still remained conscious, active, and a kind of link existed between this active part and his external being; then he remembered some of his dreams, but it was a very partial phenomenon. And to go out of one’s body means to pass gradually through *all* the states of being, if one does the thing systematically. Well, already in the subtle physical, one is almost de-individualised, and when one goes farther, there remains nothing, for nothing is formed or individualised.

Thus, when people are asked to meditate or told to go within, to enter into themselves, they are in agony — naturally! They have the impression that they are vanishing. And with reason: there is nothing, no consciousness!

These things that appear to us quite natural and evident, are, for people who know nothing, wild imagination. If, for example, you transplant these experiences or this knowledge to the West, well, unless you have been frequenting the circles of occultists, they stare at you with open eyes. And when you have turned your back, they hasten to say, “These people are cranks!”

Now to come back to the gods and conclude. It must be said that all those beings who have never had an earthly existence — gods or demons, invisible beings and powers — do not possess what the Divine has put into man: the psychic being. And this psychic being gives to man true love, charity, compassion, a deep kindness, which compensate for all his external defects.

In the gods there is no fault because they live according to their own nature, spontaneously and without constraint: as gods, it is their manner of being. But if you take a higher point of view, if you have a higher vision, a vision of the whole, you see that they lack certain qualities that are exclusively human. By his capacity of love and self-giving, man can have as much power as the gods and even more, when he is not egoistic, when he has surmounted his egoism.

If he fulfils the required condition, man is nearer to the Supreme than the gods are. He can be nearer. He is not so automatically, but he has the power to be so, the potentiality.

If human love manifested itself without mixture, it would be all-powerful. Unfortunately, in human love there is as much love of oneself as of the one loved; it is not a love that makes you forget yourself.

4 November 1958

THE MOTHER

(*Words of the Mother – III*, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 15, pp. 355-60)

## ON THE DHAMMAPADA

### Niraya (Hell)

*One who speaks untruth goes to Hell like one who, when he has done a thing, says: "I did not do it." Both, after death, will share the same fate, for these are men of evil.*

*Though they wear the yellow robe, those who are dissolute and evil-natured, their evil actions will cause them to be reborn in Hell.*

*It would be better to swallow a red-hot iron ball than to live on alms while leading a dissolute life.*

*Four punishments await the unscrupulous man who covets the wife of another: shame, troubled sleep, condemnation and Hell.*

*So he acquires an evil reputation and an evil birth; brief is the pleasure of the anxious pair, heavy the punishment of the law-giver. Let no man therefore seek the wife of another.*

*Just as Kusa grass cuts the hand if wrongly handled, so also asceticism wrongly understood leads to Niraya.*

*A duty carelessly fulfilled, a rule wrongly observed and a virtuous life followed out of fear, none of these will bring good results.*

*If a thing is to be done, do it with zeal. An ascetic with lax habits will stir up the dust (of the passions).*

*An evil deed is better left undone, for he who does it will be tormented by it. It is better to do a good deed, for he who does it will not have cause to repent it.*

*As a frontier city is well fortified both within and without, so one should guard oneself, so as not to waste a single moment of wakefulness; for those who lose this opportunity, even if only for a moment, will suffer indeed for it when in Hell.*

*Those who feel shame when there is no cause for shame, and those who feel no shame when there is cause to be ashamed, these deluded ones are destined to a painful state.*

*Those who are afraid of what should not be feared, and those who do not fear what is to be feared, these deluded ones are destined to a painful state.*

*Those who see evil where there is none, and those who do not see it where it is, these deluded ones are destined to a painful state.*

*Those who recognise evil to be evil, and good to be good, these who have right judgment are bound to enjoy happiness.*

As in all these teachings there are always several ways of understanding them. The external way is quite commonplace. In all moral principles, the same thing is always said. This Niraya for example, which some take as a kind of hell where one is punished for one's sins, has also another sense. The true sense of Niraya is that particular kind of atmosphere which one creates around oneself when one acts in contradiction, not with outer moral rules or social principles, but with the inner law of one's being, the particular truth of each one which ought to govern all the movements of our consciousness and all the acts of our body. The inner law, the truth of the being is the divine Presence in every human being, which should be the master and guide of our life.

When you acquire the habit of listening to this inner law, when you obey it, follow it, try more and more to let it guide your life, you create around you an atmosphere of truth and peace and harmony which naturally reacts upon circumstances and forms, so to say, the atmosphere in which you live. When you are a being of justice, truth, harmony, compassion, understanding, of perfect goodwill, this inner attitude, the more sincere and total it is, the more it reacts upon the external circumstances; not that it necessarily diminishes the difficulties of life, but it gives these difficulties a new meaning and that allows you to face them with a new strength and a new wisdom; whereas the man, the human being who follows his impulses, who obeys his desires, who has no time for scruples, who comes to live in complete cynicism, not caring for the effect that his life has upon others or for the more or less harmful consequences of his acts, creates for himself an atmosphere of ugliness, selfishness, conflict and bad will which necessarily acts more and more upon his consciousness and gives a bitterness to his life that in the end becomes a perpetual torment.

Of course this does not mean that such a man will not succeed in what he undertakes, that he will not be able to possess what he desires; these external advantages disappear only when there is within the inmost being a spark of sincerity

which persists and makes him worthy of this misfortune.

If you see a bad man become unlucky and miserable, you must immediately respect him. It means that the flame of inner sincerity is not altogether extinguished and something still reacts to his bad actions.

Finally, that leads us again to the observation that you must never, never judge on appearances and that all the judgments you make from outward circumstances are always, necessarily false judgments.

To have a glimpse of the Truth, one must take at least one step back in one's consciousness, enter a little more deeply into one's being and try to perceive the play of forces behind the appearances and the divine Presence behind the play of forces.

25 July 1958

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### The Elephant

*As the elephant on the battlefield endures the arrow shot from the bow, so also shall I patiently bear insult, for truly there are many of evil mind in the world.*

*It is a tamed elephant that is led to the battlefield; one whom the Raja rides. The best among men is he who patiently bears insult.*

*Trained mules are excellent, as also the thoroughbreds of Sindh and the mighty tuskers. Better yet is the man who has brought himself under control.*

*Not by mounting one of these animals does one attain the unexplored path, but by mastering oneself. By that mastery one attains it.*

*In the mating season it is difficult to control the mighty elephant Dhanapalako. When he is chained he refuses to eat, he yearns only to be once more a wild elephant of the forest.*

*When a man is slothful and gluttonous, always sleepy and rolling from side to side like a fat hog in the mud — this fool is compelled to be born over and over again.*

*Once this mind wandered where it would from one thing to another, according to its pleasure, but now I shall master it completely as the mahout with his goad masters the elephant in rut.*

*Delight in vigilance, guard carefully your mind. Lift yourself out of evil as the elephant sunk in a swamp.*

*If for company you find a prudent friend, who leads a good life, who is intelligent and self-controlled, overcoming all obstacles, do not hesitate to set out with him joyfully and courageously.*

*And if you do not meet with such a friend, who leads a good life, who is intelligent and self-controlled, then like a king renouncing a kingdom he has conquered, or like a solitary elephant in the forest follow your path alone.*

*It is better to live alone, for one cannot take a fool as a companion. It is better to live alone and do no evil, carefree, like the elephant in the jungle.*

*It is good to have friends when need arises. It is good to be satisfied with what one has. It is good, at the hour of death, to have acquired merit. It is good to leave all grief behind you.*

*In this world it is a joy to respect one's mother; it is a joy to respect one's father; it is a joy to honour the monks; it is a joy to revere the Brahmins.*

*It is a joy to live purely throughout one's life. It is a joy to have a steadfast faith. It is a joy to acquire wisdom. It is a joy to abstain from all evil.*

The first verse gives some very wise advice: the war elephant who has been well trained does not start running away as soon as he receives an arrow. He continues to advance and bears the pain, with no change in his attitude of heroic resistance. Those who wish to follow the true path will naturally be exposed to the attacks of all forms of bad will, which not only do not understand, but generally hate what they do not understand.

If you are worried, grieved or even discouraged by the malicious stupidities that men say about you, you will not advance far on the way. And such things come to you, not because you are unlucky or because your lot is not a happy one, but because, on the contrary, the divine Consciousness and the divine Grace take your resolution seriously and allow the circumstances to become a touchstone on your way, to see whether your resolution is sincere and whether you are strong enough to face the difficulties.

Therefore, if anyone sneers at you or says something that is not very charitable, the first thing you should do is to look within yourself for whatever weakness or imperfection has allowed such a thing to happen and not to be disconsolate, indignant or aggrieved, because people do not appreciate you at what you think to be your

true value; on the contrary, you must be thankful to the divine Grace for having pointed out to you the weakness or imperfection or deformation that you must correct.

Therefore, instead of being unhappy, you can be fully satisfied and derive advantage, a great advantage from the harm that was intended against you.

Besides, if you truly want to follow the path and practise yoga, you must not do it for appreciation or honour, you must do it because it is an imperative need of your being, because you cannot be happy in any other way. Whether people appreciate you or do not appreciate you, it is of absolutely no importance. You may tell yourself beforehand that the further you are from ordinary men, foreign to the ordinary mode of being, the less people will appreciate you, quite naturally, because they will not understand you. And I repeat, it has absolutely no importance.

True sincerity consists in advancing on the way because you cannot do otherwise, to consecrate yourself to the divine life because you cannot do otherwise, to seek to transform your being and come out into the light because you cannot do otherwise, because it is the purpose of your life.

When it is like that you may be sure that you are on the right path.

*1 August 1958*

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### **Craving**

*The craving of a heedless man grows like the Maluva creeper. Like a monkey seeking fruits in the forest, he leaps from life to life.*

*For one who in the world is overcome by the craving that clings, his miseries increase like Birana grass after the rains.*

*For one who in this world can overcome this craving that clings and is so difficult to master, his sorrows fall away like water from a lotus leaf.*

*To all who are gathered here, I say for your welfare: pull out the roots of your craving, as you uproot Birana grass. Do not let Mara crush you again and again as a flood crushes a reed.*

*As a tree, though felled, springs up once more if the roots remain intact, even so sorrow will return again and again until all craving is rooted out.*



*The misguided man, who cannot resist the thirty-six strong currents of craving, is swept away by the flood of his eagerness for pleasure.*

*Everywhere these currents flow and the creeper (of craving) springs up and increases. Wherever you see it springing up, cut out its roots with the force of wisdom.*

*Allowing their minds to be attracted by the enjoyment of transient objects, men who crave pleasure become a prey to birth and to decay.*

*Beset by craving, men run around like a hare in a trap. Bound by the chains of attachment, they come again and again to sorrow.*

*Beset by craving, men run around like a hare in a trap. Therefore, O Bhikkhu, desiring deliverance from passion, destroy your craving.*

*One who, delivered from craving, yet runs back to it, lo, he is like a freed man who returns to bondage.*

*What the wise call a strong bond is not made of iron, wood or rope; but the craving for jewels and ornaments, for wife and children, is a far stronger bond.*

*The wise say that it pulls you downward, and though it seems to be loose, it is hard to be rid of. This too the wise cut off; renouncing the pleasures of the senses, free from craving, they take to the homeless life.*

*Those who are bound by their passions are drawn back into the stream, like a spider caught in his own web. This too the wise cut off; renouncing the pleasures of the senses, free from craving, they take to the homeless life.*

*Be free from the past, be free from the future, be free from the present. Cross over to the other shore of existence; when the mind is wholly delivered, you shall come no more to birth and death.*

*One who is troubled by evil thoughts, who is controlled by his passions, who seeks only pleasure, his craving grows steadily; he makes his bonds strong indeed.*

*One who delights in subduing evil thoughts, who is vigilant and can distinguish impurities, he will put an end to his cravings, he shall break the bonds of Mara.*

*He who has reached the goal, who is without fear and free from craving and impurity, he has plucked out the thorns of existence; this is his last incarnation.*

*One who is free from craving, unattached, who knows the words and their meanings, who knows the arrangement of the texts in their sequence, he indeed has put on his last body. He alone is called "The Man of Great Wisdom."*

*I have vanquished all, I know all; unconditioned, all-renouncing, delivered by the extinction of craving, having understood all by myself, whom shall I call my teacher?*

*The gift of Truth excels all gifts; the savour of Truth excels all savours; delight in Truth excels all delights; deliverance from craving overcomes all suffering.*

*Riches ruin the fool, but not one who seeks the other shore. By craving for riches, the fool ruins himself and others with him.*

*Weeds are the bane of the fields; passion the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from passions yields abundant fruit.*

*Weeds are the bane of the fields; hatred the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from hatred yields abundant fruit.*

*Weeds are the bane of the fields; delusion the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from delusion yields abundant fruit.*

*Weeds are the bane of the fields; desires the bane of mankind. Therefore whatever is given to those freed from desires yields abundant fruit.*

We shall keep the last one to meditate on.

8 August 1958

\*

### **The Bhikkhu**

*To control the eye is good; to control the ear is good; to control the nose and the tongue is good.*

*It is good to control one's actions, words, mind. Control in all things is good. The Bhikkhu who controls himself entirely is delivered from all suffering.*

*The man who is master over his hands, his feet and his tongue, who controls himself wholly, who delights in meditation, who is calm and leads a solitary life, can be called a Bhikkhu.*

*The Bhikkhu who is master over his tongue and is moderate in speech, who is modest, who luminously interprets the Doctrine, in truth his words are as sweet as honey.*

*The Bhikkhu who lives by the Doctrine, who delights in the Doctrine, who meditates on the Doctrine, who knows the Doctrine thoroughly, surely cannot fall away from the Doctrine.*

*The Bhikkhu should not treat his own progress (in wisdom and goodness) lightly, nor envy the progress of others; for the Bhikkhu who is envious cannot achieve concentration.*

*Even if the progress he has made is slight, the Bhikkhu should not despise it; if his life is pure and his effort persevering, the gods themselves shall praise him for it.*

*One who is not attached to name and form, who does not think, "This belongs to me", and who does not grieve over what does not exist, he, in truth, is called a Bhikkhu.*

*The Bhikkhu who lives a life of loving kindness and who is filled with faith in the teaching of the Enlightened One, that Bhikkhu will attain the peace of Nirvana, the supreme bliss from which every conditioned element has vanished.*

*Empty this boat, O Bhikkhu; once lightened, the boat of your body will sail more lightly and having rejected desire and hatred you shall enter Nirvana.*

*Break the five bonds (belief in the ego, doubt, belief in vain rites and ceremonies, craving and bad will). Renounce these five other bonds (the desire to live in the world of forms, the desire to live in the subtle world, pride, restlessness and ignorance). Cultivate these five (faith, energy, mindfulness, meditation, and wisdom). The Bhikkhu who is thus five times free is said to be "he who has crossed over the flood".*

*Meditate, O Bhikkhus, do not be negligent. Your minds should not turn towards the pleasures of the senses; for if by negligence you swallowed a red-hot iron ball, when you felt the burning you would lament, crying, "Oh, how painful it is!"*

*For one without knowledge there is no meditation; without meditation there is no knowledge. One in whom there is both meditation and knowledge is near to Nirvana.*

*The Bhikkhu who has entered the abode of emptiness, the Bhikkhu of serene mind, enjoys delight beyond the human, in the clear vision of the Doctrine.*

*Each time that he concentrates on the appearance and disappearance of all conditioned things, he enjoys the happiness and the delight of those who have attained immortality.*

*These things are for the wise Bhikkhu the very basis of the religious life: mastery of the senses, contentment, conduct according to the code of discipline, association with noble friends who lead a life of constant purity.*

*The Bhikkhu should be cordial, kind and polite; thus in the fullness of his joy, he will put an end to suffering.*

*Just as the jasmine sheds its faded petals, so also the Bhikkhu sheds desire and hatred.*

*Calm in action, calm in speech, calm in mind, serene, emptied of all earthly appetites, this Bhikkhu is called "The Serene One".*

*Let him arouse himself, let him examine himself; thus self-guarded and vigilant, the Bhikkhu will live in happiness.*

*In truth, one is one's own protector, one's own refuge. Know therefore how to control yourself as the horse-dealer controls a noble steed.*

*Filled with gladness and faith by the teaching of the Buddha, the Bhikkhu attains the state of perfect peace, cessation of all compounded existence.*

*The young Bhikkhu who consecrates himself to the Teaching of the Enlightened One, illumines this world like the moon coming forth from behind the clouds.*

One piece of advice given here is that one should always be kind. It should not be mistaken for the sort of advice people normally give. It says something interesting, even very interesting. My comment is: Always be kind and you will be free from suffering, always be contented and happy, and you will radiate your quiet happiness.

It is particularly noticeable that all the digestive functions are extremely sensitive

to an attitude that is critical, bitter, full of ill-will, to a sour judgment. Nothing disturbs the functioning of the digestion more than that. And it is a vicious circle: the more the digestive function is disturbed, the more unkind you become, critical, dissatisfied with life and things and people. So you can't find any way out. And there is only one cure: to deliberately drop this attitude, to absolutely forbid yourself to have it and to impose upon yourself, by constant self-control, a deliberate attitude of all-comprehending kindness. Just try and you will see that you feel much better.

22 August 1958

\*

### **The Brahmin**

*Strive, O Brahmin! Seal up the current (of craving), cast away all pleasures of the senses. Knowing how to uproot the elements of existence you shall know the Uncreated.*

*When the Brahmin has attained the summit of the two paths (concentration and insight), all bonds fall away and he possesses the Knowledge.*

*One for whom neither the inner nor the outer exist, neither one nor the other, who is free from fear and bondage, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who is given to meditation and is freed of impurities, who is without stain, who has fulfilled his duty, who has attained the highest goal, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*By day the sun shines; by night the moon. In his armour the warrior shines; in meditation the Brahmin shines. Day and night, without ceasing, the Buddha is radiant.*

*The man who has rejected evil is a Brahmin. One whose behaviour is disciplined is a monk; an ascetic is one who is purged of impurities.*

*One should not strike a Brahmin, and the Brahmin should not strike back. Shame on one who strikes a Brahmin. Shame on the Brahmin who strikes back.*

*For a Brahmin there is nothing better than to restrain the mind from the pleasures of life. As he removes bad intentions, so he appeases his sufferings.*

*One who does no evil by act, word or thought, the man who is restrained in these three, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*Whosoever teaches you the Doctrine of the Perfectly Enlightened One, render him homage and venerate him as the Brahmin does the sacred fire.*

*Neither by matted hair, nor ancestry, nor by birth does one become a Brahmin. One in whom abide truth and righteousness, he is pure, he is a true Brahmin.*

*What value has your matted hair, O foolish man? What value has the antelope skin you wear? Within you lies a jungle of passions, you have only the appearance of purity.*

*The man dressed in cast-off robes, who is emaciated, whose veins stand out on his body, who meditates alone in the forest, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*But I do not call him a Brahmin, although he is of brahmin origin or born of a brahmin mother, he who is rich and arrogant. He who possesses nothing, who is attached to nothing, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He who has broken all bonds, who no longer fears anything, who has overcome all ties, who is liberated, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who little by little has broken the thong (of mind) and the straps (of attachment), who has cut the chain (of doubt) with its links (of evil tendencies) and who has rejected the yoke (of ignorance), who is enlightened, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He who is without resentment, who bears reproaches, blows and chains, whose patience is his true strength, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He who is free from anger, who is faithful to his faith, good and without craving, who has mastered himself and taken a body for the last time, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He who is no more attached to the pleasures of the senses than a drop of water to the lotus leaf, or a mustard seed to the point of a needle, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He who, in this life, has realised the cessation of suffering, who has laid down the burden and has liberated himself (from the yoke of attachment), him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*The intelligent man, gifted with profound wisdom, discerning the good and the evil path, who has attained the supreme goal, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who seeks the company neither of householders nor of monks, who has no home and few needs, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who does no harm to any creature, whether strong or weak, who does not kill nor cause to be killed, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*Friendly amid the unfriendly, calm amid the violent, unselfish amid the selfish, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He from whom passion and hatred, pride and pretence have fallen away, as a mustard seed falls from the point of a needle, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who speaks only words that are sweet, instructive, true, and who offends no one, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who in this world takes nothing but what he is given, whether it be little or much, short or long, good or bad, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who has no more desires in this world or the other, who has no more craving, who is free, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One in whom desire exists no more, one who has attained the perfection of knowledge, who has cast away all doubt and who has sounded the depths of immortality, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who in this world has broken all ties (of good and evil) and who is delivered from grief, from taints and impurities, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who, like the moon, is spotless, pure, clear, serene, from whom the thirst of earthly desires has vanished, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who has escaped from the cycle of births, this muddy path, this thorny road, and who has attained the other shore, is given to meditation, void of desire, free from doubt, detached from all things and at peace, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One in whom all passion is destroyed and who, renouncing worldly pleasures, has left the household life and taken to the homeless life, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He in whom all craving is dead and who, renouncing worldly pleasures, has left the household life, who has quenched the thirst of becoming, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who has rejected all earthly ties and has gone beyond all heavenly ties, who is delivered from all ties, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who has put aside liking and disliking, who is indifferent, who is freed from all attachment and all fetters, who has conquered all the worlds, this hero I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He who possesses the perfect knowledge of the birth and death of all beings and who is freed from all ties, he is a Blessed One, an Awakened One, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He whose future state is unknown to the gods, the demigods and mortals, who is without desire and without impurity, who has become an adept, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*He who no longer possesses anything, neither past nor present nor future, who owns nothing, who no longer clings to anything, that one I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*The Noble, the Excellent, the Hero, the great Sage, the Victor, the Impassive, the Pure, the Enlightened, him I consider to be a Brahmin.*

*One who knows his previous lives, one who perceives the heavens and the hells, who has come to the end of births, who has attained perfect vision, the Sage accomplished in all accomplishments, him in truth I consider to be a Brahmin.*

Such is the conclusion of the Dhammapada and if we have put into practice — to use its image — only a mustard seed of all that has been taught to us, well, we have not wasted our time.

There is one thing which is not spoken of here, in the Dhammapada: a supreme disinterestedness and a supreme liberation is to follow the discipline of self-perfection, the march of progress, not with a precise end in view as described here, the liberation of Nirvana, but because this march of progress is the profound law and the purpose of earthly life, the truth of universal existence and because you put yourself in harmony with it, spontaneously, whatever the result may be.

There is a deep trust in the divine Grace, a total surrender to the divine Will, an



integral adhesion to the divine Plan which makes one do the thing to be done without concern for the result. That is the perfect liberation.

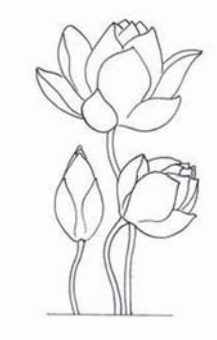
That is truly the abolition of suffering. The consciousness is filled with an unchanging delight and each step you take reveals a marvel of splendour.

We are grateful to the Buddha for what he has brought for human progress and, as I told you at the beginning, we shall try to realise a little of all the beautiful things he has taught us, but we shall leave the goal and the result of our endeavour to the Supreme Wisdom that surpasses all understanding.

5 September 1958

THE MOTHER

*(Questions and Answers 1929-1931, CWM 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 277-97)*



**“HEART-HOLLOW” —  
CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO**

Sri Aurobindo —

A sonnet for consideration at any time you think fit:

Through my abysmal solitude vainly pass  
Pageant of budded bough and rapturous wing;  
The omnipresent sparkle of green grass  
Is now a drear phantasmal flickering.  
Gigantic waters<sup>1</sup> leap precipitous glooms  
And long importunate billows beachward press,  
But all their voices float like opiate fumes  
Making yet more profound my voicelessness.

Is it Thy secret boon, O Lord, this strain  
Of life and love and longing drawn apart  
Into a tenebrous hollow of dull pain?  
Dost Thou prepare the breathless swooning heart  
          ineffable  
For Thy immutable bliss — a vacancy  
          inscrutable  
To treasure unalloyed eternity?

[*Amal's question:*]

1. Is it better to lessen the number of polysyllabic adjectives by replacing “Gigantic” by some plural noun followed by “of water”? — e.g. “Tumults . . .”

Sri Aurobindo's comment:

1. Yes “Tumults of water” would be much better.

It is a very good sonnet. The octet has much atmosphere and strength and colour — and the sestet points the thought very well.

4 March 1934

(Version from *The Secret Splendour* —  
*Collected Poems of K. D. Sethna* [Amal Kiran], 1993, p. 461:)

### HEART-HOLLOW

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Pageants of budded bough and rapturous wing;  
The omnipresent sparkle of green grass  
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Tumults of waters leap precipitous glooms  
And long importunate billows beachward press,  
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Into a tenebrous hollow of dull pain?  
Have You prepared the breathless swooning heart  
For Your immutable bliss — a vacancy  
To treasure unalloyed eternity?

AMAL KIRAN  
(K. D. SETHNA)

*Equality means . . . to have an equal view of men and their nature and acts and the forces that move them; it helps one to see the truth about them by pushing away from the mind all personal feeling in one's seeing and judgment and even all mental bias.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

*(Letters on Yoga – II, CWSA, Vol. 29, p. 130)*

# **SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI**

(Continued from the issue of July 2017)

## **Postscript: II**

### **RUMOURS AND FEARS**

Rumour is a pipe  
Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures.

— Shakespeare

Before long the panic-stricken police and the surprised bureaucracy became sure that Sri Aurobindo was no longer in British India. Far-fetched rumours about his migration compassed a geographical range that jumped from the inaccessible terrains of Tibet to France, to Switzerland and Russia. The anxiety and excitement of the people of Bengal as well as of politically conscious masses all over the country must have been widespread — indications of which we get from reports and editorials carried by newspapers preserved in different archives or in the official intelligence records of the day, while most of the articles and reports on the subject published in smaller and regional newspapers, magazines and pamphlets in different languages have not survived the century.

The daily *Hitavadi* of 11<sup>th</sup> April 1910 reported the rumour that a handsome reward had been announced by the Calcutta Police for person or persons who would give them any clue that would lead to the arrest of Sri Aurobindo. Further, the paper wrote:

We hear also that the disappearance of Sri Aurobindo Ghose had landed some police officers in trouble. . . . We should think that the Government should publish a contradiction of these rumours, for we have heard them from many persons and at many places. In the present situation it is not good for the people that the truth should not come out.<sup>1</sup>

The *Hitavarta* of the 14<sup>th</sup> April, exclaiming “bravo” for the Police, wonders how Babu Aurobindo who was vigilantly watched by several policemen and detectives had suddenly disappeared from Calcutta.<sup>2</sup>

Referring to the taunting remarks by the British-controlled paper the *Pioneer* that the disappearance of Babu Aurobindo Ghose would not be a source of difficulty

for the Government in finding a member for the Bengal Executive Council, the *Bharat Mitra* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, addressing the above paper, remarked:

You may cut jokes at Babu Aurobindo Ghose's cost, but all his countrymen know that the prestige of the Government will no doubt be raised by admitting him into the Council. Aurobindo Babu himself, however, is not expected to lower himself so as to accept such a post; he is much above it.<sup>3</sup>

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1910, reproduced the following news published in the *Englishman*:

The report which found currency recently in Calcutta relating to the suspension of the police officers, who had, as it was stated, failed to arrest Mr. Aurobindo Ghose is, we understand, not based on fact. The police officers have not been so hardly dealt with as is made out although they may have been reprimanded as a disciplinary measure in the ordinary course. There has, however, been no necessity for resorting to the extreme step of suspension and no other punishment has been inflicted on the police officials concerned in the case.

As regards the whereabouts of Mr. Aurobindo Ghose, no definite news is available. It is now practically certain that he does not intend to surrender himself as it was at one time believed he would do. There is a rumour abroad that Mr. Ghose has made for Europe and if this is true he has had ample time to leave India and probably, by this time, is in Geneva, the Mecca of the Indian and Egyptian extremists. His presence at Agra, in connection with this rumour, can only be explained by the fact that he was probably proceeding to Karachi. But, perhaps, after all, the rumour has not the slightest foundation of truth.<sup>4</sup>

The desperate Bengal police searched the house of Shri Krishna Kumar Mitra and the office of the *Sanjivani*. In its editorial the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of April 7 wrote:

Why was the *Sanjivani* office and residential house at all searched? — That is the question which is just now agitating very much the educated community in town. The object, it now appears, was this: The police wanted to get hold of a copy of the *Karmayogin* of the 25<sup>th</sup> December last and all papers and documents connected with it. Now, the *Karmayogin* is not printed or published at the *Sanjivani* office, it having a separate office of its own. It is true that Babu Aurobindo, the alleged writer of the offending article, is a relation of Babu Krishna Kumar and used to live with him. But did that justify the search of Babu Krishna Kumar's house? Would not a mere letter to Babu Krishna Kumar have served the same purpose for which he and his family were subjected to the horrors of a house-search? . . .<sup>5</sup>

But the police did not stop with the *Sanjivani* office alone. The ancestral house of Sri Aurobindo's maternal grandfather, Rishi Rajnarayan Bose, "the grandfather of Indian nationalism", was placed under constant surveillance. The Police report in a native newspaper of the last week of July 1910 says:

*The Bengalee* is surprised that the family of the late Babu Rajnarayan Bose at Deoghur should be subjected to Police surveillance. The journal attributes this to Maulvi Muzharal Huq, the Police Superintendent of the district, and hopes that this grievance, which Babu Rajnarayan's widow and family feel very deeply, will be removed.<sup>6</sup>

The Government received specific information that Sri Aurobindo was in Pondicherry within a week of his arrival there. A number of telegrams were exchanged between London and Calcutta and between Calcutta and Madras. The officers were sure that Sri Aurobindo would proceed to Paris. But he could not be arrested in the French territory or on a French ship. The only chance of catching him would come when he would change from one French ship to another French ship at the Colombo harbour by means of a native boat. That could be the excellent chance to capture him. Accordingly, the Director of C.I.D., Ceylon, was instructed to remain alert and act at the opportune moment to resort to a sort of kidnapping.<sup>7</sup>

We find the following telegraphic report from one Paupa Rao Naidu, a Deputy Superintendent of C.I.D., dated 9.4.1910, packed with imagination! We do not know how many more similar gems of information the earlier telegram he refers to contained. That one remains untraced.

In continuation of my previous wire of this day I beg to inform you that Aurobindo Ghose arrived at Pondicherry by S.S. Dupleix on the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> instant. He was received at the beach by the India office people. He is now kept in a separate house in the street wherein the proprietor Sreenivasachary lives. I am also informed that a few days before his arrival, Subramanya Bharati engaged a bungalow of Ganaprakasa Modely, a rich man of Pondicherry and there opened a library and a reading room. I am making arrangement to watch him and the people who meet him every day. I am removing my Madras agent permanently thither and am sending my Sub-Inspector to stay in British limits close by Pondicherry. I have informed Deputy I.G., C.I.D., who has not known about his arrival.<sup>8</sup>

Extract from the report of 17.10.1910 by I.G. Police to Director, C.I.D., Calcutta.

Aurobindo Ghose's disappearance: In regard to the reported arrival of Aurobindo Ghose at Pondicherry, mentioned in my last week's report, further

enquiries made in Calcutta indicate that he probably left by the S.S. Dupleix of the M.M. Company, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. The Dupleix is the only passenger boat from Calcutta which calls regularly at Pondicherry. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, the Special Branch Officer of Calcutta police who supervises arrivals and departures of Indians by sea reported that two native passengers who gave their names as J. N. Mitter of Uluberia, and Bankim Chandra Bhowmik of Nilphamari, Rungpore, had received berths on this steamer for Pondicherry. The Health Officer's inspection for this ship was held on the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup>. The Calcutta Police Officer who was present at the Health Officer's inspection reported that neither of these two passengers had turned up for inspection. On the 4<sup>th</sup> instant a letter was received from M.M. Company to the effect that these two persons had actually sailed on the Dupleix for Pondicherry, but that as they had boarded the steamer at the last moment, they had not been seen by the Calcutta Police Officer. On enquiry it was ascertained from the Health Officer that about 9.30 p.m. on the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> *ultimo*, two Bengalees giving their names as J. N. Mitter and Bankim Chandra Bhowmik came to his private residence and requested to be furnished with health certificates to enable them to sail on the Dupleix. The Health Officer granted them the necessary certificates. On a photograph of Aurobindo Ghose being shown to the Health Officer, he stated that this was probably the individual who gave his name as Jotindra Nath Mitter. The Health Officer further stated that he was struck by the fluent English which this gentleman spoke.

Enquiries at Uluberia show that there is such a person as J. N. Mitter residing there, but he is at present at home and has never left by sea. There seems little doubt that the J. N. Mitter who embarked on the Dupleix was Aurobindo Ghose.

It is believed that the other person Bankim Chandra Bhowmik may be Nolini Kanto Sen Gupta of Nilphamari, an acquitted accused in the Alipore Bomb Case who was known to be an intimate friend and admirer of Aurobindo Ghose, and who disappeared about the same time as Aurobindo. Unfortunately no photograph of this young man is on record, but the description furnished by the Health Officer of the man calling himself Bankim Chandra Bhowmik in many respects agrees with that of Nolini.

An officer of the Special Department received information that Aurobindo had decided to proceed to Berlin to throw in his lot with the Indian Revolutionary party there — the party which publishes and sends out the *Talwar*. He intended to start from Bombay in the Austrian Lloyds steamer leaving on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, but finding that he could not catch that steamer, he decided to leave Calcutta for Pondicherry in the M.M. boat.

Some rumours state that Aurobindo Ghose has taken Rs. 25,000 in sovereigns with him, but if it is true that he intended to proceed to Berlin via

Trieste in the Austrian Lloyds steamer and eventually went off in a Messageries boat getting no farther than Pondicherry, it looks to me rather as though there had been some difficulty about money.

An Inspector of the Special Department left last week for Madras, whence he will proceed with an officer of the Madras Police to Pondicherry to identify the person believed to be Aurobindo.

The Commissioner of Police is applying for warrants to be sent to Bombay, Madras and Colombo.

Telegram from D.S.P. to Director C.I.D: "My Pondicherry agent identified Arabinda personally on Simla photo."

We may telegraph to Secretary of State that it has been definitely ascertained that Aurobindo is in Pondicherry having left Calcutta on 1<sup>st</sup> April, evading police by getting the medical officer to pass him under a false name at the medical officer's residence just before the boat sailed instead of at the usual official place of examination.<sup>9</sup>

The *Karmayogin* case went to the High Court. According to the C.I.D. report of September 1910:

It is said that the accused, Man Mohan Ghose, printer, personally had no wish to move the High Court against his conviction, as he feared an enhancement of the sentence, and the appeal appears to be preferred in the interest of Aurobindo Ghose, at the instance of Girija Sundar Chakravarty, former manager of this paper. It is believed that if, by any chance, Man Mohan Ghose should be acquitted, it would mean the triumphant return of Aurobindo Ghose to Calcutta.<sup>10</sup>

The judgment of the High Court, delivered on 7<sup>th</sup> November, observed that the article in question was not seditious. The High Court ordered the release of the printer. But he was, despite the order, kept in jail till 18<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>11</sup>

The public and the Indian newspapers welcomed the judgment enthusiastically. But the English-controlled press passed hostile comments. The *Indian Mirror* openly expressed its fear that the judgment might pave the way for the return of Sri Aurobindo.<sup>12</sup>

Here are some extracts from the weekly reports on native newspapers sent to the India Office, London.<sup>13</sup>

Referring to the alleged undue detention in jail of Man Mohan Ghose, the printer in the *Karmayogin* case, the *Bengalee* writes: —

The man was kept in illegal confinement from the 7<sup>th</sup> till the 18<sup>th</sup> instant, and what is more, the pleader for the prisoner, who has considerable experience of cases of this kind, told Dr. Thornhill that scandalous delays in the release of



prisoners are frequent. We desire to call the attention of Sir Edward Baker to this disgraceful state of things. There must be someone who is responsible for the great delay that has taken place in the release of Man Mohan Ghose, and we trust that the offender will be adequately punished and that orders will be passed which will make the recurrence of such cases impossible.

Referring to the *Statesman*'s editorial article on the judgment in the *Karmayogin* case, the *Bengalee* writes: —

The article in spite of its studied conditional hypotheses and the apparent reservation made as to the exigencies of legal proof, constitutes an attack on judicial independence — in fact, grave contempt of Court. The Judges are told they did not understand the true meaning of certain things, that they have unconsciously cast the aegis of High Court on certain pernicious doctrines, and that it is necessary the Government should publicly dissociate themselves from the Judges. At this rate, we may just as well shut up the High Court, and leave it to the Executive and present law advisers of the Crown to convict anybody of any offence and pass sentence. . . . It is necessary that the Government of India or the Bengal Government should publicly dissociate themselves from the insolent demand made upon them by the *Statesman*.

The *Indian Mirror* writes: —

Unfortunately, just as the political horizon was assuming a distinctly bright aspect, a somewhat uneasy sensation has been created by the judgment of the High Court in what is known as the *Karmayogin* appeal. The decision of the High Court in this case will, we are afraid, have a far-reaching effect on political propagandism in this country. We say nothing about the judicial merits of the decision, but, from a political point of view, we are afraid it is not one which can be commended by those who are anxious for the ascendancy of moderation in the public life of India. It is curious that the pronouncement of the High Court's decision in this case should be followed at once by a letter from Babu Aurabindo Ghose to the Press. He is openly invited by a Madras journal to emerge from his present retirement in French territory; and, for the past few days, a rumour has been in circulation that he intends to return to Calcutta as soon as the proceedings in the Calcutta Police Court come to a termination. We cannot say that we look forward to Babu Aurobindo Ghose's return with pleasure. Bengal has been quiet for the past few months in the absence of Extremist propagandism. If the judgment of the High Court be construed as throwing the mantle of judicial protection over certain Extremist doctrines, then we are afraid, the effects will be exceedingly harmful. Our contemporary

of the *Statesman* has wisely observed that ‘a judicial utterance which may be taken to show to what lengths the Extremist is permitted to go, merits, indeed, the careful attention of the Government and of all who are anxious for the peaceful progress of the country.’ Our contemporary also rightly says that ‘only mischief can follow the dissemination of Nationalist doctrines of Swaraj and Passive Resistance’; and we endorse the view that ‘either the Government of India or the Bengal Government should take some means of warning all concerned that the recent judgment in the High Court must not be regarded as giving State sanction to either of these tenets of the Extremist propaganda’.

Referring to the delay on the part of the responsible authorities in releasing the printer of the *Karmayogin*, acquitted by the High Court on the 7<sup>th</sup> instant, the *Bengalee* writes:

Somebody ought to be held responsible for the delay which has occurred. Already the printer had served out half the term of imprisonment to which he had been sentenced, and this on account of a piece of writing for which he was only technically responsible and which their Lordships agreed in holding to be innocent. This consideration, if nothing else, ought to have led those with whom it rested to release the printer to expedite matters and to release him at the earliest possible moment after the delivery of the High Court’s judgment. It is sincerely to be regretted that this has not been done. We are curious to know if the printer has been released even now.

With reference to a suggestion of the *Statesman* interpreted by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to be to the effect that the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal should publicly declare by a resolution that the judgment of the High Court in the *Karmayogin* case is not only erroneous but something like perverse, the latter says:

If this is not preaching a principle of anarchism, we do not know what is.

Commenting on the *Statesman*’s article on the *Karmayogin* case, the *Bengalee* writes:

With some knowledge of public affairs and of public feeling in the matter, and with the profound conviction that the attitude of the *Statesman* constitutes a menace alike to the independence of the judiciary and the liberties of the Indian press, we would suggest that some notice be taken of the *Statesman* article, so that either the Judges or the Government may let the public know that the former will not be intimidated by the undisguised insolence of an Extremist Anglo-Indian newspaper, and that they do not care for the patronage of the same newspaper.

Referring to the *Statesman*'s observation that the High Court's judgment in the *Karmayogin* case would be "treated as the magna carta of the agitator", *The Indian Empire* writes:

If this is not contempt of court, we laymen do not understand what may constitute the offence, for, if it means anything, it means that the High Court, and more particularly Mr. Justice Fletcher, have lent their weight or authority to a sort of agitation which the Executive Government regards as seditious. . . . Indeed, our faith in Sir Lawrence Jenkins is firm that he will not easily allow the High Court — the Palladium of Justice as we regard it to be — to be thus abused by any and every penny-a-liner, however much he may think that he basks in sunshine. This is not the first time that the Chowringhee paper will have brought itself within the purview of law.

At last a reluctant Government was obliged to act on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1910 and in its next day's issue *The Times* of London announced:

The Government has formally withdrawn the charges against Mr. Aurobindo Ghose founded on his article in the *Karmayogin* newspaper.<sup>14</sup>

(*To be continued*)

MANOJ DAS

### Notes and References

1. Old India Office Library, London. The quotes are translated from the Bengali by officials of the Home Department of the provincial government. In these as well as in the other quotes that follow the author has changed the several different spellings of Sri Aurobindo's name to its correct version.

2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*

**An Apology**  
**(To the Readers of *Mother India*)**

Ref.: A write-up of mine, i.e. R. Prabhakar (Batti) in the June 2017 issue of *Mother India* about ‘The Mother’s Rooms’.

I had mentioned (page 91):

“ . . . It was later told to us that the lizard is the Mother’s *vāhana* . . . ”

On my researching with others who were present then, I find that this ‘vahana’ was only an assumption made by some of us. No one had actually asked the Mother. (I could not check with all who were present at the time — it was so long ago — well nigh 60 years; some of them are no more!)

And the ‘lizard’ mentioned may be more correctly termed ‘gecko’.

I would like to mention here that the Mother was always kind and considerate towards animals. Here are two incidents:

1. This was during the daily ‘Balcony Darshan’ behind the main Ashram building. We, the sadhaks, used to stand crowding, blocking the whole road for the darshan. On this day, she was already at the balcony and we were all standing, hands in ‘namaskar’, eyes looking up. A bullock cart driven by an old man came by and stopped as his way was blocked. The devotees were unconcerned. But the Mother made a sign from the balcony to us to move and give passage to the bullock cart.

2. There was a special darshan called ‘Bull darshan’ on Sundays at 4 p.m. This was for her to see and bless the Ashram cattle brought there for this. Naturally, the animals took precedence over the sadhaks. We could stand only *behind* the line of cattle — it was *their* time.

BATTI

# EVOLUTION OF INDIA . . . ITS MEANING

## PREFACE

“THE history of the cycles of man is a progress towards the unveiling of the Godhead in the soul and life of humanity”,<sup>1</sup> says Sri Aurobindo. If that is man’s high destiny, his history should mirror the process of his growth towards that end.

The book is an attempt to show India’s evolution as a progressive preparation for her destined future. It seeks to interpret her history from the standpoint of the Master-Seer’s vision of the India of the ages, and of the India to be. As it is an introduction to a subject intended for the general reader and for those who would have a look into the ‘inwardness’ of India’s history, the survey has had to be brief with suggestive references to the events, movements and personalities that have been shaping factors in her evolution; and those concerned with modern India’s awakening have necessarily been given more attention, particularly because they have formed the starting-point of a great movement of India’s soul towards the realisation of what Sri Aurobindo has envisaged as her “mighty and divine destiny”. “I regard,” says he, “the spiritual history of mankind and especially of India as a constant development of a divine purpose, not a book that is closed, the lines of which have to be constantly repeated. Even the Upanishads and the Gita were not final though everything may be there in seed. In this development the recent spiritual history of India is a very important stage . . .”<sup>2</sup>

This approach calls for a philosophy of history which posits the working of the Mother Force in all historic process. An outline of this Force working in India’s history has been attempted in Chapter Six and in the last one.

The Mother-cult is one of the earliest cults of the world. The ancient seers of India saw its truth and its bearing on the growth of man’s inner life and consciousness. Their sublime visions and experiences are found in the vast sacred literature from the Vedas to the Tantras, the quintessence of the latter being the *Chandi* or *Devi Mahatmyam*, ‘The Greatness and Glory of the Divine Mother’. Sri Aurobindo revised this truth — as he revised the truths of India’s other Scriptures — and revealed it in its deeper and wider connotations affirming the descent of the Divine Sakti on earth in order to complete her work for the spiritual evolution of Man.

In Sri Aurobindo’s vision the Infinite Spirit of the Vedanta and the Infinite Force of the Tantra are one in their Essence and Consciousness, the latter being the dynamic aspect of the former. They are the Being and Becoming of the Infinite, the

1. *Essays on the Gita*, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 376.

2. *Letters on Yoga – I*, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 411.

Two in One, and the One in Two in all cosmic manifestations.

“This whole wide world is only he and she.”<sup>3</sup>

That this work of the Mother centres in India may be because of the fact that India of the ages has throughout worshipped and adored the Divine Mother and has always invoked her benediction not only on her own but also on the whole humanity's well-being.

Man has to grow into a higher than his present mental consciousness, and evolve into a New Race. This, says Sri Aurobindo, is the decree and dispensation of the Supreme. And it is His Force alone that can effectuate this Will of his in remoulding man's life on earth.

Happily, modern science has begun to discover an ‘upward drive’ in evolution, impelled, as it says, by ‘a concentration of energy’. In ancient times the Vedic Seers had glimpses of man's divine future. Sri Aurobindo today sees it in all its plenitude and vastness and points to its realisation in the propitious hour which he reads in the Present.

India's history has been a living process through which she has been led to the glorious Dawn ushered in by the Mother whose very advent today is a clarion call to man to prepare for his destined perfection in the Spirit, the attainment of which ensures a perfect world civilisation. This is the great work India is divinely missioned to do because she preserves in her soul the truth of man's perfection and the power of its realisation in ‘The Hour of God’ which is now. “Never in history has there been a greater age than now”, says Sri Aurobindo. The work initiated by the Master is being carried on by the Mother towards its supreme fulfilment. The book seeks to unravel the process of India's history towards this end.

Indian influence in Asia is a fact of history too well known for mention. But what is not widely known is that the expansive movement of Indian culture reached western regions and helped in fertilising the mental soil of Europe from early times. This might have been evolutionary Nature's fundamental work for all humanity. Hence the inclusion of Chapter One which concludes with the immortal truth uttered by Ruth Reyna: ‘India is the spiritual mother of all mankind.’ India's cultural influences have been the subject of my study over long years. I have written and spoken on it on various occasions. Some of my writings on it I have included in my published works. The present one, however, is a fresh approach to the subject, in which I have used a number of new corroborative facts of much importance and interest. Chapter Two shows that India's history is indissolubly bound up with her geography and that the Mother Force working in both forged that oneness the truth of which motivates India's evolution towards her great future. The subsequent chapters deal with the Ages of her history, each against the background of a dominant factor in the historic process. Here also the Mother Force in her various aspects

3. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 63.

gives its ethos and articulation in the proper order. The last two chapters on India's re-awakening in modern times deal only with the pioneering work of the leaders thrown up by the spiritual upsurge in her national life. Their life and work were inspired by the spiritual vision of India's soul, the vision of the spiritualisation of life as a preparatory step to its ultimate divine perfection.

It is my hope that this humble study will awaken interest in the subject, and, in particular, in the divine Force reshaping our motherland and the world.

\* \* \* \*

## CHAPTER ONE

### **‘THE SPIRITUAL MOTHER OF ALL MANKIND’**

About fifty years ago Sri Aurobindo contributed to his philosophical monthly *Arya* a truly revealing sequence<sup>4</sup> on the principal aspects of Indian culture, in which he brought to light, obviously for the first time in our day, the wonderful story of India's creative achievements through the ages. His was indeed an entirely original approach, his Seer-eye piercing deep into the secret of India's soul and finding out the essential aim and intention of her historic development, the inner and, therefore, the real significance of the ways in which her children have tried over her long past to give form to their aspirations and strivings. In this luminous exposition the graph of the cultural evolution of India shines forth in its true perspective, opens up an integral vision, a coherent structure covering all the manifold aspects of the creative life of the people, their inner meaning and purpose fully laid bare, in a word, the glorious Past brought out into the living Present — all as a source of inspiration to new creation.

Matter-of-fact narrations of unending political events may tell us much but not everything about a people, because outward events cannot get at the real intention of Nature in them. And without an understanding of that we know next to nothing of the true history of a country, far less the forces that have shaped its destiny. The story of India's political development will be not only inaccurate and incomplete but a fundamentally poor and wrong representation, if it is not told with reference to the true nature and tendency of her racial being, and ignores the psychology that stimulated the people to build up a strong collective life based on the truths seen by the ancient fathers of the race.

The work of the foreign Indologists that make for the reconstruction of India's history must always be gratefully accepted. But the writings of a number of them as well as of Indian scholars who have followed these Western pioneers cannot be said

4. Since published in book form under the title *The Foundations of Indian Culture*.

to have fully satisfied the demands of history of this great sub-continent. Besides, personal equation apart, the exclusive attachment of these Western historians to the scientific method, confined to the obvious and superficial view of things, has shut out from them the deep and intrinsic values which India evolved through centuries of creative striving and which formed the very centre of her life and culture. Happily, Indian historians have begun to recognise these values of their country's cultural evolution as is evident in the ten-volume work, *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, a comprehensive record of outstanding merit, recently published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

The Vedas, the Upanishads and the sacred literature of the later ages contain utterances of the Rishis which proclaim the urge of India's soul to share with others the truths about man, God and Universe — the truths that came to the vision of the early Mystics who laid the foundation of her culture. It is this urge that motivated the expansive movement of Indian culture whose story when fully told and given its proper place in the cultural context of India as also of the world, will indeed make a romantic reading.

In her golden days the culture of India was like a heaven-kissing tower of light shedding its lustre on the surrounding countries, even on those at the far ends of the earth, illumining the mind of man, exalting his heart, ennobling his life and, above all, beckoning him on to the realisation of his highest spiritual destiny. By this light, says Sri Aurobindo, India possessed the world or at least enlightened it in the long-past ages.

Thanks to the efforts of the Greater India Society of Calcutta and the researches of Indian and European scholars who have made Indian influences in Asia their special study, there is already available some knowledge of the nature and extent of this influence, and history has just begun to take note of it. But very little is known, far less historically accepted, about how this movement spread also to the West and contributed to the growth of the early thought of Europe, and later, of Christianity. George B. de Huszar says that Greek thought and Christianity are the foundations of western culture but behind Greece and Christianity stands Asia. Asia Minor, Egypt and India influenced Greek development. It is the conviction of eminent scholars that systematic investigations into this subject are sure to yield startling results which might very well be the basis of a new chapter in the history of human thought in which India would shine as the source of many of the ideas not only of the Greek thinkers but also of the Christian and later ones.

Sylvain Levy, the eminent French Indologist, stresses India's influence over "one-fourth of the human race: from Persia to the Chinese Sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales, and her civilisation. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her



for a long time, to hold her place among the nations, summarising and symbolising the spirit of Humanity.”

## I

Four times in history, says Sri Aurobindo, the stream of Indian thought has poured out upon Europe. First, when Indian wisdom filtered through the thought of the Greek philosophers from Pythagoras to Plato and Neo-Platonists; the result was the brilliant intellectual civilisation of Greece and Rome. Second, when Buddhism and Vaishnavism filtered through the Semitic temperament and entered Europe in the form of Christianity. Third, through the Arabs after the rise of Islam; the result was the reawakening of the European mind in feudal and Catholic Europe. Fourth, a quiet entry of Indian thought into Europe, first through the veil of German metaphysics which inspired most of the modern developments of European thought, and then openly through dissemination of ideas of the various schools of Indian thought by exponents, both Indian and European; the result is the growing tendency in present-day Europe and America to acknowledge the superiority of spiritual values.

Scholars have recently begun to accept the view that India is the original home of the Aryas, the latest theory being that the whole of north-western India and Iran were called Aryiana where four successive movements took place through which the Aryan genius expressed itself, first in the Bactrian culture, secondly in the Indus Valley, thirdly in the Vedic, and lastly in the Avestan. Radhakumud Mookerji, an eminent Indian historian, has shown how no other region than India could be the cradle of the Aryas, where they must have lived for a very long time before they evolved their civilisation. There are, besides, other evidences which point to this conclusion. Sri Aurobindo says that the hymns of the Rigveda belong to a later period of a long anterior stage which witnessed “more luminous dawns of the supreme knowledge upon the forefathers of the race”. He says further that the Rigveda may be dated circa 3000 B.C. There is, therefore, no doubt that the Aryan culture has taken its birth in India and then spread to different parts of the world by the early missionaries of the race who in those dim days hazarded the perils of land and sea and went to countries far beyond the borders of their own, carrying with them the torch of that matchless wisdom of which they were the proud inheritors. Kalidas Nag, the eminent scholar and Indologist, is definite that “the Aryan trail started from India.”

Traces of Hindu culture have begun to be found in various parts of eastern Europe. Archaeologists are of opinion that Russia and Siberia have several regions where excavations may yield evidences of Indian influence. It is believed that *Aswamedha* (the horse-sacrifice of the ancient Hindu kings) was one of the royal ceremonies in some parts of northern Europe. Lithuania observes even to this day many rites and customs of the Hindus. The names of the Lithuanian rivers are

undoubtedly Indian in origin. Tapti is one such name which is the name of a river in Central India; some of the others are Nemuna (Indian Yamuna), Srobati (Indian Saraswati), Narbudey (Indian Narmada). The tribal or clan names of the Lithuanians, such as, Kuru, Puru, Yadav, Sudav are distinctly Indian: so also are the names of their gods, such as, Indra, Varuna, Purakanya (the Vedic Parjanya). Patient investigations may throw further light on this relation between India and Lithuania in pre-historic times. The eminent Lithuanian archaeologist Pulk Tarasenska in his book *Priesistorie Lietuva* has made revealing observations on the early history of the Lithuanian tribes. Reubem Burrew and Thomas Maurice hold that the Druids of Europe were “Brahmin emigrants from India who mingled with the Celtic tribes and established the Druid, in other words, the Brahmin system of superstitions in ancient Britain — the first Oriental colony in these islands. In their westward movement some of the Brahmin emigrants settled in Siberia.” Many of the Druidic rites and customs were Vedic in origin.

A very significant proof of the Vedic influence in Asia Minor has been discovered in Boghaz Keui in Cappadocia where there have been unearthed tablets with inscriptions stating that a treaty was concluded in the fourteenth century B.C. between two belligerent tribes known as the Hittites and the Mittanis in terms of their respective customs which included the invocation of the Vedic gods Mitra, Varuna and Indra for their blessings. In another inscription they invoked the twin-gods, the Aswins, known to them by their Vedic title Nasatya to bless a marriage-alliance between two royal families. Tel-el-Amarna letters point to a period between 1470 B.C. and 1400 B.C. during which there reigned in Mittani four kings whose names were Artatana, Artasuma, Sutarna and Dasaratta. The last named must have derived from the Sanskrit word Dasaratha. The other names also bear close resemblance to Sanskrit and are held to be of kings who were connected with the Aryas of the Vedic age, then dwelling in Punjab. These inscriptions show that Indian ideas penetrated the upper valley of the Euphrates in those early days.

Before the rise of Islam there lived in Arabia many Hindus, mostly brahmins, who settled there observing Hindu religious customs including the worship of Siva as Makksha from which the name of Mecca is said to have derived. The famous astronomer Yavanacharya was born of one such brahmin family. It was from these brahmins that the Arabs learned the sciences of mathematics, astronomy, algebra and decimal notation, which had been first developed in India and were later transmitted by the Arabs to Europe. Speaking particularly on the Indian influence on astronomy Weber says that “during the eighth and ninth centuries of the Christian era the Arabs learnt their astronomy from the Hindus; they also borrowed the lunar mansions in their new order; they worked up the Hindu Siddhantas under the supervision of Indian astronomers themselves whom the Khalifs of Bagdad invited to their courts.”

Researches have unravelled fragments of the story of how Indian ideas travelled

to Greece and the neighbouring countries through Persia, Asia Minor and Alexandria, and became an inspiring factor in the development of thought in those regions. Centuries before Christ these regions were widely known for their numerous, crowded, many-sided seats of learning which were visited by seekers of knowledge as also by wise teachers from various parts of the world, who used to participate in philosophical discussions for which these seats were reputed. And there can be no doubt that in those discussions representative thinkers of each country made their contribution. Authorities agree that India figured prominently in these centres of intellectual fellowship and that her ideas were most prevalent among their members.

Great scholars like Max Mueller, Garbe and Winternitz believe in the Greek and Persian traditions (because of their actual basis) that brahmins from India visited those countries in very early times. It is to them that is traced the origin of the Orphic cult, of its rites and practices, which are neither Greek nor Semitic. Says Sri Aurobindo: “. . . the Rig-Veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of human thought of which the historic Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries were the failing remnants.” Orphists flourished in the seventh century B.C. during which the Ionian philosophers were influenced by Indian wisdom. Garbe, regarded as the greatest authority on Sankhya philosophy in Europe, holds that Sankhya ideas have exerted great influence on the doctrines of Heraclitus, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus and Epicurus. Winternitz is convinced that Pythagoras was influenced by the Indian Sankhya, nor has he any doubt that the Gnostic and the Neo-Platonist philosophers have been influenced by Indian philosophical ideas.

Says A. A. Macdonnell in his *Sanskrit Literature*: “According to Greek tradition, Thales, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus and others undertook journeys to Oriental countries in order to study philosophy. The influence of Indian Philosophy on Christian Gnosticism in the second and third centuries seems at any rate undoubted. The Gnostic doctrine of the opposition between soul and matter, of the personal existence of intellect, will, and so forth, the identification of soul and light are derived from the Sankhya system. The division peculiar to several Gnostics of man into three classes *prematikoi*, *psychikoi* and *hylikoi* is also based on the Sankhya doctrine of the three Gunas. Again, Bardesanes, a Gnostic of the Syrian school who obtained information about India from Indian philosophers, assumed the existence of a subtle ethereal body which is identical with the *Linga Sharira* of the Sankhya system. Finally the many heavens of the Gnostics are evidently derived from the fantastic cosmogony of later Buddhism.”

It is the opinion of Garbe that the theory of Thales (600 B.C.), the father of Greek philosophy, that everything springs from water, that of Anaximander that the first principle is not water but infinite atmosphere, and of his disciple Anaximenes that it is air which is the source of phenomena, are derived from almost similar Vedic theories which their Greek exponents are said to have communicated to them

while they were in Persia on a 'mission of pilgrimage for philosophical studies'. Says Hopkins: "The philosophy of ancient Greece is, as it were, the shadow of the Upanishads. Most probably the philosophy of Anaximander and Heraclitus are thoroughly indebted to India."

The view of Heraclitus (500 B.C.) that "all bodies are transformations of fire, and that everything that exists is derived from it and strives to return to it" is only an echo of a similar idea in the Chandogya Upanishad. Garbe compares this doctrine with the Sankhya theory of 'the innumerable annihilations and reformations of the Universe'. Empedocles's (450 B.C.) theory of the eternity and indestructibility of matter is only a restatement of the Sankhya principle of *satkaryavada* or the beginningless and endless reality of all products. He believed also in transmigration of soul and posited the evolution of the material world out of primeval matter which is acted upon by the three qualities, lightness, activity and heaviness; these three are nothing but the three *gunas*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* of the Sankhya system.

To Zenophanes (575 B.C.), the father of the Eleatic School, God and the Universe are one, eternal and unchangeable. According to Huszar, the ideas of the Eleatic School were profoundly influenced by the teachings of the Upanishads. Says Erdmann: "The absorption of all separate existence in a single substance, as is taught by the Eleatics, seems rather an echo of Indian pantheism than a principle of Hellenic spirit."

The cultural link of Pythagoras (500 B.C.) to India is almost an accepted fact of history. There is an Indian tradition that Pythagoras was a Hindu of the Sanskrit name Prithviguru, who went to Greece to preach Hindu philosophy. Evidence however is lacking in support of this view. But that he came into touch with brahmins in Persia, if not in India, has been admitted by Max Mueller. Pythagoras is taken to have learnt from India the forty-seventh theorem of the Euclidean Geometry which is found in the *Shulva Sutras* of Baudhayana. And it is also from India that he received his ideas of the science of music, the importance of numbers and the existence of the fifth element, all of which were unknown in Greece and Egypt in those days. The origin of the Pythagorean doctrine of reincarnation is traced to India, as also the 'holy tetractyls', the swearing symbols of the later Pythagoreans, whose meaning may be found in the formula of diagrams for Vedic sacrifices (also in the Katha Upanishad) to which again is traced the origin of the decimal system of notation. The Pythagoreans regarded spitting before fire as grievous sin, and they abstained from beans, both of these are Vedic conventions. Dwijendranath Tagore, a great scholar and the elder brother of Poet Tagore, holds that all these ideas of the Pythagorean School are undoubted borrowings from India. Celebrooke says that the doctrines of Pythagoras were rooted in India. He says: "Adverting to what has come to us of the history of Pythagoras, I shall not hesitate to acknowledge an inclination to consider the Grecian to have been indebted to Indian instructors."

The mention by Plato and Aristotle of the name of Zoroaster, and the study by

Hermippus of the books of the Persian teacher, are among the evidences that the Persians were in touch with Greece and that their literature had many students in that country. We know that the Achaemenian empire touched the borders of India and Greece and that Persia was a centre of contact between these two countries. It is therefore quite probable that not only Persians, but Indians also visited Greece and had contact with Greek thinkers. Max Mueller is one of those who believe that in the fifth century B.C. there were in Greece brahmins in Athens in the time of Socrates. This is corroborated by the remarkable passage in Eusebius, a Greek Church historian of the third century A.D.: "Aristoxenus, the musician, tells the following story about the Indians. One of these men met Socrates at Athens, and asked him what was the scope of his philosophy. 'An enquiry into the phenomena', replied Socrates. At this the Indian burst out laughing. 'How can a man enquire into human phenomenon', he exclaimed, 'when he is ignorant of divine ones?'" The authority of Eusebius was Aristoxenus himself who was a pupil of Aristotle and a well-known writer on harmonics. His date is 330 B.C. So we have contemporary evidence of the presence in Athens as early as in the fourth century, of Indians who knew Greek and actually discussed philosophy with Socrates.

Urwick is one of the scholars who are convinced that India is the birthplace of many of the ideas which Plato set forth in his *Republic*. There is a Greek tradition that Plato undertook a journey in the East. He is believed to have visited Persia. There is a view that he came to India also, and that, says Will Durant, "he found his way to the banks of the Ganges, and learned the mystic meditations of the Hindus." His ideas of the bondage of the soul to matter and its liberation therefrom, as also his doctrine of reincarnation are distinctly Sankhyan. Says Hopkins: "Plato is full of Sankhyan thought worked out by him but taken from Pythagoras." His use of the simile of the Charioteer and the horses are clearly an echo of the same simile of the Katha Upanishad. Plato's division of an ideal society into four classes is the Hindu caste system in another garb. The Orphic cosmogony, quoted by Plato, is the same as found in the code of Manu. These similarities, says Rawlinson, are too close to be accidental. Max Mueller says that the similarity between Plato's language and that of the Upanishads is sometimes startling. From the foregoing outlines we may conclude with Garbe that the historical possibility of the Grecian world of thought being influenced by India through Persia as the intermediary must unquestionably be granted, and with it the possibility of the above-quoted ideas (of the Sankhya and the Vedanta philosophy) being transferred from India to Greece. That India is 'a parent civilisation' is boldly declared by the great French thinker Voltaire: "Everything came to us from the banks of the Ganges where the first Greeks travelled for nothing but knowledge."

The writings of Pliny, Strabo, Ptolemy and the anonymous pamphlet *Periplus Maris Erythraei* published at Alexandria in the first century A.D. show that for centuries there was regular intercourse, both cultural and commercial, between India

and Alexandria. The discovery by Sir Flinders Petrie of the statues and other Indian relics at Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt, led that famous British Egyptologist to believe in the existence of an Indian colony in ancient Egypt about 500 B.C. Madame Blavatsky thinks that Egypt received her laws, her social institutions, her arts and her sciences from India. The Egyptians had a caste system similar to that of India. Herodotus wrote that some of the customs of the Egyptians were essentially Aryan. Pliny says that there were a number of Buddhists in Syria, Palestine and Egypt and that the Gnostic School of thought of Alexandria was directly under their influence. Its concept of man and Nature is distinctly Buddhistic. Towards the close of the third century B.C. Alexandria under the Ptolemies who were great patrons of learning, acquired considerable importance as a far-famed centre of culture. It attracted scholars from various parts of the world. Among the Buddhists living in it there must have been some who were missionaries sent by Asoka, and there were brahmins too, who carried with them the ancient lore of the Hindus. Evidences show that these exponents of Indian thought wielded immense influence upon the scholars from different countries who assembled there, it is said, for the purpose of 'imbibing Indian wisdom'. Through these, her great sons, India made her distinctive contribution to the development of Gnostic and Neo-Platonist ideas as well as of early Christian thought. It is admitted that Gnosticism grew out of a synthesis of Christian and Indian ideas. The Gnostic idea of the plurality of heavens and spiritual worlds echoes similar Upanishadic ideas, and in particular, the Mahayana doctrine of innumerable gods or Bodhisattvas. Mahayana Buddhism and Sankhya philosophy inspired much of what is known as Alexandrian thought.

In his recently published book *Apollonius of Tyana*, G. R. S. Mead deals with the life and achievements of this remarkable mystic who was a contemporary of, and regarded by some as a rival of, Jesus Christ. He is said to have spent many years with the Brahmins and Buddhists in India and acquired the esoteric knowledge of the Upanishads which he transmitted to his disciples. Not only did he learn Brahma Vidya, 'Science of Brahman', but developed also the power of conversing with Indian seers and sages. Mead believes that the earliest Grecian centre was familiar with the Upanishads and the Gita and with Vedantic ideas, and that Apollonius spread abroad part of the ancient Indian wisdom.

SISIR KUMAR MITRA

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by Sisir Kumar Mitra, Jaico Books, Bombay, 1968, pp. vii-12)

# NEW WAYS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

## PREFACE

This book has not been written on purpose. Its chapters are separated by years, and in some cases by seven thousand miles. This will account for, though it will not excuse, any instability that may be felt in style.

The essays have been drawn together by the necessity for some temporary indication however inadequate, of the direction of English literature at the present time and in the immediate past. This necessity has arisen out of a special movement to make education in India both national and rational by putting it in contact with the vital spirit of literature, instead of starving it on half a dozen stale fragments of the past that have no interest for Indian youth, and make the cultivation of good English speech impossible.

All the same, though the essays can claim no unity in original intention, I have had an uncomfortable feeling, while shaping them for the press, of being pulled slowly and irresistibly into the narrow prison-cell of a category, and held in a vice while being branded Idealist.

I do not feel happy in presence of the word, because it has always appeared to me to connote in the history of English literature a remoteness from life; a derivative-ness like the shepherd and swain convention from Spencer downwards; a tendency to fall into dogma, which is not objectionable because it is dogma, but because it is based on an incomplete view of humanity and the universe.

At the same time I should not care to find myself forced into the other category and be labelled Realist. I admire the protestant spirit, and the claim that art should serve life, and not life art; but I object to realism for exactly the same reason (which is probably not a reason but a temperament) as I object to so-called idealism. Realism in art that does not take into account all the facts; that leaves out psychic experience and metaphysical thought, which are as real a part of human activity as the emotions and emotionalised thought generated by industrial and commercial conflict, is to me meaningless.

I think the tendency in the following pages which may be regarded as idealistic is a sign of a search for a deeper unity in literature that may embrace both idealism and realism. Certain it is that the larger knowledge and experience that have been important characteristics of life West and East during the past thirty years (knowledge of an order of things more sensible than that conceived by the simple faith and blank ignorance of Western religious convention; experience of faculties and entities beyond reach of the five senses, whose vivid actuality is beyond the ken of a type of thought that quaintly calls itself rationalistic and ignores the most important

premises in human reasoning) are bound to affect profoundly the literature and criticism of the future.

Such knowledge and experience have been granted to me in some measure, and have obviously influenced the judgment of these essays. Inadequate though they be as guides along the road of literary evolution, they may at least act as finger posts, showing a general direction without stating the mileage.

J.H.C.

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*1st November, 1917.*

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### NEW WAYS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

There is a general assumption in literary circles in England that the war marks an era in English poetry. It is not quite clear whether it is intended to be conveyed that a new era is to come after the war. The mark that is referred to seems to be of the nature of a full-stop. Much that passed for poetry before the war is not now to be heard or seen. The futurist movement in poetry, for example, became a thing of the past long before Italy, the home of Signor Marinetti, its originator, took sides with the Allies.

But terminations may be epoch-markers and by no means epoch-makers. We need a hatful of beginnings before we can conjure or prophesy; and the unmistakable beginnings are not yet. Between the era in literature that ended in August, 1914, and the era that may begin on a date not yet fixed, there is the war, and it has produced no poetry. The best poets have avoided the subject: some of them have definitely stated their determination to have nothing to do with the horrible affair because of its inartistic character. The minor poets have not, through its inspiration, become major. It has brought out no new poets of mark, and the poets who were making themselves heard just before the crash, had already found themselves and their time: that is to say, they had got as far in the development of their individual style and genius as could be expected, and they had fastened on to the new phase of British thought, the social consciousness that has been disturbing the art-for-arts'-sake theorists for the past twenty years. True, Rupert Brooke achieved fame by his death in the Aegean backed up by a small volume entitled "1914"; but any epoch-making prophetic impulse that the volume might stir in us is discounted by the volume of Henry Bryan Binns entitled "April Nineteen-fifteen", which, save for half-a-dozen lines, might have been written in a country and age that had never invented human slaughter as the last resort of Christian argument.



Yet it is quite true that the war marks, if it does not create, a passing over from one phase of poetical activity to another. Apart from the universally recognised Irish Literary Revival, that produced — or, some say, was produced by — two poets of the front rank, lovers of poetry have been aware for some time past of a new spirit and method animating the poets of England. The popular success of John Masefield, an occasional play by Lascelles Abercrombie, the winning of the Royal Literary Society's prize by Ralph Hodgson, have been special points in a general tendency. Those who did not come across small volumes by individual poets, were helped to an understanding of the new movement through the publication of two volumes entitled "Georgian Poetry", one containing representative poems during the years 1911 and 1912 by poets who were beginning to define themselves as a younger school; another for 1913 to 1915. These were brought out by the Poetry Bookshop, London, mainly, I think, through the enterprise of one of the poets, Harold Monro, who founded and edited "The Poetry Review" as an organ for the new singers, and made it the journal of the Poetry Society until a split sent Mr. Monro elsewhere, and the magazine passed under the editorship of the late Stephen Phillips and subsided into literary orthodoxy. It was quite an adventure to walk around the little bookshop in a quiet by-street off one of London's roaring highways, and note on its shelves the vitality and extensiveness of the new works, mainly in little books produced in the artistic fashion that makes reading a delight to the hand and the eye as well as the mind.

It was apparent that something in the nature of a school of modern English poetry was in process of development. A definite consciousness of purpose showed itself through the personal divergencies of the writers, and many eyes have watched them hopefully for an indication of the new ways that the rhythmic feet of the Muse would pursue through the "hilly lands and hollow lands" of the imaginations of singers who have inherited all the skill and thought of the masters of the past, yet are under the responsibility of their own genius to express their own time in their own way. It is too early yet to prophesy of the fulness of the new movement with any degree of assurance; but those to whom anticipation is a pleasure, as well as those who are content to enjoy poetry for its own sake, apart from its implications, will find material to hand in Miss Mary C. Sturgeon's "Studies in Contemporary Poets" — Harrap — which not only makes a sympathetic survey of the whole field of the poets' work, but provides copious illustrations that make the book an exegetical anthology.

Like other observers, Miss Sturgeon notes that the life of contemporary England is "evoking its own music". Some aspect of the complex life of to-day in England is reflected through the work of each of the new poets: "its awakened social consciousness, or its frank joy in the world of sense; in mysticism, or its repudiation of dogma in art as in religion." In their repudiation of dogma we have the symptom of youthfulness. We are all anti-dogmatic in youth, and are not above expressing our anti-

dogmatism in the most dogmatic terms. The fact is, of course, that an art without dogma would be as inartistic as a religion without dogma would be unreligious, or as any other creative influence would be impossible without its characteristic boundaries. What matters most, however, is not the merits or demerits of rival literary dogmas, but the free play of the mind which they express; and in the case of the new poets that play is seen not merely in the reflection of the disturbances of their time in thought and conduct, which fulfils the function of environment, but also in the matter of technique, which shows the effort of artistic adjustment between subject and method. "The technique of modern poetry", says Miss Sturgeon, "would seem to be movement towards a more exact rendering of the music and meaning of our language. That is to say, there is in prosody itself an impulse towards truth of expression, which may be found to correspond to the heightened sense of external fact in contemporary poetic genius, as well as to its closer hold upon reality. Thence comes the realism of much good poetry now being written: triune, as all genuine realism must be, since it proceeds out of a spiritual conviction, a mental process, and actual craftsmanship."

The chief characteristic of the new technique is irregularity of rhythm, and a loose adherence to rhyme. Those who forget Whitman, may regard this as an advance: — others who think back to the days before the Muse of Ireland had taught rhyme to Europe, will be forgiven if they wonder if the modern atavism in technique — the alleged bid for freedom — is not at worst a symptom of emotional haste and intellectual laziness, or at best a renunciation of art's duty to be artistic. Miss Sturgeon's reply to the "wonder" is that the new technique is a reflection of its day, which does not move in regular rhymes or rhythms: "It has taken hold upon the world real and entire"; it "has come so close to life as to claim its very identity". "Moreover," she adds, "the life upon which it seizes in this way is wider, more complex, more meaningful than ever before." Wider and more complex certainly; but it is not quite clear that extension and complication of detail are added virtues from the point of view of pure poetry, whose concern should be the seizing of essentials and fundamentals if it is to possess the vital interpretative and illuminative power of real poetry, and not the mere surface reproduction of verbal photography: and as to meaningful; that surely exists more in the interpreter than in the branchings and transient leaves of the tree of life that lead away from the root — away from the synthesis that is the business of poetry.

The poets themselves will be mercifully preserved from any bother over these uncertainties in the assumptions of their sponsor. They will write just as they are able to write. But the criticism that follows in the wake of creation has a duty to itself, and that is, to take the sanest possible view based on the fullest grasp of facts and principles. I fear that in this respect the critic referred to has let the discovery of a new thing run into rhetoric. The new school strikes a responsive cord in herself, and satisfies some desire. That is good, and to that extent the new poetry justifies

itself; but it is hardly wise to forget all the literary past of their country, and speak of these young men as having “left the twilight of reality and stepped into clear day,” with the suggestion that the fuss and gyration of the present time is reality, contrasted with the inferred unreality and darkness of the singers of the past. Miss Sturgeon’s idea of reality seems to be that of the superficialists who scorn the metaphysicians. What is of importance in her exposition of the modern poets, (and I am referring entirely to the English poets), what gives us a clue to the essential character of their work, is not any question of artistic or philosophical theory, but the plain fact stated by Miss Sturgeon that there is in these poets an identification of their method and thought with the peculiar life of their time; which is the same thing as saying that they are dated, and therefore not for all time but for a passing age; in short, that they are minor poets.

Minor is, in truth, the impression that one gets from the works of these poets. They have terseness of phrase, vividness of sight; but one misses the undertones and overtones and the invisible rays that play about the works of the masters, that lift utterance beyond echo of the sounds of life into clarion prophecy of “Life more abundant,” and raise sight from the thing seen, to the level of vision. The minor poet reproduces his or her time; the major poet reveals through himself and his time the true spiritual nature and destiny of the universe. And that is just what these poets have not yet ventured to do. They have not yet come from under the weight of post-Darwinian scepticism, which though it be forged with the sledge hammer of Mr. Blatchford into a piece of cast-iron “truth”, is as incapable of inspiring or nourishing poetry as the back streets of an English industrial town. They are disturbed, are these poets, by the possession of a social consciousness — and in this respect they are not very different from the poets of the past to whom the problem of humanity made appeal: they are in contact with the humanitarian movements of their time: they fulfil the desirable function of “doubting Thomas” in respect of religious assertion; but, in respect of the two major “discoveries” of their age and place — the fact of the survival of death by the human consciousness, and the inference of the fundamental unity of all mental life in a super-mental consciousness, as of all physical life in a super-physical substance — they are practically silent: that is to say, they have not been touched by the two most revolutionary inspirational forces that the morning of the twentieth century has brought within the sphere of certainty. This omission makes all talk of their dealing with reality very unconvincing.

In two only of the modern English poets, according to Miss Sturgeon, in Lascelles Abercrombie and Rose Macaulay — and, I would add, in Rupert Brooke — do we find any explicit declaration of “that true world within the world we see.” Mr. Abercrombie gives utterance to the idea (as old as Indian thought) that the self of the individual is God: he does not reduce Divinity to the measure of dust: he finds escape into Divinity. Thus he sings in “The Trance”:

I was exalted above surety  
 And out of time did fall,  
 As from a slander that did long distress,  
 A sudden justice vindicated me  
 From the customary wrong of Great and Small.  
 I stood outside the burning ruins of place,  
 Outside that corner, consciousness,  
 Then was I not in the midst of thee Lord God?

In the works of Miss Macaulay, the world of material things, to adopt Miss Sturgeon's excellent summary, "is vividly apprehended; but it is seen to be rounded by another realm which is not less real."

In the poetry of Walter de le Mare something of the supernatural appears. Miss Sturgeon regards the supernatural as a constant component of the romantic temperament, and speaks of the "fearful joy which this type of mind experiences in contact with the strange and weird." The words "strange and weird" indicate quite plainly that the supernatural which is referred to is the conventional business of ghosts and happenings that are strange and weird because they are not at all native to the romantic temperament, but unfamiliar. To those who have any real knowledge of these things, they cease to be strange and weird: they become normal as regards fact; but their absorption as part of the equipment of memory and experience will create an entirely different attitude to life and death and to their interpretation. In the poetry, for example, of W. B. Yeats, there is a simple acceptance of "supernatural" phenomena as an orderly fact in nature which is also a fact of experience to himself. This renders transparent to him the surface of life, which is opaque to those to whom the background of psychic reality is unknown, or merely speculative, or "strange and weird." On this account, Miss Sturgeon, like many others, mistakes Mr. Yeats' poetry for romance, instead of realising it to be the fullest expression of the *whole reality* of human life, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual, in true perspective, here and behind the veil; in short, the most real realism in modern literature in the English language.

I emphasise this matter of classification with some assurance because, in a very sympathetic reference to a portion of my own poetical work, in her chapter on "An Irish Group", Miss Sturgeon applies the term "romantic" to my poem "Etain the Beloved", and seems to relegate that poem to some remote "mythological association" in contrast with a "sharply symptomatic change" which appears in my 1915 volume "Straight and Crooked", "subjects of more social and immediate interest" appearing to engage attention. The truth is, I was not a whit more interested, in a literary way, or more engaged in active participation, in "social and immediate" matters when I was writing certain poems in "Straight and Crooked" than when I was writing "Etain the Beloved". Quite the reverse. What happened was that my

destiny took me from my own land into a greater superficial, but not more acute, relationship with certain problems of the day during a mercifully short residence in industrial England, and provided me with a few new figures of speech. That was all. If my next volume should contain a poem on social reform, it is possible that some critic will refer to a growing interest in topics of the day rather than vague subjects of the past; and I may get annoyed, and use, unliterary language in the privacy of my own thought, when I remember that the very core and marrow of social reform, including the great fight for the freedom of womanhood in which I was vigorously engaged when I was writing "Etain the Beloved", are both implicitly and explicitly contained in that poem.

Where criticism goes wrong in classification is in taking surface qualities and expressions for essentials; and not weighing fully the attitude and level of vision attained by the poet. Not everyone who *saieth* "Lord! Lord!" is fit for the kingdom of heaven. Not everyone who shouts the word *power* is powerful. I have seen Mr. Henry Ainley, one of the finest London actors, reduce a freshly starched collar to a pulpy ruffle clinging with perspiration around his neck in reciting Masfield's "Philip the King": it seemed the necessary condition for manifesting the emotional strength and energy of the play; yet there are little poems of eight lines by A. E. that have enough spiritual dynamic in them to blow all the muscle and bulk of Masfield's drama to atoms.

The protean creative energy is forever advancing the borders of "reality". The great poets anticipate the advance. The reflection of the great poet is of fire to fire which flames into prophecy: the reflection of the minor poet is of water to water that does no more than reproduce itself. When in some future volume from one or other of the new writers of the West we catch the large accent, the forward vision of the self-realised and ecstatic soul, we shall know that the new ways in English literature are breaking through the obstructions of ignorance, and all that hangs thereon, into the broad highway of literary evolution.

JAMES H. COUSINS

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