

# Early Cultural Writings



*Sri Aurobindo*

VOLUME 1  
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# Early Cultural Writings



## Publisher's Note

*Early Cultural Writings* consists of essays and other prose writings on literature, education, art and other cultural subjects. Most of them were written between 1890 and 1910, a few between 1910 and 1920. The editors have arranged the material by topic in nine parts and two appendixes. Many of the pieces were published in journals or books during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime. The others are reproduced from his manuscripts. The editors have checked all the texts against the relevant printed or manuscript versions. Simple editorial problems arising from incomplete revision, etc., are indicated by means of the system explained in the Guide to Editorial Notation on the next page. More complex problems are discussed in footnotes or in the Note on the Texts at the end of the volume.

## Guide to Editorial Notation

About half the material in this volume was not prepared by Sri Aurobindo for publication. This material has been transcribed from manuscripts that present a variety of textual difficulties. As far as possible the editors have indicated these problems by means of the notation shown below.

Notation	Textual Problem
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[word]	Word(s) omitted by the author or lost through damage to the manuscript that are required by grammar or sense, and that could be supplied by the editors
[      ]	Blank left by the author to be filled in later but left unfilled, which the editors were not able to fill
[ <i>note</i> ]	Situations requiring textual explication; all such information is printed in italics

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Sri Aurobindo in Baroda, 1906





## Part One

### The Harmony of Virtue

Sri Aurobindo wrote all the pieces in this part in England between 1890 and 1892. He did not publish any of them during his lifetime.



## The Sole Motive of Man's Existence

The banquet was half over and the wine in lively progress round the table; yet the ladies did not retire. The presence of women over the wine was one of the cardinal articles of Julian's social creed.

The conversation turned on the Christian religion which finally emerged from the arena stripped of all its plumes and in a condition woefully besmirched and bedraggled. Julian, who had taken the lead in blasphemy, closed the subject by observing "The popular Gods should be denied but respected."

"Yet you couple women and wine in your banquet-room" said Erinna.

"Ah, my friend, I only observe Nature's ordinances: in social life sex does not exist. Besides conversation requires speech as well as reason."

"You insinuate?"

"Nature gave man reason, speech to woman."

The men laughed.

"I will quote you two sentences from my new catechism, Julian" said Helen Woodward. "To what end has man used reason? To make Truth incredible. To what purpose has woman employed speech? To say nothing."

Julian felt that the tone of talk was becoming too serious and he glided away from the subject. During the flow of the wine someone coupled the names of Aphrodite and Bacchus.

"Ah yes" said Julian "how is it that we have not honoured the goddess who presides over this feast?"

"Let Julian do it in his master's fashion" suggested Corydon.

"I cannot tread beaten ground, Lionel."

"Ah but Love is as bottomless as the sea."

"Yet Plato was an excellent diver and brought up the richest pearls."

"Scarcely in one dive, Julian" said Powell.

"In five, if I remember aright."

"Yet Agathon's pearl was not flawless."

"Do you propose to amend it?"

"I should but spoil it; but I could dive for a pearl of my own finding perhaps."

"You shall have a rich meed of praise."

"But, my dear critic" said Erinna "what ground was untrod by Plato?"

"Agathon painted the loveliness of Love but not Love himself."

"Describe him then you" said Julian and raised his hand for silence.

Powell lay back a moment with his dark Welsh eyes fixed upon the ceiling and then spoke.

"I am told to describe Love" began Powell "yet in order to describe I must first define. And how is that possible with a being intangible as the air and inconstant as the moon? For Love is as slippery and mutable as Proteus, chameleon-hued, multiform, amorphous, infinite; the transmigrations of a Hindu soul are not more various and elastic; the harmony of his outlines are not blurred by chaos or the weird; rather like poetry and summer he wraps himself in a cool soft robe of velvet air and his feet are kissed by the laughing sea. But the translucent air which promises to reveal is a cloak far thicker than the gathering dusk. Thus the Eros of Praxiteles is not Love himself but the soul of the sculptor in one of her phases. Yet though Love has no one form, the idea, the soul of Love, that strange essence which walks for ever in the peopled Shadow-land, he is shackled in a single and uniform shape. How then shall I paint the idea of Love? The Greeks have described a child with a warlike bow of horn and bitter arrows tipped with steel, and modern poets inspired by this rude conception have fabled of the smart which is the herald of Love's shaft. But these ideas however happy in themselves are by no means suitable to Love; for they are without two of his most essential elements, the subtle and the impalpable. The Hindus are more felicitous when they sing of Kama — for poetry

alone can express him — the divine and radiant youth mounted on [an] emerald parrot, and bearing in his right hand a bow of flowers; the arrows too must be of the same soft and voluptuous material — for a preference I would name the shefali, the only blossom which has a soul. For Love's arrow never pains while in the wound — it is too subtle and flower-like — if a lover is in pain, it is because he loves himself more than Love — and that is the fault of Nature, not of Eros. Again Love has been painted as blind; and in this too the poets of Europe have conceived a lyrical fiction; for they say that Love looses his shafts and knows not whom they strike, whereas indeed he knows too well. It is his delight to unite those who should never have so much as met and to blind them to their own misery until the shefali arrow has withered in their hearts; and this he does with eyes open and of deliberate purpose. So far poets have sinned; but it is a vulgar error to suppose Love garrulous, a bastard child of Momus and Aphrodite; whereas in truth he is the lawful son of Hephaistos; but he has swallowed his father down, and for that reason those lovely lips, the scarlet portals of Passion's treasury, do not yield up their store of pearls and rubies — nay dare not so much as open lest Hephaistos escape and in his anger blast the world.

“Thus then I paint Love.”

A murmur of applause flew like a wild spirit from mouth to mouth.

“Record me a confirmed Pythagorean” said Julian “the soul of Agathon did not perish in Macedonia.”

“Yet I dare say, Vernon” replied Erinna “you do not believe a word of what Agathon has been saying.”

“Yet your belief is the bastard of Momus rather than the heir of Peitho” rejoined Helen Woodward.

“I confess, Powell” replied Julian “that the manner pleased me better than the matter.”

“Your reason, Julian?”

“Your picture was too beautiful to be true.”

“That is a recommendation” said Erinna.

“To the artist but not to the critic.”

“How would you define Love, Julian?” asked Corydon.

"Give me a moment to think."

"You will be harshly criticised."

"Heine speed me! How will this do — the smile of a drunken God."

There was applause.

"Ah but it is perfect" exclaimed Dufresne between a laugh and a sigh.

"But Marc might give us a better" suggested Philip.

"In its own way" assented Marc "Love is spiritual champagne, the best of wines if the briefest."

The characteristic answer set the echoes rocking to Homeric mirth.

"A poisonous purple flower" said Helen "but its chalice collects the pure wine of heaven."

"It is the paean of the soul heavenward or its dithyramb hell-ward" subjoined Corydon.

O'Ruark dissented. "It is a strange mania which everyone is bound to catch, mostly at a certain age — in short the spiritual measles."

A burst of laughter greeted this Irish flight.

"Love is a runner in the race of life with the parsley wreath of joy for his prize" said Philip, formulating the sensations of the moment in an aphorism.

"Alas, to wear it for a day" said Pattison Ely "he is the bridegroom of Sin and the father of Satiety."

"Ah no, but the child of Sin" corrected Julian "beautiful child of a more beautiful mother."

"Is it not Sin itself" suggested Erinna "Sin, the true philosopher's stone which turns life from dull lead to gold."

"What is Sin?" asked Julian smiling.

"The invention of spiritual alchemists; it turns a leaden life to gold."

"A modern discovery, I think" said Powell.

"A modern revival" corrected Erinna "they lost the secret in the Dark Ages; that is why the history of the time is so dull. Sin was legalised and therefore gave no pleasure."

Julian laughed.

"You have given me what I have long been in search of."

"What is that, Julian?"

"A good reason for the existence of Laws."

Erinna smiled and went on. "They lost the secret of Love too and found in its place the gorgeous phantasm of chivalry. I maintain that Love is only a form of Sin."

"Yet they recognise marriage."

"They raise a monument over the corpse of Love."

"She who could best tell us what Love is, sits silent" said Helen Woodward, looking at Ella.

"It is the sole motive of man's existence" replied Ella. It was the first time she had opened her lips but the thought in her mind leaped out before she could bring it back.

There was tender laughter as of disillusioned September lenient to the emerald hopes of April; yet in the company no one save only Julian had passed the farther bourne of youth. In these days men live too fast to reckon their age by years.

But Helen Woodward looked at Ella with a world of compassion in her beautiful wild eyes.

Night flew on wingéd feet and the wine was in their speech.

At last the ladies rose and left the room; to the heart of Ella it seemed as [*incomplete*]





# The Harmony of Virtue



# Book One

*Keshav Ganesh — Broome Wilson*

*Keshav* — My dear Broome, how opportune is your arrival! You will save me from the malady of work, it may be, from the dangerous opium of solitude. How is it I have not seen you for the last fortnight?

*Wilson* — Surely, Keshav, you can understand the exigencies of the Tripos?

*Keshav* — Ah, you are a happy man. You can do what you are told. But put off your academical aspirations until tomorrow and we will talk. The cigarettes are on the mantelpiece — pardon my indolence! — and the lucifers are probably stowed on the fruit-shelf. And here is coffee and a choice between cake and biscuits. Are you perfectly happy?

*Wilson* — In Elysium. But do not let the cigarettes run dry; the alliance of a warm fire and luxurious cushions will be too strong for my vigilance. Do you mean to tell me you can work here?

*Keshav* — Life is too precious to be wasted in labour, & above all this especial moment of life, the hour after dinner, when we have only just enough energy to be idle. Why, it is only for this I tolerate the wearisome activity of the previous twelve hours.

*Wilson* — You are a living paradox. Is it not just like you to pervert indolence into the aim of life?

*Keshav* — Why, what other aim can there be?

*Wilson* — Duty, I presume.

*Keshav* — I cannot consent to cherish an opinion until I realise the meaning of duty.

*Wilson* — I suppose I have pledged myself to an evening of metaphysics. We do our duty when we do what we ought to do.

*Keshav* — A very lucid explanation; but how do we know

that we are doing what we ought to do?

*Wilson* — Why, we must do what society requires of us.

*Keshav* — And must we do that, even when society requires something dissonant with our nature or repugnant to our convictions?

*Wilson* — I conceive so.

*Keshav* — And if society requires us to sacrifice our children or to compel a widow to burn herself we are bound to comply?

*Wilson* — No; we should only do what is just and good.

*Keshav* — Then the fiat of society is not valid; duty really depends on something quite different.

*Wilson* — It appears so.

*Keshav* — Then what is your idea of that something quite different on which duty depends?

*Wilson* — Would it be wrong to select morality?

*Keshav* — Let us inquire. But before that is possible, let me know what morality is or I shall not know my own meaning.

*Wilson* — Morality is the conduct our ethical principles require of us.

*Keshav* — Take me with you. This ethical principle is then personal, not universal?

*Wilson* — I think so. For different localities different ethics. I am not a bigot to claim infallibility for my own country.

*Keshav* — So we must act in harmony with the code of ethics received as ideal by the society we move in?

*Wilson* — I suppose it comes to that.

*Keshav* — But, my dear Broome, does not that bring us back to your previous theory that we should do what society requires of us?

*Wilson* — I am painfully afraid it does.

*Keshav* — And we are agreed that this is not an accurate plumbline?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — You see the consequence?

*Wilson* — I see I must change my ground and say that we must do what our personal sense of the right and just requires of us.

*Keshav* — For example if my personal sense of the right and just, tells me that to lie is meritorious, it is my duty to lie to the best of my ability.

*Wilson* — But no one could possibly think that.

*Keshav* — I think that the soul of Ithacan Ulysses has not yet completed the cycle of his transmigrations, nor would I wrong the author of the *Hippias* by ignoring his conclusions. Or why go to dead men for an example? The mould has not fallen on the musical lips of the Irish Plato nor is Dorian Gray forgotten on the hundred tongues of Rumour.

*Wilson* — If our sense of right is really so prone to error, we should not rely upon it.

*Keshav* — Then, to quote M<sup>rs</sup> Mountstuart, you have just succeeded in telling me nothing. Duty is not based on our personal sense of the right and just.

*Wilson* — I allow it is not.

*Keshav* — But surely there is some species of touchstone by which we can discern between the false and the true?

*Wilson* — If there is I cannot discover it.

*Keshav* — Ah, but do try again. There is luck in odd numbers.

*Wilson* — The only other touchstone I can imagine is religion; and now I come to think of it, religion is an infallible touchstone.

*Keshav* — I am glad you think so; for all I know at present you are very probably right. But have you any reason for your conviction?

*Wilson* — A code of morality built upon religion has no commerce with the demands of society or our personal sense of the right and just, but is the very law of God.

*Keshav* — I will not at present deny the reality of a personal God endowed with passions & prejudices; that is not indispensable to our argument. But are there not many religions and have they not all their peculiar schemes of morality?

*Wilson* — No doubt, but some are more excellent than others.

*Keshav* — And do you cherish the opinion that your own

peculiar creed — I believe it to be Christianity without Christ — is indubitably the most excellent of all religions?

*Wilson* — By far the most excellent.

*Keshav* — And your own ethical scheme, again the Christian without the emotional element, the best of all ethical schemes?

*Wilson* — I have no doubt of it.

*Keshav* — And they are many who dissent from you, are there not?

*Wilson* — Oh without doubt.

*Keshav* — And you would impose your ethical scheme on them?

*Wilson* — No; but I imagine it to be the goal whither all humanity is tending.

*Keshav* — That is a very different question. Do you think that when a man's life is in harmony with his own creed, but not with yours, he is therefore not virtuous, or in your own phrase, deviates from his duty?

*Wilson* — God forbid!

*Keshav* — Then you really do believe that a man does his duty when he lives in harmony with the ethical scheme patronised by his own religion, as a Mohammadan if he follows the injunctions of the Prophet, a Hindu if he obeys the Vedic Scriptures, a Christian, if his life is a long self-denial.

*Wilson* — That I admit.

*Keshav* — Then the ethical scheme of Islam is as much the very law of God, as the ethical scheme of Christianity, and the morals of Hinduism are not less divine than the morals of Islam.

*Wilson* — I hardly understand how you arrive at that conclusion.

*Keshav* — Did you not say, Broome, that religion is an infallible test of duty, because it is the very law of God?

*Wilson* — I still say so.

*Keshav* — And that everyone must adopt his own religion as the test of what he should do or not do?

*Wilson* — I cannot deny it.

*Keshav* — Then must you not either admit the reason to be

invalid or that anyone's peculiar religion, to whatever species it may belong, is the very law of God?

*Wilson* — I prefer the second branch of the dilemma.

*Keshav* — But tho' every religion is the very law of God, nevertheless you will often find one enjoining a practice which to another is an abomination. And can God contradict himself?

*Wilson* — You mistake the point. Islam, Hinduism, indeed all Scriptural religions were given, because the peoples professing them were not capable of receiving a higher light.

*Keshav* — Is not God omnipotent?

*Wilson* — A limited God is not God at all.

*Keshav* — Then was it not within his omnipotent power to so guide the world, that there would be no necessity for different dealings with different peoples?

*Wilson* — It was within his power, but he did not choose.

*Keshav* — Exactly: he did not choose. He of set purpose preferred a method which he knew would bring him to falsehood and injustice.

*Wilson* — What words you use! The truth is merely that God set man to develop under certain conditions and suited his methods to those conditions.

*Keshav* — Oh, then God is practically a scientist making an experiment; and you demand for him reverence and obedience from the creature vivisected. Then I can only see one other explanation. Having created certain conditions he could not receive the homage of mankind without various and mutually dissident revelations of his will.

Now imagine a physician with theosophical power who for purposes of gain so modified the climatic features of Judaea & Arabia that the same disease required two distinct methods of treatment in the one & the other. This he does wilfully and deliberately and with foreknowledge of the result. As soon as his end is assured, our physician goes to Judaea and gives the people a drug which, he tells them, is the sole remedy for their disease, but all others are the property of quacks and will eventually induce an increase of the malady. Five years later the same

physician goes off to Arabia and here he gives them another drug of an accurately opposite nature about which he imparts the same instructions. Now if we remember that the climatic conditions which necessitated the deception, were the deliberate work of the deceiver, shall we not call that physician a liar and an impostor? Is God a liar? or an impostor?

*Wilson* — We must not measure the Almighty by our poor mortal standards.

*Keshav* — Pshaw, Broome, if the legislator overrides his own laws, how can you hope that others will observe them?

*Wilson* — But if God in his incomprehensible wisdom and goodness —

*Keshav* — Incomprehensible indeed! If there is any meaning in words, the God you have described, can neither be wise nor good. Will you show me the flaw in my position?

*Wilson* — I cannot discover it.

*Keshav* — Then your suspicion is born of your disgust at the conclusion to which I have forced you.

*Wilson* — I am afraid it is.

*Keshav* — Well, shall we go on with the discussion or should I stop here?

*Wilson* — Certainly let us go on. I need not shy at a truth however disagreeable.

*Keshav* — First let me give you a glass of this champagne. I do not keep any of those infernal concoctions of alcohol and perdition of which you in Europe are so enamoured. Now here is the conclusion I draw from all that we have been saying: There are two positions open to you. One is that of the fanatic. You may say that you and those who believe with you are the specially chosen of God to be the receptacles of his grace and that all who have heard and rejected his gospel together with those who have not so much as imagined its possibility must share a similar fate and go into the outer darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. If that is the line you take up, my answer is that God is an unjust God and the wise will prefer the torments of the damned to any communion with him. The fanatic of course would be ready with his retort that the potter



has a right to do what he will with his vessels. At that point I usually abandon the conversation; to tell him that a metaphor is no argument would be futile. Even if he saw it, he would reply that God's ways are incomprehensible and therefore we should accept them without a murmur. That is a position which I have not the patience to undermine, nor if I had it, have I sufficient self-control to preserve my gravity under the ordeal.

*Wilson* — I at least, Keshav, am not in danger of burdening your patience. I have no wish to evade you by such a back-door as that.

*Keshav* — Then is it not plain to you, that you must abandon the religious basis as unsound?

*Wilson* — Yes, for you have convinced me that I have been talking nonsense the whole evening.

*Keshav* — Not at all, Broome: only you like most men have not accustomed yourself to clear and rigorous thought.

*Wilson* — I am afraid, logic is not sufficiently studied.

*Keshav* — Is it not studied too much? Logic dwindles the river of thought into a mere canal. The logician thinks so accurately that he is seldom right. No, what we want is some more of that sense which it is a mockery to call common.

*Wilson* — But if we were to eliminate the divine element from the balance, would not religion be a possible basis?

*Keshav* — No, for religious ethics would then be a mere expression of will on the part of Society. And that is open to the criticism that the commands of Society may be revolting to the right and just or inconsistent with the harmony of life.

*Wilson* — But supposing everyone to interpret for himself the ethics approved by his own creed?

*Keshav* — The Inquisitors did that. Do you consider the result justified the method?

*Wilson* — The Inquisitors?

*Keshav* — They were a class of men than whom you will find none more scrupulous or in their private lives more gentle, chivalrous & honourable, or in their public conduct more obedient to their sense of duty. They tortured the bodies of a few, that the souls of thousands might live. They did murder in the

sight of the Lord and looked upon their handiwork and saw that it was good.

*Wilson* — My dear Keshav, surely that is extravagant.

*Keshav* — Why, do you imagine that they were actuated by any other motive?

*Wilson* — Yes, by the desire to preserve the integrity of the Church.

*Keshav* — And is not that the first duty of every Christian?

*Wilson* — Only by the permissible method of persuasion.

*Keshav* — That is your opinion but was it theirs? Duty is a phantasm spawned in the green morass of human weakness & ignorance, but perpetuated by vague thought and vaguer sentiment. And so long as we are imperatively told to do our duty, without knowing why we should do it, the vagueness of private judgment, the cruelty of social coercion will be the sole arbiters and the saint will be a worse enemy of virtue than the sinner.

Will you have another cigarette?

*Wilson* — Thanks, I will.

But, Keshav, I am not disposed to leave the discussion with this purely negative result. Surely there is some guiding principle which should modify and harmonize our actions. Or are you favourable to an anarchy in morals?

*Keshav* — No, Broome. If culture and taste were universal, principle would then be a superfluous note in the world's composition. But so long as men are crude, without tact, formless, incapable of a balanced personality, so long the banner of the ideal must be waved obtrusively before the eyes of men, and education remain a necessity, so long must the hateful phrase, a higher morality, mean something more than empty jargon of sciolists. Yes, I think there is that guiding principle you speak of, or at least we may arrive at something like it, if we look long enough.

*Wilson* — Then do look for it, Keshav. I am sure you will find something original and beautiful. Come, I will be idle tonight and abandon the pursuit of knowledge to waste time in the pursuit of thought. Begin and I will follow my leader.

*Keshav* — Before I begin, let me remove one or two of those popular fallacies born of indolence which encumber the wings

of the speculator. And first let me say, I will not talk of duty: it is a word I do not like, for it is always used in antagonism to pleasure, and brings back the noisome savour of the days when to do what I was told, was held out as my highest legitimate aspiration. I will use instead the word virtue, whose inherent meaning is manliness, in other words, the perfect evolution by the human being of the inborn qualities and powers native to his humanity.

Another thing I would like to avoid is the assumption that there is somewhere and somehow an ideal morality, which draws an absolute and a sharp distinction between good and evil. Thus it is easy to say that chastity is good, licence is evil. But what if someone were to protest that this is a mistake, that chastity is bad, licence is good. How are you going to refute him? If you appeal to authority, he will deny that your authority is valid; if you quote religion, he will remind you that your religion is one of a multitude; if you talk of natural perception, he will retort that natural perception cancels itself by arriving at opposite results. How will you unseat him from his position?

*Wilson* — Yes, you can show that good is profitable, while evil is hurtful.

*Keshav* — You mean the appeal to utility?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — That is without doubt an advance. Now can you show that good is profitable, that is to say, has good effects, while evil is hurtful, that is to say, has bad effects?

*Wilson* — Easily. Take your instance of chastity and licence. One is the ground-work of that confidence which is the basis of marriage and therefore the keystone of society; the other kills confidence and infects the community with a bad example.

*Keshav* — You fly too fast for me, Broome. You say chastity is the basis of marriage?

*Wilson* — Surely you will not deny it?

*Keshav* — And licence in one leads to prevalent unchastity?

*Wilson* — It has that tendency.

*Keshav* — And you think you have proved chastity to be profitable and licence hurtful?

*Wilson* — Why, yes. Do not you?

*Keshav* — No, my friend; for I have not convinced myself that marriage is a good effect and prevalent unchastity a bad effect.

*Wilson* — Only paradox can throw any doubt on that. Assuredly you will not deny that without marriage and public decency, society is unimaginable?

*Keshav* — I suppose you will allow that in Roman society under the Emperors marriage was extant? And yet will you tell me that in those ages chastity was the basis of marriage?

*Wilson* — I should say that marriage in the real sense of the word was not extant.

*Keshav* — Then what becomes of your postulate that without marriage and public decency society is unimaginable?

*Wilson* — Can you bestow the name on the world of Nero & Caracalla?

*Keshav* — Certainly, if I understand the significance of the word. Wherever the mutual dependence of men builds up a community cemented by a chain of rights and liabilities, that, I imagine, is a society.

*Wilson* — Certainly, that is a society.

*Keshav* — And will you then hesitate to concede the name to imperial Italy?

*Wilson* — Yes, but you will not deny that from the unreality of marriage and the impudent disregard of common decency, — at once its cause and effect — there grew up a prevalence of moral corruption, but for which the Roman world would not have succumbed with such nerveless ease to Scythia and its populous multitude.

*Keshav* — What then? I do not deny it.

*Wilson* — Was not that a bad effect?

*Keshav* — By bad, I presume you mean undesirable?

*Wilson* — That of course.

*Keshav* — Perhaps it was, but should we not say that Rome fell because barbarism was strong not because she was feeble?

*Wilson* — Rome uncorrupted was able to laugh at similar perils.

*Keshav* — Then to have Rome safe, you would have had her remain barbarous?

*Wilson* — Did I say so?

*Keshav* — You implied it. In Rome the triumphal chariot of Corruption was drawn by the winged horses, Culture and Art. And it is always so. From the evergreen foliage of the Periclean era there bloomed that gorgeous and overblown flower, Athens of the philosophers, a corrupt luxurious city, the easy vassal of Macedon, the easier slave of Rome. From the blending of Hellenic with Persian culture was derived that Oriental pomp and lavish magnificence which ruined the kingdoms of the East. And Rome, their conqueror, she too when the Roman in her died and the Italian lived, when the city of wolves became the abode of men, bartered her savage prosperity for a splendid decline. Yes, the fulness of the flower is the sure prelude of decay.

Look at the India of Vikramaditya. How gorgeous was her beauty! how Olympian the voices of her poets! how sensuous the pencil of her painters! how languidly voluptuous the outlines of her sculpture! In those days every man was marvellous to himself and many were marvellous to their fellows; but the mightiest marvel of all were the philosophers. What a Philosophy was that! For she scaled the empyrean on the wingèd sandals of meditation, soared above the wide fires of the sun and above the whirling stars, up where the flaming walls of the universe are guiltless of wind or cloud, and there in the burning core of existence saw the face of the most high God. She saw God and did not perish; rather fell back to earth, not blasted with excess of light, but with a mystic burden on her murmuring lips too large for human speech to utter or for the human brain to understand. Such was she then. Yet five rolling centuries had not passed when sleepless, all-beholding Surya saw the sons of Mahomet pour like locusts over the green fields of her glory and the wrecks of that mighty fabric whirling down the rapids of barbarism into the shores of night. They were barbarous, therefore mighty: we were civilized, therefore feeble.

*Wilson* — But was not your civilization premature? The

building too hastily raised disintegrates and collapses, for it has the seeds of death in its origin. May not the utilitarian justly condemn it as evil?

*Keshav* — What the utilitarian may not justly do, it is beyond the limits of my intellect to discover. Had it not been for these premature civilizations, had it not been for the Athens of Plato, the Rome of the Caesars, the India of Vikramaditya, what would the world be now? It was premature, because barbarism was yet predominant in the world; and it is wholly due to our premature efflorescence that your utilitarians can mount the high stool of folly and defile the memory of the great. When I remember that, I do not think I can deny that we were premature. I trust and believe that the civilization of the future will not come too late rather than too early. No, the utilitarian with his sordid creed may exalt the barbarian and spit his livid contempt upon culture, but the great heart of the world will ever beat more responsive to the flame-wingèd words of the genius than to the musty musings of the moralists. It is better to be great and perish, than to be little and live. But where was I when the wind of tirade carried me out of my course?

*Wilson* — You were breaching the defences of utilitarian morality.

*Keshav* — Ah, I remember. What I mean is this; the utilitarian arrives at his results by an arbitrary application of the epithets “good” and “bad”.<sup>1</sup> This mistake is of perpetual occurrence in Bentham and gives the basis for the most monstrous and shocking of his theories. For example the servitude of women is justified by the impossibility of marriage without it. Again he condemns theft by a starving man as a heinous offence because it is likely to disturb security. He quite forgets to convince us, as the author of a system professedly grounded on logic should

<sup>1</sup> *The following passage was written at the top of the manuscript page. Its place of insertion was not marked:*

When we say a fruit is wholesome or unwholesome, we mean that it is harmless & nutritious food or that it tends to dysentery & colic, but when we say that anything is good or bad, we apply the epithets like tickets without inquiring what we mean by them; we have no moral touchstone that tells gold from spurious metal.

have done, that the survival of marriage is a desirable effect or property more valuable than life.

*Wilson* — I confess that Bentham on those two subjects is far too cavalier and offhand to please me, but the utilitarian system can stand on another basis than Bentham supplies.

*Keshav* — Yours is a curious position, Broome. You are one of those who would expunge the part of Hamlet from the play that bears his name. Your religion is Christianity without Christ, your morality Benthamism without Bentham. Nevertheless my guns are so pointed that they will breach any wall you choose to set up. For this is common to all utilitarians that they lose sight of a paramount consideration: the epithets “good” and “bad” are purely conventional and have no absolute sense, but their meaning may be shifted at the will of the speaker. Indeed they have been the root of so many revolting ideas and of so many and such monstrous social tyrannies, that I should not be sorry to see them expelled from the language, as unfit to be in the company of decent words. Why do you smile?

*Wilson* — The novelty of the idea amused me.

*Keshav* — Yes, I know that “*original*” and “*fool*” are synonymous in the world’s vocabulary.

*Wilson* — That was a nasty one for me. However I am afraid I shall be compelled to agree with you.

*Keshav* — Do you admit that there is only one alternative, faith without reason or the recognition of morality as a conventional term without any absolute meaning?

*Wilson* — I should rather say that morality is the idea of what is just and right in vogue among a given number of people.

*Keshav* — You have exactly described it. Are you content to take this as your touchstone?

*Wilson* — Neither this, nor faith without reason.

*Keshav* — Two positions abandoned at a blow? That is more than I had the right to expect. Now, as the time is slipping by, let us set out on the discovery of some law, or should I not rather say, some indicating tendency by which we may arrive at a principle of life?

*Wilson* — I am anxious to hear it.

*Keshav* — Let us furnish ourselves with another glass of claret for the voyage. You will have some?

*Wilson* — Thanks.

*Keshav* — My first difficulty when I set out on a voyage of discovery is to select the most probable route. I look at my chart and I see one marked justice along which the trade winds blow; but whoever has weighed anchor on this path has arrived like Columbus at another than the intended destination, without making half so valuable a discovery. Another route is called “beauty” and along this no-one has yet sailed. An Irish navigator has indeed attempted it and made some remarkable discoveries, but he has clothed his account in such iridescent wit and humour, that our good serious English audience either grin foolishly at him from a vague idea that they ought to feel amused or else shake their heads and grumble that the fellow is corrupting the youth and ruining their good old Saxon gravity; why he actually makes people laugh at the beliefs they have been taught by their venerable and aged grandmothers. But as for believing his traveller’s tales — they believe them not a whit. Possibly if we who do not possess this dangerous gift of humour, were to follow the path called beauty, we might hit the target of our desires: if not we might at least discover things wonderful and new to repay us for our labour. And so on with other possible routes. Now which shall we choose? for much hangs on our selection. Shall we say justice?

*Wilson* — Let me know first what justice is.

*Keshav* — I do not know, but I think no-one would hesitate to describe it as forbearance from interfering with the rights of others.

*Wilson* — That is a good description.

*Keshav* — Possibly, but so long as we do not know what are the rights of others, the description, however good, can have no meaning.

*Wilson* — Can we not discover, what are the rights of others?

*Keshav* — We have been trying for the last three-thousand years; with how much or how little success, I do not like to say.



*Wilson* — Then let us try another tack.

*Keshav* — Can you tell me which one we should choose? My own idea is that the word “*beauty*” is replete with hopeful possibilities.

*Wilson* — Is not that because it is used in a hundred different senses?

*Keshav* — I own that the word, as used today, is like so many others a relative term. But if we were to fix a permanent and absolute meaning on it, should we not say that beauty is that which fills us with a sense of satisfying pleasure and perfect fitness?

*Wilson* — Yes, I think beauty must certainly be judged by its effects.

*Keshav* — But are there not minds so moulded that they are dead to all beauty and find more charm in the showy and vulgar than in what is genuinely perfect and symmetrical?

*Wilson* — There can be no doubt of that.

*Keshav* — Then beauty still remains a relative term?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — That is unfortunate. Let us try and find some other test for it. And in order to arrive at this, should we not take something recognized by all to be beautiful and examine in what its beauty lies?

*Wilson* — That is distinctly our best course. Let us take the commonest type of beauty, a rose.

*Keshav* — Then in what lies the beauty of a rose if not in its symmetry? Why has the whole effect that satisfying completeness which subjugates the senses, if not because Nature has blended in harmonious proportion the three elements of beauty; colour, perfume, and form? Now beauty may exist separately in any two of these elements and where it does so, the accession of the third would probably mar the perfection of that species of beauty; as in sculpture where form in its separate existence finds a complete expression and is blended harmoniously with perfume — for character or emotion is the perfume of the human form; just as sound is the perfume of poetry and music — but if a sculptor tints his statue, the effect

displeases us, because it seems gaudy or tinsel, or in plain words disproportionate.

In some cases beauty seems to have only one of these elements, for example frankincense and music which seem to possess perfume only, but in reality we shall find that they have each one or both of the other elements. For incense would not be half so beautiful, if we did not see the curling folds of smoke floating like loose drapery in the air, nor would music be music if not harmoniously blended with form and colour, or as we usually call them, technique and meaning. Again there are other cases in which beauty undoubtedly has one only of the three elements: and such are certain scents like myrrh, eucalyptus and others, which possess neither colour nor form, isolated hues such as the green and purple and violet painted on floor and walls by the afternoon sun and architectural designs which have no beauty but the isolated beauty of form.

The criticism of ages has shown a fit appreciation of these harmonies by adjudging the highest scale of beauty to those forms which blend the three elements and the lowest to those which boast only of one. Thus sculpture is a far nobler art than architecture, for while both may compass an equal perfection of form, sculpture alone possesses the larger harmony derived by the union of form and perfume. Similarly the human form is more divine than sculpture because it has the third element, colour; and the painting of figures is more beautiful than the portrayal of landscapes, because the latter is destitute of perfume, while figures of life have always that character or emotion which we have called the perfume of the living form.

Again if we take two forms of beauty otherwise exactly on the same level, we shall find that the more beautiful in which the three elements are more harmoniously blended. As for instance a perfect human form and a perfect poem; whichever we may admire, we shall find our reason, if we probe for it, to be that the whole is more perfectly blended and the result a more satisfying completeness.

If we think of all this, it will assuredly not be too rash to describe beauty by calling the general effect harmony and the

ulterior cause proportion. What is your opinion, Broome?

*Wilson* — Your idea is certainly remarkable and novel, but the language you have selected is so intricate that I am in the dark as to whether it admits of invariable application.

*Keshav* — The usual effect of endeavouring to be too explicit is to mystify the hearer. I will try to dive into less abysmal depths. Can you tell me, why a curve is considered more beautiful than a straight line?

*Wilson* — No, except that the effect is more pleasing.

*Keshav* — Ah yes, but why should it be more pleasing?

*Wilson* — I cannot tell.

*Keshav* — I will tell you. It is because a curve possesses that variety which is the soul of proportion. It rises, swells and falls with an exact propriety — it is at once various and regular as rolling water; while the stiff monotony of a straight line disgusts the soul by its meaningless rigidity and want of proportion. On the other hand a system of similar curves, unless very delicately managed, cannot possibly suggest the idea of beauty: and that is because there is no proportion, for proportion, I would impress on you, consists in a regular variety. And thus a straight line, tho' in itself ugly, can be very beautiful if properly combined with curves. Here again the like principle applies.

Do you now understand?

*Wilson* — Yes, I admit that your theory is wonderfully complete and consistent.

*Keshav* — If you want a farther illustration, I will give you one. And just as before we selected the most commonly received type of beauty, I will now select the most perfect: and that, I think, is a perfect poem. Would you not agree with me?

*Wilson* — No, I should give the palm to a perfectly beautiful face.

*Keshav* — I think you are wrong.

*Wilson* — Have you any reason for thinking so?

*Keshav* — Yes, and to me a very satisfying reason. The three elements of beauty do not blend with absolutely perfect harmony in a human face. Have you not frequently noticed that those faces which express the most soul, the most genius, the most

character, are not perfectly harmonious in their form?

*Wilson* — Yes, the exceptions are rare.

*Keshav* — And the reason is that to emphasize the character, the divine artist has found himself compelled to emphasize certain of the features above the others, for instance, the lips, the eyes, the forehead, the chin, and to give them an undue prominence which destroys that proportion without which there can be no perfect harmony. Do you perceive my meaning?

*Wilson* — Yes, and I do not think your conclusions can be disputed.

*Keshav* — In a perfectly beautiful face the emotion has to be modified and discouraged, so as not to disturb the harmony of form: but in a perfectly beautiful poem the maker has indeed to blend with exquisite nicety the three elements of beauty, but though the colour may be gorgeous, the emotion piercingly vivid, the form deliriously lovely, yet each of these has so just a share of the effect, that we should find it difficult to add to or to detract from any one of them without fatally injuring the perfection of the whole.

And so it is with every form of beauty that is not originally imperfect; to detract or add would be alike fatal; for alteration means abolition. Each syllable is a key-stone and being removed, the whole imposing structure crumbles in a moment to the ground.

Can we better describe this perfect blending of parts than by the word proportion? or is its entire effect anything but harmony?

*Wilson* — There are indeed no better words.

*Keshav* — And this harmony runs through the warp and woof of Nature. Look at the stars, the brain of heaven, as Meredith calls them. How they march tossing on high their golden censers to perfume night with the frankincense of beauty! They are a host of wingèd insects crawling on the blue papyrus of heaven, a swarm of golden gnats, a cloud of burning dust, a wonderful effect of sparkling atoms caught and perpetuated by the instantaneous pencil of Nature. And yet they are none of all these, but a vast and interdependent economy of worlds.

Those burning globes as they roll in silent orbits through the infinite inane, are separated by an eternity of space. They are individual and alone, but from each to each thrill influences unfathomed and unconscious, marvellous magnetisms, curious repulsions that check like adverse gales or propel like wind in bellying canvas, and bind these solitary splendours into one supernal harmony of worlds. The solar harmony we know. How gloriously perfect it is, how united in isolation, how individual in unity! How star answers to star and the seven wandering dynasts of destiny as they roll millions of leagues apart, drag with them the invisible magnetic cord which binds them for ever to the sun. We believe that those lights we call fixed are each a sun with a rhythmic harmony of planets dancing in immeasurable gyrations around one immovable, immortal star. More, is it extravagant to guess that what to us is fixed, is a planet to God? Perhaps to the inhabitants of the moon this tumbling earth of ours is a fixed and constant light, and perhaps the glorious ball of fire we worship as the Lord of Light, is the satrap of some majesty more luminous and more large. Thus we may conceive of the universe as a series of subordinate harmonies, each perfect in itself and helping to consummate the harmony which is one and universal.

Well may the poet give the stars that majestic synonym

The army of unalterable law.

But the law that governs the perishable flower, the ephemeral moth, is not more changeful than the law that disciplines the movements of the eternal fires. The rose burns in her season; the moth lives in his hour: not even the wind bloweth where it listeth unless it preserve the boundaries prescribed by Nature. Each is a separate syllable in the grand poem of the universe: and it is all so inalterable because it is so perfect. Yes, Tennyson was right, tho' like most poets, he knew not what he said, when he wrote those lines on the flower in the crannies: if we know what the flower is, we know also what God is and what man.

*Wilson* — I begin to catch a glimpse of your drift. But is there no discordant element in this universal harmony?

*Keshav* — There is. As soon as we come to life, we find that God's imagination is no longer unerring; we almost think that he has reached a conception which it is beyond his power to execute. It is true that there are grand and beautiful lines in the vast epic of life, but others there are so unmusical and discordant that we can scarcely believe but that Chance was the author of existence. The beautiful lines are no doubt wonderful; among the insects the peacock-winged butterfly, the light spendthrift of unclouded hours; the angry wasp, that striped and perilous tiger of the air; the slow murmuring bee, an artist in honey and with the true artist's indolence outside his art: and then the birds — the tawny eagle shouting his clangorous aspiration against the sun; the cruel shrike, his talons painted in murder; the murmuring dove robed in the pure and delicate hue of constancy: the inspired skylark with his matin-song descending like a rain of fire from the blushing bosom of the dawn. Nay the beasts too are not without their fine individualities: the fire-eyed lion, the creeping panther, the shy fawn, the majestic elephant; each fill a line of the great poem and by contrast enhance harmony.

But what shall we say of the imaginations that inspire nothing but disgust, the grub, the jackal, the vulture? And when we come to man, we are half inclined to throw up our theory in despair. For we only see a hideous dissonance, a creaking melody, a ghastly failure. We see the philosopher wearing a crown of thorns and the fool robed in purple and fine linen: the artist drudging at a desk and the average driving his quill thro' reams of innocent paper: we see genius thrust aside into the hedges and stupidity driving her triumphal chariot on the beaten paths of social existence. Once we might have said that nature like a novice in art was rising through failures and imperfections into an artistic consummation and that when Evolution had exhausted her energies, her eyes would gaze on a perfect universe. But when we come to the human being, her most ambitious essay, the cynicism of frustrated hope steals slowly over us. I am reminded of some lines in a sonnet more remarkable for power than for felicitous expression.

She crowned her wild work with one foulest wrong  
When first she lighted on a seeming goal  
And darkly blundered on man's suffering soul.

It is as if nature in admitting action into her universe were in the position of a poet who trusted blindly to inspiration without subjecting his work to the instincts of art or the admonitions of the critical faculty; but once dissatisfied with his work begins to pass his pen repeatedly thro' his after performances, until he seems at last to have lighted on a perfect inspiration. His greatest essay completed he suddenly discovers that one touch of realism running thro' the whole work has fatally injured its beauty. Similarly Nature in moulding man, made a mistake of the first importance. She gave him the faculty of reason and by the use of her gift he has stultified the beauty of her splendid imaginations.

Tennyson, by one of his felicitous blunders, has again hit upon the truth when he conceives the solemn wail of a heaven-born spirit in the agony of his disillusioning.

I saw him in the shining of his stars,  
I marked him in the flowering of his fields,  
But in his ways with men I found him not.

How true is every syllable! God burns in the star, God blossoms in the rose: the cloud is the rushing dust of his chariot, the sea is the spuming mirror of his moods. His breath whistles in the wind, his passion reddens in the sunset, his anguish drops in the rain. The darkness is the soft fall of his eyelashes over the purple magnificence of his eyes: the sanguine dawn is his flushed and happy face as he leaves the flowery pillow of sleep; the moonlight is nothing but the slumberous glint of his burning tresses when thro' them glimmer the heaving breasts of Eternity. What to him are the petty imaginings of human aspiration; our puny frets, our pitiable furies, our melodramatic passions? If he deigns to think of us, it is as incompetent actors who have wholly misunderstood the bent of our powers. The comedian rants in the vein of Bombastes; the tragic artist plays the buffoon in the pauses of

a pantomime, and the genius that might have limned the passion of a Romeo, moulds the lumpish ineptitude of a Cloten. God lifting his happy curls from the white bosom of Beauty, shoots the lightning of his glance upon our antics and we hear his mockery hooting at us in the thunder. Why should he squander a serious thought on a farce so absurd and extravagant?

*Wilson* — And are these the ultimate syllables of Philosophy?

*Keshav* — You are impatient, Broome. What I have arrived at is the discovery that human life is, if not the only, at any rate the principal note in Nature that jars with the grand idea underlying her harmony. Do you agree with me?

*Wilson* — He would be a hopeless optimist who did not.

*Keshav* — And are you of the opinion that it is the exercise by man of his will-power to which we owe the discord?

*Wilson* — No, I would throw the blame on Nature.

*Keshav* — After the example of Adam? “The woman tempted me and I did eat.” I too am a son of Adam and would throw the blame on Nature. But once her fault is admitted, has not the human will been manifestly her accomplice?

*Wilson* — Her instrument rather.

*Keshav* — Very well, her instrument. You admit that?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Then if the human will, prompted by Nature or her servant, False Reason, has marred the universal harmony, may not the human will, prompted by Right Reason who is also the servant of Nature, mend the harmony he has marred? Or if that puzzles you, let me put the question in another form. Does not a wilful choice of sensuality imply an alternative of purity?

*Wilson* — It does.

*Keshav* — And a wilful choice of unbelief an alternative of belief?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Then on the same principle, if the human will chose to mar the harmony of nature, was it not within its power to choose the opposite course and fulfil the harmony?

*Wilson* — Certainly that follows.



*Keshav* — And through ignorance and the promptings of False Reason we preferred to spoil rather than to fulfil?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — And we can mend what we mar?

*Wilson* — Sometimes.

*Keshav* — Well then, can we not choose to mend the harmony we originally chose to mar?

*Wilson* — I do not think it probable.

*Keshav* — An admission that it is possible, is all I want to elicit from you.

*Wilson* — I do not know that.

*Keshav* — Have not some episodes of the great epic rung more in unison with the grand harmony than others?

*Wilson* — Yes; the old-world Greeks were more in tune with the Universe than we.

*Keshav* — The name of the episode does not signify. You admit a race or an epoch which has fallen into the harmony more than others?

*Wilson* — Freely.

*Keshav* — Then as you admit the more and the less, will you not admit that the more may become in its turn the less — that there may be the yet more? May we not attain to a more perfect harmony with the universe than those who have been most in harmony with it?

*Wilson* — It is possible.

*Keshav* — If it is possible, should we not go on and inquire how it is possible?

*Wilson* — That is the next step.

*Keshav* — And when we have found an answer to our inquiries, shall we not have solved this difficult question of a new basis for morality?

*Wilson* — Yes, we shall: for I see now that to be in harmony with beauty, or, in other words, to take the guiding principle of the universe as the guiding principle of human life, is the final and perfect aim of the human species.

*Keshav* — Broome, you have the scent of a sleuth-hound.

*Wilson* — I am afraid that is ironical. You must remember

that we are not all philosophers yet. Still I should have liked to see how the idea came out in practice.

*Keshav* — If you can spare me another night or it may be two, we will pursue the idea through its evolutions. I am deeply interested, for to me as to you it is perfectly novel.

*Wilson* — Shall you be free on Thursday night?

*Keshav* — As free as the wind.

*Wilson* — Then I will come. Goodnight.

*Keshav* — Goodnight, and God reward you for giving me your company.

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End of Book the First

## Book Two

*Keshav Ganesh [Desai] — Trevor — Broome Wilson*

*Keshav* — Ah, Broome, so the magnetism of thought has broken the chains of duty? May I introduce you? M<sup>r</sup> Trevor of Kings, M<sup>r</sup> Broome Wilson of Jesus. Would you like wine or coffee?

*Wilson* — Perhaps for an evening of metaphysics wine is the most appropriate prelude.

*Keshav* — You agree then with the Scythians who made a point of deliberating when drunk? They were perhaps right; one is inclined to think that most men are wiser drunk than sober. I have been endeavouring to explain my line of argument to Trevor, I am afraid with indifferent success.

*Wilson* — Can I do anything to help you?

*Keshav* — I have no doubt you can. Would you mind stating your difficulty, Trevor? I think you allow that every other basis of morality is unsound but uphold the utilitarian model as perfectly logical and consistent.

*Trevor* — Yes, that is what I hold to, and I do not think, Desai, you have at all shaken its validity.

*Keshav* — You do not admit that the epithets “good” and “bad” have a purely conventional force.

*Trevor* — Yes, I admit that, but I add that we have fixed a definite meaning on the epithets and adhered to it all through our system.

*Keshav* — If so, you are fortunate. Can you tell me the definite meaning to which you refer?

*Trevor* — The basis of our system is this, that whatever is profitable, is good, whatever is the reverse, is evil. Is not that an unassailable basis?

*Keshav* — I do not think so; for two ambiguous words you have merely substituted two others only less ambiguous.

*Trevor* — I fail to see your reasoning.

*Keshav* — I will endeavour to show you what I mean. You will admit that one man's meat is another man's poison, will you not?

*Trevor* — Yes, and that is where our system works so beautifully; for we bring in our arithmetical solution of balancing the good and the evil of an action and if the scale of the evil rises, we stamp it as good, if the scale of the good rises, we brand it as evil. What do you say to that?

*Keshav* — Dear me! that does indeed sound simple and satisfying. I am afraid, Broome, we shall have to throw up our theory in favour of Bentham's. Your system is really so attractive and transparent, Trevor, that I should dearly like to learn more about it.

*Trevor* — Now you are indulging in irony, Desai; you know Bentham as well as I do.

*Keshav* — Not quite so well as all that; but I avow I have studied him very carefully. Yet from some cause I have not discovered, his arguments seldom seemed to me to have any force, while you on the other hand do really strike home to the judgment. And therefore I should like to see whether you are entirely at one with Bentham. For example I believe you prefer the good of the community to the good of the individual, do you not?

*Trevor* — Not at all: it is the individuals who are the community.

*Keshav* — It is gratifying to learn that: but if the interests of a few individuals conflict with the interests of the general body, you prefer the interests of the general body, do you not?

*Trevor* — As a matter of course.

*Keshav* — And, as a general rule, if you have to deal with a number of persons and the good of some is not reconcilable with the good of others, you prefer the good of the greater number?

*Trevor* — That again is obvious.

*Keshav* — So you accept the dogma "the greatest good of the greatest number", for if one interest of a given person or number of persons conflict with another interest, you prefer the greater?

*Trevor* — Without hesitation.

*Keshav* — And so the Athenians were right when they put Socrates to death.

*Trevor* — What makes you advance so absurd a paradox?

*Keshav* — Why, your arithmetical system of balancing the good and the evil. The injury to Socrates is not to be put in comparison with the profit to the State, for we prefer the good of the greater number, and the pleasure experienced by the youths he corrupted in his discourse and the enjoyment of their corruption is not to be so much considered as the pain they would experience from the effects of their corruption and the pain inflicted on the state by the rising generation growing up corrupt and dissolute, for among conflicting interests we prefer the greatest.

*Trevor* — But Socrates did not corrupt the youth of Athens.

*Keshav* — The Athenians thought he was corrupting their youth and they were bound to act on their opinion.

*Trevor* — They were not bound to act on their opinion, but on the facts.

*Keshav* — What is this you are telling me, Trevor? We are then only to act when we have a correct opinion, and, seeing that a definitely correct opinion can only be formed by posterity after we are dead, we are not to use your arithmetical balance or at least can only use it when we are dead? Then I do not see much utility in your arithmetical balance.

*Trevor* — Now I come to think of it, the Athenians were right in putting Socrates to death.

*Keshav* — And the Jews in crucifying Christ?

*Trevor* — Yes.

*Keshav* — I admire your fortitude, my dear Trevor. And if the English people had thought Bentham was corrupting their youth, they would have been right in hanging Bentham, would they not?

*Trevor* — What a fellow you are, Desai! Of course what I mean is that the Athenians & the Jews did not listen to their honest opinion but purely to the voice of malice.

*Keshav* — Then if these wicked people who put wise men to death not in honest folly but from malice, were to have said

to you, "Come now, you who accuse us of pure malice, are you not actuated by pure benevolence? If our approval is founded on sentiment, your disapproval is founded on the same flimsy basis; you have no reasonable objection to the poisoning of Socrates or the crucifixion of Christ or the hanging of Bentham as the case may be" and you were to tell them that your arithmetical balance said it was not profitable, would they not be justified in asking whether your arithmetical balance was infallible and whether you had a satisfactory principle which guided your calculations?

*Trevor* — Yes, and I should tell them that I valued as profitable what conduces to happiness and as unprofitable what detracts from or does not add to happiness.

*Keshav* — I am afraid that would not satisfy them, for the nature of happiness is just as disputable as the nature of profit. You do not think so? Well, for example do not some think that happiness lies in material comfort, while others look for it in the province of the intellect?

*Trevor* — These distinctions are mere nonsense; both are alike essential.

*Keshav* — Indeed we have reason to thank heaven that there are still some of the sages left who are sufficiently impartial to condemn every opinion but their own. Yet under correction, I should like to venture on a question; if the good that conduces to material comfort is not reconcilable with the good that conduces to intellectual pleasure, how do you manage your arithmetical balance?

*Trevor* — Material comfort before all things! that is a necessity, intellect a luxury.

*Keshav* — You are a consistent change-artist, Trevor; yet may there not be diverse opinions on the point?

*Trevor* — I do not see how it is possible. The human race may be happy without intellectual pleasure, but never without material comfort.

*Keshav* — Have you any historical data to bear out your generalisation?

*Trevor* — I cannot say I have, but I appeal to common sense.

*Keshav* — Oh, if you appeal to Caesar, I am lost; but be sure that if you bring your case before the tribunal of common sense, I will appeal not to common, but to uncommon sense — and that will arbitrate in my favour.

*Trevor* — Well, we must agree to differ.

*Keshav* — At any rate we have arrived at this, that you assign material comfort as the most important element in happiness, while I assign the free play of the intellect.

*Trevor* — So it seems.

*Keshav* — And you maintain that I am wrong because I disagree with you?

*Trevor* — No, because you disagree with reason.

*Keshav* — That is, with reason as you see it.

*Trevor* — If you like.

*Keshav* — And you think I am unique in my opinion?

*Trevor* — No indeed! there are too many who agree with you.

*Keshav* — Now we have gone a step farther. Apparently the nature of happiness is a matter of opinion.

*Trevor* — Oh, of course, if you like to say so.

*Keshav* — And happiness is the basis of morality. You agree? Very well, the nature of the basis is a matter of opinion, and it seems to follow that morality itself is a matter of opinion. And so we have come to this, that after rejecting as a basis of morality our individual sense of what is just and right, we have accepted our individual sense of what conduces to happiness. Therefore it is moral for you to refrain from stealing and for me to steal.

*Trevor* — That is a comfortable conclusion at any rate.

*Keshav* — Yet I think it is borne out by our premisses. Do you not imagine the security of property to be essential to happiness and anything that disturbs it immoral?

*Trevor* — That goes without saying and I admit that it is immoral for me to steal.

*Keshav* — Now I on the other hand am indeed of the opinion that material comfort is essential to happiness, for without it the intellect cannot have free play, but believing as I do that

the system of private property conduces to the comfort of the few, but its abolition will conduce to the comfort of the many, I, on the principle you have accepted, the greatest good of the greatest number, am opposed to the system of private property. And I believe that the prevalence of crimes against property will accelerate the day of abolition. I recognise indeed that the immediate effects will be evil, but put a greater value on the ultimate good than on the immediate evil. It follows that, if my reasoning be correct and we agreed that individual judgment must be the arbiter, it is perfectly moral for me to steal.

*Trevor* — There is no arguing with you, Desai. You wrest the meaning of words until one does not remember what one is talking about. The enormous length to which you carry your sophistries is appalling. If I had time, I would stop and refute you. As it is, I will leave you to pour your absurdities into more congenial ears.

*Keshav* — You are not going, Trevor?

*Trevor* — I am afraid I must. Goodnight.

*Keshav* — Goodnight.

That was rather brisker towards the close. I hope you were not bored, Broome.

*Wilson* — No, I was excellently amused. But do your arguments with him usually terminate in this abrupt fashion?

*Keshav* — Very often they do so terminate. Trevor is a good fellow — a fine intellect spoiled — but he cannot bear adversity with an equal mind. Now let us resume our inquiry.

I think we had gone so far as to discover that human life is the great element of discord in the Cosmos, and the best system of morality is that which really tends to restore the harmony of the universe, and we agreed that if we apply the principles governing the universe to human life, we shall discover the highest principle of conduct. That was the point where we broke off, was it not?

*Wilson* — Yes, we broke off just there.

*Keshav* — So we profess to have found a sense in which the theory advanced by philosophers of every age has become true, that life ought to be lived in accordance with nature and not in



accordance with convention. The error we impute to them was that they failed to keep nature distinct from human nature and forgot that the latter was complicated by the presence of that fallible reason, of which conventions are the natural children. Thus men of genius like Rousseau reverted to the savage for a model and gave weight to the paradox that civilization is a mistake. Let us not forget that it is useless to look for unalloyed nature in the savage, so long as we cannot trace human development from its origin: to the original man the savage would seem nothing but a mass of conventions. We have nothing to learn from savages; but there is a vast deal to be learned from the errors of civilized peoples. Civilization is a failure, not a mistake.

*Wilson* — That is a subtle distinction.

*Keshav* — Not at all. Civilization was necessary, if the human race was to progress at all. The pity of it is that it has taken the wrong turn and fallen into the waters of convention. There lies the failure. When man at the very first step of his history used his reason to confound the all-pervading Cosmos or harmonious arrangement of Nature, conventions became necessary in order to allure him into less faulty modes of reasoning, by which alone he could learn to rectify his error. But after the torrent had rolled for a time along its natural course and two broad rivers of Thought, the Greek and the Hindu, were losing themselves in the grand harmony, there was a gradual but perceptible swerve, and the forces of convention which had guided, began to misguide, and the Sophists in Greece, in India the Brahmans availed themselves of these mighty forces to compass their own supremacy, and once at the helm of thought gave permanence to the power by which they stood, until two religions, the most hostile to Nature, in the east Buddhism, her step-child Christianity in the west, completed the evil their predecessors had begun.

Hear the legend of Purush, the son of Prithivi, and his journey to the land of Beulah, the land of blooming gardens and yellow-vested acres and wavering tree-tops, and two roads lead to it. One road is very simple, very brief, very direct, and this leads over the smiling summit of a double-headed peak, but the other through the gaping abysses of a lion-throated antre and

it is very long, very painful, very circuitous. Now the wise and beautiful instructress of Purush had indeed warned him that all other wayfarers had chosen the ascent of the beautiful hill, but had not explicitly forbidden him to select the untried and perilous route. And the man was indolent and thought it more facile to journey smoothly through a tunnel than to breast with arduous effort the tardy and panting slope, yet plumed himself on a nobler nature than all who had gone before him, because they had obeyed their monitress, but he was guided by his reason and honourably preferred the unknown and perilous to the safe and familiar. From this tangle of motives he chose the cavernous lion-throat of the gaping antre, not the swelling breasts of the fruitful mother.

Very gaily he entered the cave singing wild ballads of the deeds his fathers wrought, of Krishna and Arjun and Ram and Ravan and their glory and their fall, but not so merrily did he journey in its entrails, but rather in hunger and thirst groped wearily with the unsleeping beak of the vulture Misery in his heart, and only now and then caught glimpses of an elusive light, yet did not realise his error but pursued with querulous reproaches the beautiful gods his happy imagination had moulded or bitterly reviled the double-dealing he imputed to his lovely and wise instructress — “for she it was” he complained “who told me of the route through the cavern”. None the less he persévered until he was warmed by the genuine smiles of daylight and joy blossoming in his heart, made his step firmer and his body more erect.

And he strode on until he arrived where the antre split in two branches, the one seeming dark as Erebus to his eyes, though indeed it was white and glorious as a naked girl and suffused by the light of the upper heaven with seas of billowing splendour, had not his eyes, grown dim from holding communion with the night and blinded by the unaccustomed brilliance, believed that the light was darkness, through which if he had persévered, he had arrived in brief space among the blooming gardens and the wavering tree-tops and the acres in their glorious golden garb and all the imperishable beauty of Beulah. And the other branch

he thought the avenue of the sunlight, because the glimmer was feeble enough to be visible, like a white arm through a sleeve of black lace. And down this branch he went, for ever allured by unreal glimpses of a dawning glory, until he has descended into the abysmal darkness and the throne of ancient night, where he walks blindly like a machine, carrying the white ashes of hope in the funeral urn of youth, and knows not whence to expect a rescue, seeing the only heaven above him is the terrible pillared roof, the only horizon around him the antre with its hateful unending columns and demogorgon veil of visible darkness, and the beautiful gods he imagined are dead and his heart is no longer sweetened with prayers, and his throat no longer bubbles with hymns of praise. His beautiful gods are dead and her who was his lovely guide and wise monitress, he no longer sees as the sweet and smiling friend of his boyhood, but as a fury slinging flame and a blind Cyclops hurling stones she knows not whither nor why and a ghastly skeleton only the more horrible for its hideous mimicry of life. He sends a wailing cry to heaven, but only jeering echoes fall from the impenetrable ceiling, for there is no heaven, and he sends a hoarse shriek for aid to hell, but only a gurgling horror rises from the impenetrable floor, for there is no hell, and he looks around for God, but his eyes cannot find him, and he gropes for God in the darkness, but his fingers cannot find him but only the clammy fingers of night, and goblin fancies are rioting in his brain, and hateful shapes pursue him with clutching fingers, and horrible figures go rustling past him half-discerned in the familiar gloom. He is weary of the dreadful vaulted ceiling, he is weary of the dreadful endless floor. And what shall he do but lie down and die, who if he goes on, will soon perish of weariness and famine and thirst? Yet did he but know it, he has only to turn back at a certain angle and he will see through a chink of the cavern a crocus moon with a triple zone of burning stars, which if he will follow, after not so very painful a journey, not so very long an elapse of hours, he will come into a land of perennial fountains, where he may quench his thirst, and glistening fruit-groves where he may fill his hunger, and sweet cool grass where he may solace

his weariness, and so pursue his journey by the nearest way to the wavering tree-tops, and the blooming gardens and the acres in their yellow gaberdines for which his soul has long panted.

This is the legend of Purush, the son of Prithivi and his journey to the land of Beulah.

*Wilson* — That is a fine apologue, Keshav; is it your own, may I ask?

*Keshav* — It is an allegory conceived by Vallabha Swami, the Indian Epicurus, and revealed to me by him in a vision.

*Wilson* — There we see the false economy of Nature; only they are privileged to see these beautiful visions, who can without any prompting conceive images not a whit less beautiful.

*Keshav* — The germ of the story was really a dream, but the form and application are my own. The myth means, as I dare say you have found out, that our present servitude to conventions which are the machinery of thought and action, is principally due to weaknesses forming a large element in human nature. Our lives ought not to be lived in accordance with human nature which can nowhere be found apart from the disturbing element of reason, but according to nature at large where we find the principle of harmony pure and undefiled.

*Wilson* — On that we are both at one; let us start directly from this base of operations. I am impatient to follow the crocus moon with her triple zone of burning stars into the Eden of murmuring brooks and golden groves and fields of asphodel.

*Keshav* — The basis of morality is then the application to human life of the principles governing the universe; and the great principle of the universe is beauty, is it not?

*Wilson* — So we have discovered.

*Keshav* — And we described beauty as harmony in effect and proportion in detail.

*Wilson* — That was our description.

*Keshav* — Then the aim of morality must be to make human life harmonious. Now the other types in the universe are harmonious not merely in relation to their internal parts, but in relation to each other and the sum of the universe, are they not?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — We mean, I suppose, that the star fills its place in the Cosmos and the rose fills her place, but man does not fill his.

*Wilson* — That is what we mean.

*Keshav* — Then the human race must not only be harmonious within itself, but must be harmonious in relation to the star and the rose and so fill its place as to perfect the harmony of the universe.

*Wilson* — Are we not repeating ourselves?

*Keshav* — No, but we are in danger of it. I am aiming at a clear and accurate wording of my position and that is not easy to acquire at a moment's notice. I think our best way would be to consider the harmony of man with the universe and leave the internal harmony of the race for subsequent inquiry.

*Wilson* — Perhaps it would be best.

*Keshav* — When we say that man should fill his place in the Cosmos, we mean that he should be in proportion with its other elements, just as the thorn is in proportion to the leaf and the leaf to the rose, for proportion is the ulterior cause of harmony. And we described proportion as a regular variety, or to use a more vivid phrase, a method in madness. If this is so, it is incumbent on man to be various in his development from the star, the rose and the other elements of the Cosmos, in a word to be original.

*Wilson* — That follows.

*Keshav* — But is it enough to be merely original? For instance if he were to hoist himself into the air by some mechanical contrivance and turn somersaults unto all eternity, that would be original, but he would not be helping much towards universal harmony, would he?

*Wilson* — Well, not altogether.

*Keshav* — Then if we want to describe the abstract idea of virtue, we want something more than originality. I think we said that proportion is not merely variety, but regular variety?

*Wilson* — Yes, that is obvious.

*Keshav* — Then man must be not merely original but regular in his originality.

*Wilson* — I cannot exactly see what you mean.

*Keshav* — I cannot at all see what I mean; yet, unless our whole theory is unsound, and that I am loth to believe, I must mean something. Let us try the plan we have already adopted with such success, when we discovered the nature of beauty. We will take some form of harmony and inquire how regularity enters into it; and it occurs to me that the art of calligraphy will be useful for the purpose, for a beautifully-written sentence has many letters just as the universe has many types and it seems that proportion is just as necessary to it.

*Wilson* — Yes, calligraphy will do very well.

*Keshav* — I recollect that we supposed beauty to have three elements, of which every type must possess at least one, better two, and as a counsel of perfection all three. If we inquire, we shall find that form is absolutely imperative, seeing that if the form of the letters is not beautiful or the arrangement of the lines not harmonious, then the sentence is not beautifully written. Colour too may be an element of calligraphy, for we all know what different effects we can produce by using inks of various colours. And if the art is to be perfect, I think that perfume will have to enter very largely into it. Let us write the word “beautiful”. Here you see the letters are beautifully formed, their arrangement is beautiful, this bright green ink I am using harmonizes well with the word, and moreover the sight of this peculiar combination of letters written in this peculiar way brings to my mind a peculiar association of ideas, which I call the perfume of the written word.

*Wilson* — But is it not the combination, not of letters but of sounds, which lingers in your mind and calls up the idea?

*Keshav* — I do not think so, for I often find sentences that seem to me beautiful in writing or in print, but, once I utter them aloud, become harsh and unmusical; and sometimes the reverse happens, especially in Meredith, in whom I have often at first sight condemned a sentence as harsh and ugly, which, when I read it aloud, I was surprised to find apt and harmonious. From this I infer that if a writer’s works appear beautiful in print or manuscript, but not beautiful when read aloud, he may be set down as a good artist in calligraphy, but a bad artist in literature,

since suggestion to the eye is the perfume of the written, but suggestion to the ear the perfume of the spoken word.

In this however I seem to have been digressing to no purpose; for whatever else is uncertain, this much is certain, that form is essential to calligraphy, and this is really all that concerns us. Now if the form is to be beautiful it must be harmonious in effect, and to be harmonious in effect it must be proportionate in detail, and to be proportionate in detail, the words and letters of which it is made must exhibit a regular variety. We can easily see that the letters and words in a sentence are various, but how can they be said to be regular in their variety?

*Wilson* — I do not know at present, but I can see that the variety is regular.

*Keshav* — This we must find out without delay. Let us take the alphabet and see if the secret is patent there.

*Wilson* — That is indeed looking for Truth at the bottom of a well.

*Keshav* — Do you not see at a glance that the letters in the Latin alphabet are regular in this sense, that the dominant line is the curve and there is no written letter without it, for the straight lines are only used to prevent the monotony generated by an unrelieved system of curves? In the Bengali alphabet again, which is more elaborate, but less perfect than the Latin, there is a dominant combination of one or more straight lines with one or more curves and to obviate monotony letters purely composed of straight lines are set off by others purely composed of curves. In the Burmese and other dialects, I believe but from hearsay only, no line but the curve is admitted and I am told that the effect is undeniably pretty but a trifle monotonous. Here then we have a clue. If we consider, as we have previously considered, every type in the universe to be a word, then, if the sentence is to be beautifully written each word must not only be various from its near companions but must allow one dominant principle to determine the lines on which it must vary; and to avoid monotony there must be straight lines in the letters, that is to say each type must have individual types within it departing from the general type by acknowledging another dominant principle. I am afraid

this is rather intricate. Would you like it to be made clearer?

*Wilson* — No, I perfectly understand; but I should like to guard myself against being misled by the analogy between a beautifully-written sentence and the beautifully-arranged universe. If this rule does not apply to every other form of beauty, we may not justly compare the universe to one in which it does happen to apply.

*Keshav* — I hope you will only require me to adduce examples of perfect beauty, for the aim of morality is to arrange a perfect, not an imperfect harmony.

*Wilson* — Oh certainly, that is all I am entitled to require.

*Keshav* — Then you will admit that the stars are various, yet built on a dominant principle?

*Wilson* — Without doubt.

*Keshav* — And in making the flowers so various, the divine artist did not fail to remember a dominant principle which prevails in the structure and character of his episode in flowers.

*Wilson* — But this is merely to take an unfair advantage of the method of species so largely indulged in by Nature.

*Keshav* — Well, if you prefer particulars to generals, we will inquire into the beauty of a Greek design, for the Greeks were the only painters who understood the value of design, and we will as usual take an example of perfect beauty. Do you know the Nereid and Sea-Horse?

*Wilson* — Very intimately.

*Keshav* — Then, if you have not forgotten how in that incomparable work of art to every mass there is another and answering mass and to the limbs floating forward limbs floating backwards and to every wisp of drapery an answering wisp of drapery, and in short how the whole design is built on the satisfying principle of balancing like by like, you will admit that here is a dominant idea regulating variety. And the principle of balancing like with like is not peculiar to Greek designing but prevalent in the designs of Nature, for example, the human face, where eye answers to luminous eye and both are luminous with one and the same brilliance, nor is one hazel while the other is azure, and the porches of hearing are two but similar in their



curious workmanship, and the sweep of the brow to one ear does not vary from the sweep of the brow to the other and the divergence of the chin describes a similar curve on either face of the design, nor is one cheek pallid with the touch of fear while the other blushes with the flag of joy and health, but in everything the artist has remembered the principle of balancing like with like, both here and in the emerald leaf and swaying apple which if you tear along the fibrous spine or slice through the centre of the core, will leave in your hands two portions, diverse in entity but alike in material and workmanship. And yet the impertinent criticism of the moderns claims for themselves a keener appreciation of Nature, than those great pupils who learned her lessons so gloriously well. If you would like farther examples of the dominant principle regulating variety in a design, you need only look at a blowing rose, a wind-inspired frigate, an evergreen poem, and you will not be disappointed. With all this in your mind, you will surely admit that even if we compare the universe to a system of designs we shall not arrive at other results than when we compared it to God's episode in flowers and his marshalled pomp of stars and a sentence beautifully written.

*Wilson* — Yet I should like to ask one more question.

*Keshav* — My dear Broome, you are at liberty to ask a thousand, for I am always ready to answer.

*Wilson* — A single answer will satisfy me. Why do you compare the universe to a system of designs and not to a single design?

*Keshav* — The universe itself is a system of designs, first the harmony of worlds and within it the lands and seas and on that the life of flowers and trees & the life of birds and beasts and fishes and the life of human beings. Imagine the Greeks in search of a dominant idea to regulate the variety of their designs and hitting on the human figure as their model; would they not have been foolish, if they had gone away from their study of the human figure and drawn a system, balancing like design by like design?

*Wilson* — I suppose they would.

*Keshav* — Nor should we be less foolish to draw up an ideal universe or system of designs on the principle of a single design. Are you satisfied?

*Wilson* — Perfectly.

*Keshav* — And our conclusion is that we ought to regulate the variety of the types in the universe, not by balancing like with like, but by determining the lines of variance on one dominant principle.

*Wilson* — That is the indisputable conclusion.

*Keshav* — And so, now we have panted up to the ridge we once thought the crowning summit, we find that we have to climb another slope as arduous which was lying in wait for us behind. We have discovered the presence of a dominant idea in the variety of types, but we do not know what the idea may be.

*Wilson* — That is what we have to find.

*Keshav* — But if we find that all the diverging types observe a single requisite in divergence, shall we not infer that we have found the idea of which we are inquisitive?

*Wilson* — Obviously.

*Keshav* — And we shall find it most easily by comparing one type with another, shall we not?

*Wilson* — That is our first idea.

*Keshav* — But if we compare a rose to a star, we shall not find them agree in any respect except the brilliance of their hues and that is not likely to be the dominant idea.

*Wilson* — They are both beautiful.

*Keshav* — Exactly, but we wish to learn the elements of their beauty, and we agreed that these were variety, to begin with, and method in variety. Now we are inquiring what the method is they observe in their variety. We know that they are both beautiful; but we wish to know why they are both beautiful.

*Wilson* — And how are you going to do it?

*Keshav* — Well, since it will not do to compare a rose with a star, we will compare a star with a star; and here we find, that, however widely they differ, there is a large residuum of properties, such as brilliance and light, which are invariably present in one and the other, and they diverge not in the possession

and absence of properties peculiar to a star, but in things accidental, in their size and the exactness of their shape and the measure of their brilliance and the character of the orbits they are describing. And if we compare flower with flower, we shall find a residuum of properties invariably present in one and the other but the divergence of flower from flower, just like the divergence of star from star, not in properties peculiar to a flower, but in accidents like size and peculiarities of shape and varying vividness of hues and time and length of efflorescence. Moreover we perceive that the star is content to pierce the darkness with its rays and to burn like a brilliant diamond in the bodice of heaven, and is not ambitious to shed sweet perfumes upon space or to burden the heart of the night with song, but develops the virtues of a star without aspiring to the virtues of a flower or a bird, and the rose content to be an empress in colour and perfume and a gorgeous harmony of petals and is not ambitious to give light in the darkness or to murmur a noontide song in response to the bee, but develops the virtues of a rose without aspiring to the virtue of a bee or a star. And so if we compare with the help of this new light the rose and the star, we see that they are both alike in developing their own virtues without aspiring to the virtues of one another. And this is the case with every natural form of beauty animate or inanimate, is it not?

*Wilson* — There can be no doubt of that.

*Keshav* — Then have we not found the dominant idea which governs the variety of types?

*Wilson* — I really believe we have.

*Keshav* — And man if he wishes to be in proportion with the other elements of the Cosmos, must be content to develop the virtues of a man without aspiring to the virtues of a rose or a star, or any other element of the Cosmos?

*Wilson* — So it seems.

*Keshav* — And when we talk of the virtues of a star, do we not mean the inborn qualities and powers which are native to its sidereal character, for example brilliance and light?

*Wilson* — Of course.

*Keshav* — And by the virtues of a flower the inborn qualities and powers which are native to its floral character, such as fragrance, colour, delicacy of texture?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Then by the virtues of a man we shall have to mean the inborn qualities and powers which are native to his humanity, such as — what shall we say?

*Wilson* — That we can discover afterwards.

*Keshav* — Very well; but at any rate we can see already that some things are not inborn qualities and powers native to our humanity; and we know now why it is not an act of splendid virtue to turn somersaults in the air without any visible means of support; for if we did that, we should not be developing the virtues of a man, but we should be aspiring to the virtues of a kite; or, to use one of our phrases, we should be mad without method.

*Wilson* — That is evident.

*Keshav* — So a man's virtue lies not in turning somersaults without any visible means of support, but in the perfect evolution of the inborn qualities and powers which are native to his humanity.

*Wilson* — Yes, and I believe these are the very words in which you described virtue before we started on our voyage of discovery.

*Keshav* — That is indeed gratifying; and if we have shown any constancy and perseverance in following our clue through the labyrinth, I at least am amply rewarded, who feel convinced by the identity of the idea I have derived from the pedestrian processes of logical inference with the idea I once caught on the wings of thought and instinct, that as far as human eyes are allowed to gaze on the glorious visage of Truth unveiled, we shall be privileged to unveil her and embrace her spiritual presence, and are not following a will-o'-the-wisp of the imagination to perish at last in a quagmire.

We have then laid a firm hold on that clear and accurate wording, for which we were recently groping as blindly as Purush in his delusive cavern. And since the human brain is impatient of abstract ideas but easily fixed and taken by concrete

images, let me embody our ideas in a simile. I have an accurate remembrance of climbing a very steep and ragged rock on the Yorkshire beaches, where my only foothold was a ladder carved in the rock with the rungs so wide apart that I had to grasp tightly the juts and jags and so haul myself up as slowly as a lizard, if I did not prefer by a false step or misplaced confidence to drop down some thirty feet on a rough sediment of sharp and polished pebbles. It occurs to me that what I did then in the body, I am doing now in the spirit, and it is a reason for self-gratulation that I have mounted safely to the second rung of the perilous ladder and am not lying shattered on the harsh and rasping pebbles of disappointment. And if I aspire to the third rung, I shall have less cause for apprehension than in my Yorkshire peril, since I can hardly fall to the beach but shall merely slip back to the rung from which I am mounting. Let us then estimate our progress. Our first rung was the basis of morality which we may describe by the golden rule “apply to human life the principles dominant in the Cosmos”, and our second, as we now see, is the conception of abstract virtue or the perfect expression of the human being as a type in the Cosmos, and this we describe as “the consistent evolution of the inborn qualities and powers native to our humanity”.

Here then we have two rungs of the ladder, we must now be very careful in our selection of the third.

*Wilson* — Is it not obviously the next stage to discover what are the inborn qualities and powers native to our humanity?

*Keshav* — Possibly. Yet have we not forgotten a signal omission we made when we drew inferences from the comparison of a beautifully written sentence to the beautifully arranged universe?

*Wilson* — I am afraid I at least have forgotten. What was it?

*Keshav* — Did we not compare the broad types in the Cosmos to the words in a sentence and infer that as the dominant principle governing the word was the prevalence of the curve, so there must be a dominant principle governing the type?

*Wilson* — We did.

*Keshav* — And also that as in the letters within the word

there were two prevalent lines, the curve and the straight line, so within the broad or generic type there are individual types governed by quite another principle.

*Wilson* — That also. But surely you are not going to argue from analogies?

*Keshav* — Did we not argue from the beautifully written sentence merely because the principles of calligraphy proved to be the principles of every sort of harmony?

*Wilson* — I confess we did; otherwise all we have been saying would be merely a brilliant explosion of fancy.

*Keshav* — Then we are logically justified in what we have been doing. Consider then how in a system of harmony, every part has to be harmonious in itself or else mar the universal music.

*Wilson* — That is true.

*Keshav* — And the human race is a part of such a system, is it not?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Then must the human race become harmonious within itself or continue to spoil the universal harmony.

*Wilson* — Of course. How foolish of me to lose sight of that.

*Keshav* — And so we have been elucidating the harmony of man with the Cosmos and saying nothing about the harmony of man with man?

*Wilson* — Did we not relegate that for subsequent inquiry?

*Keshav* — We did, but I think the time for subsequent inquiry has come.

*Wilson* — It is too late in the day for me to distrust your guidance.

*Keshav* — I do not think you will have reason to regret your confidence in me. Our line then will be to consider the internal harmony of the race before we proceed farther.

*Wilson* — So it is best.

*Keshav* — Here again we must start from our description of beauty as harmony in effect and proportion in detail and our description of the latter as a regular variety or method in

madness. Then just as in the Cosmos, the individual type must vary from all the other types, so in the human Cosmos the individual man must vary from all other men.

*Wilson* — That is rather startling. Do you mean that there ought to be no point of contact?

*Keshav* — No, Broome; for we must always remember that the elements of a generic type must have certain virtues without which they would not belong to the type: as the poet says

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

*Wilson* — Then where do you find your variety?

*Keshav* — If you will compare the elements of those types in which the harmony is perfect, your ignorance will vanish like a mist. You will see at once that every planet develops indeed his planetary qualities, but varies from every other planet, and if Venus be the name and the star be feminine, is a dovelike white in complexion and yields an effulgence more tender than a girl's blush, but if he is Mars, burns with the sanguine fire of battle and rolls like a bloodshot eye through space, and if he is Saturn, has seven moons in his starry seraglio, and is richly orange in complexion like vapour coloured by the sun's pencil when he sets, and wears a sevenfold girdle of burning fire blue as a witch's eye and green as Love's parrot and red as the lips of Cleopatra and indeed of all manner of beautiful colours, and if he is Jupiter or any one of the planets, has the qualities of that planet and has not the qualities of another, but develops his own personality and has no regard for any model or the example of any other planet.

And if you drop your eyes from the sublimer astral spaces to the modest gauds of Earth our mother, you will see that every flower has indeed the qualities of its floral nature, but varies widely from her sister beauties, and if she is a lily, hides in her argent beaker a treasure of golden dust and her beauty is a young and innocent bride on her marriage-morning, but if she is a crocus, has a bell-like beauty and is absorbed in the intoxication of her own loveliness and wears now the gleaming robe of sunrise and now a dark and delicate purple, and now a

soft and sorrowful pallor, but, if she is a rose, has the fragrance of a beautiful soul and the vivid colour of a gorgeous poem, yet conceals a sharp sting beneath the nestling luxury of her glorious petals, and if she is a hyacinth or honeysuckle or meadow-sweet, has the poisonous perfume of the meadow-sweet or the soul-subduing fragrance of the honeysuckle or the passionate cry of the hyacinth, and not the beautiful egoism of the crocus or the oriental splendour of the rose, but develops her own qualities without aspiring to the qualities of any and every flower.

May we not then say that the dominant principle regulating the variety of individual types is the evolution of individual as distinct from generic virtues?

*Wilson* — That is the logical consequence.

*Keshav* — Then the description of individual virtue runs thus, the evolution by the human being of the inborn qualities and powers native to his personality; that is to say, just as every beautiful building has the solid earth for its basis but is built in a distinct style of architecture, so the beautiful human soul will rest on the solid basis of humanity but build up for itself a personality distinct and individual.

*Wilson* — That is exactly what the virtuous man must do.

*Keshav* — And so with infinite ease and smoothness we have glided up to the third rung of our ladder, as if we were running up a broad and marble stair-case. Here then let us stop and reflect on all we have said and consider whether from confusion of mind or inability to comprehend the whole situation we have made any mistake or omission. For my part I avow that my thoughts have not been so lucid tonight as I could have wished. We are then to continue the inquiry in the Gardens on Tuesday afternoon? I think that was what you suggested.

*Wilson* — Yes, on Tuesday at half-past two.

*Keshav* — Would you mind my bringing Prince Paradox with me? He is anxious to hear how we are dealing with our idea and as he will be perfectly willing to go the lengths we have so far gone, we need not fear that he will be a drag on us.

*Wilson* — I am perfectly willing that he should come. The more, the merrier.



*Keshav* — Not at this stage; for this intellectual ascent up the precipice of discovery, is indeed very exciting and pleasant, but strains the muscles of the mind more than a year's academical work; and I trust that next time we shall bring it to a satisfying conclusion.

End of the Second Book

## Book Three

*Keshav Ganesh — Broome Wilson — Treneth*

*Treneth* — But we must not forget our purpose in being here.

*Keshav* — Well, Broome, what do you say to our resuming our cruise for the discovery of virtue? I avow the speculation weighs on me, and I am impatient to see the last of it.

*Wilson* — I have not to learn that you are the most indolent of men. No sooner are you in a novel current of thought than you tire and swim back to the shore. I am indignant with Nature for wasting on you a genius you so little appreciate.

*Treneth* — Ah but you are really quite wrong, Wilson. Genius is a capacity for being indolent.

*Wilson* — Enter Prince Paradox! But seriously, Keshav, I think the argument will live beyond this afternoon and I give warning that I shall drag you all over the field of ethics before we have done with it.

*Keshav* — It will be the corpse of my intellect you will maltreat. But in extremity I rely upon Treneth to slay my Argus with the bright edge of a paradox.

*Wilson* — We were at the third rung of the ladder, were we not?

*Keshav* — Yes, thou slave-driving Ishmaelite. I declare it is impious on a day like this to bury ourselves in the gloomy vaults of speculation. But as you will.

To remember how far we have climbed, is the best incentive to climb farther, and will give Treneth an idea of the situation. We happened to be weighing the ordinary principles of morality and finding them all wanting cast about for a new principle and discovered that beauty was the sole morality of the universe, and it had colour, form and perfume as elements, harmony as its general effect and proportion, which we described as regular

variety or method in madness, as the ulterior cause of the harmony, and we ventured to imagine that as all the other elements of the universe were harmonious notes in a perfect sonata, but the human element had wilfully chosen to jar upon and ruin the exquisite music, the right principle of virtue was wilfully to choose to mend the harmony we had ruined.

With these projections from the rock of speculation to help us we climbed up the three steep and difficult rungs I am going to describe to you. We argued that the only way to remedy a note that rebels against the spirit of the composition is to reduce it into harmony with that spirit, and so arrived at the conclusion that the principle of morality is to apply to human life the principles that govern the rest of the Cosmos. There you have the first rung of our ladder.

We recommenced from this basis and by remembrance of the nature of proportion or regular variety which is the cause of harmony and throughout every natural type of beauty appears in the common principle which determines their line of variance from each other, we thought that in the elements of the Cosmos there must be such a common principle and found it to be the evolution by each element of its own peculiar virtue as distinct from the peculiar virtues of every other element, and so reached our second conclusion, that just as astral virtue lies in the evolution by the star of the inborn qualities and powers native to its astral character, just so human virtue lies in the evolution by the human being of the inborn qualities and powers native to his humanity. This is the second rung of our ladder.

With this second secure basis behind us, we went on to discover that within generic types such as the star, the flower, the human being, there were individual types governed by the similar but different principle of evolving the individual as distinct from the generic virtues, or, when applied to the human being, of evolving the inborn qualities and powers native to his personality. This is the third rung of our ladder.

Have I been correct in my statement, Broome?

*Wilson* — Perfectly correct.

*Treneth* — My only quarrel with your conclusions is that

you have wasted a couple of evenings in arriving at them. Why, except the first they are mere axioms.

*Keshav* — Yes, to the seeing eye they are axioms, but to the unseeing eye they are paradoxes. The truths that are old and stale to the philosopher, are to the multitude new and startling and dangerous. But now that we have all mounted to the same rung, let us pursue the ascent. And I suppose our immediate step will be to find whether the mere evolution of the inborn qualities and powers is or is not the sole requisite for virtue.

*Wilson* — Before we go to that, Keshav, you will have to meet a difficulty which you show every sign of evading.

*Keshav* — Whatever difficulty there is, I am ready to solve, but I cannot guess to what you refer.

*Wilson* — I suppose you will admit that a definition, to be adequate, must have nothing vague or indefinite about it?

*Keshav* — If there is anything vague, it must be elucidated or our statement falls to the ground.

*Treneth* — I dissent: a definite definition is a contradiction in terms. I am for definite indefinitions.

*Keshav* — I am not in extremities yet, Prince Paradox.

*Wilson* — Well now, is not your phrasing “the inborn qualities and powers native to our humanity” very vague and indefinite?

*Keshav* — Indefinite, I admit, and I cannot think that an objection but I plead not guilty to the charge of vagueness.

*Wilson* — You think with Treneth that a definition should not be definite?

*Keshav* — If by being definite is implied reduction to its primal elements you will agree with me that a definition need not be definite: or do you want me to enumerate the qualities native to our humanity such as physical vigour, and the faculty of inference and sexual passion and I do not know how many more?

*Wilson* — You shall not escape me so easily, Keshav. You are merely spinning dialectical cobwebs which give a specious appearance to the pit in which you would have us fall.

*Keshav* — Then by pointing out the trap, you can easily sweep away my sophistical cobwebs, my good Broome.

*Treneth* — What penalty for a pun?

*Keshav* — No penalty, for to punish a lie on the information of Beelzebub is to do God's work at the devil's bidding.

*Wilson* — Yes, a penalty: you shall be taken at your word. You are setting a trap for us, when you try to shuffle in your phrase about the qualities native to our humanity. If we leave this inexplicit and unlimited, you will be at liberty to describe any quality you choose as a virtue and any other quality you choose as a defect by assuming in your own insinuating manner that it is or is not native to our humanity. And in reality there is a very distinct gulf between those of our qualities which are native to our humanity and those others which belong to the animal nature we are working out of our composition; for example between lust and love, of which one belongs to the lower animal nature and the other to the higher spiritual. You are ignoring the distinction and by ignoring it, you ignore the patent fact of evolution.

*Treneth* — To ignore facts is the beginning of thought.

*Keshav* — No, but to forget facts for the time being — that is the beginning of thought.

*Wilson* — My dear Keshav, pray don't trail a red paradox across the path.

*Keshav* — It was the other boy who did it. To return to the subject, are you really unconscious of the flagrant errors of which you have been so lavish in a little space?

*Wilson* — I am quite unconscious of any error.

*Keshav* — You have made three to my knowledge, and the first is your assumption that what is animal, cannot be human.

*Wilson* — Can you disprove it?

*Keshav* — Can you prove it? In the first place you cannot tell what is animal and what is not.

*Wilson* — Why, the qualities possessed by human beings as distinct from animals are those which are not animal.

*Keshav* — And, I suppose, qualities possessed in common by human beings and animals, are animal?

*Wilson* — You are right.

*Keshav* — And such qualities ought to be worked out of our composition?

*Wilson* — Yes, as Tennyson says, we ought to be

working out  
The tiger and the ape.

*Keshav* — Then we ought to get rid of fidelity, ought we not?

*Wilson* — Why so?

*Keshav* — Because it is a quality possessed in common by the dog and the human being, and the dog is an animal.

*Treneth* — Of course we should. Fidelity is a disease like conscience.

*Keshav* — And infidelity is a quality possessed in common by the cat and the human being, and therefore we ought to get rid of infidelity.

*Treneth* — Again of course; for infidelity is merely a relative term, and if fidelity is not, then how can infidelity be?

*Keshav* — And so we must get rid of all opposing qualities and acquire a dead neutrality? Your ambition then is not to be a personality, but to be a — negative?

*Treneth* — I confess you have taken me in the flank: even my paradoxes will not carry me so far.

*Keshav* — And you, Broome, are you willing to break down the ladder by which we are climbing?

*Wilson* — Not for a moment. What I mean is that the qualities possessed in common by all the animals and the human being are animal.

*Keshav* — Is not the human being an animal?

*Wilson* — Yes, scientifically.

*Keshav* — But not really?

*Wilson* — Well, he is something more than an animal.

*Keshav* — You mean he has other qualities besides those which belong to the animal type?

*Wilson* — That is what I mean.

*Keshav* — And has not the planet other qualities besides those which belong to the astral type?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Does that warrant us in saying that a planet is not really a star?

*Wilson* — No.

*Keshav* — And are we warranted in saying that man is not really an animal?

*Wilson* — We are not.

*Keshav* — And the animal world is an element in the Cosmos, is it not?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Is it not then the virtue of an animal to evolve the qualities and powers native to his animality?

*Wilson* — I suppose so.

*Keshav* — And man, being an animal, ought also to evolve the qualities and powers native to his animality?

*Wilson* — That seems to follow, but is not this to cancel our old description of human virtue and break down our second rung?

*Keshav* — No, for just as the qualities native to a planet include the qualities native to a star, so the qualities native to the human type include the qualities native to the animal type.

*Wilson* — I quite agree with you now. What was my second error?

*Keshav* — You talked of the lower animal nature and the higher spiritual nature and in so talking assumed that the qualities peculiar to the human being are higher than the qualities he shares with some or all of the animals. Is dissimulation higher than love? You reject the idea with contempt: yet dissimulation is peculiar to the human being but love, and love of the most spiritual kind, he shares with the turtle-dove and with the wild-duck of the Indian marshes, who cannot sleep the live-long night because Nature has severed him from his mate but ever wails across the cold and lapping water with passionate entreaty that she may solace his anguish with even a word, and travellers straying in the forest hear his forlorn cry "Love, speak to me!" No, we can only say of varying qualities that one is beautiful and another less beautiful, or not beautiful at all; and beauty does not reside in being animal or being more than animal but in something very different.

*Wilson* — And my third error?

*Keshav* — Your third error was to confound evolution with elimination.

*Wilson* — And does it not really come to that?

*Keshav* — The vulgar opinion, which finds a voice as usual in Tennyson — what opinion of the British average does he not echo? — the vulgar opinion learns that the principle of evolution or gradual perfection is the reigning principle of life and adapts the idea to its own stupid fallacy that perfection implies the elimination of all that is vivid and picturesque and likely to foster a personality. Evolution does not eliminate but perfects.

*Wilson* — But surely perfection tends to eliminate what is imperfect?

*Keshav* — Oh I don't deny that we have lost our tails, but so has a Manx cat.

*Treneth* — Dear me! that is a fruitful idea. A dissertation proving that the Manx cat is the crowning effort of Evolution might get me a Fellowship.

*Keshav* — It would deserve it for its originality. Moreover if we have lost our tails, we have also lost our wings.

*Treneth* — I maintain that the tails are the more serious loss. Wings would have been useful and we do not want them but we do want tails, for they would have been lovely appendages and a magnificent final flourish to the beauty of the human figure. Just fancy the Dean and Provost pacing up to the Communion Table with a fine long tail swishing about their ears! What a glorious lesson! What a sublime and instructive spectacle!

*Wilson* — You are incorrigibly frivolous, Treneth.

*Keshav* — If Prince Paradox is frivolous, he is virtuous, insofar as he is developing the virtue most intimately native to his personality; and the inquiry is dull enough at present to bear occasional touches of enlivening laughter.

*Wilson* — Yet the inquiry must pass through stifling underground galleries and to avoid them is puerile.

*Keshav* — I am at one with you, but if we must dive under the ground, there is no need to linger there.

Evolution does not eliminate, but perfects. The cruelty that blossoms out in the tiger, has its seeds deep down in the nature



of man and if it is minimised in one generation will expand in another, nor is it possible for man to eradicate cruelty without pulling up in the same moment the bleeding roots of his own being. Yet the brute ferocity that in the tiger is graceful and just and artistic, is in the man savage and crude and inharmonious and must be cultured and refined, until it becomes a virtue and fits as gracefully and harmlessly into the perfect character, as its twin-brother physical courage and physical love, its remote relative.

*Wilson* — You are growing almost as paradoxical as Prince Paradox, Keshav.

*Keshav* — Look for Truth and you will find her at the bottom of a paradox. Are you convinced that animal qualities are not the worse for being animal?

*Wilson* — Perfectly convinced.

*Keshav* — And here I cannot do better than quote a sentence that like so many of Meredith's sentences, goes like a knife to the root of the matter. "As she grows in the flesh when discreetly tended, nature is unimpeachable, flowerlike, yet not too decoratively a flower; you must have her with the stem, the thorns, the roots, and the fat bedding of roses." And since I have quoted that immortal chapter so overloaded with truth critical, truth psychologic and truth philosophic, let me use two other sentences to point the moral of this argument and bid you embrace "Reality's infinite sweetness" and "touch the skirts of Philosophy by sharing her hatred of the sham decent, her derision of sentimentalism." May we not now ascend to the fourth rung?

*Wilson* — Yes, I think we may go on.

*Keshav* — I am especially eager to do so because I am more and more convinced that our description of virtue is no longer adequate: for if the only requisite is to evolve our innate qualities, will it not be enough to be merely cruel and not to be cruel in a refined and beautiful manner?

*Wilson* — Plainly it will.

*Keshav* — And is it really enough to be merely cruel?

*Treneth* — No, for to be inartistic is the only sin.

*Keshav* — Your paradox cuts to the heart of the truth. Can you tell me, Broome, whether is the rose more beautiful than the bramble or the bramble than the rose?

*Wilson* — Obviously the rose than the bramble.

*Keshav* — And why is this? Is it not because the thorn develops unduly the thorn and does not harmonize it with leaves but is careless of proportion and the eternal principle of harmony, and is beautiful indeed as an element in the harmony of plants but has no pretensions to personal beauty but the rose subdues the thorn into harmony with the leaf and the blossom and is perfectly beautiful in herself no less than as an element in the harmony of flowers?

*Wilson* — I believe you are right.

*Keshav* — And must not cruelty, the thorn of our beautiful human rose, be subdued into harmony with his other qualities and among them tenderness and clemency and generous forbearance and other qualities seemingly the most opposed to cruelty and then only will it be a real virtue but until then nothing more than a potential virtue?

*Wilson* — You are right; then only will it be a real virtue.

*Keshav* — So we must modify our description of virtue by affixing an epithet to the word “evolution”, and preferably I think the epithet “perfect” which does not imply size or degree or intensity or anything but justness of harmony, for example in a poem, which is not called perfect when it is merely long-drawn-out or overflowing with passion or gorgeous even to swooning, but when it blends all the elements of beauty into an irreproachable harmony. We shall then describe virtue as the perfect evolution by the human being of the inborn qualities and powers native to his personality.

*Wilson* — With that I have no quarrel, but am I too inquisitive when I ask you how cruelty and tenderness can live together?

*Keshav* — My dear Broome, I shall never think you too inquisitive but above all things desire that you should have a clear intelligence of my meaning. Have you never learned by experience or otherwise how a girl will torment her favoured

lover by a delicate and impalpable evasion of his desires and will not give him even the loan of a kiss without wooing, but must be infinitely entreated and stretch him on the rack of a half-serious refusal and torture him with the pangs of hope just as a cat will torture a mouse, yet all the while means to give him everything he asks for and would indeed be more bitterly disappointed than he, if any accident precluded her from making him happy?

*Wilson* — Yes, I know, some women are like that.

*Keshav* — If you had said most women were like that, you would have hit the truth more nearly. And this trait in women we impute to feminine insincerity and to maiden coyness and to everything but the real motive, and that is the primitive and eternal passion of cruelty appearing in the coarse fibre of man as crude and inartistic barbarity, but in the sweet and delicate soul of woman as a refined and beautiful playfulness and the inseparable correlative of a gentle and suave disposition.

*Wilson* — But I am inclined to credit the girl with the purpose of giving a keener relish to the gratified desire by enhancing the difficulty of attainment, and in that case she will be actuated not by cruelty but always by tenderness.

*Keshav* — You think she is actuated by the principles of Political Economy? I cannot agree with you.

*Treneth* — And I deny the truth of the principle. A precious thing easily acquired is treasured for its beauty and worth, but if acquired with pain and labour, the memory of the effort leaves a bad taste in the mouth which it is difficult to expunge. I read Vergil at school and never read a line of him now but Catullus I skimmed through in my arm-chair and love and appreciate.

*Keshav* — Your distinction is subtle and suggestive, *Treneth*, but it never occurred to me in that light before.

*Treneth* — It never occurred to *me* in that light before.

*Keshav* — Yet I do not think it applies to our lovers, and it does not apply always, for the poem I have perfected with labour and thought is surely dearer to me than the light carol thrown off in the happy inspiration of the moment. Rapid generalities seldom cover more than a few cases. So I will take Broome on his own ground, not because I cannot adduce other instances of

cruelty and tenderness living in wedded felicity, but because I do not want to fatigue myself by recollecting them.

And now, Broome, will you say that a tyrant who desires to give his favourite a keener relish of luxury and strains him on the rack and washes him with scalding oil and dries him with nettles and flays him with whips and then only comforts him with the luxury of downy pillows and velvet cushions and perfect repose, has not been actuated by cruelty but always by tenderness?

*Wilson* — Oh, of course, if you cite extravagant instances—!

*Keshav* — And will you say that the girl who wishes to give her kiss a sweeter savour on the lips of her favourite and strains him on the rack of suspense and washes him with the scalding oil of despair and dries him with the nettles of hope and flays him with the whips of desire and then only comforts him with the velvet luxury of a kiss and the downy cushion of an embrace and the perfect repose of desire fulfilled, has not been actuated by cruelty but always by tenderness and not rather that all unnecessary pain is cruelty to the sufferer?

*Wilson* — Certainly, unnecessary pain is cruelty.

*Keshav* — Are you perfectly satisfied?

*Wilson* — Perfectly satisfied.

*Keshav* — We have discovered then that perfect evolution is requisite for perfect virtue, but I do not think we have distilled its full flavour into the epithet. Or are you of the opinion that we want nothing more than the harmonizing of all the inborn qualities?

*Wilson* — I cannot think of any other requisite.

*Keshav* — Can you, Treneth?

*Treneth* — I was much attracted by something you said in the beginning about the elements of beauty and I suspect it is these we want now.

*Keshav* — You have exactly hit it. We described it as not merely harmony in effect and proportion in detail but as possessed of one of the three elements, colour, perfume and form, and in most types combining at least two and in many all three. But in confining our outlook to harmony and proportion we have talked as if human virtue were merely possessed of one

of the elements; yet is there any reason to suppose that human virtue does not possess the whole three?

*Wilson* — No reason whatever.

*Keshav* — Well, might we not inquire whether it does possess all three, and if it does not, whether it may not legitimately or, to speak more properly, may not artistically possess all three?

*Wilson* — By all means, let us inquire.

*Keshav* — And if we find that it may artistically possess them, then, if our theory that beauty should be the governing principle in all things, is really correct, must we not say that they not only may but ought to possess all three?

*Wilson* — Evidently we must.

*Treneth* — That is as plain as a Cambridge laundress.

*Keshav* — And it is clear that all qualities may, with diligence, be entirely divested of colour, form and perfume, and when they have reached the stage of wanting every single element of beauty, we need take no notice of them, for they have no longer anything to do with virtue, until they begin to redevelop.

*Wilson* — Obviously, for we are talking of perfect virtue or perfect beauty of character.

*Keshav* — Now if we have not the qualities requisite for a given action, we shall not achieve the action, supposing we attempt it, but shall only achieve a blunder, is it not so?

*Wilson* — Clearly.

*Keshav* — But if we have the qualities, we are likely to achieve the action?

*Wilson* — Necessarily.

*Keshav* — Then is not action the outward manifestation of a quality, and I include in action any movement physical or intellectual which is visible or whose effects are visible to the human understanding?

*Wilson* — Yes, but may not an action manifest the want of a quality?

*Keshav* — No doubt, but we need not touch on those, since we have not to develop defects in order to be virtuous, or do you think we need?

*Treneth* — Clearly not: negatives cannot be virtues.

*Keshav* — That is a very just sentiment and I shall have occasion to recall it. Now is not a battle the outward manifestation of the warlike qualities?

*Wilson* — Evidently.

*Keshav* — And composition the outward manifestation of the poetical qualities, I mean, of course, the qualities of a maker?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — And do we not mean that the poetical qualities express themselves in composition just as the sidereal in a star?

*Wilson* — We do.

*Keshav* — And is not the star the form of the sidereal qualities?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Then is not composition the form of the poetical qualities?

*Wilson* — That follows.

*Keshav* — And battle of the warlike qualities?

*Wilson* — That also.

*Keshav* — Then is not action the form of a quality, that is to say the shape in which it expresses itself?

*Wilson* — So it seems.

*Keshav* — So we find that virtue has a form.

*Wilson* — But may not qualities have a form apart from action?

*Treneth* — For example, thought.

*Keshav* — But the expression of thought is included in action for our purpose.

*Treneth* — For our purpose only.

*Keshav* — As you please. I merely want to use one projection from the rock and not imperil my neck by clutching two in one hand.

*Treneth* — I am satisfied.

*Keshav* — I suppose, Broome, you mean by form a concrete shape?

*Wilson* — I suppose so.

*Keshav* — Then you must see that qualities unexpressed in

action are wholly chaotic and formless; and I mean within the scope of action, the expression of thought and the act of sitting or standing or lying down and the act of being indolent and anything that by any legitimate stretch of language may be called an act.

*Wilson* — I too am satisfied.

*Keshav* — Then we are agreed that a quality must possess form, that is to say, express itself in action or it will not be a virtue?

*Treneth* — May it not prefer to express itself in perfume and colour?

*Keshav* — I had forgotten that.

Now if we inquire what colour is, we shall see that it is nothing concrete but merely an effect on the retina of the eye, and its prosperity lies in the eye that sees it, and if the retina of the eye is perfect, every different shade impresses itself, but if imperfect, then the eye is blind to one or more colours. Will you agree with me when I say that anything to which we give the name of colour must be the reverse of concrete?

*Wilson* — That follows.

*Keshav* — Then the colour of a virtue must be the reverse of concrete.

*Wilson* — Evidently.

*Keshav* — Now let us take metaphor into our counsel, for metaphor has sometimes an intuitive way of chiming consonantly with the truth; and metaphor tells us that we often talk of a scarlet and sinful character and of a white and innocent character and of a neutral and drab-coloured character, and assign various colours to various women and call one woman a splendid carnation, for we are fond of comparing women to flowers and another a beautiful and gorgeous rose, and a third a pure and sinless lily and yet another a modest violet betraying herself only by her fragrance, and are all the while implying that to the imaginative eye, if the retina is perfect, various characters have various colours. Do you follow me?

*Treneth* — Yes, the idea is fine.

*Wilson* — And true.

*Treneth* — That is immaterial.

*Keshav* — And character is the composition of qualities just as a poem is the composition of sounds and a painting the composition of pigments.

*Wilson* — Yes, just in that sense.

*Keshav* — Then is it not plain that if a character has colour, the qualities of which it is composed must have colour.

*Wilson* — I think it is.

*Keshav* — And colour is not concrete, but an effect on the retina of the eye?

*Wilson* — So we said.

*Keshav* — Then is not the colour of a quality its effect on the retina of the imaginative eye?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — And a quality in itself may be formless?

*Wilson* — Yes.

*Keshav* — Then to the imaginative eye is not a quality pure colour?

*Wilson* — I suppose so.

*Keshav* — But the imaginative eye is not one with the perceptive eye, for it perceives what does not exist, but the perceptive eye only what does exist.

*Wilson* — You are right.

*Keshav* — I mean that nothing without form can have an effect on the retina of the perceptive eye.

*Wilson* — That is evident.

*Keshav* — Then to be visible to the perceptive eye, the colour of a quality, which is really the soul of the quality, must suffuse the action which expresses it, which is the body of the quality.

*Wilson* — It must.

*Keshav* — And is colour without form a perfect type of beauty?

*Wilson* — No.

*Keshav* — Then a quality must suffuse its body with its soul, or, since the word action is growing ambiguous, its expression with its colour.



*Wilson* — Yes, I agree to that.

*Keshav* — And so the quality will so suffuse its expression as to be visible to the perceptive eye, just as the soul of a rose, which is the effect on the retina of the imaginative eye, suffuses her form with colour which is the effect on the retina of the perceptive eye, and varies according to the variety of colours, and if two roses have the same form but one is crimson and the other yellow, the soul of the red rose is seen to be scarlet with unholy passion, but the soul of the yellow rose is seen to be dull and blanched and languid, like the reaction after intensely voluptuous enjoyment.

And so virtue may possess both form and colour, and, I suppose, may artistically possess both, or will colour be detrimental to the perfection of virtue as tinting to the perfection of sculpture?

*Treneth* — By no means; for qualities are not hewn out of marble or cast in beaten gold or chiselled in Indian ivory, but are moulded in the delicate and flower-like texture of human emotion and, if colourless, are scarcely beautiful.

*Keshav* — Then we are agreed that a quality must possess both form and colour, or will not be a perfect virtue?

*Treneth* — Plainly.

*Wilson* — I am afraid I hardly understand what we are saying.

*Keshav* — I am certain I do not; but we must follow where the argument leads us, and I have a glimmering intelligence which I hope to see expanding into perfect daylight; but I do not want any side issue to distract my thoughts and will go on to inquire what is the perfume of a quality: for I am like a frail canoe that wavers through a tranquil to be buffeted outside by the swelling waters and have with difficulty plunged through these two waves of form and colour, when I see rolling down on me with its curled forehead this third wave of perfume which I do not hope to outlive. But to the venturous Fortune is as compliant as a captive Briseis and I will boldly plunge into the crash of the breaking water and call manner the perfume of a quality, for in manner resides the subtle aroma and sense of

something delicious but impalpable which is what we mean by perfume.

*Treneth* — With your usual good luck you have notched your mark in the centre.

*Keshav* — So by audacity I have outlived the third wave and am more than ever convinced that you must take liberties with Fortune before she will love you.

I suppose you will agree with me that for a virtue to be beautiful, there must be a perfect harmony in the elements of beauty, and the colour not too subdued as in the clover nor too glaring as in the sunflower, and the perfume not too slight to be noticeable as in the pansy nor too intense for endurance as in the meadow-sweet, and the form not too monotonous as in a canal or too irregular as in the leafless tree, but all perfectly harmonious in themselves and in fit proportion to each other?

*Wilson* — From our description of beauty, that is evident.

*Treneth* — I plead not guilty on behalf of the sunflower, but agree with the sentiment.

*Keshav* — And now since Broome and I are at a loss to conjecture what we mean, do you not think we shall be enlightened by a concrete example?

*Treneth* — It is likely.

*Wilson* — Let us at least make an attempt.

*Keshav* — We will call on the stage the girl and her lover, who have been so useful to us. It is clear at once that if she is not virtuous but harmonizes the elements of beauty unskilfully, the passion of her favourite will wither and not expand.

*Wilson* — That is clear.

*Keshav* — What then will be her manner of harmonizing them?

*Wilson* — I return the question to you.

*Keshav* — Well now, will she not harmonize the phases of her dalliance, and hesitate on the brink of yielding just at the proper pitch of his despair, and elude his kiss just at the proper pitch of his expectancy, and fan his longing when it sinks, and check it when it rises, and surrender herself when he is smouldering with hopeless passion?

*Wilson* — That is probably what she will do.

*Keshav* — And is not that to cast her dalliance in a beautiful form?

*Wilson* — It is.

*Keshav* — But she will not do this grossly and palpably, but will lead up to everything by looks and tones and gestures so as to glide from one to the other without his perceiving and will sweeten the hard and obvious form by the flavour of the simple and natural, yet will be all the while the veriest coquette and artist in flirtation.

*Wilson* — Yes, that is what a girl like that would do.

*Keshav* — And is not that to give a subtle perfume to her dalliance?

*Wilson* — I suppose it is.

*Keshav* — But if she is perfect in the art, will she not, even when repulsing him most cruelly, allow a secret tenderness to run through her words and manner, and when she is most tenderly yielding, will she not show the sharp edge of asperity through the flowers, and in a word allow the blended cruelty and sweetness of her soul to be just palpable to his perceptive senses?

*Wilson* — She will.

*Keshav* — And is not that to suffuse her dalliance with colour?

*Wilson* — Plainly.

*Keshav* — And moreover she will not allow her affectation of the natural to be too imperfect to conceal her art or so heavily scented as to betray the intention, or the colour to be unnoticeable from slightness or from intensity to spoil the delicate effect of her perverseness, or the form to engross too largely the attention, or indeed any element to fall too short or carry too far, but will subdue the whole trio into a just and appropriate harmony.

*Wilson* — If she wants to be a perfect flirt, that is what she will do.

*Keshav* — And if coquetry is native in her, to be a perfect flirt will be highest pinnacle of virtue.

*Wilson* — That follows from the premisses.

*Keshav* — And so here we have a concrete example of perfect virtue, and begin to understand what we mean by the perfect evolution of an inborn quality, or are you still unenlightened?

*Wilson* — No, I perfectly understand.

*Keshav* — Hither then we have climbed with much more laborious effort and have almost cut our hands in two on the projections, but do at last really stand on the fourth and last rung of the ladder.

*Wilson* — The last? I rather fancy we are only half way up and shall have to ascend another three or four rungs before we are kissed by the fresh winds that carol on the brow. I have many things to ask you and you have as yet spoken nothing of the relations between man and man and how this new morality is to be modified by the needs of society and what justice means and what self-sacrifice and indeed a thousand things which will need many hours to investigate.

*Keshav* — I am Frankenstein saddled with a monster of my own making and have made a man to my ruin and a young man to my hurt. Nevertheless “lead on, monster: we’ll follow.”

*Treneth* — Will you not rest on the fourth rung and have a cup of tea in my rooms before you resume?

*Keshav* — But shall we not put a stop to your spheroids and trianguloids and asinoids and all the other figures of mathematical ingenuity?

*Treneth* — I am at present watching a body which revolves on six screws and is consequently very drunk, and a day off will sensibly assist my speculations.

*Keshav* — So let it be, but before we go I may as well recall to you at a glance what is our fourth rung.

We have expanded our description of virtue as the evolution of the inborn qualities native to our personality, by throwing in the epithet “perfect”, and have interpreted the full flavour of the epithet in words to the effect that qualities in their evolved perfection must be harmonious one with another and have a beautiful form or expression, and a beautiful colour or revelation of the soul, and a beautiful perfume or justly-tempered manner and must subdue all three into a just and appropriate harmony.

With this conviction in our souls we will journey on, despising the censure and alarm of the reputable, and evolve our inborn qualities and powers into a beautiful and harmonious perfection, until we walk delicately like living poems through a radiant air, and will not stunt the growth of any branch or blossom, but will prefer to the perishable laurels of this world a living crown of glory, and hear through the chaotic murmur of the ages the solemn question of Christ “What profiteth it a man if he own the whole world and lose his own soul?” and will answer according to the melodious doctrines of philosophy and acquire by a life of perfect beauty the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

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## Beauty in the Real

I had ridden down by Shelsford thro' the glittering lustre of an afternoon in March and as I was returning somewhat cold and tired, saw at a distance the pink hat and heavy black curls of Keshav Ganesh and with him Broome Wilson and Prince Paradox. As I trotted up Prince Paradox hailed me. "Come round and have tea with me" he said "we are speculating at large on the primitive roots and origin of the universe, and I know your love for light subjects." "I shall be a delighted listener" I said, and was genuine in the assurance, for I had many a while listened with subtle delight to the beautiful and imaginative talk of Keshav Ganesh. I rode to the stables and returned to the College and quickly changing my apparel repaired to Chetwynd Court, but found them already drinking tea with the liberality of artists. "A cup of nectar" I cried "ere the bowl be empty!" "It seems that Pegasus is blind" said Wilson "or he would not see the drink of Gods in the brown tincture of tea-leaves and the chased bowls of Hephaestus in a common set of China." "If not the drink of Gods" I replied "it is the nectar of poets and women." "And that is a more splendid title" put in Prince Paradox. "You are right" said Keshav "poets and women are the efflorescence of being and the crowning rapture of creation, and if poets are roses in their delicate texture and have the crimson luxury and the heavy fragrance and the petalled sublimity of a blowing rose, women are moulded of as fine material but are flowers perpetually in the bud and are only seen in a glint of peeping splendour and not in the consummated outburst of glory, which is only fostered by the living waters of culture and the nurturing warmth of independence." Broome interposed. "No more of that" he said "if you escape into a byway, Keshav, you will never be wooed back into the high-road." "But what is the high-road?" I inquired. Broome Wilson, who was gifted with a retentive memory undertook to

inform me. "I understand" I said when he had finished "and am pleased to see my own ideas garbed in the beautiful dialect of poetical analogy; but have you not finished or is there more wine to be pressed from the cluster?" "There is more to be pressed" he answered. Then began an amusing scene, for Broome baited his hook for the argument and kept throwing the line repeatedly, but Keshav was the wariest fish that ever cheated an angler and if he ever appeared to bite, was seen, as the line went flying up, to dart away into some fine thought or voluptuous image. At last when we least expected it, he plunged into the argument.

"And so on the gnarled brow of Pisgah we stand and look down on a land flowing with milk and honey. Now whether is it wiser to descend and take the kingdom of heaven by violence or to linger here and feel on our temples the breath of the winds wafting us hints of the beauty we relinquish? Below there are truculent peoples to conquer and strong cities to storm and giants, the sons of Anak, to slaughter, but above the stainless heavens and the sweet, fresh morning and one lingering star."

"Let us go down" I said "and enjoy the full meaning of the beauty below us."

"Yes" added Broome eagerly "leave hints to the spiritually indolent."

Treneth threw in a paradox.

"I love the pleasure of anticipation better than the pain of enjoyment."

"We are very far from the enjoyment" said Keshav "for we have yet to make the descent of Pisgah."

"But what is Pisgah?" I asked.

"In thought, the knowledge of virtue, and, in action, the purpose of evolving the inborn qualities and powers native to our personality."

"Shall I let you off, Keshav," said Broome "or are you ready to answer my inquiries?"

"Pray do not" he said "for like Gorgias I profess to answer any question and not be at a loss however strange the inquiry."

"I am glad to hear it, and I hope you will answer and tell me why you have ignored the qualities that are native neither to

our human nature nor to our personality but to a more subtle part of us."

"I see;" he replied with a smile "you shy at the spectre of heredity. Well, we will lay the spectre."

"And a spectre it is, or rather a scarecrow;" put in Prince Paradox "for it seems to me neither beautiful as an idea nor sound as a theory but merely the last resource of bad psychologists."

"I see the lovers of the past are as iconoclastic from regret as the lovers of the future from aspiration. We are then agreed that our first step will be to reject or accept heredity?"

We all assented.

"And now, Prince Paradox" he said "will you tell me that you do not believe in race?"

"God forbid."

"And you agree with me that an Aryan is various from a non-Aryan, and a Teuton from a Celt and a Celt from a Hindu, and a Rajput from a Mahratta, and that this is fine as an idea and sound as a theory and consonant with Nature, which is fond of sphering harmony within harmony?"

"Yes, I agree with all that."

"And by origin the Saxon varies from the Celt, and is meant for the drudgery of Life and not for its beauty and splendour, just as by origin the thistle varies from the rose and is not glorious nor wonderful but simply decent and useful and good diet for donkeys?"

"That is true."

"Then if race divergences result from origin, and origin is heredity, is it not?, is not heredity real and not a sciolism?"

"Yes, in broad masses, but not in the individual. What is sauce for the goose abstract is not sauce for the positive gander."

"It would take a positive goose to deny that. But synthesis is the secret of Philosophy and not analysis, and we err widely when we work from without rather than from within. Let us rectify our methods or we shall arrive at incomplete results. I trust none of you are proficient in text-book Psychology?"

We all disclaimed the text-book.



“That is fortunate, for I can now make ridiculous mistakes without fear of ridicule. This is the theory of race as I conceive it. Temperament is the basis or substratum of character, and the character built on anything other than temperament is an edifice rooted in the sea-waves which in a moment will foam away into nothing or tumble grovelling under the feet of fresh conquerors. Indeed it would be more apt to call temperament the root of character, and the character itself the growing or perfect tree with its hundred branches and myriads of leaves. And temperament is largely due to race, or, in another phrasing, varies with the blood, and if the blood is quick and fiery the temperament is subtle and sensitive and responds as promptly to social influences and personal culture as a flower to sunlight and rain, and shoots up into multitudinous leaves and branches, but if the blood is slow and lukewarm, the temperament is dull and phlegmatic and will not answer to the most earnest wooing, but grows up stunted and withered in aspect and bald of foliage and miserly of branches and altogether unbeautiful. On the blood depends the sensitiveness of the nerves to impressions and the quick action of the brains and the heat of the passions, and all that goes to the composition of a character, which if they are absent, leave only the heavy sediment and dregs of human individuality. Hence the wide gulf between the Celt and the Saxon.”

“You are the dupe of your own metaphors, Keshav” said Broome “the quick nature is the mushroom, but the slow is the gradual and majestic oak.”

“If the Athenians were mushrooms and the Lowland Scotch are oaks, the mushroom is preferable. To be slow and solid is the pride of the Saxon and the ox, but to be quick and songful and gracile is the pride of the Celt and the bird. There is no virtue in inertia, but only absence of virtue; for without growth there is no development, and the essence of growth and the imperative need of the spirit is movement, which if you lose, you lose all that separates the human from the brute.”

Broome avowed that on our theory of virtue the remark was convincing.

“And do we all recognize” said he “blood as the seed of temperament and temperament as the root of character?”

We all signified assent.

“Then, Prince Paradox, does it not follow that if our ancestors had quick blood, we shall have quick blood and a quick temperament, and if they had slow blood, we shall have slow blood and a slow temperament, and if they had some of both characters, we shall have the elements of either temperament, and either they will amalgamate, one predominant and the other subordinate or driven under, or they will pervert our souls into a perpetual field of battle?”

“Obviously” he assented.

“Then here we have heredity in the individual as in the broad masses.”

“But only a racial heredity and to that I do not object, but what I loath is to be told that my virtues are mere bequests and that I am not an original work but a kind of anthology of ancestral qualities.”

“But if I called you a poem, in which peculiar words and cadences have been introduced and assimilated and blended in a new and beautiful manner, would you loath to be told that?”

“Dear me, no: it quite reconciles me to the idea.”

“And it is the more accurate comparison. Nature does not go to work like a mere imitator of herself, as modern poets do, but transplants the secrets of her old poems and blends them with new secrets, so as to enrich the beauty of her new poem, and however she may seem to grow grapes from thistles, is really too wise and good, to do anything so discordant, and only by her involved and serpentine manner gives an air of caprice and anarchy to what is really apt and harmonious. She often leaves the ground fallow for a generation and the world is surprised when it sees spring from Sir Timothy Shelley, Baronet and orthodox, Percy Bysshe Shelley, poet and pioneer of free-thought, but learns in a little while that Percy Shelley had a grandfather, and marvels no longer. Could we trace the descent of Goethe and Shakespeare we should find the root of the Italian in the one and the Celt in the other — but the world did not then and

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does not now appreciate the value of genealogies to philosophy. We are vexed and are sceptical of harmony in nature, when we find Endymion a Londoner, but look back a step and learn that his parents were Devonshire Celts and recover our faith in the Cosmos. And why should we exclaim at the Julian emperors as strange products for stoical virtue-ridden Rome, when we know that Tiberius was a Clausus, one of the great Italian houses renowned for its licence, cruelty, pride and genius, and Caligula the son and Nero the grandson of Germanicus, who drew his blood from Mark Antony. Science is right in its materialist data, though not always in the inferences it draws from them and when she tells us that nothing proceeds from nothingness and that for every effect there is a cause and for every growth a seed, we must remember that her truths apply as much to the spiritual as to the material world. Mommsen has said rightly that without passion there is no genius. We shall not gather beauty from ugliness, nor intellect from a slow temperament, nor fiery passion from disciplined apathy, but in all things shall reap as we sow, and must sow the wind before we can reap the whirlwind."

## Stray Thoughts

Flowers and trees are the poetry of Nature; the gardener is a romantic poet who has added richness, complexity of effect and symmetry to a language otherwise distinguished merely by facility, by directness and by simplicity of colour and charm.

Sound is more essential to poetry than sense. Swinburne who often conveys no meaning to the intellect, yet fills his verse with lovely & suggestive melodies, can put more poetry into one such line than Pope into a hundred couplets of accurate sense and barren music. A noble thought framed in a well-rounded sentence, will always charm by virtue of its satisfying completeness, but will never convey that exquisite agony of rapture which a line of perfect melody conveys to the sensitive soul.

The melody of words has this advantage over the melody of mere sounds that it needs only a soul to understand poetry but to comprehend music a technical education as well.

To govern life by fixed laws and a pocket-hand-book.

Beware of heavy touches above all in tragedy: comedy heavily stressed becomes the grotesque, which has its value in Art: tragedy heavily stressed becomes melodrama, which has no value anywhere.

One step beyond the sublime & you are in the grotesque.

The Greek mythology was evolved by poets and sculptors; therefore it is beautiful. The Hindu mythology fell into the hands of priests and moralists; therefore it has become hideous.

Art holds the mirror up to Nature that Nature may see her own image beside that of Art and realise her own deformity and imperfections.

It was Meredith who taught me that the epigram is the soul of style, and Plato who whispered that rhythm is its body. Words are the texture of the flesh and sentences the system of hard matter that gives it consistency: the texture of the flesh may be coarse or delicate, and as you design so you shall build.

Just as Socrates was nothing without his *daemon*, so the artist is helpless if he has not his daemon at his elbow. And who is the artist's daemon?

The artistic conscience.

Inspiration means that the papyrus of your imagination is held to the fire of memory and reveals characters written in Indian ink by unseen compositors.



## Part Two

### On Literature

Sri Aurobindo wrote all the pieces in this part in Baroda between 1893 and 1906. He published the essays making up *Bankim Chandra Chatterji* in a newspaper in 1893–94. He published two of the essays on Kalidasa, “The Age of Kalidasa” and “The Seasons”, in 1902 and 1909 respectively. He did not publish any of the pieces in the sections headed “On Poetry and Literature” and “On the Mahabharata”.





Bankim Chandra Chatterji



## I

# His Youth and College Life

**B**ANKIM Chandra Chattopadhyaya, the creator and king of Bengali prose, was a high-caste Brahman and the son of a distinguished official in Lower Bengal. Born at Kantalpara on the 27th June 1838, dead at Calcutta on the 8th April 1894, his fifty-six years of laborious life were a parcel of the most splendid epoch in Bengali history; yet among its many noble names, his is the noblest. His life shows us three faces, his academical career, his official labours and his literary greatness; it will be here my endeavour to give some description of each and all. The first picture we have of his childhood is his mastering the alphabet at a single reading; and this is not only the initial picture but an image and prophecy of the rest. Even thus early men saw in him the three natural possessions of the cultured Bengali, a boundless intellect, a frail constitution and a temper mild to the point of passivity. And indeed Bankim was not only our greatest; he was also our type and magnified pattern. He was the image of all that is most finely characteristic in the Bengali race. At Midnapur, the home of his childhood, the magnificence of his intellect came so early into view, that his name grew into a proverb. "You will soon be another Bankim," — for a master to say that was the hyperbole of praise, and the best reward of industry. He ascended the school by leaps and bounds; so abnormal indeed was his swiftness that it put his masters in fear for him. They grew nervous lest they should spoil by over-instruction the delicate fibre of his originality, and with a wise caution they obstructed his entrance into the highest class. Bankim had always an extraordinary luck. Just as at school his fine promise was saved by the prudence of its guardians from the altar of High Education, the Moloch to whom we stupidly sacrifice India's most hopeful sons, so it was saved at Hugly College by his own distaste for hard work. At Hugly College

quite as much as at Midnapur he had the reputation of an intellectual miracle. And indeed his ease and quickness in study were hardly human. Prizes and distinctions cost him no effort in the attaining. He won his honours with a magical carelessness and as if by accident while others toiled and failed. But while unconquerably remiss in his duties, he bestowed wonderful pains on his caprices. He conceived at this time a passion for Sanskrit and read with great perseverance at a Pandit's tol. In a single year he had gone through the Mugdhabodh, Raghuvansa, Bhatti and the Meghaduta. Advancing at this pace he managed in something under four years to get a sense of mastery in the ancient tongue and a feeling for its literary secrets which gave him immense leverage in his work of creating a new prose. Not that there is the least touch of pedantry in his Bengali style: rather it was he and Madhu Sudan Dutt who broke the tyranny of the Sanskrit tradition: but one feels how immensely his labour was simplified by a fine and original use of his Sanskrit knowledge. At the age of seventeen, being then a student of five years' standing, he cut short his attendance at Hugly College. He left behind him a striking reputation, to which, except Dwarkanath Mitra, no student has ever come near. Yet he had done positively nothing in the way of application or hard work. As with most geniuses his intellectual habits were irregular. His spirit needed larger bounds than a school routine could give it, and refused, as every free mind does, to cripple itself and lose its natural suppleness. It was his constant habit, a habit which grew on him with the lapse of time, to hide himself in a nook of the College Library and indulge his wandering appetite in all sorts of reading. At the eleventh hour and with an examination impending, he would catch up his prescribed books, hurry through them at a canter, win a few prizes, and go back to his lotus-eating. I believe this is a not uncommon habit with brilliant young men in all countries and it saves them from the sterilizing effects of over-instruction; but it hardly strikes one as a safe policy for slower minds. At the Presidency College, his next seat of instruction, he shaped his versatile intellect to the study of law. He had then some project of qualifying as a High Court Pleader, but at the

right moment for literature the Calcutta University came into being and Bankim took literary honours instead of legal. The Courts lost a distinguished pleader and India gained a great man. Bankim, however, seems to have had some hankering after Law; for he subsequently snatched time from hard official drudgery and larger literary toil to appear with his usual distinguished success for the B.L. But his chief pretension to academical originality is perhaps that he was, together with Jodunath Bose, our first B.A., even in this detail leading the way for his countrymen. His official appointment followed close on the heels of his degree. At the age of twenty he was sent as Deputy Magistrate to Jessore.

I have drawn out in a manner as little perfunctory as I could manage, this skeleton of Bankim's academical life. In any account of an eminent Hindu a dry sketch of this sort is a form that must be gone through; for we are a scholastic people and in our life examinations and degrees fill up half the book. But examinations and degrees are a minor episode in the history of a mind. An European writer has acutely observed that nothing which is worth knowing can be taught. That is a truth which Dr. Bhandarkar, when he can spare time from his Carlyle, might ponder over with profit. Not what a man learns, but what he observes for himself in life and literature is the formative agency in his existence, and the actual shape it will take is much determined by the sort of social air he happens to breathe at that critical moment when the mind is choosing its road. All else is mere dead material useless without the breath of a vivifying culture. If examinations and degrees are the skeleton of university life, these are its soul and life-blood, and where they exist poorly or not at all, education, except for the one or two self-sufficing intellects, becomes mere wind and dust. Among what sort of men did the student Bankim move? From what social surroundings did his adolescent personality take its colour? These are questions of a nearer interest than the examinations he passed or the degrees he took; and to them I shall give a larger answer.

## II

### The Bengal He Lived In

THE SOCIETY by which Bankim was formed, was the young Bengal of the fifties, the most extraordinary perhaps that India has yet seen,—a society electric with thought and loaded to the brim with passion. Bengal was at that time the theatre of a great intellectual awakening. A sort of miniature Renaissance was in process. An ardent and imaginative race, long bound down in the fetters of a single tradition, had had suddenly put into its hands the key to a new world thronged with the beautiful or profound creations of Art and Learning. From this meeting of a foreign Art and civilisation with a temperament differing from the temperament which created them, there issued, as there usually does issue from such meetings, an original Art and an original civilisation. Originality does not lie in rejecting outside influences but in accepting them as a new mould into which our own individuality may run. This is what happened and may yet happen in Bengal. The first impulse was gigantic in its proportions and produced men of an almost gigantic originality. Rammohan Ray arose with a new religion in his hand, which was developed on original lines by men almost greater one thinks than he, by Rajnarain Bose and Debendranath Tagore. The two Dutts, Okhay Kumar and Michael Madhu Sudan, began a new Prose and a new Poetry. Vidyasagara, scholar, sage and intellectual dictator, laboured hugely like the Titan he was, to create a new Bengali language and a new Bengali society, while in vast and original learning Rajendra Lal Mitra has not met his match. Around these arose a class of men who formed a sort of seed-bed for the creative geniuses, men of fine critical ability and appreciative temper, scholarly, accomplished, learned in music and the arts, men in short not only of culture, but of original culture. Of these perhaps the most finished patterns were Madhu Sudan's friends,

Gourdas Byshak, and that scholarly patron of letters, Rajah Jyotindra Mohun Tagore. At the same time there arose, as in other parts of India, a new social spirit and a new political spirit, but these on a somewhat servilely English model. Of all its channels the released energies of the Bengali mind ran most violently into the channel of literature. And this was only natural; for although the Bengali has by centuries of Brahmanic training acquired a religious temper, a taste for law and a taste for learning, yet his peculiar sphere is language. Another circumstance must not be forgotten. Our renascence was marked like its European prototype, though not to so startling an extent, by a thawing of old moral custom. The calm, docile, pious, dutiful Hindu ideal was pushed aside with impatient energy, and the Bengali, released from the iron restraint which had lain like a frost on his warm blood and sensuous feeling, escaped joyously into the open air of an almost Pagan freedom. The ancient Hindu cherished a profound sense of the nothingness and vanity of life; the young Bengali felt vividly its joy, warmth and sensuousness. This is usually the moral note of a Renascence, a burning desire for Life, Life in her warm human beauty arrayed gloriously like a bride. It was the note of the sixteenth century, it is the note of the astonishing return to Greek Paganism, which is now beginning in England and France; and it was in a slighter and less intellectual way the note of the new age in Bengal. Everything done by the men of that day and their intellectual children is marked by an unbounded energy and passion. Their reading was enormous and ran often quite out of the usual track. Madhu Sudan Dutt, besides English, Bengali and Sanskrit, studied Greek, Latin, Italian and French, and wrote the last naturally and with ease. Toru Dutt, that unhappy and immature genius, who unfortunately wasted herself on a foreign language and perished while yet little more than a girl, had, I have been told, a knowledge of Greek. At any rate she could write English with perfect grace and correctness and French with energy and power. Her novels gained the ear of the French public and her songs breathed fire into the hearts of Frenchmen in their fearful struggle with Germany. And as was their reading so was their life. They were

giants and did everything gigantically. They read hugely, wrote hugely, thought hugely, and drank hugely.

Bankim's student days did not happen among that circle of original geniuses; his time fell between the heroes of the Renaissance and the feebler Epigoni of our day. But he had contemporary with him men of extraordinary talent, men like Dinabandhu Mitra and Dwarkanath Mitra, men so to speak of the second tier. Bankim was the last of the original geniuses. Since then the great impulse towards originality has gone backward like a receding wave. After Bankim came the Epigoni, Hemchandra Banerji, Nobin Sen, Robindranath Tagore, men of surprising talent, nay, of unmistakable genius, but too obviously influenced by Shelley and the English poets. And last of all came the generation formed in the schools of Keshab Chandra Sen and Kristo Das Pal, with its religious shallowness, its literary sterility and its madness in social reform. Servile imitators of the English, politicians without wisdom and scholars without learning, they have no pretensions to greatness or originality. Before they came the first mighty impulse had spent itself and Bengal lay fallow for a new. It rests with the new generation, the generation that will soon be sitting in the high places and judging the land, whether there shall be scope for any new impulse to work itself out. Two years ago it looked as if this mighty awakening would lose itself, as the English sixteenth century lost itself, in Puritanism and middle-class politics.

But when Bankim was a student, the traditions of the Hindu college were yet powerful, the Hindu college, that nursery of geniuses, where the brain of the New Age had worked most powerfully and the heart of the New Age had beat with the mightiest vehemence. The men around Bankim were calmer, sedater, more temperate; but they walked in the same ways and followed the same ideals. To that life of hard thinking and hard drinking Bankim was drawn not merely, as some were, by the power of youthful imitateness, but by sympathy of temperament. He had the novelist's catholicity of taste and keen sense for life, and the artist's repugnance to gloom and dreariness. Even when the thoughts turned to old faith, the clear sanity of the



man showed itself in his refusal to admit asceticism among the essentials of religion. He never indulged in that habit of frightful and inveterate riot which has killed one or two of our second-rate talents, but it cannot quite be said that he never overstepped the limits or always observed the principle of "nothing in excess," which is the only sure rule for a man's conduct. Some would like to see in this sensuous exuberance the secret of his early decay. It may be so; but speculation on this subject will remain a solemn farce, until it is taken up in a disinterested spirit. At present all our wise disquisitions proceed from unchastened sentiment. Dr. Bhandarkar is a violent social reformer and wants to throw odium upon Hindu society; Mr. Ranade's hobby is a Conservative Radicalism and the spirit moves him to churn the ocean of statistics in a sense more agreeable to his own turn of mind; a third authority, prejudiced against Western Culture, traces all premature deaths to pleasure and wine-bibbing. Each starts from his own sensations, each builds his web of argument in the spirit of a sophist. To this Dr. Bhandarkar brings his moral ardour and grave eloquence, Mr. Ranade his trained reason and distinguished talent, the religionist his prejudices and cold precepts. Widely as they differ, they have this in common that they have not for their aim to speak usefully: they are simply trying to find reasons for their own likes and dislikes. Dealing with subjects of scientific interest in a spirit of this sort is only to invite confusion and exclude light. We in Bengal with our tendency to the sins of the blood are perhaps more apt than others to call to our aid the gloomy moralities of the Puritan; in censuring Bankim we are secretly fortifying ourselves against ourselves; but in this instance it is a false caution. The cultured Bengali begins life with a physical temperament already delicate and high-strung. He has the literary constitution with its femineity and acute nervousness. Subject this to a cruel strain when it is tenderest and needs the most careful rearing, to the wicked and wantonly cruel strain of instruction through a foreign tongue; put it under the very worst system of training; add enormous academical labour, immense official drudgery in an unhealthy climate and constant mental application; crown all with the

nervous expense of thought and fever of composition plus the unfailing exhaustion that comes after; and we need not go to the momentary excesses of a generous blood to find the explanation of broken health and an early decline. The miracle of it is not that the victims die prematurely but that they live so long. Perhaps we might begin to enquire into the causes of that phenomenon for a change.

One thing however is certain that whatever else Bankim lost, he gained from his youthful surroundings much emotional experience and great flexibility of mind. There too he got his initial stimulus. Like Telang, and perhaps even more than Telang, Bankim was blessed or cursed with an universal talent. Everything he touched, shaped itself to his hand. It would have been easy for him to make disastrous mistakes, to miss his vocation, waste himself in English and at the end to leave no enduring monument of his personality behind. What saved him? It was the initial stimulus and the cultured environment; it was that he lived among men who could distinguish a talent when they saw it and once distinguished were bent on realizing it; among men in fact who had some instinct for finding their way. With a limited creature like man, the power of the environment is immense. Genius it is true exists independently of environment and by much reading and observation may attain to self-expression but it is environment that makes self-expression easy and natural; that provides sureness, verve, stimulus. Here lies the importance to the mind in its early stage of self-culture of fine social surroundings; — that sort of surroundings which our Universities do nothing and ought to have done everything to create.

### III

## His Official Career

THUS equipped, thus trained Bankim began his human journey, began in the radiance of joy and strength and genius the life which was to close in suffering and mortal pain. The drudgery of existence met him in the doorway, when his youth was still young. His twenty-first year found him at Jessore, his fifty-third was the last of his long official labour. Here too however his inveterate habit of success went always with him. The outward history of his manhood reads more brilliantly even than that of his youth, and if he did not climb to the highest posts, it was only because these are shut to indigenous talent. From start to finish, his ability, delicacy of judgment and careful work were recognised as something unusual: yet it would not be easy to find a more careful or cleverer set of administrators than the Hindu civilians of Bengal. At Jessore his life was chequered by a great boon and a great sorrow. It was here that he made fast his friendship with the dramatist Dinabandhu Mitra, which remained close-soldered to the end, and it was here that his young wife died. At Kanthi, the next stage of his official wanderings, he married again and more fortunately. Khulna, the third step in the ladder, was also the theatre of his most ambitious exploits. Entangled in the Sundarban, that rude and unhealthy tract of marsh and jungle, the zillah was labouring under two morbid ailments, for which none of its official doctors had found an efficient panacea, — the small-pox of piracy and the greater pox of Indigoism. Ruffians from Europe were in hot competition with the native breed which should deserve best the Government Scholarship for lawlessness and brutality; and as they had a racial gift for these things and a wider field it might have been safely awarded to them. Unluckily Bankim stepped into their happy hunting-grounds and spoiled the game. But to the unhappy ryots, the battle-field for these rival

rascalities, he came as a champion and a deliverer. At Khulna this mild, thoughtful Bengali wears the strange appearance of a Hercules weeding out monsters, clearing Augean stables, putting a term to pests. His tranquil energy quite broke the back of the Indigo tyrants. Their master-criminals and chief indigocrats fled to Anam and Brindaban, but they were overtaken by Bankim's warrant and persuaded to come back. Fine and imprisonment meted out with a healthy severity, shattered their prestige and oppressed their brutal spirit. Khulna then saw the last of government by organised ruffianism. No less terse and incisive were Bankim's dealings with the water-thieves who lurking in creek and brushwood dominated to the perpetual alarm and molestation of travellers the hundred waters of the Sundarban. The out-laws were hunted down and imprisoned and their principal spirits relegated where there was less room for their genius to find self-expression. The hydra of the waters had been crushed as effectually as the indigo pest; and since the era of Bankim's magistracy one may travel the length and breadth of Khulna without peril except from malaria and ague. By a little quiet decisiveness he had broken the back of two formidable tyrannies and given an object-lesson in what a Government can do when it heartily intends the good of the people.

Baruipur, consecrated a place in the calendar of literature, was next put into his hands. The event of his residence here was his appointment vice Mr. Justice Princep to the chair of an Official Emoluments Commission then sitting. The Government intended this to look like an extraordinary distinction, and had not the genius of the man raised him unmeasurably above any Englishman in the country, we might have regarded it as such. Barhampur was the next step in his journey, and after Barhampur Maldeh, and after Maldeh the important Suburban district of Hugly. He was now nearing his high-water mark and his official existence which had been till then more than ordinarily smooth, began to be ploughed up by unaccustomed storms. The Government wanted to give some inadequate expression to its sense of his extraordinary merits and could think of nothing better than a place in the Secretariat. It was here

that he came into collision with the spirit of bureaucracy. His superior was a certain Macaulay, a hard working official, whose brains were tied together with red tape. The diligent mediocrity of this man was goaded to extra hours by flickering visions of a Lieutenant-Governorship, but Bankim, having no such high incentive, was careful to close his work at the strict office-hour. For this Macaulay took him severely to task. "It is natural enough" replied Bankim, forgetting unfortunately that he was talking to a piece of red tape "it is natural enough for you to work hard. You are of the ruling caste and may rise, who knows? to be Lieutenant-Governor. But why should I be subservient to your example? Here is the bourne and goal of my promotion. Beyond it what prospect have I? No, I have no idea of sweating myself to death over extraordinary work." When independence and red tape come into collision, it is usually independence that gets tripped up. Bankim was sent back in a hurry to Magistrate's work, this time at Alipur. But his ill-luck followed him. He was shipwrecked again in a collision with Anglo-Indianism. Walking in Eden Garden he chanced across Munro, the Presidency Commissioner, a farouche bureaucrat with the manners of an Englishman and the temper of a badly-educated hyena. Bankim examined the queer curiosity, as one might any queer curiosity, with a certain lazy interest, but no signal of respect. He was unaware at this time that to Salaam any stray European you may meet is the highest privilege of a Hindu and the whole duty of a Deputy Magistrate. But he was soon to receive instruction: for His Hyenaship was off in a rage to the Government and by a little private roaring easily got Bankim transferred to Jahajpur in Orissa. Bankim was considerably taken aback and not a little angry. "Have I then committed some grave fault?" he enquired of the Chief Secretary "or is it that the Government has found out a new way to pay its old debts? Resolve me, for I am in doubt." The gibe told. He had hardly set foot in Orissa, when he was gazetted back to Hugly. After a lapse of time, — Munro, I believe, had in the mean time been struck by his own astonishing likeness to the founder of Christianity and was away to spread the light of the Gospel among the heathen — after a lapse of time

Bankim was allowed to come back to Alipur. But this was the last stage of that thankless drudgery in which he had wasted so much precious force. His term of service was drawing to a close, and he was weary of it all: he wished to devote his remnant of life to literature. But the days that remained to him were few and evil. One or two years clouded with sickness, sorrow and suffering stood between him and the end.

#### IV

### His Versatility

WHENEVER a literary man gives proof of a high capacity in action people always talk about it as if a miracle had happened. The vulgar theory is that worldly abilities are inconsistent with the poetic genius. Like most vulgar theories it is a conclusion made at a jump from a few superficial appearances. The inference to be drawn from a sympathetic study of the lives of great thinkers and great writers is that except in certain rare cases versatility is one condition of genius. Indeed the literary ability may be said to contain all the others, and the more so when it takes the form of criticism or of any art, such as the novelist's, which proceeds principally from criticism. Goethe in Germany, Shakespeare, Fielding and Matthew Arnold in England are notable instances. Even where practical abilities seem wanting, a close study will often reveal their existence rusting in a lumber-room of the man's mind. The poet and the thinker are helpless in the affairs of the world, because they choose to be helpless: they sacrifice the practical impulse in their nature, that they may give full expression to the imaginative or speculative impulse; they choose to burn the candle at one end and [not] at the other, but for all that the candle has two ends and not one. Bankim, the greatest of novelists, had the versatility developed to its highest expression. Scholar, poet, essayist, novelist, philosopher, lawyer, critic, official, philologist and religious innovator, — the whole world seemed to be shut up in his single brain. At first sight he looks like a bundle of contradictions. He had a genius for language and a gift for law; he could write good official papers and he could write a matchless prose; he could pass examinations and he could root out an organised tyranny; he could concern himself with the largest problems of metaphysics and with the smallest details of word-formation: he had a feeling for the

sensuous facts of life and a feeling for the delicate spiritualities of religion: he could learn grammar and he could write poetry.

What shall we say in the presence of this remarkable versatility? Over-borne by the pomp of it and the show, shall we set it down as an adjunct of intellectual kingliness? Yes, to have it is an adjunct of intellectual kingliness, but to give expression to it is an intellectual mistake. To give impartial expression to all your gifts is to miss your vocation. Bankim was never so far led astray as that. His province was literature, prose literature, and he knew it. His lyrics are enchanting, but few; metaphysics he followed at the end of his life and law at the beginning; and he used scholarship and philology, simply as other great writers have used them, to give subtlety of suggestion and richness of word-colour to his literary style. Even in the province of prose literature, where he might have worked out his versatility to advantage, he preferred to specialise. He never stepped unpardonably out of his province, but he was occasionally led astray by this or that lure to allow small drains on his fund of energy; and so far as he did so, he sinned against his own soul. The one great and continuous drain was the tax put upon him by official drudgery. Under the morbid and wasteful conditions of middle-class life in India genius, when not born in the purple, has put before it, like the fair Rosamund of Norman romance, a choice between two methods of suicide, the Services and the Law. It must either take the poisoned bowl or the dagger. And in this limited circle of professions the Educational Service with its system of respites and remissions, and the Executive Service with its indirect rather than direct tax on the pure intellect, present, it may be, the points of least repulsion. But they are none the less a fearful drain because they are, under existing circumstances, necessary.

In this versatility Bankim was only a type of the intellectual Hindu. This gift, at once a blessing and a curse, is the most singular characteristic of those two Hindu races, which have the destinies of the country in their keeping. It is the evidence of our high blood, our patent of nobility among the nations; for



it comes of the varied mental experience of our forefathers, of the nation's three thousand years of intellectual life. But it is at the same time a rock ahead, of which the Hindu genius has yet to pilot itself clear. To find your vocation and keep to it, that is not indeed a showy, but it is a simple and solid rule of life. We however prefer to give an impartial expression to all our gifts, forgetting that the mind is as mortal and as much subject to wear and tear as any perishable thing, forgetting that specialism is one condition of the highest accomplishment, forgetting that our stock of energy is limited and that what we expend in one direction, we lose in another. We insist on burning the candle at both ends. This spirit appears in our system of public instruction, the most ingeniously complete machine for murder that human stupidity ever invented, and murder not only of a man's body but of a man's soul, of that sacred fire of individuality in him which is far holier and more precious than this mere mortal breath. It appeared too with melancholy effects in the literary fate of Kashinath Telang. It was one reason why he, a man of such large abilities, the most considerable genius a highly intellectual people has produced, yet left nothing to which the world will return with unfailing delight. Telang, it is true, worked mainly in English, a language he had learned; and in a language you have learned, you may write graciously, correctly, pleasingly, but you will never attain to the full stature of your genius. But it was a yet more radical mistake that he, whose power was pre-eminently literary, as any eye trained to these things can see that it was, yet allowed it to run in every direction except the very one that nature had marked out for it. Bankim was more fortunate. He wrote in his own beautiful mother-tongue, his best work was literary and his immense originality would in any case have forced its way out. But one cannot think without a pang of the many delightful master-pieces he might have brought into his garner, if he had had leisure to work single-heartedly in the field of his richest harvests. The body of work he gave us in nearly forty years of intellectual activity amounts to ten novels, two critical works on religion and some scattered literature. Small in quantity, it is pure gold

in quality. And it may be that in no case would he have written much. Nature gives us quartz profusely and mixed alloy in abundance, but pure gold only in rare parcels and infinitesimal portions.

## His Literary History

**B**ANKIM'S literary activity began for any serious purpose at Khulna, but he had already trifled with poetry in his student days. At that time the poet Iswara Chandra Gupta was publishing two papers, the *Sangbad Prabhakar* and the *Sadhuranjan*, which Dwarkanath Mitra and Dinbandhu Mitra were helping with clever school-boy imitation of Iswara Chandra's style. Bankim also entered these fields, but his striking originality at once distinguished him from the mere cleverness of his competitors, and the fine critical taste of Iswara Chandra easily discovered in this obscure student a great and splendid genius. Like Madhu Sudan Dutt Bankim began by an ambition to excel in English literature, and he wrote a novel in English called *Rajmohan's Wife*. But, again like Madhu Sudan, he at once realised his mistake. The language which a man speaks and which he has never learned, is the language of which he has the nearest sense and in which he expresses himself with the greatest fulness, subtlety and power. He may neglect, he may forget it, but he will always retain for it a hereditary aptitude, and it will always continue for him the language in which he has the safest chance of writing with originality and ease. To be original in an acquired tongue is hardly feasible. The mind, conscious of a secret disability with which it ought not to have handicapped itself, instinctively takes refuge in imitation, or else in bathos and the work turned out is ordinarily very mediocre stuff. It has something unnatural and spurious about it like speaking with a stone in the mouth or walking upon stilts. Bankim and Madhu Sudan, with their overflowing originality, must have very acutely felt the tameness of their English work. The one wrote no second English poem after the *Captive Lady*, the other no second English novel after *Rajmohan's Wife*.

Bankim's first attempt of any importance was begun at

Khulna and finished at Baruipur, the birthplace of some of his finest work. It was the *Durgesh Nandini*, a name ever memorable as the first-born child of the New Prose. At Baruipur he wrote also *Kopal Kundala* and *Mrinalini* and worked at the famous *Poison-Tree*. At Barhampur, his next station, he began editing the *Bangadarshan*, a magazine which made a profound impression and gave birth to that increasing periodical literature of to-day, of which *Bharati*, the literary organ of the cultured Tagore family, is the most finished type. Since then Bankim has given us some very ripe and exquisite work, *Chandrashekhar*, *Krishna Kanta's Will*, *Debi Chaudhurani*, *Anandmath*, *Sitaram*, *Indira* and *Kamal Kanta*. Dating from his magistracy at Barhampur broken health and increasing weakness attended the great novelist to his pyre; but the strong unwearied intellect struggled with and triumphed over the infirmities of the body. His last years were years of suffering and pain, but they were also years of considerable fruitfulness and almost unceasing labour. He had been a sensuous youth and a joyous man. Gifted supremely with the artist's sense for the warmth and beauty of life, he had turned with a smile from the savage austerities of the ascetic and with a shudder from the dreary creed of the Puritan. But now in that valley of the shadow of death his soul longed for the sustaining air of religion. More and more the philosophic bias made its way into his later novels, until at last the thinker in him proved too strong for the artist. Amid his worst bodily sufferings he was poring over the Bhagavadgita and the Vedas, striving to catch the deeper and sacred sense of those profound writings. To give that to his countrymen was the strenuous aim of his dying efforts. A *Life of Krishna*, a book on the *Essence of Religion*, a rendering of the Bhagavadgita and a version of the Vedas formed the staple of his literary prospects in his passage to the pyre. The first realised themselves and the Bhagavadgita was three parts finished, but the version of the Vedas, which should have been a priceless possession, never got into the stage of execution. Death, in whose shadow he had so long dwelt, took the pen from his hand, before it could gather up the last gleanings of that royal intellect. But his ten master-

pieces of fiction are enough. They would serve to immortalise ten reputations.

### HIS PLACE IN LITERATURE

To assign Bankim's place in Bengali literature is sufficiently easy: there is no prose-writer, and only one poet who can compete with him. More difficulties enter into any comparison of him with the best English novelists; yet I think he stands higher than any of them, except one; in certain qualities of each he may fall short, but his sum of qualities is greater; and he has this supreme advantage over them all that he is a more faultless artist. In his life and fortunes, and sometimes even in his character, he bears a striking resemblance to the father of English fiction, Henry Fielding; but the literary work of the two men moves upon different planes. Philosophical culture, and deep feeling for the poetry of life and an unfailing sense of beauty are distinguishing marks of Bankim's style; they find no place in Fielding's. Again, Bankim, after a rather silly fashion of speaking now greatly in vogue, has been pointed at by some as the Scott of Bengal. It is a marvellous thing that the people who misuse this phrase as an encomium, cannot understand that it conveys an insult. They would have us imagine that one of the most perfect and original of novelists is a mere replica of a faulty and incomplete Scotch author! Scott had many marvellous and some unique gifts, but his defects are at least as striking. His style is never quite sure; indeed, except in his inspired moments, he has no style: his Scotch want of humour is always militating against his power of vivid incident; his characters, and chiefly those in whom he should interest us most, are usually very manifest puppets; and they have all this shortcoming, that they have no soul: they may be splendid or striking or bold creations, but they live from outside and not from within. Scott could paint outlines, but he could not fill them in. Here Bankim excels; speech and action with him are so closely interpenetrated and suffused with a deeper existence that his characters give us the sense of their being real men and women. Moreover to the

wonderful passion and poetry of his finest creations there are in English fiction, outside the Brontës and that supreme genius, George Meredith, no parallel instances. Insight into the secrets of feminine character, that is another notable concomitant of the best dramatic power, and that too Bankim possesses. Wade as you will through the interminable bog of contemporary fiction, you will meet no living woman there. Even novelists of genius stop short at the outside: they cannot find their way into the soul. Here Fielding fails us; Scott's women are a mere gallery of wax figures, Rebecca herself being no more than a highly-coloured puppet; even in Thackeray the real women are only three or four. But the supreme dramatic genius has found out this secret of femineity. Shakespeare had it to any degree, and in our own century Meredith, and among ourselves Bankim. The social reformer, gazing, of course, through that admirable pair of spectacles given to him by the Calcutta University, can find nothing excellent in Hindu life, except its cheapness, or in Hindu woman, except her subserviency. Beyond this he sees only its narrowness and her ignorance. But Bankim had the eye of a poet and saw much deeper than this. He saw what was beautiful and sweet and gracious in Hindu life, and what was lovely and noble in Hindu woman, her deep heart of emotion, her steadfastness, tenderness and loveliness, in fact, her woman's soul; and all this we find burning in his pages and made diviner by the touch of a poet and an artist. Our social reformers might learn something from Bankim. Their zeal at present is too little ruled by discretion. They are like bad tailors very clever at spoiling the rich stuffs given over to their shaping but quite unable to fit the necessities of the future. They have passed woman through an English crucible and in place of the old type, which, with all its fatal defects, had in it some supreme possibilities, they have turned out a soulless and superficial being fit only for flirtation, match-making and playing on the piano. They seem to have a passion for reforming every good thing out of existence. It is about time this miserable bungling should stop. Surely it would be possible, without spoiling that divine nobleness of soul, to give it a wider culture and mightier channels! So we should have

a race of women intellectually as well as emotionally noble, fit to be the mothers not of chatterers and money-makers, but of high thinkers and heroic doers.

Of Bankim's style I shall hardly trust myself to speak. To describe its beauty, terseness, strength and sweetness is too high a task for a pen like mine. I will remark this only that what marks Bankim above all, is his unfailing sense of beauty. This is indeed the note of Bengali literature and the one high thing it has gained from a close acquaintance with European models. The hideous grotesques of old Hindu Art, the monkey-rabble of Ram and the ten heads of Ravan, are henceforth impossible to it. The *Shakuntala* itself is not governed by a more perfect graciousness of conception or suffused with a more human sweetness than *Kopal Kundala* and the *Poison-Tree*.

## What He Did for Bengal

I HAVE kept so far to Bankim's achievement looked at purely as literature. I now come to speak of it in the historic sense, of its relations to the Bengali language and potency over the Bengali race. Of this it is not easy to suggest any image without speaking in superlatives. I had almost said in one place that he created the language, and if one couples his name with Madhu Sudan Dutt's, the statement is hardly too daring. Before their advent the Bengali language, though very sweet and melodious, was an instrument with but one string to it. Except the old poet Bharatchandra, no supreme genius had taken it in hand; hence while prose hardly existed except in *Baital Pachisi* and some other tales about Vikramaditya, Bengali verse had very little to recommend it beyond a certain fatiguing sweetness. Virility, subtlety, scope, these were wanting to it. Then came Madhu Sudan and Bankim, and, like Terpander and Orpheus added fresh strings to the lyre. In Madhu Sudan's hands that nerveless and feminine dialect became the large utterance of the early Gods, a tongue epic and Titanic, a tongue for the storms and whirlwinds to speak in: he caught and studied his diction from the echo and rumour of the sea. All the stormiest passions of man's soul he expressed in gigantic language. We seem to hear Milton's Satan speaking in every line he wrote. But in Bankim's hands the Bengali language, before stammering and inarticulate, became a rich, musical and flexible organ vibrating to every human emotion and expressive of every beautiful or noble thought. I do not mean that there were no labourers in the field before Bankim and Madhu Sudan. The paths of the Gods are always prepared for them. Many daring minds were already at work, but they fell short of their high conception. Rammohan Ray, the great Vidyasagara, Okhay Kumar Dutt and the Bengali playwrights were all working bravely towards the same consummation. But



Vidyasagara, though he had much in him of the scholar and critic, was nothing of an artist; Okhay Kumar's audience ran only to the subscribers of a single magazine; and the literary originality of the rest was not equal to their audacity. None of them could transform and recreate with that sure and easy touch, which reveals the true maker of language.

Bankim moreover has this splendid distinction, that he more than anyone exalted Bengali from the status of a dialect to the majesty of a language. The immediate effect of English education had been to foster an indiscriminating love of things English and an unwise contempt for things Bengali. Among the rest the Bengali tongue was put by as an instrument hopelessly bad and unsatisfying; even Madhu Sudan in his youth neglected and forgot it. The strivings of Vidyasagara and Okhay Kumar Dutt were the strivings of a few far-sighted and patriotic men in a generation misled by false ideals. On that generation Madhu Sudan's first great poems, *Sharmishtha* and *Tilottama*, had a complex effect much of a piece with the sensation created by Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* in Elizabethan England or Hugo's *Hernani* in nineteenth century France. They took men's imaginations by storm with their splendour, passion and mighty imagery; by creating the Bengali blank verse they freed poetry from the facilities and prettinesses of the old rhymed stanza; by their magnificencies of style and emotion they brought new elements into Hindu literature, and they gave battle with their strange and fiery coloured music to the classic frigidity of the Sanscritists. They first sounded the note of Romanticism which still governs our literature. They revealed too those magnificent possibilities, latent in every Sanscritic language, which only wait for the magic touch of original genius to open out their store; and they set flowing that perennial fountain of gracious and noble poetry which is doing so much to bring beauty and high feeling into our lives and to produce a race of Bengalis braver and better than we. But at the same time they had to overcome a vast opposition. Lauded with rapturous enthusiasm by the cultured, they were anathematised by the pedants. All the Pandits, all the Sanscritists, all the fanatics of classicism, even the great

Vidyasagara himself, then the intellectual dictator of Bengal, were startled out of their senses by these magnificent and mighty poems. *Tilottama* was a gauntlet thrown down by the Romantic school to the classical. Romanticism won: it was bound to win: it had on its side youth, fire, enthusiasm, the future, and the poems of an unexampled genius for its battle-cry. *Tilottama* had been the *casus belli*; that marvellous epic, the *Meghnad-badh*, was the *coup de grâce*. When Vidyasagara praised the *Meghnad-badh* as a supreme poem, the day of the Sanscritists was over. That cabal of Pandits which had shouted against Madhu Sudan, could only murmur weakly against Bankim; the conscience of the nation had passed out of their keeping. But still the victor's audience was small and went little beyond the class that followed him into battle, the geniuses, the literary men, the women, the cultured zamindars and those men of the stamp of Rajah Jyotindra Mohan Tagore, men of an extraordinary and original culture, who were then so common in Bengal, but are now almost obsolete. The great poet died with a limited audience and before the full consummation of his fame.

Bankim came into that heritage of peace which Madhu Sudan had earned. There is, indeed, a curious contrast between these two builders of the Bengali language, so alike in their mission, but in their fortunes so dissimilar. Both were equipped with enormous stores of reading, both were geniuses of a vast originality, both had creative power, a fine sense for beauty, and a gift for emotion and pathos: both made the same false start. But here all likeness between them stops. One was the king of prose, the other the king of poetry; and their lives were of a piece with their writings. Madhu Sudan's is full of sound and passion, violence of heart, extravagance, intemperance, self-will, a life passing through grief, bitterness and anguish to a mournful and untimely doom. As we read the passage of that Titanic personality over a world too small for it, we seem to be listening again to the thunder-scene in *Lear*, or to some tragic piece out of Thucydides or Gibbon narrating the fall of majestic nations or the ruin of mighty kings. No sensitive man can read it without being shaken to the very heart. Even after his death

Madhu Sudan's evil star followed him. Though a great poet among the greatest, he is read nowhere outside Bengal and the Panjab; and his name is not heard even in Bombay and Madras, provinces of his own native land. How different was it with Bankim, the genius of prose. His nature, with plenty of strength in it, was yet mild, calm and equable, clear and joyous, but not intemperate. Fortune's favourite to whom every door opened without keys, his life had in it that sedate maturity and august quiet, which, according to Epicurus, is the true attitude of the Gods, and which the Gods only give to those mortals, who, like themselves, have seen life steadily and seen it whole. And if his last years were stained with suffering, yet he died in the fruition of his greatness, amid the mourning of a nation which he had done much to create and whose imagination he had filled with so many beautiful thoughts and so many tender, passionate or glorious images.

Bankim's influence has been far-reaching and every day enlarges its bounds. What is its result? Perhaps it may very roughly be summed up thus. When a Mahratta or Gujerati has anything important to say, he says it in English; when a Bengali, he says it in Bengali. That is, I think, the fact which is most full of meaning for us in Bengal. It means besides other things less germane to literature, that, except in politics and journalism which is the handmaid of politics, English is being steadily driven out of the field. Soon it will only remain to weed it out of our conversation; and even to that wheel I am told that Babu Kali Prasunna Ghose has set his shoulder. However that may be, the works of this distinguished prose-writer are a remarkable proof of what I have just been saying. Not long ago anyone moving in that province of the mind which Babu Kali Prasunna has annexed, would have held it beneath the dignity of his subject to write in any medium but English. Work like Babu Kali Prasunna's marks an important stage in the great revolution of sentiment which our literary class has set going, the revolution of sentiment which promises to make the Bengalis a nation.

## VII

### Our Hope in the Future

**B**UT PROFOUND as have been its effects, this revolution is yet in its infancy. Visible on every side, in the waning influence of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, in the triumph of the Bengali language, in the return to Hinduism, in the pride of birth, the angry national feeling and the sensitiveness to insult, which are growing more and more common among our young men, it has nevertheless only begun its work and has many more fields to conquer. Calcutta is yet a stronghold of the Philistines; officialdom is honeycombed with the antinational tradition: in politics and social reform the workings of the new movement are yet obscure. The Anglicised Babu sits in the high place and rules the earth for a season. It is he who perorates on the Congress, who frolics in the abysmal fatuity of interpellation on the Legislative Council, who mismanages civic affairs in the smile of the City Corporation. He is the man of the present, but he is not the man of the future. On his generation, a generation servilely English and swayed by Keshab Chandra Sen and Kristo Das Pal, Bankim had little effect. Even now you will hear Anglicised Bengalis tell you with a sort of triumph that the only people who read Bengali books are the Bengali ladies. The sneer is a little out of date, but a few years ago it would not have been so utterly beside the mark. All honour then to the women of Bengal, whose cultured appreciation kept Bengali literature alive! And all honour to the noble few who with only the women of Bengal and a small class of cultured men to appreciate their efforts, adhered to the language our forefathers spoke, and did not sell themselves to the tongue of the foreigner! Their reward is the heartfelt gratitude of a nation and an immortal renown. Yes, the women of Bengal have always been lovers of literature and may they always remain so; but it is no longer true that they are its only readers. Already we see the embryo of a new generation

soon to be with us, whose imagination Bankim has caught and who care not for Keshab Chandra Sen and Kristo Das Pal, a generation national to a fault, loving Bengal and her new glories, and if not Hindus themselves, yet zealous for the honour of the ancient religion and hating all that makes war on it. With that generation the future lies and not with the Indian Unnational Congress or the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Already its vanguard is upon us. It has in it men of culture, men of talent, men of genius. Let it only be true to itself and we shall do yet more marvellous things in the future than we have done in the past. A Bengali may be pardoned who looking back to a splendid beginning and on to a hopeful sequel, indulges in proud and grandiose hopes.

Literature and learning are the provinces in which the Bengali is fitted to have kingship, and of the two literature rather than learning; but signs are not wanting that in other spheres also he may win laurels only less splendid. In painting and sculpture, in the plastic arts, the Hindu imagination has had no gift. The favourite style is evidence of a debauched eye and a perverted taste. Yet even in this alien sphere a Bengali has been winning noble renown, and that too in Italy, the native land of painting, the land of Raphael, Da Vinci and Angelo, and among Italians, with whom artistic taste is an instinct. In religion too, the Bengali has the future in his hands. He was the first to revolt against the shortcomings of Hinduism, and he is the first who has attempted to give some shape to that New Hinduism, which is, one feels, his religious destiny. He has sojourned for some time in the religious thought of the foreigner, but he is now coming back to the creed of his fathers with strange and precious gifts in his hands. In politics he has always led and still leads. The Congress in Bengal is dying of consumption; annually its proportions shrink into greater insignificance; its leaders, the Bonnerjis and Banerjis and Lalmohan Ghoses have climbed into the rarefied atmosphere of the Legislative Council and lost all hold on the imagination of the young men. The desire for a nobler and more inspiring patriotism is growing more intense; and already in the Hindu revival and the rise of an Indigenous

Trade Party we see the handwriting on the wall. This is an omen of good hope for the future; for what Bengal thinks tomorrow, India will be thinking tomorrow week. Even towards commerce and science, spheres in which he has been painfully helpless, the Bengali is casting wistful glances; but whether he will here as elsewhere ascend the ladder, can only be settled by experiment. He is almost too imaginative, restless and swayed by his feelings for paths in which a cold eye or an untroubled brain is the one thing needful. Nevertheless let Bengal only be true to her own soul, and there is no province in which she may not climb to greatness. That this is so, is largely due to the awakening and stimulating influence of Bankim on the national mind. Young Bengal gets its ideas, feelings and culture not from schools and colleges, but from Bankim's novels and Robindranath Tagore's poems; so true is it that language is the life of a nation.

Many are carrying on the great work in prose and poetry: Hemchandra, Nobin, Kamini Sen, Robindranath and Robindranath's sister, that flower of feminine culture in Bengal, Swarna Kumari Devi, and many more whose names it would take long to repeat; but another Bankim, another Madhu Sudan comes not again. Some are pointing to this as a sign of intellectual barrenness; but it is not so. Shakespeare and Milton came within the limits of a century! Since then there have been Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, but not a second Shakespeare or Milton. Dante and Boccaccio came successively: since then there have been Berni, Boiardo, Alfieri, Tasso, but not a second Dante or Boccaccio. Such men come rarely in the lapse of centuries. Greece alone has presented the world an unbroken succession of supreme geniuses. There is nothing to prevent us Hindus, a nation created for thought and literature, from repeating that wonderful example. Greece is a high name, but what man has once done, man may again strive to do. All we need is not to tie ourselves down to a false ideal, not to load our brains with the pedantry of a false education, but to keep like those first builders a free intellect and a free soul. If we are careful to do that, there is no reason why the creative impulse in Bengal should for a moment die out. But whatever

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else may perish or endure, Bankim's fame cannot die. Already it has overleaped the barrier between East and West; translations of his works are already appearing in English and German, and wherever they are read, they excite admiration, wonder and delight. O sage politicians, and subtle economists, whose heads run on Simultaneous Examinations and whose vision is bounded by Legislative Councils, what a lesson is here for you! Not in this way shall we exalt ourselves in the scale of nations, not in this way, O sages of the bench and sophists of the bar, but by things of which your legal wisdom takes little cognizance, by noble thoughts, by high deeds, by immortal writings. Bankim and Madhu Sudan have given the world three noble things. They have given it Bengali literature, a literature whose princelier creations can bear comparison with the proudest classics of modern Europe. They have given it the Bengali language. The dialect of Bengal is no longer a dialect, but has become the speech of Gods, a language unfading and indestructible, which cannot die except with the death of the Bengali nation, and not even then. And they have given it the Bengali nation; a people spirited, bold, ingenious and imaginative, high among the most intellectual races of the world, and if it can but get perseverance and physical elasticity, one day to be high among the strongest. This is surely a proud record. Of them it may be said in the largest sense that they, being dead, yet live. And when Posterity comes to crown with her praises the Makers of India, she will place her most splendid laurel not on the sweating temples of a place hunting politician nor on the narrow forehead of a noisy social reformer, but on the serene brow of that gracious Bengali who never clamoured for place or for power, but did his work in silence for love of his work, even as nature does, and just because he had no aim but to give out the best that was in him, was able to create a language, a literature and a nation.





# On Poetry and Literature



# Poetry

Poetry I take to be the measured expression of emotion. Of prose one asks, does the matter please, stimulate or instruct the intellect; does the style satisfy a cultured taste & observant literary sense; if it does so, it is good prose, whether it moves the heart or not. Of poetry we ask, does the matter move, stimulate, enlarge, heighten, or deepen the feelings; does it excite emotions of delight, sorrow, awe, sublimity, passionate interest, or if the nature of the subject matter is not such as to excite actual emotions, does it excite certain vague & nameless sensations, the quiet stirring of the heart which attends the perception of beauty, or the august tumult which goes with the sense of largeness & space or the quick delight of increased horizons & heart-searching perceptions, does it give us the sense of power & passion? If it does, we have the material of poetry, but not yet poetry. Prose can and often does create similar effects. Great thoughts, beautiful description, noble narrative will always have this power on the soul. We have also to ask, does the language & verse harmonise with the emotion, become part of it & expressive of it, swell with its fullness and yet bound & restrain it? If it does, then we have poetry, a thing mighty & unanalysable, to usurp whose place prose vainly aspires. Matter by itself does not make poetry; skill in verse & diction is not poetry; striking & brilliant phrases, melodious weavings of sound are not poetry; it is the natural & predestined blending or rather inseparable existence of great matter with great verse producing high emotions or beautiful matter with beautiful verse producing soft emotions that gives us genuine poetry. An identity of word & sound, of thought & word, of sound & emotion which seems to have been preordained from the beginning of the world and only awaited its destined hour to leap into existence, or rather was

there from the beginning of the world & only dawned into sight at the right time, this rare identity is what we call poetry.

# Characteristics of Augustan Poetry

## *Relation of Gray to the poetry of his times*

The poetry of Gray marks the transition from the eighteenth-century or Augustan style of poetry to the nineteenth-century style; i.e. to say almost all the tendencies of poetry between the death of Pope and the production of the Lyrical Ballads in 1798 are to be found in Gray's writings. Of the other poets of the time, Johnson & Goldsmith mark the last development of the Augustan style, while Collins, Blake, Cowper, Burns, Chatterton each embody in their poetry the beginnings of one or more tendencies which afterwards found their full expression in the nineteenth century. Gray alone seems to include in himself along with many characteristics of the conservative school of Johnson & Goldsmith all the revolutionary tendencies, not one or many but all, of the later poets. His earliest poem, the Ode on Spring, has many of the characteristics of Pope and Dryden; one of his latest, the Ode on Vicissitude, has many of the characteristics of Wordsworth. He is therefore the typical poet of his age, which, as regards poetry, was an age of transition.

*What is meant by the Augustan or eighteenth-century style? In what sense is it less poetical than the poetry of Wordsworth & Shelley?*

The poetry of the eighteenth century differs entirely from that of another period in English literature. It differs alike in subject-matter, in spirit and in form. Many modern critics have denied the name of poetry to it altogether. Matthew Arnold calls Pope and Dryden classics not of poetry, but of prose, he says that they are great in the regions of half poetry; other critics while hesitating to go so far, say in substance much the same thing; Gosse, for instance, calls their poetry the poetry of English rhetoric, which exactly amounts to Matthew Arnold's description of it as

half poetry. Its own admirers give it the name of classic poetry, that is to say a poetry in which imagination and feeling are subordinated to correctness and elegance.

Poetry as generally understood, the poetry of Shakespeare and Wordsworth, may be defined as a deeper and more imaginative perception of life and nature expressed in the language and rhythm of restrained emotion. In other words its subject-matter is an interpretation of life and nature which goes deeper into the truth of things than ordinary men can do, what has been called a poetic criticism of life; its spirit is one of imagination and feeling, it is not intellectual but imaginative, not rational but emotional; and its form is a language impassioned and imaginative but restrained by a desire for perfect beauty of expression; and a rhythm generally taking the form of metre, which naturally suits the expression of deep feeling. It differs from rhetoric in this that rhetoric expresses feeling which is not deep & not quite sincere, and tries to strike and influence the reader instead of being satisfied with expressing itself and for that purpose relies mainly on tricks of language such as antithesis, epigram etc. Rhetoric tries to excite admiration and appeals to the intellect; poetry is content with adequate self-expression and appeals to the heart.

Eighteenth-century poetry differs from ordinary poetry, in subject-matter, in spirit and in form.

### *Spirit*

The spirit of ordinary poetry is one of imagination and feeling, that is to say imaginative and emotional; that of eighteenth-century poetry is one of commonsense and reason, that is to say intellectual and rational. Pope and Johnson are the two chief critics of the school. Pope expressly lays it down in his *Essay on Criticism* that sense and wit are the bases of all true poetry and Johnson is continually appealing to them as criterions, especially in his *life of Gray*, where he objects to what he considers the excess of imagery, the incredibility of his subjects, the use of imaginative mythological language and the occasional absence of a didactic purpose. In their opinion nothing should

be admitted in poetry which is not consistent with sense & wit, that is to say which is not intellectual and rational. Accordingly we find no striking imagery & no passion in eighteenth-century poetry; the poets as a rule avoid subjects in which emotion is required and when they do try to deal with the passions and feelings, they fail, their expression of these is rhetorical and not poetic. This is the reason why the drama in the eighteenth century is such an utter failure.

*Subject-matter*

The difference in subject-matter is manifold. In the first place, instead of dealing with the whole of life and nature, they limit themselves to a very narrow part of it. This limitation is partly due to the restriction of poetry to sense and wit and partly to the nature of the audience the poets addressed. It was a period in which literature depended mainly on the patronage of the aristocracy, and it was therefore for the English aristocracy of the time that the poets wrote. They were therefore bound to limit themselves to such subject-matter as might suit the tastes of their patrons. These two considerations led to three very important limitations of subject-matter.

1<sup>st</sup> The exclusion of the supernatural from poetry. The temper of the times was rationalistic and sceptical and to the cultured aristocracy of the times Shakespeare's ghosts and fairies and Milton's gods and angels would have seemed absurdities; it resulted also from the idea of commonsense as the cardinal rule of poetry, that nothing incredible should be admitted unless it was treated humorously, like the sylphs and gnomes in Pope's *Rape of the Lock* or the beasts in the fables of Gay & Swift. Poetry however seems naturally to demand the element of the supernatural & the only way to admit the supernatural without offending against reason was by Personification. We therefore find a tendency to create a sort of makeshift mythology by personifying the qualities of the mind. Otherwise the supernatural practically disappears from English poetry for a whole century.

2<sup>d</sup> The exclusion of rural life and restriction to the life of the

town and of good society. The aristocracy of the time took no interest in anything but the pleasures, occupations and mental pursuits of the town and it is accordingly only with this part of life that eighteenth-century poetry deals. The country is only treated as a subject of ridicule as in Gay's *Shepherd's Week* or of purely conventional description as in Pope's *Pastorals* and *Windsor Forest*.<sup>1</sup>

3<sup>d</sup> As a natural result of this, the exclusion of external Nature. The sense of natural beauty is quite absent from eighteenth-century poetry and we do not have even so much as the sense of the picturesque except in subjects such as landscape gardening where art could modify nature. Whenever the poets try to write of natural scenery or natural objects, they fail; their descriptions are either conventional and do not recall the object at all or only describe it in a surface manner recalling just so much as may be perceived by a casual glance. Of sympathy with Nature or close observation of it, there is hardly a single instance in English poetry between Dryden and Thomson.

4<sup>th</sup> The exclusion of human emotion, i.e. to say poetry was not only limited to the workings of the human mind and human nature but to cultured society and to the town, & not only to this but to the intellect and weaknesses of men purely; the deeper feelings of the heart are not touched or only touched in an inadequate manner; and it is a characteristic fact that the passion of love which is the most common subject of English poetry, is generally left alone by these poets or if handled, handled in a most unreal and rhetorical manner.

It followed from the exclusion of so much subject-matter that the forms of poetry which demanded this subject-matter almost disappeared. Lyrical poetry & the drama, both of which demand passion, feeling and fancy, epic poetry, which requires a grasp of entire human and external nature, a wide view of

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<sup>1</sup> The poets of the time have a tendency to the false or conventional pastoral; i.e. to say a mechanical imitation of Latin & Greek rural poetry, & especially when they try to write love poetry, they use Latin & Greek pastoral names; but these pastorals have nothing to do with any real country life past or present, nor do they describe any rural surroundings and scenery that ever existed, but are mere literary exercises.



life and some element of the supernatural, and serious narrative poetry are very little represented in the age of Pope and then only by second-rate productions. The poetry of the age is mainly didactic, i.e. its subjects are literary criticism, ethics, science or theology or humorous, i.e. consists of satire, mock-epic, humorous narrative and light society verse. All these are subjects which are really outside the scope of poetry strictly so called, as they give no room for imagination and emotion, the cardinal elements of poetry. The subjects and the way they are treated, making allowance for the difference involved by the use of metre & especially the heroic metre which necessitates a very condensed expression of thought, is not very different from that of the prose periodicals of the time. The poetry of the age taken in the mass gives one the impression of a great social journal in verse, somewhat more brilliant and varied than the *Tatler* and *Spectator* but identical in spirit.

### *Form*

Lastly the poetry of the eighteenth century differs widely in form, i.e. in language & metre, from that of preceding & subsequent poetry. This difference proceeds from a revolt against the poetical language of the seventeenth century, just as the language of Wordsworth & Keats is a revolt against that of the eighteenth. The Elizabethan poets aimed at a poetry which should be romantic, sensuous and imaginative; romantic, that is to say, full of the strange and wonderful, sensuous, that is to say, expressing the perceptions of the senses & especially the sense of the beautiful in vivid and glowing colours, and imaginative in the sense of being full of splendid and original imagery, & especially of striking phrases & vivid metaphors. In the later Elizabethans & even many of the earlier all this was carried to great excess; the love of the strange and wonderful was carried into unnaturalness and distortion, sensuousness became lost in exaggeration and poetry became a sort of hunt for metaphors, metaphors used not as aids to the imagination, but for their own sake, and the more absurd and violent, the better. Waller &

Dryden first and Pope to a much greater extent revolted against this style of forced ingenuity and proclaimed a new kind of poetry. They gave to Elizabethan language the name of false wit and Pope announced the objects of the new school in an often quoted couplet

True wit is nature to advantage dressed  
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

This couplet gives the three main principles of eighteenth-century style out of which all its distinctive characteristics rise.

(1) The poets were to write only of what oft was thought; they were to avoid the Elizabethan romantic tendency to search after the strange & wonderful. But these poets went much farther. Not only all that was peculiar or eccentric but all that was original, individual or unusual was avoided as offensive to reason & commonsense. There are no ideas in Augustan poetry which are not perfectly obvious and common, nothing which might not occur to an average educated man. This was fatal to poetry which to be poetry at all must be unusual; unusually lofty, unusually beautiful or unusually impassioned, & which dries up in an atmosphere of commonsense and commonplace. Augustan poetry has neither feeling for greatness nor for beauty nor for passion and it is therefore not without justice that it is described as at best a half poetry or a poetry of rhetoric.

But the obvious & commonplace will not be read, unless it is made to look new & interesting by brilliant language.

(2) The second principle is that while the obvious & commonplace should be the staple of poetry, it should be expressed in new and brilliant language, and this should be done by means of true wit. That is to say, while false ingenuity should be avoided, true ingenuity should be the rule of poetry. Accordingly we find that striking poetical expressions are singularly absent, the imagery is cold, obvious & conventional & their place is taken by brilliant cleverness and rhetoric. In order to conceal the barrenness of subject-matter every line is made an antithesis, an epigram or some other rhetorical turn of language. The Augustan poets did not realise that wit, whether false or true, has

nothing to do with poetry & so they fell from one extreme to the other; poetry with them became even more an exercise for mere ingenuity than with the Elizabethans, in a way less open to ridicule but more barren & prosaic.<sup>2</sup>

(3) The eighteenth century was not contented with nature, it wanted nature to be dressed & dressed to advantage. Elizabethan poetry had been even at its best either rude & unpolished or extravagant & lawless. It broke through all the ordinary rules which restrain poetry; in their recoil from this tendency the Augustans determined to restrict themselves by the greatest number of rules possible, not only those rules which are universal and for all time but many which were artificial & unsuitable. They made the language & metre of their poetry not only smooth & elegant, but formal and monotonous; the tendency was, as has been often said, to cut out poetry according to a uniform & mechanical pattern. Cowper said that Pope

Made poetry a mere mechanic art;  
And every warbler has his tune by heart

and Taine has expanded the charge in his *History of English Literature*, II p. 194, "One would say that the verse had been fabricated by a machine, so uniform is the make." The charge though exaggerated is well founded; there is a tendency to a uniform construction & turn of sentence and the unchanging repetition of 3 or 4 rhetorical artifices. It is the language of a school rather than of individual genius.

When we examine the metre, we find it treated in the same way. Poetical harmony depends upon two things, the choice of the metre and the combination of all the various cadences possible within the limits of the metre chosen. The poet chooses

<sup>2</sup> *The following passage was written on a separate page of the manuscript. Its place of insertion was not marked:*

Besides this in order to dignify the obviousness of their ideas & sentiments, a sort of conventional poetic language was adopted, wherever wit and epigram could not be employed; ordinary words were avoided as ignoble and literary words often with an artificial meaning were employed, or else a sounding paraphrase was employed or a pretentious turn of language. The universal rule was that an idea should not be stated simply, but either cleverly or as it was called nobly.

a particular stanza or a couplet form or blank verse just as he thinks most suitable to his subject; but the pauses and accents in the lines of the stanza or successive verses may be arranged many different ways, the disposition of long and short syllables and the combination of assonances and alliterations are almost infinite in their variety & great poets always vary one line from another so that not only the language but the sound of the verse, or as it is technically called the movement may suggest the exact emotion intended. This variation of cadences is a matter not for rules, but for individual genius to work out. But the Augustan poets in their passion for regularity determined to subject even this to rules. They chose as their favourite & almost only form of verse, the couplet and especially the heroic couplet. All ambitious poetical work of Pope's school is in the heroic couplet; only in light verse do they try any other. The part of their poetry in lyrical metres or in stanzas is insignificant in quantity and almost worthless in quality. Having confined themselves to the heroic couplet, they tried to make even this as formal and monotonous as possible; they put a pause regularly at the end of the first line and a full stop or colon at the end of the second; they place the accent almost invariably on every second syllable; they employ assonance without the slightest subtlety and, though without some skill in the disposition of long & short syllables good metre itself is impossible, yet they only use it in the most elementary manner. The only variety then possible was a very minute and almost imperceptible one which gave great scope for ingenuity but little for real poetic power.<sup>3</sup>

One more characteristic of the school must be noticed, i.e. the narrowness of its culture. In the eighteenth century it was the tendency to consider all the age between the third and sixteenth centuries as barbarous and best forgotten; even the sixteenth and early seventeenth were regarded as half barbarous times; and the only things besides contemporary science, philosophy

<sup>3</sup> *The following sentence was written on a separate page. Its place of insertion was not marked:*

These restrictions forced the writers to be extremely condensed & ingenious and as has been said reduced every couplet to the point of an epigram.

and literature which were regarded with interest were ancient classical literature and French civilisation. Even of the classics, little was known of Greek literature though it was held in formal honour; French & Latin and Latin rather of the second best than the best writers were the only foreign influences that affected Augustan literature to any appreciable extent.

The main characteristics of eighteenth-century poetry may therefore be summed up as follows; — a rational & intellectual rather than imaginative & emotional spirit; a restriction to town society and town life, and inability to deal with rural life, with Nature, with passion or with the supernatural; a tendency to replace the supernatural by personification; an almost exclusive preference for didactic, satirical and humorous poetry; a dislike of originality and prevalence of merely obvious ideas and sentiments; an excess of rhetorical artifice in style; a monotonous, rhetorical and conventional style; a restricted and cut-and-dried metre and an exclusion of all poetic influences & interests except the Latin writers & contemporary and French thought & literature. Its merits were smoothness, regularity & correctness; great cleverness and brilliance of wit; great eloquence; and the attainment of perfection within its own limits & according to its own ideals.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The following sentence was written on a separate page. Its place of insertion was not marked:*

The history of our period is partly that of a breaking away from formality in language and metre & a revival of lyric poetry, but still more of a struggle to widen the range of poetry by bringing all nature and all human activity both past & present into its scope, to increase interests and subject-matter as well as to inspire new life and sincerity into its style.

## Sketch of the Progress of Poetry from Thomson to Wordsworth

The Age of transition from the poetry of Pope to that of Wordsworth begins strictly speaking with Thomson. This transition was not an orderly and consistent development, but consisted of different groups of poets or sometimes even single poets each of whom made a departure in some particular direction which was not followed up by his or their successors. The poetry of the time has the appearance of a number of loose and disconnected threads abruptly broken off in the middle. It was only in the period from 1798 to 1830 that these threads were gathered together and a definite, consistent tendency imparted to poetry. It was an age of tentatives and for the most part of failures. Meanwhile the main current of verse up till 1798 followed the direction given it by Pope only slightly modified by the greater and more original writers.

These different groups of writers may be thus divided. (1) The school of natural description & elegiac moralising, consisting of Thomson, Dyer, Green, Young and other inferior writers. (2) The school of Miltonic Hellenists, begun by Warton & consisting besides of Gray, Collins, Akenside and a number of followers. (3) The school of Johnson, Goldsmith & Churchill, who continued the eighteenth-century style tho' some of them tried to infuse it with emotion, directness and greater simplicity. To this school belong the minor writers who formed the main current of verse during the time; of whom Erasmus Darwin & Gifford are the only notable ones. (4) The school of country life and the simpler feelings, consisting of Cowper and Crabbe. (5) The school of romantic poets & restorers of mediaevalism, consisting of Chatterton, Macpherson and Percy. (6) The Scotch lyric poets of whom Ferguson and Burns are the head. (7) William Blake standing by himself as a romantic, mystical & lyric poet. Besides these there are two writers who cannot

be classed, Smart & Beattie. Last come the first nineteenth-century poets, who published their earliest work in 1798–1800, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Landor & Campbell.

### *School of Natural Description*

The first to break away from Pope were Thomson & Dyer. The original departures made by their school were as follows. (1) In subject-matter an almost exclusive devotion of their poetry to the description of natural objects and natural scenery. In dealing with human emotion or human life they are generally even more incapable than the Pope school.<sup>1</sup> There is beside a tendency to force poetry to the service of the most unpoetical subjects, Armstrong writing in verse of the Art of Medicine, Dyer of Agriculture & Thomson of jail reform. On the other hand Satire is less practised or even abandoned. (2) In language, the discarding of the idea of wit as the basis of poetry; there is no straining for wit and cleverness, but its place is taken by a pseudo-Miltonic eloquence or an attempt at Miltonic imaginativeness. The influence of Milton is paramount in these writers. (3) In metre an almost entire abandonment of the heroic couplet and the return to old metres, especially blank verse, the Spenserian stanza & the octosyllabic couplet as used by the later Elizabethans. The main influences of this school on future poetry are (1<sup>st</sup>) the habit of describing Nature for its own sake (2) the Thomsonian form of blank verse which was afterwards adopted by Cowper & Wordsworth and improved by Shelley (3) the use of the Spenserian stanza in narrative poetry (4) the sense for antiquity & for the picturesque as regards ruins (5) the habit of moralising on subjects of general human interest as opposed to those which concern towns & highly civilized society only.

<sup>1</sup> *The following sentence was written on the opposite page of the manuscript. Its exact place of insertion was not marked:*

An attempt is made to reintroduce emotion and a more general appeal to all humanity, in the form of elegiac moralizing on the subjects of death & decay, as shown in Dyer's Ruins of Rome & Young's Night Thoughts.

The Thomsonian school however broke off suddenly about the middle of the century & was replaced by the school of Gray.

### *School of Gray*

There are considerable differences between Gray, Collins and Akenside, who are the chief representatives of the school, but they all resemble each other in certain main tendencies. The general aim of all seems to have been to return to the Miltonic style of writing while preserving the regularity and correctness of the eighteenth-century style. They attempted in other words to substitute the true classical style of writing for the pseudoclassical. By classical poetry is meant verse which with entire correctness and perfection of form, i.e. of metre and language and a careful observance of restraint, i.e. to say avoidance of that extravagance & excess which injure the work of Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, unites a high imagination and deep emotion. This is the character of Milton's poetry, which is based upon Greek & Latin models. Pope and his school aimed at correctness & restraint without high imagination and deep emotion; their poetry is therefore not really classical. Gray, Collins and Akenside endeavoured by study of Milton & the Greek writers to recover the true classical style. They were however all greatly hampered by the traditions of eighteenth-century poetry and none of them quite succeeded.

Besides this similarity in general aim, there are several particular resemblances. 1<sup>st</sup> in metre. They all avoided the heroic couplet. Collins' Persian Eclogues, the work of his youth, & a few of Gray's fragments are in this metre, but in their mature & accomplished work it is not represented. Akenside wrote either in blank verse or in lyrical metres. Secondly Gray and Collins are the restorers of the English lyric; since the reign of Charles II no one had written any even decently good lyrics, if a few of Gay's & Prior's are excepted, until this school appeared. The only form of lyric however which the three writers tried were Odes, which is the most stately & the least lyrical of lyrical forms; i.e. the true lyrical stanza is always short & simple so



as to express particular emotion freely & naturally; the stanza of an Ode is long and elaborate and expresses properly high and broad, not intense emotion. This restriction to the statelier lyrical forms partly results from the attempt at classical dignity. But the Augustan tradition of smooth & regular verse has also hampered the writers; the cadences are not managed with sufficient subtlety and the infinitely varied and flexible verse of Shakespeare & Milton has remained beyond their reach. Their verse at its best is on the second plane, not on the first; it shows however a great advance in freedom & variety on that of the Augustans.

2<sup>d</sup> in language. The aim of all three is at an elevated style of language, a diction more or less Miltonic. Here again none of them are successful. Akenside's elevation is mainly rhetorical, rarely, at his best, as in the Hymn to the Naiads, it is poetical; there he almost catches something of the true Miltonic tone; Gray's is marked by nobleness, strength, much real sublimity, but he is often betrayed into rhetoric tho' even then more vigorous than Akenside's and the Augustan love of epigram and antithesis often spoil his work; Collins' elevation tho' free from these faults is usually wanting in power. There is to some extent in Collins and still more in Gray a tendency to what the eighteenth century thought noble language, to the avoidance of simple and common words & phrases as below the dignity of poetry.<sup>2</sup>

3<sup>d</sup> in subject-matter. It was in this that there was the farthest departure from the eighteenth century. All the poets have a tendency to dwell on rural life and rural scenes; all turn away from town life. Both Gray & Collins, so far as they deal with Nature, deal with it in a really poetical manner, but unlike the Thomsonian school, they have not described Nature for the sake of describing it but only in connection with the thoughts or feelings suggested by it. The one exception to this is Collins'

<sup>2</sup> *The following sentence was written on the opposite page of the manuscript. Its exact place of insertion was not marked:*

On the other hand their language is mainly imaginative & not drily intellectual like Augustan language.

Ode to Evening. There is also an attempt to reintroduce the supernatural into poetry. This is partly done by carrying the eighteenth-century habit of personification to an almost ridiculous extreme, but more successfully by dwelling like Milton on the images of Greek mythology, as in the Hymn to the Naiads, or Gray's earlier poems, especially the Progress of Poesy; also by dwelling on the ideas of the Celtic romantic fancy, such as ghosts, fairies, spirits as in Gray's Bard & Collins' Ode or of Norwegian mythology as in Gray's translations from the Norse. This impulse towards the supernatural is extremely marked in Gray & finds its way even into his humorous poems; & tho' less prominent in Collins, it was sufficient to offend Johnson, the chief critic of the Pope school, who especially animadverts on it in his life of Collins & his remarks on Gray's sister Odes. Again they tried to deal with human emotion but there also they were hampered by the Augustan tradition. They deal with it rather in an abstract than a direct manner; Collins' Ode on the Passions is the main instance of this abstract handling of emotion which is peculiar to the school. In the same spirit they dealt with high & general feelings, especially the love of Liberty, which inspires Collins' Ode to Liberty, Gray's Bard & Progress of Poesy, and much of Akenside's writing. It is noticeable that Collins was a republican, Akenside had republican sympathies and Gray was a pronounced Whig. Over the personal emotions Collins & Akenside had no mastery, & Gray only shows it occasionally as in the Elegy & then only over the most general of all of them, the love of life and the melancholy feelings attending death.

(4) In spirit, the school departed from the critical, didactic and satiric tendency of eighteenth-century poetry; so far as their poetry teaches or criticises it is with some exceptions in the indirect, incidental & emotional manner proper to poetry. Even Akenside who wrote on a philosophical theme aimed at teaching poetically, tho' he did not succeed. Their poetry is inspired not by intellect & reason, but by imagination and feeling. On the other hand it must be noticed that their ideas & sentiments are always obvious & on the surface like those of the Pope school and the feeling that inspires their poetry, tho' not false, is not

very deep; Collins & Akenside are extremely cold compared with poets of other periods & Gray is rather enthusiastic or at his best sublime than impassioned.<sup>3</sup>

(5) It was in the influences which governed their poetry that this school departed most radically from Pope. They rejected French influence altogether & were little influenced by the inferior Latin poets; they were above all things Hellenists, lovers & followers of Greek literature; the English poet who influenced them most was Milton whom Johnson considers to be rough in his verse & language; Gray even declared the diction of Shakespeare to be the true poetic diction. Besides this they opened new fields of interest. Collins took an interest [in] late mediaeval history & literature & Gray was the first Englishman of eminence who studied the Norse language or interested himself in Welsh literature or was a competent & appreciative critic of Gothic architecture.

The Thomsonian school had a little but only a little influence on that of Gray. The *Elegy* carries to its highest point of perfection the vein of elegiac moralising started by Young & Dyer, Collins' *Ode to Evening* is a study of Nature as faithful but more sympathetic and imaginative than Thomson's descriptions; & his *Ode on Popular Superstitions* recalls several passages in the *Seasons*; but this is practically all.

The influences of Gray's school on future poetry consist mainly in (1) the first attempt to handle Nature in a new poetic fashion afterwards perfected by Wordsworth, (2) the reintroduction of the supernatural influencing all subsequent writers but mainly Coleridge, Shelley & Keats, (3) the introduction of Hellenism into poetry, carried out by Keats & Shelley & (4) the restoration of the lyric & especially the *Ode* form, which became a favourite one in the early nineteenth century & of the general subjects suited to the *Ode* form.

<sup>3</sup> *The following sentence was written on the facing page of the manuscript. Its exact place of insertion was not marked:*

It was perhaps partly as a result of this that none of these poets was able to write much or to write long poems; Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* is the only exception and that is a failure.

*Later Augustan School*

The Gray school exhausted itself almost as quickly as the Thomsonian school. It was followed by a reaction in favour of the eighteenth-century ideal. This movement had been already anticipated by Johnson who wrote contemporaneously with Gray & even with Thomson. It was now taken up by Goldsmith, carried on by Churchill & culminated in Erasmus Darwin.

Johnson & Goldsmith returned to the ideals of Pope, they violently opposed & disparaged Gray, they kept to the use of the heroic couplet & conventional language, to the narrowness of culture and to the exclusion of all that does not square with or proceed from the reason & intellect; their characteristics are broadly the same as the Pope school's, but there is a difference which shows that the dryness of this school could no longer satisfy the mind. In Johnson at least in his *Vanity of Wishes* there is a far deeper & wider tone of thought & feeling & a far greater sincerity; tho' the style is so different, the tone is almost the same as that of Gray's *Elegy*; in fact in tone & subject-matter it belongs to the same type of elegiac moralizing as the *Elegy* & the *Night Thoughts*. Goldsmith carried this departure in tone from Pope yet farther; he wrote what were professedly didactic poems, but instead of teaching by satirical portraits [and] epigrammatic maxims, he tried to do it by touching the feelings & drawing portraits full of humour rather than wit, of natural truth & pathos rather than cleverness & eloquence. While not touching subjects of general appeal like Johnson & Gray, he goes more widely afield than Pope, dealing with foreign countries in the *Traveller*, with the rural life of an Irish village in the *Deserted Village*. [There is a sort of natural lyrical power in Goldsmith which is always breaking through the restraints of the mechanical metre & style he chose to adopt.]<sup>4</sup> Churchill reverted to Pope far more than either Goldsmith or Johnson; he is purely satirical & has neither Goldsmith's feeling & sweetness nor Johnson's depth & strength; he is hardly a poet at all, but he

<sup>4</sup> *Sentence bracketed in the manuscript. — Ed.*

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also helped the disintegration of the eighteenth-century style by a complete abandonment of Pope's elaborate & rhetorical art, which he attempted to replace by a rude & direct vigour. Lastly Erasmus Darwin took the exact model of Pope's style, not only the metre & language but the very construction & balance of his sentences & reduced this & the didactic spirit to absurdity by trying to invest with poetical pomp of style & imagery a treatise on botany. This school may be considered as an attempt in various directions to make the eighteenth-century style compatible with the new impulses in poetry, the impulses towards sincerity on the one hand & sublimity on the other. In the poetry of Darwin this attempt finally breaks down. No poet of eminence except Byron afterwards attempted the style. Besides these four writers however there was a crowd of versifiers, of whom only Gifford need be named, who went on making feeble copies of Pope right into the nineteenth century.

## APPENDIX

### Test Questions

#### The Mediaevalists

1. Describe the nature & influence on English poetry of Percy's *Reliques*.
2. Sketch the career of Chatterton.
3. Describe the character of Chatterton's forgeries and estimate their effects on the value of his poetry.
4. Discuss the conflicting estimates of Chatterton's poetry.
5. What is the Ossian controversy? What stage has the controversy reached at present?
6. Macpherson's work is often condemned as empty and turgid declamation. How far is this view justified?
7. State the author & nature of the following works: *Ella*, an Interlude; *Bristow Tragedy*.
8. Who were the distinctly mediaevalist writers of the period? What was their importance in the history of the period?

\*

#### *[Draft-answers to the first three questions]*

1. 1765 Percy's *Reliques*
2. Chatterton born 1752. Colston's Hospital. 1764 first Rowley forgery *Elinoure & Juga*. 1767 apprenticed to Lambert. 1768–9 contributions to London magazines. 1768 attempt to get Dodsley to publish especially *Ella*. 1769 attempt to interest Horace Walpole. 1770 life in London & death.
3. Speght's *Glossary to Chaucer*. Kersey's *Dictionary*. metres not 15<sup>th</sup> century; rhymes inconsistent with 15<sup>th</sup> century pronunciation; words either noted down from above & often incorrectly used; or invented by C. himself.

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Pope School

1. Trace the history of the classical eighteenth-century style thro' this period.
2. Describe the career of Goldsmith, or of a typical man of letters during this period.
3. Estimate Goldsmith as a poet.
4. Describe briefly the subject & character of the following poems; the Deserted Village, the Traveller, Retaliation.
5. What rank would you assign to Churchill among English satirists? Give your reasons for your answer.
6. Describe briefly the subject & character of the Rosciad, the Ghost, Gotham, the Times, the Prophecy of Famine.

\*

*[Incomplete draft-answer to the second question]*

1728 Goldsmith born in Ireland. Father a clergyman, the original of Dr Primrose. Education. 1744 Dublin Unv. Made attempts to become clergyman, private tutor; *[incomplete]*

# Marginalia

ON MADHUSUDAN DUTT'S VIRANGANA KAVYA

A Virgilian elegance and sweetness and a Virgilian majesty of diction ennoble the finer epistles of these Heroides; there is too a Virgilian pathos sad & noble breaking out in detached lines and passages, as in Shacountala's sorrowful address to the leaf and the single melancholy line এই কি রে ফলে ফল প্রেম তরু-শাথে, but the more essential poetical gifts, creative force, depth or firmness of meditation, passionate feeling, a grasp of the object, consistency & purity of characterisation are still absent. They were not in the poet's nature and such gifts if denied by Nature, are denied for ever. What exists even faintly can be developed, transformed, strengthened but what does not exist, cannot be produced by labour.

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः

\*

The Epistle of Tara is perhaps less satisfactory; the fiery outbursts of a monstrous and lawless passion needed a stronger imagination than Madhusudan's to conceive and execute them. The elegances of the Epistle, with its graceful rephrasing of outworn classical images and its stately love-conceits is out of place where the volcanic sheerness of a Webster could alone have been appropriate. Nevertheless the passage in which Tara complains of the unclean love she cannot avoid or control is not without a noble dignity of passion; and shows with what charm the poet could invest the plainest and most hackneyed images. And there are lines in this latter part which have the true note of that terrific passion, [for example] her cry দেহ ভিক্ষা, দেহ ভিক্ষা; the magnificent



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distichs কলকী শশাঙ্ক etc. and লিখিনু লেখন etc. and the powerful closing line have all a dramatic simplicity, fire and force which belong to the highest poetry only. Would that Madhusudan had written not only stray lines, distichs, passages, but whole poems in this spirit. The deplorable want of a discerning criticism and false conceptions of poetry early imbibed have done untold harm to our best and most promising writers.

## Originality in National Literatures

It is a singular and as yet unexplained phenomenon in the psychology of mankind that out of so many magnificent civilisations, so many powerful, cultured & vigorous nations & empires whose names and deeds crowd the pages of history, only a select few have been able to develop a thoroughly original and self-revealing literature. Still fewer have succeeded in maintaining these characteristics from beginning to end of their literary development. There have been instances in which a nation at some period of especial energy and stress of life has for a moment arrived at a perfect self-expression, but with the effort the literary originality of the race seems to exhaust itself. We have the picture of an age, not the spiritual and mental history of a nation. Such a period of partial self-revelation we find in the flowering of Italian literature; in the *Divine Comedy*, the *Decameron*, the works of Petrarch, Machiavelli, Cellini, Castiglione, mediaeval Italy lives before our eyes for all time; but the rest of Italian prose and poetry is mere literature and nothing more. Again when we have seen the romantic spirit of Spain, its pride, punctilious sense of honour, courage, cruelty, intrigue, passion and the humour & pathos of its decline mirrored in the work of Calderon & Cervantes we seem to have exhausted all that need interest the student of humanity in Spanish literature. Similar instances offer themselves in the Sagas of the Scandinavian peoples and Germany's *Nibelungenlied*, in the extraordinary picture of Mahomedan civilisation of which the *Thousand & One Nights* are the setting. On the other hand there are literatures of high quality and world-wide interest which are yet almost purely derivative in their character and hardly succeed in rendering the national spirit to us at all, so overloaded are they with foreign material, with things learned rather than experienced; such are the American literature, the modern German literature. Instances there

are again of the nation freeing itself from foreign domination in one or two kinds of writing which partially reflect its inner mind and life, while the rest of its literature remains derivative and secondhand in its every fibre. We get to the heart of Roman life and character in Roman Satires, the annalistic histories of Livy & Tacitus, the Letters of Cicero or Pliny, but in the more splendid & ambitious portions of Latin literature we get only the half Greek dress in which the Roman mind learned to disguise itself. Let us suppose that all historical documents, archives, records were destroyed or disappeared in the process of Time and the catastrophes of civilisation, and only the pure literature survived. Of how many nations should we have the very life, heart & mind, the whole picture of its life & civilisation and the story of its development adequately revealed in its best writing? Three European nations would survive immortally before the eyes of posterity, the ancient Greeks, the modern English and French, and two Asiatic nations, the Chinese & the Hindus,—no others.

Of all these the Hindus have revealed themselves the most perfectly, continuously and on the most colossal scale, precisely because they have been the most indomitably original in the form & matter of their literature. The Vedas, Upanishads & Puranas are unique in their kind; the great Epics in their form and type of art stand apart in the epic literature of the world, the old Sanscrit drama has its affinities with a dramatic species which developed itself in Europe more than a thousand years later, and the literary epic follows laws of form and canons of art which are purely indigenous. And this immense body of first-rate work has left us so intimate & complete a revelation of national life & history, that the absence of pure historical writings becomes a subject of merely conventional regret. The same intense originality and depth of self-expression are continued after the decline of the classical language in the national literatures of Maharashtra, Bengal & the Hindi-speaking North.



# The Poetry of Kalidasa



## A Proposed Work on Kalidasa

Chapter I. Kalidasa's surroundings. Chapter II. Kalidasa & his work. The Malavas — the three ages, Valmekie.. Vyasa.. Kalidasa.. materialism & sensuousness..] the historic method.. psychological principles of criticism.. variety of Kalidasa's work.. probable chronological succession of his works. Chapter III. The Seasons. Chapter IV. The House of Raghu; its scope & outline; nature of the poem; descriptive epic of later Hindu civilisation; its limitations. Qualities of verse diction. Similes. Description. Sentiment; pathos and eloquence. Relative merits of later & earlier cantos. Comparison of Kalidasa's pathos & Bhavabhuti's. Chapter V. The Cloud Messenger. Kalidasa's treatment of the Supernatural.. Substance of the poem.. Chastened style.. Perfection of the harmony.. moderation & restraint.. pathos & passion. Chapter VI. The Drama before Kalidasa; elements of Hindu drama.. the three plays studies of one subject. Chapter VII. The Agnimitra; its plot; perfection of dramatic workmanship; Kalidasa's method of characterisation; the characters. Dramatic style. Relation of the Agnimitra to the Raghu. Chapter VIII. The Urvashi.. dramatic workmanship & conception; character of the poetry; relation to Meghaduta. Chapter IX. The Characters. Chapter X XI XII. The Shacountala. Chapter XIII XIV. The Kumara. Chapter XV. Retrospect; poetic greatness of Kalidasa; comparisons with other classical [writers]. Chapter XVI XVII. Hindu civilisation in the time of Kalidasa (this may go with Raghu or Kumara).

## The Malavas

Once in the long history of poetry the great powers who are ever working the finest energies of nature into the warp of our human evolution, met together and resolved to unite in creating a poetical intellect & imagination that, endowed with the most noble & various poetical gifts, capable in all the great forms used by creative genius, should express once & for all in a supreme manner the whole sensuous plane of our life, its heat & light, its joy, colour & sweetness. And since to all quality there must be a corresponding defect, they not only gifted this genius with rich powers and a remarkable temperament but drew round it the necessary line of limitations. They then sought for a suitable age, nation and environment which should most harmonise with, foster and lend itself to his peculiar powers. This they found in the splendid & luxurious city of Ujjaini, the capital of the great nation of the Malavas, who consolidated themselves under Vikramaditya in the first century before Christ. Here they set the outcome of their endeavour & called him Kalidasa. The country of Avunti had always played a considerable part in our ancient history for which the genius, taste and high courage of its inhabitants fitted it & Ujjaini their future capital was always a famous, beautiful & wealthy city; but until the rise of Vikrama it seems to have been disunited and therefore unable to work out fully the great destiny for which the taste, genius [ ] marked it out. Moreover the temperament of the nation had not fitted it to be the centre of Aryan civilisation in the old times when that civilisation was preponderatingly moral and intellectual. Profoundly artistic and susceptible to material beauty and the glory of the senses, they had neither the large, mild and pure temperament, spiritual & emotional, of the eastern nations which produced Janaca, Valmekie & Buddha, nor the bold intellectual temperament, heroic, ardent and severe, of the



Central nations which produced Draupadie, Bhema, Urjouna, Bhishma, Vyasa and Srikrishna; neither were they quite akin to the searchingly logical, philosophic & scholastic temperament of the half Dravidian southern nations which produced the great grammarians and commentators and the mightiest of the purely logical philosophers, Madhva, Ramanuja, Shankaracharya. The Malavas were Westerners and the Western nations of India have always been material, practical & sensuous. For the different races of this country have preserved their basic temperaments with a marvellous conservative power; modified & recombined they have been in no case radically altered. Bengal colonised from the west by the Chedies & Haihayas & from the north by Coshalas & Magadhans, contains at present the most gentle, sensitive and emotional of the Indian races, also the most anarchic, self-willed, averse to control and in all things extreme; there is not much difference between the characters of Shishupal and that thoroughly Bengali king & great captain, Pratapaditya; the other side shows itself especially in the women who are certainly the tenderest, purest & most gracious & loving in the whole world. Bengal has accordingly a literature far surpassing any other in an Indian tongue for emotional and lyrical power, loveliness of style & form and individual energy & initiative. The North West, inheritor of the Kurus, has on the other hand produced the finest modern Vedantic poetry full of intellectual loftiness, insight and profundity, the poetry of Suradasa & Tulsi; its people are still the most sincerely orthodox and the most attached to the old type of thought & character, while the Rajputs, who are only a Central Nation which has drifted westward, preserved longest the heroic & chivalrous tradition of the Bharatas. The Dravidians of the South, though they no longer show that magnificent culture and originality which made them the preservers & renovators of the higher Hindu thought & religion in its worst days, are yet, as we all know, far more genuinely learned & philosophic in their cast of thought & character than any other Indian race. Similarly the West also preserves its tradition; the Punjab is typified by its wide acceptance of such crude, but practical & active religions as those of Nanak

& Dayanunda Saraswati, religions which have been unable to take healthy root beyond the frontier of the five rivers; Gujarat & Sindh show the same practical temper by their success in trade & commerce, but the former has preserved more of the old Western materialism & sensuousness than its neighbours. Finally the Mahrattas, perhaps the strongest and sanest race in India today, present a very peculiar & interesting type; they are southwestern & blend two very different characters; fundamentally a material and practical race — they are for instance extremely deficient in the romantic & poetical side of the human temperament — a race of soldiers & politicians, they have yet caught from the Dravidians a deep scholastic & philosophical tinge which along with a basic earnestness & capacity for high things has kept them true to Hinduism, gives a certain distinction to their otherwise matter-of-fact nature and promises much for their future development.

But the Malavas were a far greater, more versatile and culturable race than any which now represent the West; they had an aesthetic catholicity, a many sided curiosity and receptiveness which enabled them to appreciate learning, high moral ideals and intellectual daring & ardour and assimilate them as far as was consistent with their own root-temperament. Nevertheless that root-temperament remained material and sensuous. When therefore the country falling from its old pure moral ideality and heroic intellectualism, weakened in fibre & sunk towards hedonism & materialism, the centre of its culture & national life began to drift westward. Transferred by Agnimitra in the second century to Videsha of the Dasharnas close to the Malavas, it finally found its true equilibrium in the beautiful and aesthetic city of Ujjaini which the artistic & sensuous genius of the Malavas had prepared to be a fit & noble capital of Hindu art, poetry and greatness throughout its most versatile & luxurious age. That position Ujjaini enjoyed until the nation began to crumble under the shock of new ideas & new forces and the centre of gravity shifted southwards to Devagirrie of the Jadhavas and finally to Dravidian Vijayanagara, the last considerable seat of independent Hindu culture & national greatness. The consolidation of

the Malavas under Vikramaditya took place in 56 BC, and from that moment dates the age of Malava preeminence, the great era of the Malavas afterwards called the Samvat era. It was doubtless subsequent to this date that Kalidasa came to Ujjaini to sum up in his poetry, the beauty of human life, the splendours of art & the glory of the senses.

## The Age of Kalidasa

**V**ALMIKI, Vyasa and Kalidasa are the essence of the history of ancient India; if all else were lost, they would still be its sole and sufficient cultural history. Their poems are types and exponents of three periods in the development of the human soul, types and exponents also of the three great powers which dispute and clash in the imperfect and half-formed temperament and harmonise in the formed and perfect. At the same time their works are pictures at once minute and grandiose of three moods of our Aryan civilisation, of which the first was predominatingly moral, the second predominatingly intellectual, the third predominatingly material. The fourth power of the soul, the spiritual, which can alone govern and harmonise the others by fusion with them, had not, though it pervaded and powerfully influenced each successive development, any separate age of predominance, did not like the others possess the whole race with a dominating obsession. It is because, conjoining in themselves the highest and most varied poetical gifts, they at the same time represent and mirror their age and humanity by their interpretative largeness and power that our three chief poets hold their supreme place and bear comparison with the greatest world-names, with Homer, Shakespeare and Dante.

It has been said, truly, that the Ramayana represents an ideal society and assumed, illogically, that it must therefore represent an altogether imaginary one. The argument ignores the alternative of a real society idealised. No poet could evolve entirely out of his own imagination a picture at once so colossal, so minute and so consistent in every detail. No number of poets could do it without stumbling into fatal incompatibilities either of fact or of view, such as we find defacing the Mahabharata. This is not the place to discuss the question of Valmiki's age and authorship. This much, however, may be said that after excluding the

Uttarakanda, which is a later work, and some amount of interpolation, for the most part easy enough to detect, and reforming the text which is not unfrequently in a state of truly shocking confusion, the Ramayana remains on the face of it the work of a single mighty and embracing mind. It is not easy to say whether it preceded or followed in date Vyasa's epic; it is riper in form and tone, has some aspects of a more advanced and mellow culture, and yet it gives the general impression of a younger humanity and an earlier less sophisticated and complex mind. The nature of the poem and much of its subject matter might at least justify the conclusion that Valmiki wrote in a political and social atmosphere much resembling that which surrounded Vyasa. He lived, that is to say, in an age of approaching if not present disorder and turmoil, of great revolutions and unbridled aristocratic violence, when the governing chivalry, the Kshatriya caste, in its pride of strength was asserting its own code of morals as the one rule of conduct. We may note the plain assertion of this stand-point by Jarasandha in the Mahabharata and Valmiki's emphatic and repeated protest against it through the mouth of Rama. This ethical code was like all aristocratic codes of conduct full of high chivalry and the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, but a little loose in sexual morality on the masculine side and indulgent to violence and the strong hand. To the pure and delicate moral temperament of Valmiki, imaginative, sensitive, enthusiastic, shot through with rays of visionary idealism and ethereal light, this looseness and violence were shocking and abhorrent. He could sympathise with them, as he sympathised with all that was wild and evil and anarchic, with the imaginative and poetical side of his nature, because he was a universal creative mind driven by his art-sense to penetrate, feel and re-embody all that the world contained; but to his intellect and peculiar emotional temperament they were distasteful. He took refuge therefore in a past age of national greatness and virtue, distant enough to be idealised, but near enough to have left sufficient materials for a great picture of civilisation which would serve his purpose, — an age, it is important to note, of grandiose imperial equipoise, such as must have existed in some form at least since

a persistent tradition of it runs through Sanskrit literature. In the framework of this imperial age, his puissant imagination created a marvellous picture of the human world as it might be if the actual and existing forms and material of society were used to the best and purest advantage, and an equally marvellous picture of another non-human world in which aristocratic violence, strength, self-will, lust and pride ruled supreme and idealised or rather colossalised. He brought these two worlds into warlike collision by the hostile meeting of their champions and utmost evolutions of their peculiar character-types, Rama and Ravana, and so created the Ramayana, the grandest and most paradoxical poem in the world, which becomes unmatchably sublime by disdaining all consistent pursuit of sublimity, supremely artistic by putting aside all the conventional limitations of art, magnificently dramatic by disregarding all dramatic illusion, and uniquely epic by handling the least as well as the most epic material. Not all perhaps can enter at once into the spirit of this masterpiece; but those who have once done so, will never admit any poem in the world as its superior.

My point here, however, is that it gives us the picture of an entirely moralised civilisation, containing indeed vast material development and immense intellectual power, but both moralised and subordinated to the needs of purity of temperament and delicate ideality of action. Valmiki's mind seems nowhere to be familiarised with the high-strung intellectual gospel of a high and severe Dharma culminating in a passionless activity, raised to a supreme spiritual significance in the Gita, which is one great keynote of the Mahabharata. Had he known it, the strong leaven of sentimentalism and femininity in his nature might well have rejected it; such temperaments when they admire strength, admire it manifested and forceful rather than self-contained. Valmiki's characters act from emotional or imaginative enthusiasm, not from intellectual conviction; an enthusiasm of morality actuates Rama, an enthusiasm of immorality tyrannises over Ravana. Like all mainly moral temperaments, he instinctively insisted on one old established code of morals being universally observed as the only basis of ethical stability, avoided

casuistic developments and distasteful innovators in metaphysical thought as by their persistent and searching questions dangerous to the established bases of morality, especially to its wholesome ordinariness and everydayness. Valmiki, therefore, the father of our secular poetry, stands for that early and finely moral civilisation which was the true heroic age of the Hindu spirit.

The poet of the Mahabharata lives nearer to the centre of an era of aristocratic turbulence and disorder. If there is any kernel of historic truth in the story of the poem, it records the establishment of those imperial forms of government and society which Valmiki had idealised. Behind its poetic legend it celebrates and approves the policy of a great Kshatriya leader of men who aimed at the subjection of his order to the rule of a central imperial power which should typify its best tendencies and control or expel its worst. But while Valmiki was a soul out of harmony with its surroundings and looking back to an ideal past, Vyasa was a man of his time, profoundly in sympathy with it, full of its tendencies, hopeful of its results and looking forward to an ideal future. The one might be described as a conservative idealist advocating return to a better but departed model, the other is a progressive realist looking forward to a better but unborn model. Vyasa accordingly does not revolt from the aristocratic code of morality; it harmonises with his own proud and strong spirit and he accepts it as a basis for conduct, but purified and transfigured by the illuminating idea of the *niṣkāma dharma*.

But above all intellectuality is his grand note, he is profoundly interested in ideas, in metaphysics, in ethical problems; he subjects morality to casuistic tests from which the more delicate moral tone of Valmiki's spirit shrank; he boldly erects above ordinary ethics a higher principle of conduct having its springs in intellect and strong character; he treats government and society from the standpoint of a practical and discerning statesmanlike mind, idealising solely for the sake of a standard. He touches in fact all subjects, and whatever he touches he makes fruitful and interesting by originality, penetration and a sane and bold vision. In all this he is the son of the civilisation

he has mirrored to us, a civilisation in which both morality and material development are powerfully intellectualised. Nothing is more remarkable in all the characters of the Mahabharata than this puissant intellectualism; every action of theirs seems to be impelled by an immense driving force of mind solidifying in character and therefore conceived and outlined as in stone. This orgiastic force of the intellect is at least as noticeable as the impulse of moral or immoral enthusiasm behind each great action of the Ramayana. Throughout the poem the victorious and manifold mental activity of an age is prominent and gives its character to its civilisation. There is far more of thought in action than in the Ramayana, far less of thought in repose; the one pictures a time of gigantic creative ferment and disturbance; the other, as far as humanity is concerned, an ideal age of equipoise, tranquillity and order.

Many centuries after these poets, perhaps a thousand years or even more, came the third great embodiment of the national consciousness, Kalidasa. There is a far greater difference between the civilisation he mirrors than between Vyasa's and Valmiki's. He came when the daemonic orgy of character and intellect had worked itself out and ended in producing at once its culmination and reaction in Buddhism. There was everywhere noticeable a petrifying of the national temperament, visible to us in the tendency to codification; philosophy was being codified, morals were being codified, knowledge of any and every sort was being codified; it was on one side of its nature an age of scholars, legists, dialecticians, philosophical formalisers. On the other side the creative and aesthetic enthusiasm of the nation was pouring itself into things material, into the life of the senses, into the pride of life and beauty. The arts of painting, architecture, song, dance, drama, gardening, jewellery, all that can administer to the wants of great and luxurious capitals, received a grand impetus which brought them to their highest technical perfection. That this impetus came from Greek sources or from the Buddhists seems hardly borne out: the latter may rather have shared in the general tendencies of the time than originated them, and the Greek theory gives us a maximum of conclusions with a minimum



of facts. I do not think, indeed, it can be maintained that this period, call it classical or material or what one will, was marked off from its predecessor by any clear division: such a partition would be contrary to the law of human development. Almost all the concrete features of the age may be found as separate facts in ancient India: codes existed from old time; art and drama were of fairly ancient origin, to whatever date we may assign their development; physical yoga processes existed almost from the first, and the material development portrayed in the Ramayana and Mahabharata is hardly less splendid than that of which the Raghuvamsa is so brilliant a picture. But whereas, before, these were subordinated to more lofty ideals, now they prevailed and became supreme, occupying the best energies of the race and stamping themselves on its life and consciousness. In obedience to this impulse the centuries between the rise of Buddhism and the advent of Shankaracharya became, though not agnostic and sceptical, for they rejected violently the doctrines of Charvak, yet profoundly scientific and outward-going even in their spiritualism. It was therefore the great age of formalised metaphysics, science, law, art and the sensuous luxury which accompanies the arts.

Nearer the beginning than the end of this period, when India was systematising her philosophies and developing her arts and sciences, turning from Upanishad to Purana, from the high rarefied peaks of early Vedanta and Sankhya with their inspiring sublimities and bracing keenness to physical methods of ascetic yoga and the dry intellectualism of metaphysical logic or else to the warm sensuous humanism of emotional religion, — before its full tendencies had asserted themselves, in some spheres before it had taken the steps its attitude portended, Kalidasa arose in Ujjayini and gathered up in himself its present tendencies while he foreshadowed many of its future developments. He himself must have been a man gifted with all the learning of his age, rich, aristocratic, moving wholly in high society, familiar with and fond of life in the most luxurious metropolis of his time, passionately attached to the arts, acquainted with the sciences, deep in law and learning, versed in the formalised

philosophies. He has some notable resemblances to Shakespeare; among others his business was, like Shakespeare's, to sum up the immediate past in the terms of the present: at the same time he occasionally informed the present with hints of the future. Like Shakespeare also he seems not to have cared deeply for religion. In creed he was a Vedantist and in ceremony perhaps a Siva-worshipper, but he seems rather to have accepted these as the orthodox forms of his time and country, recommended to him by his intellectual preference and aesthetic affinities, than to have satisfied with them any profound religious want. In morals also he accepted and glorified the set and scientifically elaborate ethics of the codes, but seems himself to have been destitute of the finer elements of morality. We need not accept any of the ribald and witty legends with which the Hindu decadence surrounded his name; but no unbiassed student of Kalidasa's poetry can claim for him either moral fervour or moral strictness. His writings show indeed a keen appreciation of high ideal and lofty thought, but the appreciation is aesthetic in its nature: he elaborates and seeks to bring out the effectiveness of these on the imaginative sense of the noble and grandiose, applying to the things of the mind and soul the same aesthetic standard as to the things of sense themselves. He has also the natural high aristocratic feeling for all that is proud and great and vigorous, and so far as he has it, he has exaltation and sublimity; but aesthetic grace and beauty and symmetry sphere in the sublime and prevent it from standing out with the bareness and boldness which is the sublime's natural presentation. His poetry has, therefore, never been, like the poetry of Valmiki and Vyasa, a great dynamic force for moulding heroic character or noble or profound temperament. In all this he represented the highly vital and material civilisation to which he belonged.

Yet some dynamic force a poet must have, some general human inspiration of which he is the supreme exponent; or else he cannot rank with the highest. Kalidasa is the great, the supreme poet of the senses, of aesthetic beauty, of sensuous emotion. His main achievement is to have taken every poetic element, all great poetical forms, and subdued them to a harmony of artistic

perfection set in the key of sensuous beauty. In continuous gift of seizing an object and creating it to the eye he has no rival in literature. A strong visualising faculty such as the greatest poets have in their most inspired descriptive moments, was with Kalidasa an abiding and unfailing power, and the concrete presentation which this definiteness of vision demanded, suffused with an intimate and sovereign feeling for beauty of colour and beauty of form, constitutes the characteristic Kalidasian manner. He is besides a consummate artist, profound in conception and suave in execution, a master of sound and language who has moulded for himself out of the infinite possibilities of the Sanskrit tongue a verse and diction which are absolutely the grandest, most puissant and most full-voiced of any human speech, a language of the Gods. The note struck by Kalidasa when he built Sanskrit into that palace of noble sound, is the note which meets us in almost all the best work of the classic literature. Its characteristic features of style are a compact but never abrupt brevity, a soft gravity and smooth majesty, a noble harmony of verse, a strong and lucid beauty of chiselled prose, above all an epic precision of phrase, weighty, sparing and yet full of colour and sweetness. Moreover it is admirably flexible, suiting itself to all forms from the epic to the lyric, but most triumphantly to the two greatest, the epic and the drama. In his epic style Kalidasa adds to these permanent features a more than Miltonic fullness and grandiose pitch of sound and expression, in his dramatic an extraordinary grace and suavity which makes it adaptable to conversation and the expression of dramatic shade and subtly blended emotion.

With these supreme gifts Kalidasa had the advantage of being born into an age with which he was in temperamental sympathy and a civilisation which lent itself naturally to his peculiar descriptive genius. It was an aristocratic civilisation, as indeed were those which had preceded it, but it far more nearly resembled the aristocratic civilisations of Europe by its material luxury, its aesthetic tastes, its polite culture, its keen worldly wisdom and its excessive appreciation of wit and learning. Religious and ethical thought and sentiment were cultivated much as in France under Louis XIV, more in piety and profession than

as swaying the conduct; they pleased the intellect or else touched the sentiment, but did not govern the soul. It was bad taste to be irreligious, but it was not bad taste to be sensual or even in some respects immoral. The splendid and luxurious courts of this period supported the orthodox religion and morals out of convention, conservatism, the feeling for established order and the inherited tastes and prejudices of centuries, not because they fostered any deep religious or ethical sentiment. Yet they applauded high moral ideas if presented to them in cultured and sensuous poetry much in the same spirit that they applauded voluptuous description similarly presented. The ideals of morality were much lower than of old; free drinking was openly recognised and indulged in by both sexes; purity of life was less valued than in any other period of our civilisation. Yet the unconquerable monogamous instinct of the high-class Hindu woman seems to have prevented promiscuous vice and the disorganisation of the home which was the result of a similar state of society in ancient Rome, in Italy of the Renaissance, in France under the Bourbons and in England under the later Stuarts. The old spiritual tendencies were also rather latent than dead, the mighty pristine ideals still existed in theory, — they are outlined with extraordinary grandeur by Kalidasa, — nor had they yet been weakened or lowered to a less heroic key. It was a time in which one might expect to meet the extremes of indulgence side by side with the extremes of renunciation; for the inherent spirituality of the Hindu nature finally revolted against the splendid and unsatisfying life of the senses. But of this phase Bhartrihari and not Kalidasa is the poet. The greater writer lived evidently in the full heyday of the material age, and there is no sign of any setting in of the sickness and dissatisfaction and disillusionment which invariably follow a long outburst of materialism.

The flourishing of the plastic arts had prepared surroundings of great external beauty of the kind needed for Kalidasa's poetic work. The appreciation of beauty in nature, of the grandeur of mountain and forest, the loveliness of lakes and rivers, the charm of bird and beast life had become a part of contemporary culture. These and the sensitive appreciation of trees and plants and hills

as living things, the sentimental feeling of brotherhood with animals which had influenced and been encouraged by Buddhism, the romantic mythological world still farther romanticised by Kalidasa's warm humanism and fine poetic sensibility, gave him exquisite grace and grandeur of background and scenic variety. The delight of the eye, the delight of the ear, smell, palate, touch, the satisfaction of the imagination and taste are the texture of his poetical creation, and into this he has worked the most beautiful flowers of emotion and intellectual or aesthetic ideality. The scenery of his work is a universal paradise of beautiful things. All therein obeys one law of earthly grace; morality is aestheticised, intellect suffused and governed with the sense of beauty. And yet this poetry does not swim in languor, does not dissolve itself in sensuous weakness; it is not heavy with its own dissoluteness, heavy of curl and heavy of eyelid, cloyed by its own sweets, as the poetry of the senses usually is. Kalidasa is saved from this by the chastity of his style, his aim at burdened precision and energy of phrase, his unsleeping artistic vigilance.

As in the Ramayana and Mahabharata we have an absorbing intellect impulse or a dynamic force of moral or immoral excitement driving the characters, so we have in Kalidasa an intense hedonistic impulse thrilling through speech and informing action. An imaginative pleasure in all shades of thought and of sentiment, a rich delight of the mind in its emotions, a luxuriousness of ecstasy and grief, a free abandonment to amorous impulse and rapture, a continual joy of life and seeking for beauty mark the period when India, having for the time exhausted the possibilities of soul-experience attainable through the spirit and the imaginative reason, was now attempting to find out the utmost each sense could feel, probing and sounding the soul-possibilities in matter and even seeking God through the senses. The emotional religion of the Vaishnava Puranas which takes as its type of the relation between the human soul and the Supreme the passion of a woman for her lover, was already developing. The corresponding Tantric development of Shaivism may not yet have established itself fully; but the concretisation of the idea of Purusha-Prakriti, the union of Ishwara and Shakti,

from which it arose, was already there in the symbolic legends of the Puranas and one of these is the subject of Kalidasa's greatest epic poem. The Birth of the War-God stands on the same height in classical Sanskrit as the Paradise Lost in English literature: it is the masterpiece and *magnum opus* of the age on the epic level. The central idea of this great unfinished poem, the marriage of Siva and Parvati, typified in its original idea the union of Purusha and Prakriti, the supreme Soul and dynamic Nature by which the world is created; but this type of divine legend was used esoterically to typify also the Nature-Soul's search for and attainment of God, and something of this conception pierces through the description of Parvati's seeking after Siva. Such was the age of Kalidasa, the temper of the civilisation which produced him; other poets of the time expressed one side of it or another, but his work is its splendid integral epitome, its picture of many composite hues and tones. Of the temperament of that civilisation the Seasons is an immature poetic self-expression, the House of Raghu the representative epic, the Cloud Messenger the descriptive elegy, Shakuntala with its two sister loveplays intimate dramatic pictures and the Birth of the War-God the grand religious fable. Kalidasa, who expressed so many sides and facets of it in his writings, stands for its representative man and genius, as was Vyasa of the intellectual mood of Indian civilisation and Valmiki of its moral side.

It was the supreme misfortune of India that before she was able to complete the round of her experience and gather up the fruit of her long millenniums of search and travail by commencing a fourth and more perfect age in which moral, intellectual and material development should be all equally harmonised and all spiritualised, the inrush of barbarians broke in finally on her endless solitary tapasya of effort and beat her national life into fragments. A preparation for such an age may be glimpsed in the new tendencies of spiritual seeking that began with Shankara and continued in later Vaishnavism and Shaivism and in new turns of poetry and art, but it found no opportunity of seizing on the total life of the nation and throwing it into another mould. The work was interrupted before it had well begun;

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and India was left with only the remnants of the culture of the material age to piece out her existence. Yet even the little that was done afterwards, proved to be much; for it saved her from gradually petrifying and perishing as almost all the old civilisations, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, petrified and perished, as the material civilisation of Europe, unless spiritualised, must before long petrify and perish. That there is still an unexhausted vitality in her, that she yet nourishes the seeds of re-birth and renewal, we owe to Shankara and his successors and the great minds and souls that came after them. Will she yet arise, new combine her past and continue the great dream where she left it off, shaking off on the one hand the soils and filth that have grown on her in her period of downfall and futile struggle, and re-asserting on the other her peculiar individuality and national type against the callow civilisation of the West with its dogmatic and intolerant knowledge, its still more dogmatic and intolerant ignorance, its deification of selfishness and force, its violence and its ungoverned Titanism? In doing so lies her one chance of salvation.

## The Historical Method

Of Kalidasa, the man who thus represents one of the greatest periods in our civilisation and typifies so many sides and facets of it in his writing, we know if possible even less than of Valmekie and Vyasa. It is probable but not certain that he was a native of Malwa born not in the capital Ujjaini, but in one of those villages of which he speaks in the Cloud-Messenger and that he afterwards resorted to the capital and wrote under the patronage of the great Vicramaditya who founded the era of the Malavas in the middle of the first century before Christ. Of his attainments, his creed, his character we may gather something from his poetry, but external facts we have none. There is indeed a mass of apocryphal anecdotes about him couching a number of witticisms & ingenuities mostly ribald, but these may be safely discredited. Valmekie, Vyasa and Kalidasa, our three greatest names, are to us, outside their poetical creation, names merely and nothing more.

This is an exceedingly fortunate circumstance. The natural man within us rebels indeed against such a void; who Kalidasa was, what was his personal as distinguished from his poetic individuality, what manner of man was the great King whose patronage he enjoyed, who were his friends, who his rivals and how he dealt with either or both, whether or not he was a lover of wine & women in practice as well as in imagination, under what special surroundings he wrote and who were the minds by whom he was most influenced, all this the natural man clamours to know; and yet all these are things we are very fortunate not to know. The historical method is certainly an attractive one and it leads to some distinct advantages, for it decidedly aids those who are not gifted with fine insight and literary discrimination, to understand certain sides of a poet's work more clearly and intelligently. But while it increases our



knowledge of the workings of the human mind it does not in the end assist or improve our critical appreciation of poetry; it helps to an understanding of the man and of those aspects of his poetry which concern his personal individuality but it obstructs our clear and accurate impression of the work and its value. The supporters of the historical method put the cart before the horse and placing themselves between the shafts do a great deal of useless though heroic labour in dragging both. They insist on directing that attention to the poet which should be directed to the poem. After assimilating a man's literary work and realising its value first to ourselves and then in relation to the eternal nature and scope of poetry, we may and indeed must, — for if not consciously aimed at, it must have been insensibly formed in the mind, — attempt to realize to ourselves an idea of his poetic individuality from the data he himself has provided for us; and the idea so formed will be the individuality of the man so far as we can assimilate him, the only part of him therefore that is of real value to us. The individuality of Shakespeare as expressed in his recorded actions & his relations to his contemporaries is a matter of history and has nothing to do with appreciation of his poetry. It may interest me as a study of human character & intellect but I have no concern with it when I am reading *Hamlet* or even when I am reading the *Sonnets*; on the contrary it may often come between me and the genuine revelation of the poet in his work, for actions seldom reveal more than the outer, bodily and sensational man while his word takes us within to the mind and the reason, the receiving and the selecting parts of him which are his truer self. It may matter to the pedant or the gossip within me whether the sonnets were written to William Herbert or to Henry Wriothesley or to William Himself, whether the dark woman whom Shakespeare loved against his better judgment was Mary Fitton or someone else or nobody at all, whether the language is that of hyperbolical compliment to a patron or that of an actual passionate affection; but to the lover of poetry in me these things do not matter at all. It may be a historical fact that Shakespeare when he sat down to write these poems intended to use the affected language of conventional and fulsome flattery; if

so, it does not exalt our idea of his character; but after all it was only the bodily and sensational case of that huge spirit which so intended, — the food-sheath and the life-sheath of him, to use Hindu phraseology; but the mind, the soul which was the real Shakespeare felt, as he wrote, every phase of the passion he was expressing to the very utmost, felt precisely those exultations, chills of jealousy and disappointment, noble affections, dark and unholy fires, and because he felt them, he was able so to express them that the world still listens and is moved. The passion was there in the soul of the man, — whether as a potential force or an experience from a past life, matters very little, — and it forms therefore part of his poetic individuality. But if we allow the alleged historical fact to interfere between us and this individuality, the feelings with which we ought to read the Sonnets, admiration, delight, sympathy, rapt interest in a soul struggling through passion towards self-realisation, will be disturbed by other feelings of disgust and nausea or at the best pity for a man who with such a soul within him, prostituted its powers to the interests of his mere bodily covering. Both our realisation of the true Shakespeare & our enjoyment of his poetry will thus be cruelly and uselessly marred. This is the essential defect which vitiates the theory of the man and his milieu. The man in Dr Johnson expressed himself in his conversation and therefore his own works are far less important to us than Boswell's record of his daily talk; the man in Byron expresses himself in his letters as well as his poetry and both have therefore to be read. It is only the most sensational and therefore the lowest natures that express themselves mainly by their actions. In the case of great poets with whom expression is an instrument that answers spontaneously and accurately to the touch of the soul, it is in their work that we shall find them, the whole of them and not only that meagre part which struggled out brokenly and imperfectly in the shape of action. It is really this difference that makes the great figures of epic poetry so much less intimately and thoroughly known to us than the great figures of drama. Kalidasa was both an epic poet and a dramatist, yet Sheva and Parvatie are merely grand paintings while Dushyanta, Shacountala, Sharngarava,

Priyumvada & Anasuya, Pururavus and Urvasie and Chitraleqha, Dharinie and Iravatie and Agnimitra are living beings who are our friends, whom we know. The difference arises from the importance of speech in self-revelation and the comparative inadequacy of acts, except as a corroboration or a check. The only epics which have creations equal to dramatic creation in their nearness to us are the Mahabharata and the Ramayan; and the art-form of those far more closely resembles the methods of the modern novel than those of epic poetry as it is understood in Europe; they combine, that is to say, the dramatic method with the epic and introduce a minuteness of observant detail with which European poets would have shrunk from tempting the patience of the sensational and soon-wearied West.

The importance of the milieu to criticism has likewise been immensely exaggerated. It is important as literary history, but history is not criticism; a man may have a very wide and curious knowledge of literary history and yet be a very poor critic and the danger of the present times lies in the immense multiplication of literary historians with their ass's load of facts and theories and opinions and tendencies and the comparative rarity of really illuminating critics. I do not say that these things are not in a measure necessary but they are always the scaffolding and not the pile. The tendency of the historical method beginning with and insisting on the poet rather than the poem is to infer from him as a "man" the meaning & value of his poetry, — a vicious process for it concentrates the energies on the subordinate and adds the essential as an appendix. It has been said that in a rightly constituted mind the knowledge of the man and his milieu will help to a just appreciation of his poetry; but this knowledge in its nature rather distorts our judgment than helps it, for instead of giving an honest account to ourselves of the impression naturally made by the poem on us, we are irresistibly led to cut & carve that impression so as to make it square with our knowledge and the theories, more or less erroneous & ephemeral, we deduce from that knowledge. We proceed from the milieu to the poem, instead of arguing from the poem to the milieu. Yet the latter is the only fair method, for it is not the whole of the milieu that

affects the man nor every part of it that affects him equally; the extent to which it affects him and the distribution of its various influences can only be judged from the poem itself.

The milieu of Shakespeare or of Homer or of Kalidasa so far as it is important to an appreciation of their poetry, can be gathered from their poetry itself, and a knowledge of the history of the times would only litter the mind with facts which are of no real value as they mislead and embarrass the judgment instead of assisting it. This is at least the case with all poets who represent their age in some or most of its phases and with those who do not do this, the milieu is of very small importance. We know from literary history that Marlowe and Kyd and other writers exercised no little influence on Shakespeare in his young and callow days; and it may be said in passing that all poets of the first order & even many of the second are profoundly influenced by the inferior and sometimes almost worthless work which was in vogue at the time of their early efforts, but they have the high secret of mental alchemy which can convert not merely inferior metal but even refuse into gold. It is only poets of a onesided or minor genius who can afford to be aggressively original. Now as literary history, as psychology, as part of the knowledge of intellectual origins this is a highly important and noteworthy fact. But in the task of criticism what do we gain by it? We have simply brought the phantoms of Marlowe & Kyd between ourselves and what we are assimilating and so disturbed & blurred the true picture of it that was falling on our souls; and if we know our business, the first thing we shall do is to banish those intruding shadows and bring ourselves once more face to face with Shakespeare.

The historical method leads besides to much confusion and is sometimes a veil for a bastard impressionism and sometimes a source of literary insincerity or at the best anaemic catholicity. As often as not a critic studies, say, the Elizabethan age because he has a previous sympathy with the scattered grandeurs, the hasty and vehement inequalities, the profuse mixture of flawed stones, noble gems and imitation jewellery with which that school overwhelms us. In that case the profession with which he

starts is insincere, for he professes to base his appreciation on study, whereas his study begins from, continues with and ends in appreciation. Often on the contrary he studies as a duty and praises in order to elevate his study; because he has perused all and understood all, he must sympathise with all, or where is the proof of his having understood? Perfect intelligence of a man's character and work implies a certain measure of sympathy and liking; antipathy has only half sight and indifference is blind. Hence much false criticism misleading the public intelligence and causing a confusion in critical weights & measures, a depreciation of the literary currency from which in the case of the frank impressionist we are safe. In mere truth the historical method is useful only with inferior writers who not having had full powers of expression are more interesting than their work; but even here it has led to that excessive and often absurd laudation of numberless small names in literature, many of them "discoveries", which is the curse of latterday criticism. The historical method is in fact the cloven foot of science attempting to insinuate itself into the fair garden of Poetry. By this I mean no disrespect to Science. The devil is a gentleman, & Shakespeare himself has guaranteed his respectability; but he is more than that, he is a highly useful and even indispensable personage. So also is Science not only a respectable branch of intellectual activity, — when it does not indulge its highly civilized propensity for cutting up live animals, — but it is also a useful and indispensable branch. But the devil had no business in Paradise and Science has no business in the sphere of Poetry. The work of Science is to collect facts and generalize from them; the smallest and meanest thing is as important to it as the highest, the weed no less than the flower and the bug that crawls & stinks no less than man who is a little lower than the angels. By introducing this method into criticism, we are overloading ourselves with facts and stifling the literary field with the host of all the mediocrities more or less "historically" important but at any rate deadly dull & uninspiring, who at one time or another had the misfortune to take themselves for literary geniuses. And just as scientific history tends to lose individual genius in movements, so the historical

method tends to lose the individual poem in tendencies. The result is that modern poets instead of holding up before them as their ideal the expression of the great universal feelings and thoughts which sway humanity, tend more and more to express tendencies, problems, realisms, romanticisms, mysticisms and all the other local & ephemeral aberrations with which poetry has no business whatever. It is the sign of a decadent & morbid age which is pushing itself by the mass of its own undigested learning into Alexandrianism and scholasticism, cutting itself off from the fountainheads of creation and wilfully preparing its own decline and sterility. The age of which Callimachus & Apollonius of Rhodes were the Simonides & the Homer and the age of which Tennyson is the Shakespeare & Rudyard Kipling the Milton present an ominous resemblance.

# The Seasons

## I

### ITS AUTHENTICITY

THE "SEASONS" of Kalidasa is one of those early works of a great poet which are even more interesting to a student of his evolution than his later masterpieces. We see his characteristic gift even in the immature workmanship and uncertain touch and can distinguish the persistent personality in spite of the defective self-expression. Where external record is scanty, this interest is often disturbed by the question of authenticity, and where there is any excuse for the doubt, it has first to be removed. The impulse which leads us to deny authenticity to early and immature work, is natural and almost inevitable. When we turn from the great harmonies and victorious imaginations of the master to the raw and perhaps faltering workmanship of these uncertain beginnings, we are irresistibly impelled to cry out, "This is not by the same hand." But the impulse, however natural, is not always reasonable. The maxim that a poet is born and not made is only true in the sense that great poetical powers are there in the mind of the child, and in this sense the same remark might be applied with no less truth to every species of human genius; philosophers, sculptors, painters, critics, orators, statesmen are all born and not made. But because poetical genius is rarer or at any rate wider and more lasting in its appeal than any other, the popular mind with its ready gift for seizing one aspect of truth out of many and crystallizing error into the form of a proverb, has exalted the poet into a splendid freak of Nature exempt from the general law. If a man without the inborn oratorical fire may be trained into a good speaker or another without the master's inspiration of form and colour

work out for himself a blameless technique, so too may a meagre talent become by diligence a machine for producing elegant verse. But poetic genius needs experience and self-discipline as much as any other, and by its very complexity more than most. This is eminently true of great poets with a varied gift. A narrow though a high faculty works best on a single line and may show perfection at an early stage; but powerful and complex minds like Shakespeare or Kalidasa seldom find themselves before a more advanced period. Their previous work is certain to be full of power, promise and genius, but it will also be flawed, unequal and often imitative. This imperfection arises naturally from the greater difficulty in imposing the law of harmony of their various gifts on the bodily case which is the instrument of the spirit's self-expression. To arrive at this harmony requires time and effort, and meanwhile the work will often be halting and unequal, varying between inspiration expressed and the failure of vision or expression.

There is no more many-sided, rich and flexible genius in literature than Kalidasa's, and in his case especially we must be on our guard against basing denial of authenticity on imperfection and minor differences. We have to judge, first, by the presence or absence of the essential and indefinable self of Kalidasa which we find apparent in all his indubitable work, however various the form or subject, and after that on those nameable characteristics which are the grain and fibre of his genius and least imitable by others. In the absence of external evidence, which is in itself of little value unless received from definite and contemporary or almost contemporary sources, the test of personality is all-important. Accidents and details are only useful as corroborative evidence, for these are liable to variation and imitation; but personality is a distinguishable and permanent presence as fugitive to imitation as to analysis. Even a slight fineness of literary palate can perceive the difference between the Nalodaya and Kalidasa's genuine work. Not only does it belong to an age or school in which poetic taste was debased and artificial, — for it is a poetical counterpart of those prose works for whose existence the display of scholarship seems to be the



chief justification, — but it presents in this matter of personality and persistent characteristics no sufficient point of contact either with the *Shakuntala* or the *Kumarasambhava* or even with the *House of Raghu*. But in the *Seasons*, Kalidasa's personality is distinctly perceived as well as his main characteristics, his force of vision, his architecture of style, his pervading sensuousness, the peculiar temperament of his similes, his characteristic strokes of thought and imagination, his individual and inimitable cast of description. Much of it is as yet in a half-developed state, crude consistence not yet fashioned with the masterly touch he soon manifested, but Kalidasa is there quite as evidently as Shakespeare in his earlier work, the *Venus and Adonis* or *Lucrece*. Defects which the riper Kalidasa avoids, are not uncommon in this poem, — repetition of ideas, use of more words than are absolutely required, haphazard recurrence of words and phrases, not to produce a designed effect but from carelessness, haste or an insufficient vocabulary; there is moreover a constant sense of uncertainty in the touch and a frequent lack of finished design. The poet has been in too much haste to vent his sense of poetic power and not sufficiently careful that the expression should be the best he could compass. And yet immature, greatly inferior in chastity and elegance to his best work, marred by serious faults of conception, bearing evidence of hurry and slovenliness in the execution, the *Seasons* is for all this not only suffused by a high though unchastened beauty, but marked with many of the distinctive signs of Kalidasa's strong and exuberant genius. The defects are those natural to the early work of a rich sensuous temperament, eagerly conscious of poetic power but not yet instructed and chastened.

## II

### THE SUBSTANCE OF THE POEM

Kalidasa's *Seasons* is perhaps the first poem in any literature written with the express object of describing Nature. It is precisely similar in its aim to a well-known eighteenth-century

failure in the same direction — Thomson's *Seasons*. The names tally, the forms correspond, both poems adopting the plan of devoting a canto to each season, and the method so far agrees that the poets have attempted to depict each season in its principal peculiarities, scenes and characteristic incidents. But here all parallel ends. Wide as the gulf between the genius of one of the greatest world-poets and the talent of the eighteenth-century versifier is the difference between the gathered strength and compact force, the masterly harmonies and the living truth of the ancient Indian poem and the diffuse artificiality and rhetoric of the modern counterpart. And the difference of spirit is not less. A poet of the prosaic and artificial age when the Anglo-Saxon mind emerged in England and got itself Gallicised, Thomson was unable to grasp the first psychological laws of such descriptive poetry. He fixed his eye on the object, but he could only see the outside of it. Instead of creating he tried to photograph. And he did not remember or did not know that Nature is nothing to poetry except in so far as it is either a frame, setting or ornament to life or else a living presence to the spirit. Nature interpreted by Wordsworth as a part of his own and the universal consciousness, by Shakespeare as an accompaniment or note in the orchestral music of life, by more modern poets as an element of decoration in the living world-picture is possible in poetry; as an independent but dead existence it has no place either in the world itself or in the poet's creation. In his relations to the external, life and mind are the man, the senses being only instruments, and what he seeks outside himself is a response in kind to his own deeper reality. What the eye gathers is only important in so far as it is related to this real man or helps this expectation to satisfy itself. Kalidasa with his fine artistic feeling, his vitality and warm humanism and his profound sense of what true poetry must be, appears to have divined from the beginning the true place of Nature in the poet's outlook. He is always more emotional and intellectual than spiritual, like Shakespeare to whom he has so many striking resemblances. We must not expect from him the magical insight of Valmiki, still less the spiritual discernment of Wordsworth. He looks inside, but not

too far inside. But he realises always the supreme importance of life as the only abiding foundation of a poem's immortality.

The first canto is surcharged with the life of men and animals and the life of trees and plants in summer. It sets ringing a note of royal power and passion and promises a poem of unexampled vigour and interest. But to play variations on this note through six cantos seems to have been beyond the young poet's as yet limited experience and narrow imaginative mastery. He fell back on the life of sensuous passion with images of which, no doubt, his ungoverned youth was most familiar. But instead of working them into the main thought he turned to them for a prop and, when his imaginative memory failed him, multiplied them to make up the deficiency. This lapse from artistic uprightness brought its own retribution, as all such lapses will. From one error indeed Kalidasa's vigorous and aspiring temperament saved him. He never relaxed into the cloying and effeminate languor of sensuous description which offends us in Keats' earlier work. The men of the age with all their sensuousness, luxury and worship of outward beauty were a masculine and strenuous race, and their male and vigorous spirit is as prominent in Kalidasa as his laxer tendencies. His sensuousness is not coupled with weak self-indulgence, but is rather a bold and royal spirit seizing the beauty and delight of earth to itself and compelling all the senses to minister to the enjoyment of the spirit rather than enslaving the spirit to do the will of the senses. The difference perhaps amounts to no more than a lesser or greater force of vitality, but it is, for the purposes of poetry, a real and important difference. The spirit of delightful weakness swooning with excessive beauty gives a peculiar charm of soft laxness to poems like the *Endymion*, but it is a weakening charm to which no virile temperament will trust itself. The poetry of Kalidasa satisfies the sensuous imagination without enervating the virile chords of character; for virile energy is an unfailing characteristic of the best Sanskrit poetry, and Kalidasa is inferior to none in this respect. His artistic error has nevertheless had disastrous effects on the substance of his poem.

It is written in six cantos answering to the six Indian seasons,

Summer, Rain, Autumn, Winter, Dew and Spring. Nothing can exceed the splendour and power of the opening. We see the poet revelling in the yet virgin boldness, newness and strength of his genius and confident of winning the kingdom of poetry by violence. For a time the brilliance of his work seems to justify his ardour. In the poem on Summer we are at once seized by the marvellous force of imagination, by the unsurpassed closeness and clear strenuousness of his gaze on the object; in the expression there is a grand and concentrated precision which is our first example of the great Kalidasian manner, and an imperial power, stateliness and brevity of speech which is our first instance of the high classical diction. But this canto stands on a higher level than the rest of the poem. It is as if the poet had spent the best part of his force in his first enthusiasm and kept back an insufficient reserve for the sustained power proper to a long poem. The decline in energy does not disappoint at first. The poem on the Rains gives us a number of fine pictures with a less vigorous touch but a more dignified restraint and a graver and nobler harmony, and even in the Autumn, where the falling off of vigour becomes very noticeable, there is compensation in a more harmonious finish of style, management and imagery. We are led to believe that the poet is finding himself and will rise to a finale of flawless beauty. Then comes disappointment. In the next two cantos Kalidasa seems to lose hold of the subject; the touches of natural description cease or are, with a few exceptions, perfunctory and even conventional, and the full force of his genius is thrown into a series of extraordinary pictures, as vivid as if actually executed in line and colour, of feminine beauty and sensuous passion. The two elements, never properly fused, cease even to stand side by side. For all description of Winter we have a few stanzas describing the cold and the appearance of fields, plants, waters in the wintry days, by no means devoid of beauty but wanting in vigour, closeness of vision and eagerness. In the poem on Dew-tide the original purpose is even fainter. Perhaps the quietness of these seasons, the absence in them of the most brilliant pictorial effects and grandest distinctive features, made them a subject uninspiring to the unripeness and

love of violence natural to a richly-endowed temperament in its unschooled youth. But the Spring is the royal season of the Indian year and should have lent itself peculiarly to Kalidasa's inborn passion for colour, sweetness and harmony. The closing canto should have been the crown of the poem. But the poet's sin pursues him and, though we see a distinct effort to recover the old pure fervour, it is an effort that fails to sustain itself. There is no falling off in harmonious splendour of sound and language, but the soul of inspired poetic observation ceases to inform this beautiful mould and the close fails and languishes. It is noticeable that there is a double close to the Spring, the two versions having been left, after the manner of the old editions, side by side. Kalidasa's strong artistic perception must have suffered acutely from the sense of failure in inspiration and he has accordingly attempted to replace the weak close by an improved and fuller cadence. What is we may presume, the rejected version, is undoubtedly the weaker of the two but neither of them satisfies. The poem on Spring which should have been the finest, is the most disappointing in the whole series

### III

#### ITS POETIC VALUE

Nevertheless the Seasons is not only an interesting document in the evolution of a poetic genius of the first rank, but in itself a work of extraordinary force and immense promise. Many of the most characteristic Kalidasian gifts and tendencies are here, some of them in crude and unformed vigour, but characteristic and unmistakable, giving the poem a striking resemblance of spirit and to some extent of form to the House of Raghu, with a far-off prophecy of the mature manner of Kalidasa in the four great masterpieces. There is his power of felicitous and vivid simile; there is the individual turn of his conceits and the single-minded force with which he drives them home; there is his mastering accuracy and lifelikeness in description conspicuous

especially in the choice and building of the circumstantial epithets. That characteristic of the poet, not the most fundamental and important, which most struck the ancient critics, *upamāsu kālīdāsaḥ*, Kalidasa for similes, is everywhere present even in such early and immature work, and already they have the sharp clear Kalidasian ring, true coin of his mint though not yet possessed of the later high values. The deep blue midsummer sky is like a rich purple mass of ground collyrium; girls with their smiling faces and lovelit eyes are like “evenings beautifully jewelled with the moon”; the fires burning in the forest look far-off like clear drops of vermillion; the new blades of grass are like pieces of split emerald; rivers embracing and tearing down the trees on their banks are like evil women distracted with passion slaying their lovers. In all these instances we have the Kalidasian simile, a little superficial as yet and self-conscious, but for all that Kalidasian. When again he speaks of the moon towards dawn growing pale with shame at the lovelier brightness of a woman’s face, of the rains coming like the pomp of some great king all blazing with lights, huge clouds moving along like elephants, the lightning like a streaming banner and the thunder like a peal of drums, of the clouds like archers shooting their rains at the lover from the rainbow stringed with lightning, one recognises, in spite of the occasional extravagance of phrase and violent fancifulness, the Kalidasian form of conceit, not only in the substance which can be borrowed, but in the wording and most of all in the economy of phrase expressing a lavish and ingenious fancy. Still more is this apparent in the sensuous and elaborate comparison of things in Nature to women in ornamental attire, — rivers, autumn, the night, the pale priyungou creeper.

Most decisive of all are the strokes of vivid description that give the poem its main greatness and fulfil its purpose. The seasons live before our eyes as we read. Summer is here with its sweltering heat, the sunbeams burning like fires of sacrifice and the earth swept with whirling gyres of dust driven by intolerable gusts. Yonder lies the lion forgetting his impulse and his mighty leap; his tongue lolls and wearily from time to time he shakes

his mane; the snake with lowered head panting and dragging his coils labours over the blazing dust of the road; the wild boars are digging in the dried mud with their long snouts as if they would burrow their way into the cool earth; the bisons wander everywhere dumbly desiring water. The forests are grim and parched, brown and sere; and before long they are in the clutch of fire.... But the rains come, and what may be yonder writhing lines we see on the slopes? It is the young water of the rains, a new-born rivulet, grey and full of insects and dust and weeds, coiling like a snake down the hillside. We watch the beauty of the mountains streaked everywhere with waterfalls, their high rocks kissed by the stooping clouds and their sides a gorgeous chaos of peacocks: on the horizon the great clouds blue as lotus-petals climb hugely into the sky and move across it in slow procession before a sluggish breeze. Or look at yonder covidara tree, its branches troubled softly with wind, swarming with honey-drunken bees and its leaves tender with little opening buds. The moon at night gazes down at us like an unveiled face in the skies, the racing stream dashes its ripples in the wild-duck's face, the wind comes trembling through the burdened rice-stalks, dancing with the crowding courbous, making one flowery ripple of the lotus-wooded lake. Here there can be no longer any hesitation. These descriptions which remain perpetually with the eye, visible and concrete as an actual painting, belong, in the force with which they are visualised and the magnificent architecture of phrase with which they are presented, to Kalidasa alone among Sanskrit poets. Other poets, his successors or imitators, such as Bana or even Bhavabhuti, overload their description with words and details; they have often lavish colouring but never an equal power of form; their figures do not appear to stand out of the canvas and live.

And though we do not find here quite the marvellous harmonies of verse and diction we meet in the *Raghu*, yet we do come across plenty of preparation for them. Here for instance is a verse whose rapidity and lightness restrained by a certain half-hidden gravity is distinctly Kalidasa's:

ज्वलति पवनवृद्धः पर्वतानां दरीषु  
 स्फुटति पटुनिनादैः शुष्कवंशस्थलीषु ।  
 प्रसरति तृणमध्ये लब्धवृद्धिः क्षणेन  
 ग्लपयति मृगवर्गं प्रान्तलग्नो दवाग्निः ॥

“Clinging to the woodland edges the forest fire increases with the wind and burns in the glens of the mountains; it crackles with shrill shoutings in the dry bamboo reaches; it spreads in the grasses gathering hugeness in a moment and harasses the beasts of the wilderness.”

And again for honeyed sweetness and buoyancy what can be more Kalidasian than this?

पुंस्कोकिलश्चूतरसासवेन  
 मत्तः प्रियं चुम्बति रागहृष्टः ।  
 गुञ्जन् द्विरेफोऽप्ययमम्बुजस्थः  
 प्रियं प्रियायाः प्रकरोति चाटु ॥

“The male cuckoo, drunk with wine of the juice of the mango flower, kisses his beloved, glad of the sweet attraction, and here the bee murmuring in the lotus-blossom hums flattery’s sweetness to his sweet.”

There are other stanzas which anticipate something of the ripest Kalidasian movements by their gravity, suavity and strength.

आकम्पयन् कुसुमिताः सहकारशाखा  
 विस्तारयन् परभृतस्य वचांसि दिक्षु ।  
 वायुर्विवाति हृदयानि हरन्नराणां  
 नीहारपातविगमात् सुभगो वसन्ते ॥

“Making to tremble the flowering branches of the mango trees, spreading the cry of the cuckoo in the regions the wind ranges ravishing the hearts of mortals, by the passing of the dewfalls gracious in the springtide.”

If we take Kalidasa anywhere in his lighter metres we shall



at once perceive their essential kinship with the verse of the Seasons.

इदमसुलभवस्तुप्रार्थनादुर्निवारं  
 प्रथममपि मनो मे पञ्चबाणः क्षिणोति ।  
 किमुत मलयवातोन्मीलितापाण्डुवर्ण-  
 मुपवनसहकारैर्दर्शितेष्वंकुरेषु ॥

“Already Love torments my mind importunate in prayer for a thing unattainable; what shall it be when the woodland mango-trees display their buds, a pallid whiteness opening to the southern wind?”

It is the same suave and skilful management, the same exquisite and unobtrusive weaving of labial, dental and liquid assonances with a recurring sibilant note, the same soft and perfect footing of the syllables. Only the language is richer and more developed. We do not find this peculiar kind of perfection in any other master of classical verse. Bhavabhuti’s manner is bold, strenuous, external; Jayadeva’s music is based palpably upon assonance and alliteration which he uses with extraordinary brilliance and builds into the most enchanting melodies, but without delicacy, restraint or disguise. If there were any real cause for doubt of the authorship, the verse would clearly vindicate the Seasons for Kalidasa.

Such is this remarkable poem which some, led away by its undoubted splendours, have put in the first rank of Kalidasa’s work. Its artistic defects and its comparative crudity forbid us to follow them. It is uncertain in plan, ill-fused, sometimes raw in its imagery, unequal in its execution. But for all that, it must have come upon its contemporaries like the dawning of a new sun in the skies. Its splendid diction and versification, its vigour, fire and force, its sweetness of spirit and its general promise and to some extent actual presentation of a first-rate poetic genius must have made it a literary event of the first importance. Especially is it significant in its daring gift of sensuousness. The prophet of a hedonistic civilisation here seizes with no uncertain hand on the materials of his work. A vivid and virile interpretation

of sense-life in Nature, a similar interpretation of all elements of human life capable of greatness or beauty, seen under the light of the senses and expressed in the terms of an aesthetic appreciation,—this is the spirit of Kalidasa's first work as it is of his last. At present he is concerned only with the outward body of Nature, the physical aspects of things, the vital pleasures and emotions, the joy and beauty of the human body; but it is the first necessary step on the long road of sensuous and poetic experience and expression he has to travel before he reaches his goal in his crowning work, the Birth of the War-God, in which he takes up for treatment one of the supreme fables of the life of the Gods and the Cosmos and in its handling combines sublimity with grace, height of speech with fullness and beautiful harmony of sound, boldness of descriptive line with magnificence of sensuous colour in a degree of perfection never before or afterwards surpassed or even equalled in poetic literature.

# Hindu Drama

The origin of the Sanscrit drama, like the origin of all Hindu arts and sciences, is lost in the silence of antiquity; and there one might be content to leave it. But European scholarship abhors a vacuum, even where Nature allows it; confronted with a void in its knowledge, it is always ready to fill it up with a conjecture and this habit of mind while it has led to many interesting discoveries, has also fostered a spirit of fantasy and dogmatism in fantasy, which is prejudicial to sane and sober thinking. Especially in the field of Sanscrit learning this spirit has found an exceptionally favourable arena for the exercise of its ingenuity; for here there is no great body of general culture and well-informed lay opinion to check the extravagances to which a specialised knowledge is always prone. Undaunted therefore by the utter silence of history on the question, European scholars have set about filling up the void with theories which we are asked or rather bidden to accept not as ingenious scholastic playthings, but as serious solutions based upon logical and scientific deduction from convincing internal evidence. It is necessary for reasons I shall presently touch on to cast a cursory glance at the most important of these attempts.

The first thought that would naturally suggest itself to an average European mind in search of an origin for Hindu drama is a Greek parentage. The one great body of original drama prior to the Hindu is the Greek; from Greece Europe derives the beginnings of her civilization in almost all its parts; and especially in poetry, art and philosophy. And there was the alluring fact that Alexander of Macedon had entered India and the Bactrians established a kingdom on the banks of the Indus before the time of the earliest extant Hindu play. To the European mind the temptation to build upon this coincidence a theory was irresistible, more especially as it has always been

incurably loath to believe that the Asiatic genius can be original or vigorously creative outside the sphere of religion. In obedience to this [*incomplete*]

Deftness & strength in dialogue, masterly workmanship in plot-making & dramatic situation and vital force of dramatic poetry are enough in themselves to make a fine and effective poetical play for the stage, but for a really great drama a farther & rarer gift is needed, the gift of dramatic characterisation. This power bases itself in its different degrees sometimes on great experience of human life, sometimes on a keen power of observation and accurate imagination making much matter out of a small circle of experience but in its richest possessors on a boundless sympathy with all kinds of humanity accompanied by a power of imbibing and afterwards of selecting & bringing out from oneself at will impressions received from others. This supreme power, European scholars agree, is wanting in Hindu dramatic literature. A mere poet like Goethe may extend unstinted & even superlative praise to a Shacountala but the wiser critical & scholarly mind passes a far less favourable verdict; there is much art in Hindu poetry, it is said, but no genius; there is plenty of fancy but no imagination; beautiful and even moving poetry is abundant, but the characters are nil; the colouring is rich but colour is all. Indian scholars trained in our schools to repeat what they have learnt do not hesitate to add their voice to the chorus. A Hindu scholar of acute diligence and wide Sanscrit learning has even argued that the Hindu mind is constitutionally incapable of original & living creation; he has alleged the gigantic, living and vigorous personalities of the Mahabharat as an argument to prove that these characters must have been real men and women, copied from the life; since no Hindu poet could have created character with such truth and power. On the other side the Bengali critics, men of no mean literary taste and perception though inferior in pure verbal scholarship, are agreed in regarding the characters of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti as beautiful and energetic creations, not less deserving of study than the personalities of Elizabethan drama.

This contradiction, violent as it is, is not difficult to understand, since it takes its root in an element always more or less present in criticism, the national element. National character, national prejudices, national training preordain for the bulk of us the spirit in which we shall approach unfamiliar poetry. Now the average English mind is capable of appreciating character as manifested in strong action or powerfully revealing speech, but constitutionally dull to the subtleties of civilized character which have their theatre in the mind and the heart and make of a slight word, a gesture or even silence their sufficient revelation. The nations of Europe, taken in the mass, are still semicivilized; their mind feeds on the physical, external and grossly salient features of life; where there is no brilliance & glare, they are apt to condemn the personality as characterless. A strength that shuns ostentation, a charm that is not luxuriant, not naked to the first glance, are appreciable only to the few select minds who have chastened their natural leanings by a wide and deep culture. The Hindu on his side distastes violence in action, excess in speech, ostentation or effusiveness in manner; he demands from his ideal temperance and restraint as well as nobility, truth and beneficence; the Aryan or true gentleman must be *मिताचारः* and *मितभाषी*, restrained in action and temperate in speech.

This national tendency shows itself even in our most vehement work. The Mahabharat is that section of our literature which deals most with the external and physical and corresponds best to the European idea of the epic; yet the intellectualism of even the Mahabharat, its preference of mind-issues to physical and emotional collisions and catastrophes, its continual suffusion of these when they occur with mind and ideality, the civilisation, depth and lack of mere sensational turbulence, in one word the Aryan cast of its characters, are irritating to European scholars. Thus a historian of Indian literature complains that Bhema is the one really epic character in this poem. He meant, evidently, the one character in which vast and irresistible strength, ungovernable impetuosity of passion, warlike fury & destroying anger are grandiosely displayed. But to the Hindu, whose ideas of epic are not coloured with the wrath of Achilles,

epic motive and character are not confined to what is impetuous, huge and untamed; he demands a larger field for the epic and does not confine it to savage and half savage epochs. Gentleness, patience, self-sacrifice, purity, the civilized virtues, appear to him as capable of epic treatment as martial fire, brute strength, revenge, anger, hate and ungovernable self-will. Rama mildly and purely renouncing the empire of the world for the sake of his father's honour seems to them as epic & mighty a figure as Bhema destroying Kechaka in his wild fury of triumphant strength and hatred. It is noteworthy that the European temperament finds vice more interesting than virtue, and in its heart of hearts damns the Christian qualities with faint praise as negative, not positive virtues; the difficulty European writers experience in making good men sympathetic is a commonplace of literary observation. In all these respects the Hindu attitude is diametrically opposed to the European. This attitude of the Hindu mind as evinced in the Mahabharata is so intolerable to European scholars that they have been forced to ease their irritation by conjuring up the phantom of an original ballad-epic more like their notions of what an epic should be, an epic in which the wicked characters of the present Mahabharata were the heroes and the divine champions of right of the present Mahabharata were the villains! The present Mahabharata is, they say, a sanctimonious monastic corruption of the old vigorous and half-savage poem. To the Hindu the theory naturally seems a grotesque perversion of ingenuity but its very grotesqueness is eloquent of the soil it springs from, the soil of the half barbarous temperament of the martial & industrial Teuton which cannot, even when civilised, entirely sympathise with the intellectual working of more radically civilised types. This fundamental difference of outlook on character, generating difference in critical appreciation of dramatic and epic characterisation is of general application, but it acquires a peculiar force when we come to consider the Hindu drama; for here the ingrained disparity is emphasized by external conditions.

It has been pointed out, perhaps too often, that the Hindu drama presents some remarkable points of contact with the

Elizabethan. In the mixture of prose and poetry, in the complete freedom with which time & scene vary, in the romantic lifelikeness of the action, in the mixture of comedy with serious matter, in the gorgeousness of the poetry and the direct appeal to the feelings, both these great literatures closely resemble each other. Yet the differences, though they do not strike us so readily as the similarities, are yet more vital and go deeper; for the similarities are of form, the differences of spirit. The Elizabethan drama was a great popular literature which aimed at a vigorous and realistic presentation of life and character such as would please a mixed and not very critical audience; it had therefore the strength and weakness of great popular literature; its strength was an abounding vigour in passion & action, and an unequalled grasp upon life; its weakness a crude violence, imperfection and bungling in workmanship combined with a tendency to exaggerations, horrors & monstrosities. The Hindu drama, on the contrary, was written by men of accomplished culture for an educated, often a courtly audience and with an eye to an elaborate and well-understood system of poetics.

The vital law governing Hindu poetics is that it does not seek to represent life and character primarily or for their own sake; its aim is fundamentally aesthetic, by the delicate & harmonious rendering of passion to awaken the aesthetic sense of the onlooker and gratify it by moving or subtly observed pictures of human feeling; it did not attempt to seize a man's spirit by the hair and drag it out into a storm of horror & pity & fear and return it to him drenched, beaten and shuddering. To the Hindu it would have seemed a savage and inhuman spirit that could take any aesthetic pleasure in the sufferings of an Oedipus or a Duchess of Malfi or in the tragedy of a Macbeth or an Othello. Partly this arose from the divine tenderness of the Hindu nature, always noble, forbearing & gentle and at that time saturated with the sweet & gracious pity & purity which flowed from the soul of Buddha; but it was also a necessary result of the principle that aesthetic & intellectual pleasure is the first object of all poetic art. Certainly poetry was regarded as a force for elevation as well as for charm, but as it reaches these

objects through aesthetic beauty, aesthetic gratification must be the whole basis of dramatic composition; all other objects are superstructural. The Hindu mind therefore shrank not only from violence, horror & physical tragedy, the Elizabethan stock-in-trade, but even from the tragic moral problems which attracted the Greek mind; still less could it have consented to occupy itself with the problems of disease, neurosis and spiritual medicology generally which are the staple of modern drama and fiction. An atmosphere of romantic beauty, a high urbanity and a gracious equipoise of the feelings, a perpetual confidence in the sunshine & the flowers, are the essential spirit of a Hindu play; pity and terror are used to awaken the feelings, but not to lacerate them, and the drama must close on the note of joy and peace; the clouds are only admitted to make more beautiful the glad sunlight from which all came & into which all must melt away. It is in an art like this that the soul finds the repose, the opportunity for being, confirmed in gentleness and in kindly culture, the unmixed intellectual and aesthetic pleasure in quest of which it has turned away from the crudeness & incoherence of life to the magic regions of Art.

When therefore English scholars, fed on the exceedingly strong & often raw meat of the Elizabethans, assert that there are no characters in the Hindu drama, when they attribute this deficiency to the feebleness of inventive power which leads "Asiatic" poetry to concentrate itself on glowing description and imagery, seeking by excess of ornament to conceal poverty of substance, when even their Indian pupils perverted from good taste and blinded to fine discrimination by a love of the striking & a habit of gross forms & pronounced colours due to the too exclusive study of English poetry, repeat & reenforce their criticisms, the lover of Kalidasa & his peers need not be alarmed; he need not banish from his imagination the gracious company with which it is peopled as a gilded & soulless list of names. For these dicta spring from prejudice and the echo of a prejudice; they are evidence not of a more vigorous critical mind but of a restricted critical sympathy. Certainly if we expect a Beautiful White Devil or a Jew of Malta from the Hindu dramatist, we



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shall be disappointed; he deals not in these splendid or horrible masks. If we come to him for a Lear or a Macbeth, we shall go away discontented; for these also are sublimities which belong to cruder civilisations and more barbarous national types; in worst crimes & deepest suffering as well as in happiness & virtue, the Aryan was more civilized & temperate, less crudely enormous than the hard, earthy & material African peoples whom in Europe he only half moralised. If he seeks a Père Goriot or a Madame Bovary, he will still fail in his quest; for though such types doubtless existed at all times among the mass of the people with its large strain of African blood, Hindu Art would have shrunk from poisoning the moral atmosphere of the soul by elaborate studies of depravity. The true spirit of criticism is to seek in a literature what we can find in it of great or beautiful, not to demand from it what it does not seek to give us.

# Vikramorvasie

## The Play

Vikram and the Nymph is the second, in order of time, of Kalidasa's three extant dramas. The steady development of the poet's genius is easy to read even for a superficial observer. *Malavica and the King* is a gracious and delicate trifle, full of the sweet & dainty characterisation which Kalidasa loves, almost too curiously admirable in the perfection of its structure and dramatic art but with only a few touches of that nobility of manner which raises his tender & sensuous poetry and makes it divine. In the *Urvasie* he is preening his wings for a mightier flight; the dramatic art is not so flawless, but the characters are far deeper and nobler, the poetry stronger and more original and the admirable lyrical sweetness of the first and fourth acts as well as the exaltation of love and the passion of beauty which throb through the whole play, lift it into a far rarer creative atmosphere. It is a worthy predecessor of the *Shacountala*, that loveliest, most nobly tender and most faultless of all romantic plays. Other indications of this development may be observed. The conventional elements of an Indian romantic comedy, the humours of the Brahmin buffoon and the jealousy of the established wife for the new innamorata occupy the whole picture in the *Malavica*, though they are touched with exquisite skill and transfigured into elements of a gracious and smiling beauty. In the *Urvasie* the space given to them is far more limited and their connection with the main action less vital; and they are less skilfully handled: finally in the *Shacountala* we have only vestiges of them, — a perfunctory recognition of their claims to be admitted rather than a willing use of them as good dramatic material. The prologues of the three plays point to a similar conclusion. In producing the *Malavica* Kalidasa comes forward as a new and unrecognized poet challenging the fame of the great dramatic classics and apprehensive of severe criticism for

his audacity, which he anticipates by a defiant challenge. When the Urvasie is first represented, his position as a dramatist is more assured; only the slightest apology is given for displacing the classics in favour of a new play and the indulgence of the audience is requested not for the poet but for the actors. The prologue of the *Shacountala* on the other hand breathes of the dignified and confident silence of the acknowledged Master. No apology is needed; none is volunteered.

The prologue of this play contains an apparent allusion to the great Vikramaditya, Kalidasa's patron, and tradition seems to hint, if it does not assert, connection of a kind between the plot of the drama and, perhaps, some episode in the King's life. At any rate the name of the drama is an obvious compliment to that great ruler & conqueror and one or two double entendres in the play which I have not thought it worth while to transfer into English, are, it is clear, strokes [of] delicate flattery pointed to the same quarter. The majority of European scholars identify this Vikrama with Harsha of Ujjaini, the Grand Monarque of classical India; indigenous scholarship mostly dissents from this view, and an imaginative mind may well prefer to associate our greatest classical poet with the earlier and more heroic, if also more shadowy, Vikram, who united the Malavas and founded the power of that great nation, the most gifted and artistic of the earlier Hindu peoples. There are no sufficient data to fix Kalidasa's epoch; he was certainly not later than the 6<sup>th</sup> century after Christ, certainly not earlier than the 1<sup>st</sup> century before; but a chronological margin of seven hundred years is too wide to encourage dogmatism.

The legend which forms the subject of the plot is one of the older Indian myths; it may have been a sun myth dear to the heart of the late Prof. Max Muller, — or it may have meant something very different. The literary critic is only concerned with the changes and developments it has undergone in the hands of Kalidasa; that these are all in the direction of emotional sweetness and artistic beauty, may easily be seen by comparing with the drama a translation of the original story as it appears in the [*Shatapatha Brahmana*.]

# Vikramorvasie

## The Characters

Pururavus is the poet's second study of kingship; he differs substantially from Agnimitra. The latter is a prince, a soldier & man of the world yielding by the way to the allurements of beauty, but not preoccupied with passion; the subtitle of the piece might be, in a more innocent sense than Victor Hugo's, "Le Roi s'amuse". He is the mirror of a courteous & self-possessed gentleman, full of mildness & grace, princely tact, savoir-faire, indulgent kindness, yet energetic withal & quietly resolute in his pleasure as well as in his serious affairs. "Ah, Sire" says Dharinie with sharp irony "if you only showed as much diplomatic skill & savoir-faire in the affairs of your kingdom, what a good thing it would be". But one feels that these are precisely the gifts he would show in all his action, that the innocently unscrupulous & quite delightful tact & diplomacy with which he pursues his love-affair is but the mirror of the methods he pursued in domestic politics. We see in him the typical & ideal king of an age hedonistic, poetic, worldly but withal heroic & capable. Pururavus is made of very different material. He is a king and a hero, a man of high social & princely virtues, otherwise Kalidasa would not have taken the trouble to depict him; but these qualities are like splendid robes which his nature has put on, & which have become so natural to him that he cannot put them off if he would; they are not the naked essential man. The fundamental Pururavus is not the king and the hero but the poet & lover. The poet on a throne has been the theme of Shakespeare in his Richard II and of Renan in his Antéchrist; and from these two great studies we can realise the European view of the phenomenon. To the European mind the meeting of poet & king in one man wears always the appearance of an anomaly, a misplacement, the very qualities which have fitted him to be a poet unfit him to rule. A mastering egotism

becomes the mainspring of the poetic temperament so placed; the imagination of the man is centred in himself, and the realm & people whose destinies are in his hands, seem to him to be created only to minister to his ingenious or soaring fancies & his dramatic, epic or idealistic sense of what should be; his intellect lives in a poetic world of its own and thinks in tropes & figures instead of grappling with the concrete facts of the earth; hence he is unfitted for action and once absolute power is out of his hands, once he is no longer able to arrange men & events to his liking as if he were a dramatist manoeuvring the creatures of his brain but is called upon to measure his will & ability against others, he fails & his failure leads to tragic issues; for he persists in attempting to weave his own imaginations into life; he will not see facts; he will not recognize the inexorable logic of events. Hence, though not necessarily a coward, though often a man of real courage & even ability, he plays the part of an incompetent or a weakling or both. Moreover he tends to become a tyrant, to lose moral perspective & often all sense of proportion and sanity; for he regards himself as the centre of a great drama, and to all who will not play the part he assigns them and satisfy his emotional needs & impulses, to all who get in the way of his imaginative egotism he becomes savage & cruel; his rage when a word of his life-drama is mispronounced or a part ill-studied or a conception not complied with is a magnified reflection of the vexation felt by a dramatist at a similar contretemps in the performance of his darling piece; and unfortunately unlike the playwright he has the power to vent his indignation on the luckless offenders in a fashion only too effective. The last end of the poet-king is almost always tragic, the madhouse, the prison, suicide, exile or the dagger of the assassin. It must be admitted that this dramatic picture largely reflects the facts of history. We know some instances of poet-kings in history, Nero & Ludwig of Bavaria were extreme instances; but we have a far more interesting because typical series in the history of the British isles. The Stuarts were a race of born poets whom the irony of their fate insisted upon placing one after the other upon a throne; with the single exception of Charles II (James VI was a pedant, which

for practical purposes is as bad as a poet) they were all men of an imaginative temper, artistic tastes & impossible ideals, and the best of them had in a wonderful degree the poet's faculty of imparting this enthusiasm to others. The terrible fate which dogged them was no mysterious doom of the Atridae, but the natural inexorable result of the incompatibility between their temperament & their position. Charles II was the only capable man in his line, the only one who set before him a worldly & unideal aim & recognising facts & using the only possible ways & means quietly & patiently accomplished it. The first James had some practical energy, but it was marred by the political idealism, the disregard of a wise opportunism and the tyrannical severity towards those who thwarted him which distinguished his whole dreamy, fascinating & utterly unpractical race. Nor is the type wanting in Indian History. Sriharsha of Cashmere in the pages of Kalhana affords a most typical picture of the same unhappy temperament. It is interesting therefore to see how Kalidasa dealt with a similar character. To our surprise we find that the Hindu poet does not associate incompetence, failure & tragedy with his image of the poet-king; on the contrary Pururavus is a Great Emperor, well-loved of his people, an unconquered hero, the valued ally of the Gods, successful in empire, successful in war, successful in love. Was then Kalidasa at fault in his knowledge of the world and of human nature? Such a solution would be inconsistent with all we know of the poet's genius as shown in his other work. The truth is that Kalidasa simply gives us the other side of the shield. It is not an invariable law of human nature that the poetic temperament should be by its nature absolutely unfitted for practical action & regal power. Nero & Charles I were artistic temperaments cursed with the doom of kingship. But Alexander of Macedon & Napoleon Buonaparte were poets on a throne, and the part they played in history was not that of incompetents & weaklings. There are times when Nature gifts the poetic temperament with a peculiar grasp of the conditions of action and an irresistible tendency to create their poems not in ink & on paper, but in living characters & on the great canvas of the world; such men become portents

& wonders, whom posterity admires or hates but can only imperfectly understand. Like Joan of Arc or Mazzini & Garibaldi they save a dying nation, or like Napoleon & Alexander they dominate a world. They are only possible because they only get full scope in races which unite with an ardent & heroic temperament a keen susceptibility to poetry in life, idealism, & hero worship. Now the Hindus, before the fibre of their temperament had been loosened by hedonistic materialism on the one side & Buddhistic impracticability on the other, were not only the most ardent & idealistic race in the world, the most ready to put prose behind them, the most dominated by thought & imagination, but also one of the most heroic, and they still preserved much of this ancient temper in the days of Kalidasa. It was only natural therefore that the national dramatist in representing the great legendary founder of the Kurus as of the poet-emperor type, should mould him of stronger make & material & not as one of the beautiful porcelain vessels that are broken. Yet always, even when gifted with the most extraordinary practical abilities, the poetic temperament remains itself and keeps a flaw of weakness in the heart of its strength. The temperaments of Alexander & Napoleon were both marked by megalomania, gigantic imaginations, impossible ideals; though not wantonly cruel or tyrannical, they at times showed a singular insensibility to moral restraints and the demands of generous & humane feeling; especially in times of abnormal excitement or temporary indulgence of their passions, the birthmark came out and showed itself in acts of often insane tyranny. This was especially the case with Alexander; but Napoleon was not free from the same taint. Alexander, we know, strove consciously to mould his life into an Iliad; Napoleon regarded his as a Titanic epic and when facts would not fit in ideally with his conception of himself as its great protagonist, he would alter & falsify them with as little scruple as a dramatist would feel in dealing licentiously with the facts of history. All men of this type, moreover, show a strange visionary impracticability in the midst of their practical energy & success, make huge miscalculations & refuse to receive correction, insist that facts shall mould themselves according to

their own imaginations and are usually dominated by an unconquerable egoism or self-absorption which is not necessarily base or selfish; their success seems as much the result of a favouring destiny as of their own ability & when the favour is withdrawn, they collapse like a house of cards at one blow. Joan of Arc dreamed dreams & saw visions, Mazzini & Garibaldi were impracticable idealists and hated Cavour because he would not idealise along with them. The rock of St Helena, the blazing stake at Rouen, the lifelong impotent exile of Mazzini, the field of [ ]<sup>1</sup> & the island of Caprera, such is the latter end of these great spirits. Alexander was more fortunate, but his greatest good fortune was that he died young; his next greatest that the practical commonsense of his followers prevented him from crossing the Ganges; had Napoleon been similarly forced to recognise his limit, his end might have been as great as his beginning. Pururavus in the play is equally fortunate; we feel throughout that the power & favour of the Gods is at his back to save him from all evil fortune and the limits of a legend help him as effectually as an early death helped Alexander.

Kalidasa's presentation of Pururavus therefore is not that of a poetic nature in a false position working out its own ruin; it is rather a study of the poetic temperament in a heroic & royal figure for no issue beyond the study itself. This is in accordance with the temper of the later poetry which, as I have said, troubles itself little with problems, issues & the rest, but is purely romantic, existing only to express disinterested delight in the beauty of human life & emotion & the life & emotion of animate & inanimate Nature.

When Pururavus first appears on the scene it is as the king and hero, the man of prompt courage and action, playing the part which he has assumed like a royal robe of purple; but it is not in the practical side of his character that Kalidasa is interested. He has to introduce it only as a background to his inner temperament, in order to save him from the appearance

<sup>1</sup> *Blank in manuscript. Apparently Aspromonte or Mentana, sites of defeats suffered by Garibaldi, was intended. — Ed.*



of frivolous weakness & unworthiness which always surrounds the dilettante in life, the epicure of his own emotions. This he does with his usual consummate art. Pururavus is introduced to us at the very beginning in a scene of extraordinary swiftness, decision & tumultuous excitement like an eagle cleaving the winds in the rushing swoop upon his prey. The remembrance of this rapid & heroic episode lingers with us & gives us a sense of concealed iron behind his most feminine moods as lover & poet. Then again at the end of the play Kalidasa skilfully strikes the same note & when we take leave of the Ilian it is again as the King & hero whose strong arm is needed by the Gods in their approaching war with the Titans. Thus finding & leaving him as the warlike prince, we always have the impression that however great the part played by his love for Urvasie in his life, it is not the whole; that we are listening only to a love episode in some high epic. This impression again is skilfully aided by brief but telling touches in each Act, such as the song of the Bards, for example, which remind us of the King of Kings, the toiling administrator & the great warrior; in not a single Act are these necessary strokes omitted & the art with which they are introduced naturally & as if without design is beyond praise. But here again Kalidasa does not depart from his artistic principle of “nothing too much, nothing too little”; the purple robes of the Emperor and the bow of the hero being needed only for the background are not allowed to intrude upon the main interest, which is Pururavus the man in his native temperament.

From the very first utterance that temperament reveals itself; the grandiose & confident announcement of his name & his communion with the Gods is characteristic of the epic megalomaniac; we are not deceived by his proud assumption of modesty, which he only wears as a fit outward ornament of the role he is playing on the world's stage, part of the conventional drapery of the heroic king. “For modesty was ever valour's crown.” Through this drapery we see the man glorying in himself as a poet might glory in some great creation & when madness has removed all conventional disguise, his temper breaks out with the most splendid frankness. We see his mind empurpled with

the consciousness of his worldwide fame, "This is too much; it is not possible he should not know me"; of his marvellous birth "the grandson to the Sun & Moon"; of his matchless achievements as "the chariot-warrior, great Pururavus"; of his mighty empire, "the universal sceptre of the world and sovran footstool touched by jewelled heads of tributary monarchs". The glory of this triple purple in which he has wrapped himself, matchless valour, matchless fame, matchless empire, dominates his imagination, and he speaks in the proud brief language of the hero but with an evident consciousness of their fine suitability to the part. We seem to see Napoleon robing himself in the dramatic splendour of his despatches and proclamations or Alexander dragging Batis at his chariot wheels in order that he may feel himself to be Achilles. Shall we accuse these men as some do of being liars, theatrical braggarts, inhuman madmen, mountebanks? Let us not so in our feeble envy spit our venom on these mighty souls to half whose heights we could never rise even if we have no opportunity given us of sinking to their depths!

And then as he rushes in pursuit of the Titan and revels in the speed of his chariot and the scenic splendour of the crumbling thunderclouds flying up like dust beneath it, all the poet in him breaks out into glories of speech. Surely no king before or after, not even Richard II, had such a royal gift of language as this grandson of the Sun & Moon. It is peculiar to him in the play. Others, especially those who habitually move near him, Manavaca, the Chamberlain, the Huntsman, the Charioteer, catch something at times of his enthusiastic poetry, but their diction is usually simple & unpretending and when it is most ambitious pale to the colour, energy & imaginativeness which floods all his utterance. For example in the scene of the vulture how he catches fire from a single trope of the Huntsman's and his imagination continues coruscating & flashing over the jewel until it has vanished from sight. I have said that his imagination has become empurpled; but the tendency is really inborn in him; he sees, thinks & speaks in purple. Not only is his mind stored with pictures which break out in the most splendid tropes and similes, but he cannot see any natural object or feel any simplest

emotion without bathing it in the brilliant tones of his imagination & expressing it in regal poetry. He has also the poet's close & inspired observation, the poet's visualising power, the poet's sensuousness & aim at the concrete. Little things that he has seen in Nature, a portion of the bank of a river collapsing into the current, the rapid brightening of a dark night by the moon, fire at night breaking its way through a volume of smoke, a lotus reddening in early sunlight, a wild swan flying through the sky with a lotus fibre in his beak, remain with his inner eye and at a touch burst out in poetry. So inveterate is this habit of seizing on every situation & emotion & turning it into a poem, that even when he affects a feeling as in his flattery of the queen, he takes fire & acts his part with a glory & fervour of speech which make the feigned emotion momentarily genuine. Thus with a mind stored & brimming with poetry, a habit of speech of royal splendour & fulness and an imagination fired & enlarged by the unequalled grandeur of his own destiny, Pururavus comes to the great event which shall be the touchstone of his nature. Such a man was alone fit to aspire to & win the incarnate Beauty of the world & of its sensuous life, the Opsara who sprang from the thigh of the Supreme. The Urvsie of the myth, as has been splendidly seen & expressed by a recent Bengali poet, is the Spirit of imaginative beauty in the Universe, the unattainable ideal for which the soul of man is eternally panting, the goddess adored of the nympholept in all lands & in all ages. There is but one who can attain her, the man whose mind has become one mass of poetry & idealism and has made life itself identical with poetry, whose glorious & starlike career has itself been a conscious epic and whose soul holds friendship & close converse with the Gods. This is Pururavus, "the noise of whom has gone far & wide", whose mother was Ida, divine aspiration, the strange daughter of human mind (Manu) who was once male & is female, and his father Budha, Hermes of the moonlike mind, inspired & mystic wisdom, and his near ancestors therefore are the Sun & Moon. For Urvsie he leaves his human wife, earthly fame & desire, giving her only the passionless kindness which duty demands & absorbs his whole real soul in the divine. Even he,

however, does not enjoy uninterrupted the object of his desire; he transgresses with her into that fatal grove of the Virgin War-God where ethereal beauty & delight are not suffered to tread but only ascetic self-denial & keen swordlike practical will; at once she disappears from his ken. Then must his soul wander through all Nature seeking her, imagining her or hints & tokens of her in everything he meets, but never grasping unless by some good chance he accept the Jewel Union born from the crimson on the marvellous feet of Himaloy's Child, Uma, daughter of the mountains, the Mighty Mother, She who is the Soul behind Nature. Then he is again united with her and their child is Ayus, human life & action glorified & ennobled by contact with the divine. It is therefore one of the most profound & splendid of the many profound & splendid allegories in the great repertory of Hindu myth that Kalidasa has here rendered into so sweet, natural & passionate a story of human love & desire. [The religious interpretation of the myth, which is probably older than the poetical, is slightly but not materially different.]<sup>2</sup>

In one sense therefore the whole previous life of Pururavus has been a preparation for his meeting with Urvasie. He has filled earth & heaven even as he has filled his own imagination with the splendour of his life as with an epic poem, he has become indeed Pururavus, he who is noised afar; but he has never yet felt his own soul. Now he sees Urvasie and all the force of his nature pours itself into his love for her like a river which has at last found its natural sea. The rich poetry of his temperament, the sights & images with which his memory is stored, his dramatic delight in his own glory & greatness & heroism, are now diverted & poured over this final passion of his life, coruscate & light it up & reveal it as in a wonderful faeryland full of shimmering moonlight. Each thought, image, emotion of his mind as it issues forth, connects itself with his love and for a moment stands illumined in the lustre of his own speech. The same extraordinary vividness of feeling & imagination is poured over Ayus when Pururavus finds himself

<sup>2</sup> *The square brackets are Sri Aurobindo's. — Ed.*

a father; never has the passion of paternity been expressed with such vivid concreteness or with such ardent sensuousness of feeling. Yet the conventions of life & the dramatic part in it he feels bound to sustain cling about him and hamper his complete utterance. In order therefore to give him his full opportunity, Kalidasa has separated him from Urvasie by a more romantic device than the dramatically unmanageable contrivance of the original legend, and liberated him into the infinite freedom of madness. The fourth Act therefore which seems at first sight episodic, is really of essential importance both to the conduct of the play & the full revelation of its protagonist.

Yet madness is hardly the precise word for the condition of Pururavus; he is not mad like Lear or Ophelia;<sup>3</sup> it is rather a temporary exaltation than a perversion or aberration from his natural state. An extraordinarily vivid & active imagination which has always felt a poetic sense of mind & sympathy in brute life & in “inanimate” Nature leaps up under the shock of sudden & inexplicable loss & the encouragement of romantic surroundings into gigantic proportions; it is like a sudden conflagration in a forest which transfigures & magnifies every petty object it enlightens and fills the world with the rush & roar & volume of its progress. The whole essential temperament of the man comes whirling out in a gyrating pomp of tropes, fancies, conceits, quick & changing emotions; everything in existence he gifts with his own mind, speech, feelings and thus moves through the pageantry of Nature draping it in the regal mantle of his imagination until the whole world exists only to be the scene & witness of his sorrow. For splendour of mere poetry united with delicate art of restraint and management, this scene is not

<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo wrote the following passage on a separate page of the manuscript used for this essay. He did not mark its place of insertion:

That accomplished scholar & litterateur Prof Wilson in introducing the Vicramorvaseum to English readers, is at pains to inform them that in the “mad scene” of this play they must not expect the sublime madness of King Lear, but a much tamer affair conformable to the mild, domestic & featureless Hindu character & the feebler pitch of Hindu poetic genius. The good Professor might have spared himself the trouble. Beyond the fact that both Lear & Pururavus go about raving in a storm, there is no point of contact between the two dramas.

easily surpassed. We may note one of the smaller & yet essential features of its beauty, the skill with which the gradations of his excitement are indicated. When he first rushes in he is in the very height & tumult of it mistaking the cloud for a Titan who carries off his Urvsie and threatening him with a clod of earth which he imagines to be a deadly weapon. But he is not really mad; the next moment he realises his hallucination, and the reaction produces a certain calming down of the fever; yet his mind is still working tumultuously & as he ranges through the forest, every object is converted for a moment into a sign of Urvsie and the megalomaniac in him bursts out into the most splendid flights of self-magnification. But each fresh disappointment brings a reaction that sobers him just a little more; he turns from the inanimate objects of nature to the bee in the flower, then to the birds, then to the beasts; he gifts them with a voice, with articulate words, with thoughts lent out of the inexhaustible treasury of his teeming imagination. Next he appeals to the God of the mountain and fancies the Echo to be his answer. Mark that now for the first time it is a real articulate voice that he hears, though but the reflection of his own. Immediately afterwards his mind coming nearer & nearer to sanity, hits upon something very close to the truth; he realises that a divine force may have transformed her to some object of nature & at first by a natural misapprehension imagines that it must be the river which has the appearance Urvsie wore when she fled from him. Then reason as it returns tells him that if he wishes to find her, it must be nearer the place where she disappeared. As he hurries back, he appeals for the last time to an animal to speak to him, but does not lend him a voice or words; again also he sees tokens of her in flower & tree, but they are no longer hallucinations but real or at least possible tokens. He touches the Jewel Union & hears the actual voice of the sage; he is now perfectly restored to his normal state of mind & when he embraces the creeper, it is not as Urvsie but as an “imitatress of my beloved”. Through the rest of the scene it is the old natural Pururavus we hear though in his most delicate flights of imagination. What a choice of a “conveyance” is that with which the scene closes & who but

Pururavus could have imagined it? I dwell on these subtle and just perceptible features of Kalidasa's work, the art concealing art, because the appreciation of them is necessary to the full reception on our mind-canvas of Kalidasa's art & genius and therefore to the full enjoyment of his poetry.

And while Pururavus glorifies & revels in his passion, he is also revealed by it; and not only in the strength of the poetic temperament at its strongest, its grasp of, devotion to & joy in its object, its puissant idealism & energy & the dynamic force with which for a time at least it compels fate to its will, but also in its weaknesses. I have spoken of his self-magnification & touches of megalomania. There is besides this a singular incompetence or paralysis of activity in occasional emergencies which, as I have before suggested, often overtakes the poetic temperament in action even in its most capable possessors. His helplessness when confronted by Aushinarie compares badly with the quiet self-possession & indulgent smile with which Agnimitra faces Iravatie in a much more compromising situation. Characteristic too is his conduct when the jewel is lost. We feel certain that Agnimitra when rushing out of his tent would have caught up his bow & arrows & and shot the thief on the spot; Pururavus occupies time in pouring out splendid tropes & similes over the bird & the jewel and appeals helplessly to Manavaca for advice. This is characteristic of the poetic temperament whose mind has long trained itself to throw out its imagination to meet every new object or situation and not its acting faculties; except in natures of a very firm balance the habit must lead to paralysis of the will. Such a sapping of vigour has been going on in Pururavus during the long years of absorption in his romantic passion.<sup>4</sup> One must hope that when he stands again in the forefront of battle "Heaven's great soldier" will have sufficient elasticity of character to recover in the shock of action what he has lost in the peace of the seraglio. Then there are certain

<sup>4</sup> *Alternative to this sentence:*

This growing incompetence is the result of vigour being sapped by long indulgence in the poetical sensibilities to the comparative exclusion of the practical side of the temperament.

moral insensibilities, certain feelings which seem to have been left out in his composition. It is part of his self-assumed rôle in life to be the ideal king, the mirror of gallantry & conjugal duty, the champion of the gods & of religion. Yet it is Urvasie and not he who remembers that his “high capital awaits him long” and who shrinks from the displeasure of the people. He exhibits deference & a show of love to Aushinarie because he “owes” her respect & affection, but in spite of his glowing language and fine acting we feel that he cherishes towards her none of the genuine respect & affection or of the real & indulgent kindness Agnimitra feels for Dharinie & Iravatie. In the last Act he expresses some fear that he may lose religious calm; one feels that religious calm in Pururavus must have been something like the King’s robe in Hans Andersen’s story. But it was one of the necessary “belongings” of the great semi-divine king which Pururavus considered his “part” in life, just as impassive calm & insensibility to human misfortune & grief was one of the necessary “belongings” of the great demigod, the human Jove which Napoleon thought to be his destined rôle. If that vast, flaming and rushing mass of genius & impetuosity which we call Napoleon was incompatible with stoical calm & insensibility, so was the ardent mass of sensuousness & imagination which Kalidasa portrayed in Pururavus incompatible with the high austerity of religion. It is in the mouth of this champion of Heaven Kalidasa has placed one of the few explicit protests in Sanscrit of the ordinary sensuous man against the ascetic idealism of the old religion

And yet I cannot think of her  
 Created by a withered hermit cold.  
 How could an aged anchoret dull & stale  
 With poring over Scripture & oblivious  
 To all this rapture of the senses build  
 A thing so lovely?

The minor male characters of the piece look too wan in the blaze of this great central figure to command much attention except as his adjuncts. As such the Charioteer, the Huntsman &



the Chamberlain, Latavya, appear; the former two merely cross the stage and are only interesting for the shadow of tropical magnificence that their master's personality has thrown over their mode of speech.

In nothing does the delicacy & keen suavity of Kalidasa's dramatic genius exhibit itself with a more constant & instinctive perfection than in his characterisation of women. He may sometimes not care to individualise his most unimportant male figures, but even the slightest of his women have some personality of their own, something which differentiates them from others & makes them better than mere names. Insight into feminine character is extraordinarily rare even among dramatists for whom one might think it to be a necessary element of their art. For the most part a poet represents with success only one or two unusual types known to him or in sympathy with his own temperament or those which are quite abnormal and therefore easily drawn; the latter are generally bad women, the Clytaemnestras, Vittoria Corombonas, Beatrice Joannas. The women of Vyasa & of Sophocles have all a family resemblance; all possess a quiet or commanding masculine strength of character which reveals their parentage. Other poets we see succeeding in a single feminine character & often repeating it but failing or not succeeding eminently in the rest. Otherwise women in poetry are generally painted very much from the outside. The poets who have had an instinctive insight into women, can literally be counted on the fingers of one hand. Shakespeare in this as in other dramatic gifts is splendidly & unapproachably first or at least only equalled in depth though not in range by Valmekie; Racine has the same gift within his limits & Kalidasa without limits, though in this as in other respects he has not Shakespeare's prodigal abundance and puissant variety. Other names I do not remember. There are a few poets who succeed with coarse easy types, but this is the fruit [of] observation rather than an unfailing intuitive gift. The *Agnimitra* is a drama of women; it passes within the women's apartments and pleasure gardens of a great palace and is full of the rustling of women's robes, the tinkling of their ornaments,

the scent of their hair, the music of their voices. In the Urvasie where he needs at least half the canvas for his hero, the scope for feminine characterisation is of necessity greatly contracted, but what is left Kalidasa has filled in with a crowd of beautiful & shining figures & exquisite faces each of which is recognizable. These are the Opsaras and Urvasie the most beautiful of them all. To understand the poetry & appeal of these nymphs of heaven, we must know something of their origin & meaning.

In the beginning of things, in the great wide spaces of Time when mankind as yet was young and the azure heavens & the interregions between the stars were full of the crowding figures of luminous Gods & gigantic Titans by the collision of whose activities the cosmos was taking form & shape, the opposing forces once made a truce and met in common action on the waves of the milky ocean. The object for which they had met could not have been fulfilled by the efforts of one side alone; good must mingle with evil, the ideal take sides with the real, the soul work in harmony with the senses, virtue & sin, heaven & earth & hell labour towards a common end before it can be accomplished; for this object was no less than to evolve all that is beautiful & sweet & incredible in life, all that makes it something more than mere existence; and in especial to realise immortality, that marvellous thought which has affected those even who disbelieve in it, with the idea of unending effort and thus lured men on from height to height, from progress to progress, until mere beast though he is in his body & his sensations, he has with the higher part of himself laid hold upon the most distant heavens. Therefore they stood by the shore of the milky Ocean and cast into it the mountain Mundara for a churning stick and wound round it Vasuqie, the Great Serpent, the snake of desire, for the rope of the churning and then they set to with a will, god & devil together, and churned the milky ocean, the ocean of spiritual existence, the ocean of imagination & aspiration, the ocean of all in man that is above the mere body and the mere life.

They churned for century after century, for millennium upon millennium and yet there was no sign of the nectar of immortality. Only the milky ocean swirled & lashed & roared, like

a thing tortured, and the snake Vasuqie in his anguish began to faint & hang down his numberless heads hissing with pain over the waves and from the lolling forked tongues a poison streamed out & mingled with the anguish of the ocean so that it became like a devastating fire. Never was poison so terrible for it contained in itself all the long horror & agony of the ages, all the pain of life, its tears & cruelty & despair & rage & madness, the darkness of disbelief & the grey pain of disillusionment, all the demoniac & brute beast that is in man, his lust & his tyranny & his evil joy in the sufferings of his fellows. Before that poison no creature could stand and the world began to shrivel in the heat of it. Then the Gods fled to Shankara where he abode in the ice and snow & the iron silence & inhuman solitudes of the mountains where the Ganges streams through his matted locks; for who could face the fire of that poison? who but the great ascetic Spirit clothed in ashes who knows not desire and sorrow, to whom terror is not terrible & grief has no sting, but who embraces grief & madness & despair and<sup>5</sup>

And now wonderful things began to arise from the Ocean; Uchaisravus arose, neighing & tossing his mighty mane, he who can gallop over all space in one moment while hooves make music in the empyrean; Varunie arose, Venus Anadyomene from the waters, the daughter of Varuna, Venus Ourania, standing on a lotus & bringing beauty, delight and harmony & all opulence into the universe; Dhunwuntari arose, cup in hand, the physician of the Gods, who can heal all pain & disease & sorrow, minister to a mind diseased & pluck out from the bosom its rooted sorrow; the jewel Kaustubha arose whose pure luminousness fills all the world & worn on the bosom of the Saviour & helper becomes the cynosure of the suffering & striving nations;<sup>6</sup>

There is nothing more charming, more attractive in Kalidasa than his instinct for sweet & human beauty; everything he

<sup>5</sup> Here there is an abrupt break in the text. — Ed.

<sup>6</sup> Here there is another abrupt break with nothing to link this paragraph to what follows. — Ed.

touches becomes the inhabitant of a moonlit world of romance and yet — there is the unique gift, the consummate poetry — remains perfectly natural, perfectly near to us, perfectly human. Shelley's Witch of Atlas & Keats' Cynthia are certainly lovely creations, but they do not live; misty, shimmering, uncertain beings seen in some half dream when the moon is full and strange indefinable figures begin to come out from the skirts of the forest, they charm our imagination but our hearts take no interest in them. They are the creations of the mystic Celtic imagination with its singular intangibility, its fascinating otherworldliness. The Hindu has been always decried as a dreamer & mystic. There is truth in the charge but also a singular inaccuracy. The Hindu mind is in one sense the most concrete in the world; it seeks after abstractions, but is not satisfied with them so long as they remain abstractions. But to make the objects of this world concrete, to realise the things that are visited by sun & rain or are, at their most ethereal, sublimated figures of fine matter, that is comparatively easy, but the Hindu is not contented till he has seized things *behind* the sunlight also as concrete realities. He is passionate for the infinite, the unseen, the spiritual, but he will not rest satisfied with conceiving them, he insists on mapping the infinite, on seeing the unseen, on visualising the spiritual. The Celt throws his imagination into the infinite and is rewarded with beautiful phantoms out of which he evolves a pale, mystic and intangible poetry; the Hindu sends his heart & his intellect & eventually his whole being after his imagination and for his reward he has seen God and interpreted existence. It is this double aspect of Hindu temperament, extreme spirituality successfully attempting to work in harmony with extreme materialism, which is the secret of our religion, our life & our literature, our civilisation. On the one side we spiritualise the material out of all but a phenomenal & illusory existence, on the other we materialise the spiritual in the most definite & realistic forms; this is the secret of the high philosophic idealism which to the less capable European mind seems so impossible an intellectual atmosphere and of the prolific idolatry which to the dogmatic & formalising Christian reason seems so gross.

In any other race-temperament this mental division would have split into two broadly disparate & opposing types whose action, reaction & attempts at compromise would have comprised the history of thought. In the myriad minded & undogmatic Hindu it worked not towards mental division but as the first discord which prepares for a consistent harmony; the best & most characteristic Hindu thought regards either tendency as essential to the perfect & subtle comprehension of existence; they are considered the positive & negative sides of one truth, & must both be grasped if we are not to rest in a half light. Hence the entire tolerance of the Hindu religion to all intellectual attitudes except sheer libertinism; hence also the marvellous perfection of graded thought-attitudes in which the Hindu mind travels between the sheer negative & the sheer positive and yet sees in them only a ladder of progressive & closely related steps rising through relative conceptions to one final & absolute knowledge.

The intellectual temperament of a people determines the main character-stamp of its poetry. There is therefore no considerable poet in Sanscrit who has not the twofold impression, (spiritual & romantic in aim, our poetry is realistic in method), who does not keep his feet on the ground even while his eyes are with the clouds. The soaring lark who loses himself in light, the ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void are not denizens of the Hindu plane of temperament. Hence the expectant critic will search ancient Hindu literature in vain for the poetry of mysticism; that is only to be found in recent Bengali poetry which has felt the influence of English models. The old Sanscrit poetry was never satisfied unless it could show colour, energy & definiteness, & these are things incompatible with true mysticism. Even the Upanishads which declare the phenomenal world to be unreal, yet have a rigidly practical aim and labour in every line to make the indefinite definite & the abstract concrete. But of all our great poets Kalidasa best exemplifies this twynatured Hindu temperament under the conditions of supreme artistic beauty & harmony. Being the most variously learned of Hindu poets he draws into his net all our traditions, ideas, myths, imaginations, allegories; the grotesque

& the trivial as well as the sublime or lovely; but touching them with his magic wand teaches them to live together in the harmonising atmosphere of his poetic temperament; under his touch the grotesque becomes strange, wild & romantic; the trivial refines into a dainty & gracious slightness; the sublime yields to the law of romance, acquires a mighty grace, a strong sweetness; and what was merely lovely attains power, energy & brilliant colour. His creations in fact live in a peculiar light, which is not the light that never was on sea or land but rather our ordinary sunshine recognisable though strangely & beautifully altered. The alteration is not real; rather our vision is affected by the recognition of something concealed by the sunbeams & yet the cause of the sunbeams; but it is plain human sunlight we see always. May we not say it is that luminousness behind the veil of this sunlight which is the heaven of Hindu imagination & in all Hindu work shines through it without overpowering it? Hindu poetry is the only Paradise in which the lion can lie down with the lamb.

The personages of Kalidasa's poetry are with but few exceptions gods & demigods or skiey spirits, but while they preserve a charm of wonder, sublimity or weirdness, they are brought onto our own plane of experience, their speech and thought & passion is human. This was the reason alleged by the late Bunkim Chundra Chatterji, himself a poet and a critic of fine & strong insight, for preferring the Birth of the War God to Paradise Lost; he thought that both epics were indeed literary epics of the same type, largely-planned and sublime in subject, diction and thought, but that the Hindu poem if less grandiose in its pitch had in a high degree the humanism and sweetness of simple & usual feeling in which the Paradise Lost is more often than not deficient. But the humanism of which I speak is not the Homeric naturalism; there is little of the sublime or romantic in the essence of the Homeric gods though there is much of both in a good many of their accidents & surroundings. But Kalidasa's divine & semidivine personages lose none of their godhead by living on the plane of humanity. Perhaps the most exquisite masterpiece in this kind is the Cloud Messenger. The

actors in that beautiful love-elegy might have been chosen by Shelley himself; they are two lovers of Faeryland, a cloud, rivers, mountains, the gods & demigods of air & hill & sky; the goal of the cloud's journey is the ethereal city of Ullaca upon the golden hill crowned by the clouds and bathed at night in the unearthly moonlight that streams from the brow of Sheva, the mystic's God. The earth is seen mainly as a wonderful panorama by one travelling on the wings of a cloud. Here are all the materials for one of those intangible harmonies of woven & luminous mist with which Shelley allures & baffles us. The personages & scenery are those of Queen Mab, Prometheus Unbound & the Witch of Atlas. But Kalidasa's city in the mists is no evanescent city of sunlit clouds; it is his own beautiful & luxurious Ujjayini idealised & exempted from mortal affection; like a true Hindu he insists on translating the ideal into the terms of the familiar, sensuous & earthy.

For death and birth keep not their mystic round  
In Ullaca; there from the deathless trees  
The blossom lapses never to the ground  
But lives for ever garrulous with bees  
All honey-drunk — nor yet its sweets resign.  
For ever in their girdling companies. etc.<sup>7</sup>

And when he comes to describe the sole mourner in that town of delight eternal & passion unsated, this is how he describes her.<sup>8</sup> How human, how touching, how common it all is; while we read, we feel ourselves kin to & one with a more beautiful world than our own. These creatures of fancy hardly seem to be an imaginary race but rather ourselves removed from the sordidness & the coarse pains of our world into a more gracious existence. This, I think, is the essential attraction which makes his countrymen to this day feel such a passionate delight in Kalidasa; after reading a poem of his the world and life and

<sup>7</sup> The "etc." indicates that Sri Aurobindo intended to quote more from his now-lost translation of *The Cloud Messenger*. — Ed.

<sup>8</sup> Sri Aurobindo evidently intended to insert another passage from his translation of *The Cloud Messenger* here. — Ed.

our fellow creatures human, animal or inanimate have become suddenly more beautiful & dear to us than they were before; the heart flows out towards birds & beasts and the very trees seem to be drawing us towards them with their branches as if with arms; the vain cloud & the senseless mountain are no longer senseless or empty, but friendly intelligences that have a voice to our souls. Our own common thoughts, feelings & passions have also become suddenly fair to us; they have received the sanction of beauty. And then through the passion of delight & the sense of life & of love in all beautiful objects we reach to the Mighty Spirit behind them whom our soul recognizes no longer as an object of knowledge or of worship but as her lover, to whom she must fly, leaving her husband the material life & braving the jeers & reprobation of the world for His sake. Thus by a singular paradox, one of those beautiful oxymorons of which the Hindu temperament is full, we reach God through the senses, just as our ancestors did through the intellect and through the emotions; for in the Hindu mind all roads lead eventually to the Rome of its longing, the dwelling of the Most High God. One can see how powerfully Kalidasa's poetry must have prepared the national mind for the religion of the Puranas, the worship of Kali, Our Mother & of Srikrishna, of Vrindavun, our soul's Paramour. Here indeed lies his chief claim to rank with Valmekie & Vyasa as one of our three national poets, in that he gathered the mind-life of the nation into his poetry at a great & critical moment and helped it forward into the groove down which it must henceforth run.

This method is employed with conspicuous beauty & success in the Urvasie. The Opsaras are the most beautiful & romantic conception on the lesser plane of Hindu mythology. From the moment that they arose out of the waters of the milky Ocean robed in ethereal raiment & heavenly adornments, waking melody from a million lyres, the beauty and light of them has transformed the world. They crowd in the sunbeams, they flash & gleam over heaven in the lightnings, they make the azure beauty of the sky; they are the light of sunrise & sunset, and the haunting voices of forest & field. They dwell too in the life of



the soul; for they are the ideal pursued by the poet through his lines, by the artist shaping his soul on his canvas, by the sculptor seeking a form in his marble; for the joy of their embrace the hero flings his life into the rushing torrent of battle; the sage, musing upon God, sees the shining of their limbs & falls from his white ideal. The delight of life, the beauty of things, the attraction of sensuous beauty, this is what the mystic & romantic side of the Hindu temperament strove to express in the *Opsara*. The original meaning is everywhere felt as a shining background, but most in the older allegories, especially the strange and romantic legend of *Pururavus* as we first have it in the *Brahmanas* and the *Vishnupurana*.

But then came in the materialistic side of the Hindu mind and desired some familiar term, the earthlier the better, in which to phrase its romantic conception; this was found in — the *Hetaira*. The class of *Hetairae* was as recognized an element in Hindu society as in Greek, but it does not appear to have exercised quite so large an influence on social life. As in the Greek counterpart they were a specially learned and accomplished class of women, but their superiority over ladies of good families was not so pronounced; for in ancient India previous to the Mahomedan episode respectable women were not mere ignorant housewives like the Athenian ladies, they were educated though not in a formal manner; that is to say they went through no systematic training such as men had but parents were always expected to impart general culture & accomplishments to them by private tuition at home; singing, music, dancing and to some extent painting were the ordinary accomplishments, general knowledge of morality, Scripture and tradition was imperative, and sometimes the girls of highborn, wealthy or learned families received special instruction in philosophy or mathematics. Some indeed seem to have pursued a life of philosophic learning either as virgins or widows; but such instances were in preBuddhistic times very rare; the normal Hindu feeling has always been that the sphere of woman is in the home and her life incomplete unless merged in her husband's. In any case the majority of the *kulabadhus*, women of respectable families, could hardly

be more than amateurs in the arts & sciences, whereas with the Hetairae (Gunicas) such accomplishments were pursued and mastered as a profession. Hence beside their ordinary occupation of singing & dancing in the temples & on great public occasions such as coronations & holy days, they often commanded the irregular affections of highborn or wealthy men who led openly a double life at home with the wife, outside with the Hetaira. As a class, they held no mean place in society; for they must not be confused with the strolling actor or mountebank caste who were a proverb for their vileness of morals. Many of them, no doubt, as will inevitably happen when the restraints of society are not recognized, led loose, immoral & sensual lives; in such a class Lais & Phryne must be as common as Aspasia. Nevertheless the higher & intellectual element seems to have prevailed; those who arrogated freedom in their sexual relations but were not prostitutes, are admirably portrayed in Vasuntséna of the Toy Cart, a beautiful melodrama drawn straight from the life; like her they often exchanged, with the consent of their lover's family, the unveiled face of the Hetaira for the seclusion of the wife. This class both in its higher & lower type lasted late into the present century, but are now under the auspices of Western civilisation almost entirely replaced by a growing class of professional prostitutes, an inevitable consummation which it seems hardly worth while to dub social reform & accelerate by an active crusade.

The Opsaras then are the divine Hetairae of Paradise, beautiful singers & actresses whose beauty and art relieve the arduous & worldlong struggle of the Gods against the forces that tend towards disruption & dissolution, of disruption represented by the Titans who would restore matter to its original atomic condition or of dissolution by the sages & hermits who would make phenomena dissolve prematurely into the One who is above Phenomena. They rose from the Ocean, says Valmekie, seeking who should choose them as brides, but neither the Gods nor the Titans accepted them, therefore are they said to be common or universal.

We see then the appropriateness of the Hetaira as a material form into which the vague idea of sensuous beauty in the world might run. For the charm of the Opsara even when working on the plane of the mind, is still vital & sensational; it does not belong to the more rarefied regions of the spirit. Now vital & sensational charm in seeking its fulfilment demands that the pursuit of sensuous beauty shall be its sole object, that it shall be without check as without any sideglance or afterthought; it does not seek to be immoral, but simply rejects all moral tests; it recognizes no law but the fulfilment of its own being. This is the very spirit of the Hetaira. The beauty of nakedness sculptured, painted or shaped into words, is not immoral; but the moment we apply the test of morality, it becomes clear that we must either rule it out as not belonging to the world of morality, or rule out morality itself for the moment as not belonging to the world of beauty, which is essentially a world of nakedness in the sense that dress there is an occasional ornament, not a necessary covering — not because there is any essential opposition between them but because there is no essential connection or necessary point of contact. The ideals of all the plastic & sensuous arts fall within the scope of the Opsara; she is actress, songstress, musician, painter. When they arose from the waves, neither the gods nor the demons accepted them; accepted by none, they became common to all; for neither the great active faculties of man nor the great destructive recognize sensuous delight & charm as their constant & sufficient mistress, but rather as the joy & refreshment of an hour, an accompaniment or diversion in their constant pursuit of the recognized ideal to which they are wedded. Moreover sensuous beauty has a certain attraction & splendour which seem to some minds finally & occasionally to most, fairer & brighter than that other ideal which by daily occupation with it, by permissibility & by sameness, grows stale for some, fades into homeliness & routine for others & preserves its real undying, unageing and unforsakeable freshness & delight only to the few constant & unswerving souls, who are the elect of our human evolution. In all this the idea of the Opsara coincides with the actuality of the Hetaira. In choosing the Hetaira therefore for the

Opsara's earthly similitude, the Hindu mind showed once more that wonderful mythopoeic penetrativeness which is as unerring & admirable in its way as the Greek mythopoeic felicity & tact.

But in the Opsaras the beauty and allurements of the sensuous universe are diffused, scattered, broken up into a million facets just as they first present themselves to human observation. The Hindu imagination needed some one figure into which all this should be compressed, a figure essential & superlative, compressed & running over with beauty. This was at first sought in Tilottama, the wonderful maiden to whose loveableness every gracious thing in the world gave a portion of its own subtlest charm; but this was too much of a fancy, not sufficiently profound & searching for the Hindu mind. It attempted to find a more perfect expression of its idea & created for the purpose a characteristic & therefore favourite legend.

When Naraian, the primeval and dateless sage of old, entered upon austerities in the most secret & desolate recesses of the Snowy Mountains, Indra, prince of the air, always hostile to asceticism, always distrustful of the philosophic & contemplative spirit, was alarmed for the balance of the world and the security of his own rule. He therefore sent the Opsaras to disturb the meditations of Naraian. Then upon the desolate Himalaya Spring set the beauty of his feet; the warm south wind breathed upon those inclement heights, blossoming trees grew in the eternal snow and the voice of the cuckoo was heard upon the mountain tops. It was amidst this vernal sweetness that the Opsaras came to Naraian; they were the loveliest of all the sisterhood who came, & subtlest & most alluring of feminine arts & enchantments was the way of their wooing; but Naraian, who is Vishnu the World Saviour when he comes in the guise of the ascetic, moved neither by the passion of love nor by the passion of anger, smiled in the large & indulgent mood of his world embracing nature and opening his thigh took from it a radiant and marvellous creature of whose beauty the loveliest Opsaras seemed but pale & broken reflections. Ashamed they

veiled their faces & stole silently away from the snowy hermitage. But Naraian called this daughter of his creation Urvasie (she who lies in the thigh of the Supreme, the thigh being the seat of sensuousness) and gave her to Indra to be his most potent defence against the austerities of spiritual longing.

The legend is characteristic of the Hindu mythopoeic faculty both in its slight and unpretentious build and in the number of searching & suggestive thoughts with which it is packed. Indra is the universal cosmic energy limited in the terrestrial forces of conservation; like all active & conservative forces he distrusts the contemplative spirit of philosophy because it is disruptive and tends to cast thought & therefore life into solution towards the creation of fresh forms. Thus he is besieged by a double anxiety; on one side the spirits entrusted with the work of destruction & anarchy are ever endeavouring to seat themselves in the place of Indra, the high conserving force, on the other he dreads to be dethroned by some embodiment of the contemplative spirit, examining, analysing, synthetising new forms. His method of defence against the former is usually though by no means invariably open warfare, against the latter sensuous seduction. He tempts the mind of the philosopher to sacrifice that aloofness from ordinary sensuous life & its average delights on which his perfect effectiveness depends; or if he cannot succeed in this, to move him to an angry and abhorrent recoil from sensuousness which is equally fatal to complete philosophic efficiency. This then is the inwardness of the sending of the Opsaras by Indra. Naraian conquers the temptation, not by ignoring or repelling it, but by producing out of the sensuous in himself a lovelier sensuousness than any that can be brought to tempt him. Here is a peculiarity in the highest Indian conception of ascetism. The sage who delivers the world by his philosophy must not be a half nature; he must contain the whole world in himself. It is told that the great Shankaracharya in the midst of his triumphant religious activity had to turn aside and learn by personal experience the delights of sensuous life and the love of women, because the defect of this experience left him maimed for his philosophic

task. The philosopher must be superior to sensuousness not because he is incapable of experiencing passion & delight, but because he has fathomed their utmost depth and measured their utmost reach, and far passed the stage of soul-evolution where they can satisfy.

And yet the work of the philosophic mind incidentally serves sensuous and material life by increasing its resources and the depth of its charm. For the power of the philosophic ideals which have profoundly affected humanity is not limited to the domain of the intellect but also affects, enlarges and strengthens man's aesthetic outlook upon the world. The sensuous world becomes fuller of beauty, richer in colours, shades and suggestions, more profound and attractive with each widening of the human ideal. It is Urvasie who sprang from the thigh of the withered hermit cold and not any of those original daughters of the inconstant waves who is the loveliest and most dangerous of the Opsaras.

Such then is Urvasie, Naraian born, the brightness of sunlight & the blush of the dawn, the multitudinous laughter of the sea, the glory of the skies and the leap of the lightning, all in brief that is bright, far-off, unseizable & compellingly attractive in this world; all too that is wonderful, sweet to the taste & intoxicating in human beauty, human life, the joy of human passion & emotion: all finally that seizes, masters & carries away in art, poetry, thought & knowledge, is involved in this one name.

Of these outward brilliances Kalidasa's conception of Urvasie is entirely void. His presentation of her is simply that of a beautiful and radiant woman deeply in love. Certainly the glories of her skiey residence, the far-off luminousness and the free breath of the winds are about her, but they are her atmosphere rather than part of herself. The essential idea of her is a natural, frank & charming womanliness; timidity, a quick temper, a harmless petulance and engaging childishness afterwards giving way to a matronly sedateness & bloom, swift, innocent & frank passion, warm affections as mother, sister & friend, speech

always straight from the heart, the precise elements in fact that give their greatest charm to ideal girlhood & womanhood are the main tones that compose her picture. There is nothing here of the stately pace & formal dignity of the goddess, no cothurnus raising her above human stature, no mask petrifying the simple & natural play of the feelings, the smile in the eyes, the ready tears, the sweetness of the mouth, the lowered lashes, the quick and easy gesture full of spontaneous charm. If this is a nymph of heaven, one thinks, then heaven must be beautifully like the earth. Her terror & collapse in the episode of her abduction & rescue, where Chitraleqha manages pretty successfully to keep up her courage as a goddess should, is certainly not Opsaralike — Chitraleqha with sisterly impatience expresses her sense of that, “Fie, sweet! thou art no Opsara” — but it is nevertheless attractively human and seizes our sympathies for her from the outset. Still more engaging is her timidity. There is also a sensitiveness in her love, a quickness to take alarm & despond which makes her very human. If this is jealousy, it is a quick & generous jealousy having nothing in it of “jealous baseness”, but rather born of a panic of timidity and an extreme diffidence & ignorance of the power of her own beauty. This detail is very carefully observed & emphasized as if Kalidasa wished to take especial pains to prevent even the most hidebound commentator from reading in her character any touch of the heavenly courtesan. The ostentatious splendours, the conscious allurements of the courtesan are not here, but rather a divine simplicity and white candour of soul. It is from an innate purity & openness that the frankness & impulsiveness of her love proceeds. Incapable of disguise, hastily open, even tremulously playful at times, she is easily dashed in her advances & quick to distrust her own merit. There are few more graceful touches in lighter love-drama than her hasty appearance, unconsciously invisible, before Pururavus, and her panic of dismay when he takes no notice of her. In the same scene, her half playful, half serious self-justification on embracing her lover and her immediate abashed silence at his retort, portray admirably the mixture of frank impulsiveness and shy timidity proper to her character. These

are the little magic half-noticeable touches of which Kalidasian characterisation is mainly composed, the hundred significant trifles which Kalidasa's refined taste in life felt to be the essence of character in action. A shade of wilfulness, the occasional childlike petulance, the delighted abandonment of herself to her passion, which are part of her charm, proceed also from the same surface lightness & quickness of a deep & strong nature. With all this she can be very sweet and noble too, even dignified as in a few utterances of the Third Act, her reunion with Pururavus in the fourth and all through the fifth where she is wife and mother and while losing the girlishness, petulance & playfulness of the earlier scenes has greatly deepened her charm. I see nothing of the heavenly courtesan which some over-precise commentators insist on finding in her; within the four corners of the play, which is all Kalidasa allows us to consider, she is wholly delightful, innocent, even modest, at any rate not immodest. Certainly she is more frank and playful in her love than Shacountala or even Malavica could venture to be, but something must be allowed to a goddess and her demeanour is too much flavoured with timidity, her advances too easily dashed to give any disagreeable impression of forwardness. Urvashi's finest characteristic, however, is her sincerity in passion and affection. The poet has taken great pains to discharge her utterance of all appearance of splendour, ornament & superfluity; her simple, direct & earnest diction is at the opposite pole to the gorgeous imaginativeness of the Ilian. And while her manner of speech is always simple and ordinary, what she says is exactly the unstudied & obvious thing that a woman of no great parts, but natural and quick in her affections would spontaneously say under the circumstances; it is even surprisingly natural. For example when she sees Ayus fondled by Pururavus, "Who is this youth" she asks with the little inevitable undertone of half-jealousy "Himself my monarch binds his hair into a crest! Who should this be so highly favoured"; and then she notices Satyavatie & understands. But there is no poetical outburst of maternal joy & passion. "It is my Ayus! *How he has grown!*" That is all; & nothing could be better or truer. Yet for all the surface colourlessness there is a charm in



everything Urvasie says, the charm of absolute sincerity & direct unaffected feeling. Her passion for Pururavus is wonderfully genuine and fine from her first cry of “O Titans! You did me kindness!” to her last of “O a sword is taken Out of my heart!” Whatever the mood its speech has always a tender force and reality. Her talk with Chitraleqha and the other Opsaras from the outburst “O sisters, sisters, take me to your bosoms” to her farewell “Chitraleqha, my sister! do not forget me”, is instinct, when moved, with “a passion of sisterliness” and at other times, bright & limpid in its fair kindness & confidence. To her son she comes “with her whole rapt gaze Grown mother, the veiled bosom heaving towards him And wet with sacred milk.” & her farewell to the Hermitess sets a model for the expression of genuine & tender friendship. Urvasie is doubtless not so noble & strong a portraiture as Shacountala, but she is inferior to no heroine of Sanscrit drama in beauty & sweetness of womanly nature.

In dramatic tone and build therefore this is an admirable creation, but there is so far no hint of the worldwide divineness of Urvasie, of the goddess within the woman. In direct allegory Kalidasa was too skilful an artist to deal, but we expect the larger conception of this beautiful and significant figure to enter into or at least colour the dramatic conception of the woman; some pomp of words, some greatness of gesture, some large divinity whether of speech or look to raise her above a mere nymph, however charming, into the goddess we know. Yet in rigidly excluding the grandiose or the coloured Kalidasa has shown, I think, his usual unerring dramatic and psychological tact. Dramatically, to have made Pururavus & Urvasie equally romantic in spirit & diction, to have clothed both in the external purple of poetry, would have been to offend the eye with unrelieved gorgeousness and converted the play from an interesting & skilfully woven drama into a confused splendour of lyrical dialogue. Psychologically, the divinity and universal charm of Urvasie would have been defaced rather than brought out by investing her with grandeur of feeling or a pomp of poetic

ornament. Perfect beauty has in it a double aspect, its intrinsic self and the impression it makes on the vivid & receptive mind. In itself it is simple, unconscious & unadorned, most effective when it is most naked, ceasing to be these, it loses its perfection and a great part of its universal charm. The nude human figure in painting and sculpture, unadorned magic or strength of style & conception in poetry, clear, luminous & comprehensive thought in philosophy, these are what the pursuing human spirit feels to be ideal, highest, most worthy of itself. Drapery blurs the effulgence of the goddess, ornament distracts the spirit and disappoints it of its engrossed and undisturbed sense of possession. On the other hand the mind while most moved by what is simple and natural in its appeal, is romantic in its method of receiving the impression; becoming engrossed and steeped with the idea of it, it directs to it and surrounds it with all the fresh impressions that continually flow in on the consciousness, gathers from it colour, fire & passion, creates around it a host of splendid associations and clothes it in the pomp of its own passionate imagery. The first period of a literary race when its mind is yet virgin & has to create beauty is invariably simple and classical, the last period when its mind is saturated and full of past beauty is always romantic and aesthetic. The relations of Urvashī & Pururavus are true to this psychological principle. She herself is mere beauty and charm sufficient to itself and commanding delight and worship because she is herself, not because of any graces of expression, imagination or intellectual profundity. But the mind of Pururavus receiving her pure and perfect image steeps her in its own fire and colour, surrounding her with a halo of pomp and glory, which reveals himself while seeking to interpret her.

#### Minor Characters

Nothing more certainly distinguishes the dramatic artist from the poet who has trespassed into drama than the careful pain he devotes to his minor characters. To the artist nothing is small; he bestows as much of his art within the narrow limit of his small

characters as within the wide compass of his greatest. Shakespeare lavishes life upon his minor characters, but in Shakespeare it is the result of an abounding creative energy; he makes living men, as God made the world, because he could not help it, because it was in his nature and must out. But Kalidasa's dramatic gift, always suave and keen, had not this godlike abundance; it is therefore well to note the persistence of this feature of high art in all his dramas. In the *Urvasie* the noble figure of Queen Aushinaria is the most striking evidence of his fine artistry, but even slight sketches like the *Opsaras* are seen upon close attention to be portrayed with a subtle & discriminating design; thought has been bestowed on each word they speak, an observable delicacy of various touch shows itself in each tone & gesture they employ. A number of shining figures crowded into a corner of the canvas, like in meaning, like in situation, like in nature, they seem to offer the very narrowest scope for differentiation; yet every face varies just a little from its sister, the diction of each tongue has its revealing individuality. The timid, warmhearted Rumbha, easily despondent, full of quick outbursts of eagerness and tenderness is other than the statelier Menaca with her royal gift of speech and her high confidence. Sahajunya is of an intenser, more silent, less imaginative, more practical type than either of these. It is she who gives Pururavus the information of the road which the ravisher has taken, and from that point onward amid all the anxious and tender chatter of her sisters she is silent until she has the practical fact of Pururavus' reappearance to seize upon. This she is again the first to descry and announce. Her utterance is brief, of great point & substance. From the few words she has uttered we unconsciously receive a deep impression of helpfulness, earnestness and strength; we know her voice and are ready [to] recognise it again in the Fourth Act. Her attitude there is characteristic; since help she cannot, she will not waste time over vain lamentation; Fate has divided the lovers, Fate will unite them again; so with a cheerful & noble word of consolation she turns to the immediate work in hand.

Chitraleqha, more fortunate than the other *Opsaras* in obtaining through three acts a large canvas as the favourite and

comrade of Urvasie, suffers dramatically from her good fortune, for she must necessarily appear a little indistinct so near to the superior light of her companion. Indeed dramatic necessity demands subdued tones in her portraiture lest she should deflect attention from Urvasie where it is her task to attract it to her; she must be always the cloud's dim legion that prepares us to watch for the lightning. Richness of colour & prominence of line are therefore not permissible; yet in spite of these hampering conditions the poet has made her a sufficiently definite personality. Indeed her indulgent affection, her playful kindness, her little outbreaks of loving impatience or sage advice,—the neglect of which she takes in excellent part—her continual smiling surrender to Urvasie's petulance & wilfulness and her whole half matron-like air of elder-sisterly protection, give her a very sensible charm and attractiveness; there is a true nymphlike & divine grace, tact & felicity in all that she says & does. Outside the group of Opsaras the Hermitess Satyavatie is a slighter but equally attractive figure, venerable, kind, a little impersonal owing to the self-restraint which is her vocation, but with glimpses through it of a fine motherliness and friendliness. The perpetual grace of humanness, which is so eminently Kalidasian, forming the atmosphere of all his plays, seems to deepen with a peculiar beauty around his ascetics, Kunwa, Satyavatie, the learned & unfortunate lady of the Malavica. The "little rogue of a tiring-woman" Nipounica, sly & smoothtongued, though with no real harm in her beyond a delight in her own slyness and a fine sense of exhilaration in the midst of a family row, pleasantly brings up the rear of these slighter feminine personalities. The masculine sketches are drawn in more unobtrusive outlines and, after Kalidasa's manner, less individualized than his women. The Charioteer & the Huntsmen are indeed hardly distinct figures; they have but a few lines to utter between them and are only remarkable for the shadow of the purple which continual association with Pururavus has cast over their manner of speech. The Chamberlain again, fine as he is in his staid melancholy, his aged fidelity, his worn-out and decrepit venerableness and that continual suggestion of the sorrowfulness of grey hairs, is still

mainly the fine Kalidasian version of a conventional dramatic figure. The one touch that gives him a personal humanity is the sad resignation of his “It is your will, Sire” when Pururavus, about to depart to asceticism in the forests, commands the investiture of his son. For it is the last & crowning misfortune that the weary old man must bear; the master over whose youth & greatness he has watched, for whose sake he serves in his old age, with the events of whose reign all the memories of his life are bound up, is about to depart and a youthful stranger will sit in his place. With that change all meaning must go out of the old man’s existence; but with a pathetic fidelity of resignation he goes out to do his master’s last bidding uttering his daily formula, — how changed in its newly acquired pathos from the old pompous formality “It is your will, Sire.” Manavaca & Ayus need a larger mention, yet they are less interesting in themselves than for their place, one in the history of Kalidasa’s artistic development, the other among the finest evidences of his delicacy in portraiture & the scrupulous economy, almost miserliness, with which he extracts its utmost artistic utility, possibility, value from each detail of his drama.

The age of childhood, its charm and sportive grace and candour, seems to have had a peculiar charm for Kalidasa’s imagination; there is an exquisite light and freshness of morning and dew about his children; an added felicity of touch, of easy and radiant truth in his dramatic presentation. Vasuluxmie in the Malavica does not even appear on the stage, yet in that urbane & gracious work there is nothing more charming than her two fateful irruptions into the action of the play. They bring up a picture of the laughing, lighthearted and innocent child, which remains with us as vividly as the most carefully-drawn character in the piece. The scene of the child playing with the lion’s cub in the Shacountala has the same inevitable charm; ninety-one poets out of a hundred would have hopelessly bungled it, but in Kalidasa’s hands it becomes so admirably lifelike and spontaneous that it seems as natural as if the child were playing with a kitten. Kalidasa’s marvellous modesty of dramatic effect and power

of reproducing ordinary hardly observable speech, gesture and action magicalising but not falsifying them saves him from that embarrassment which most poets feel in dealing dramatically with children. Even Shakespeare disappoints us. This great poet with his rich & complex mind usually finds it difficult to attune himself again to the simplicity, irresponsibility & naive charm of childhood.

Arthur, whom the Shakespeare-worshipper would have us regard as a masterpiece, is no real child; he is too *voulu*, too eloquent, too much dressed up for pathos and too conscious of the fine sentimental pose he strikes. Children do pose & children do sentimentalise, but they are perfectly naive and unconscious about it; they pose with sincerity, they sentimentalise with a sort of passionate simplicity, indeed an earnest businesslikeness which is so sincere that it does not even require an audience. The greatest minds have their limitations and Shakespeare's overabounding wit shut him out from two Paradises, the mind of a child and the heart of a mother. Constance, the pathetic mother, is a fitting pendant to Arthur, the pathetic child, as insincere and falsely drawn a portraiture, as obviously dressed up for the part. Indeed throughout the meagre and mostly unsympathetic list of mothers in Shakespeare's otherwise various & splendid gallery there is not even one in whose speech there is the throbbing of a mother's heart; the sacred beauty of maternity is touched upon in a phrase or two; but from Shakespeare we expect something more, some perfect & passionate enshrining of the most engrossing & selfless of human affections. And to this there is not even an approach. In this one respect the Indian poet, perhaps from the superior depth and keenness of the domestic feelings peculiar to his nation, has outstripped his greater English compeer.

Kalidasa like Shakespeare seems to have realised the paternal instinct of tenderness far more strongly than the maternal; his works both dramatic and epic give us many powerful & emotional expressions of the love of father & child to which there are few corresponding outbursts of maternal feeling. Valmekie's Cowshalya has no parallel in Kalidasa. Yet he expresses the true

sentiment of motherhood with sweetness & truth if not with passion.

Ayus & Urvasie in this play were certainly not intended for the dramatic picture of mother & child; this mother has abandoned her child to the care of strangers; this child is new to the faces of his parents. Such a situation might easily have been made harsh and unsympathetic but for the fine dramatic tact of the poet which has purified it from everything that might repel and smoothed away all the angles of the incident. But here the circumstances excuse if not justify Urvasie. Acting under hard conditions, she has chosen the lesser of two evils; for by keeping Ayus, she would have lost both her child and Pururavus; by delivering him into wise and tender hands she has insured his welfare & for her part only anticipated the long parting which the rule of education in ancient India demanded from parents as their sacrifice to the social ideal. Knowing that the child was in good hands she solaces herself with the love of her husband, but it is not from maternal insensibility that she bears quietly the starvation of the mother within her. When he returns to her, there is a wonderful subdued intensity characteristic of her simple & fine nature in the force with which that suppressed passion awakes to life. She approaches her son, wordless, but her veiled bosom heaves towards him and is “wet with sacred milk”; in her joy over him she forgets even that impending separation from the husband to avert which she has sacrificed the embrace of his infancy. It is this circumstance, not any words, that testifies to the depth of her maternal feeling; her character forbids her to express it in splendours of poetic emotion such as well spontaneously from the heart of Pururavus. A look, a few ordinary words are all; if it were not for these & the observation of others, we should have to live with her daily before we could realise the depth of feeling behind her silence.

Ayus himself is an admirable bit of dramatic craftsmanship. There is a certain critical age when the growing boy is a child on one side of his nature and a young man on the other, and of all psychological states such periods of transitional unstable

equilibrium are the most difficult to render dramatically without making the character either a confused blur or an illjoined piece of carpenter's work. Here Kalidasa excels. He has the ready tact of speech gradations, the power of simple & telling slightrness that can alone meet the difficulty. By an unlaboured and inevitable device the necessary materials are provided. The boy comes straight from the wild green & ascetic forest into the luxurious splendours of an Oriental court and the presence of a father and mother whom he has never seen; a more trying situation could not easily be imagined; he inevitably becomes self-conscious, embarrassed, burdened with the necessity of maintaining himself against the oppressions of his surroundings. He attempts therefore to disguise his youthful nervousness behind the usual shield of an overdone & formal dignity, a half unconscious pompousness and an air of playing the man. We are even aware of a slight touch of precocity not unbecoming in one who has been put through the "complete education of a prince" by the mightiest scholar and sage of his time. Confronted with all these new faces making claims upon him to which his past consciousness is an alien, the whole adult side of his nature turns uppermost. But fortunately for our comprehension of his true state of mind, something of the green forest which is his home has come with him in the person of his fostermother, Satyavatie. With her he feels as a child may feel with his mother. When he turns to her or speaks to her, he is again and instinctively in manner, utterance and action the child who ran by her side clutching the skirts of her dress in the free woodland. He speaks like a child, thinks like a child, acts docilely at her bidding like a child. Nothing could be more finely artistic in execution or more charmingly faithful to nature in its conception.

Manavaca on the other hand is an element of weakness rather than of strength. I have already spoken of the progressive attenuation of the traditional buffoon part which keeps pace with Kalidasa's dramatic development. Gautama in the *Malavica* is a complete and living personality who has much to say to the action of the plot; witty, mischievous, mendacious & irresponsible



he adds to the interest of the play even independently of this functional importance. But in the Urvasie to have made the main action of the plot turn in any way on the buffoon would have been incongruous with the high romantic beauty of the drama and therefore a serious dramatic error. The function of Manavaca is accordingly reduced to that of an interlocutor; he is there because Pururavus must have somebody to confide in & talk with, otherwise his only dramatic purpose is to give rise by his carelessness to the episode of Aushinarie's jealousy & self-subdual. Nevertheless his presence affects the composite tone of the picture. He is other than the buffoons of the Malavica & Shacountala, far more coarse in the grain, far less talented & highspirited than Gautama, yet not a mere stupid block like [Mandhavya]. He has along with the stock characteristics of gluttony, ugliness & cowardice, an occasional coarse humour, infertile & broad, and even a real gift of commonsense and rather cynical practicality, to say nothing of that shadow of the purple flung across the speech of all those who associate habitually with Pururavus; he is at the same time low in mind, unable to understand characters higher than his own. His best virtue is perhaps his absence of all pretensions & readiness to make a gibe of himself. Such a figure necessarily tends to set off by its drab colour & squat dimensions the lyric idealism of Pururavus, the radiant charm of Urvasie & the pale loftiness of the Queen. But it is by his place in the picture and not by what he is in himself that he justifies his existence. He does not attract or interest, indeed he at times only just escapes being tiresome. At the same time he lives.

Among all these minor figures who group themselves around the two protagonists and are of purely accessory interest there is one who stands out and compels the eye both by her nobler proportions and her independent personality. Queen Aushinarie has no real claim by any essentiality in her actions to the large space she occupies in the play; her jealousy does not retard and her renunciation sanctifies rather than assists the course of Pururavus' love for Urvasie. The whole episode in which she figures fits more loosely into the architecture of the piece than can be

exampled elsewhere in Kalidasa's dramatic workmanship. The interest of her personality justifies the insertion of the episode rather than the episode that justifies the not inconsiderable space devoted to her. The motif of her appearance is the same conventional element of wifely rivalry, the jealousy of the rose-in-bloom against the rose-in-bud that has formed the whole groundwork of the *Malavica*. There the groundwork, here its interest is brief and episodical. And yet none of the more elaborated figures in the earlier play, not even Dharinie herself, is as fine and deep a conception as the wife of Pururavus. Princess of Kashie and daughter of the Ushenors, acknowledged by her rival to deserve by right of her noble majesty of fairness "the style of Goddess and of Empress," we feel that she has a right to resent the preference to her even of an *Opsara* from heaven and the completeness of Pururavus' absorption in *Urvasie* gives a tragic significance to her loss which is not involved in the lighter loves & jealousies of *Videsha*. The character is more profoundly & boldly conceived. The passion of her love strikes deeper than the mere heyday of youth and beauty and the senses in *Iravatie* as the noble sadness of her self-renunciation moves more powerfully than the kind & gentle wifeliness of Queen Dharinie. And in the manner of her delineation there is more incisiveness and restraint with a nobler economy of touch. The rush of her jealousy comes with less of a storm than *Iravatie's* but it has a fierier & keener edge and it is felt to be the disguise of a deep and mighty love. The passion of that love leaps out in the bitter irony of her self-accusal

Not yours the guilt, my lord. I am in fault  
 Who force my hated and unwelcome face  
 Upon you.

and again when in the very height of her legitimate resentment she has the sure consciousness of her after-repentance.

And yet the terror  
 Of the remorse I know that I shall feel  
 If I spurn his kindness, frightens me.

Anger for the time sweeps her away, but we are prepared for her

repentance and sacrifice in the next act. Even in her anger she has been imperially strong & restrained and much of the poetic force of her renunciation comes from the perfect sweetness, dignity & self-control with which she acts in that scene. The emotion of self-sacrificing love breaks out only once at the half sneering reproach of the buffoon

Dull fool!

I with the death of my own happiness  
Would give my husband ease. From this consider  
How dearly I love him.

Putting gently but sorrowfully away from her the King's half-sincere protestations of abiding love, she goes out of the drama, a pure, devoted & noble nature, clad in gracious white "and sylvanly adorned with flowers, her raven tresses spangled with young green Of sacred grass"; but the fragrance of her flowers of sacrifice and the mild beauty of the moonlight remain behind her. She does not reappear unless it is in the haste of Urvasie to bring her recovered child to his "elder mother". This haste with its implied fulness of gratitude & affection is one of Kalidasa's careful side touches telling us better than words that in spirit & letter she has fulfilled utterly the vow she made on the moonlit terrace under seal of

The divine wife & husband, Rohinnie  
And Mrigolanchon named the spotted moon.

The deepening of moral perception, the increase in power & pathos, the greater largeness of drawing and finer emotional strength and restraint show the advance Kalidasa has made in dramatic characterisation. Grace, sweetness, truth to life and character, perfect & delicate workmanship, all that reveals the presence of the artist were his before; but the Urvasie reveals a riper & larger genius widening its scope, raising mightier vans before yet it take its last high and surpassing flight.

## The Spirit of the Times

The life & personality of Kalidasa, the epoch in which he lived and wrote, the development of his poetical genius as evidenced by the order of his works, are all lost in a thick cloud of uncertainty and oblivion. It was once thought an established fact that he lived & wrote in the 6<sup>th</sup> century at the court of Harsha Vikramaditya, the Conqueror of the Scythians. That position is now much assailed, and some would place him in the third or fourth century; others see ground to follow popular tradition in making him a contemporary of Virgil, if not of Lucretius.

The exact date matters little. It is enough that we find in Kalidasa's poetry the richest bloom and perfect expression of the long classical afternoon of Indian civilisation. The soul of an age is mirrored in this single mind. It was an age when the Indian world after seeking God through the spirit and through action turned to seek Him through the activity of the senses, an age therefore of infinite life, colour and splendour, an age of brilliant painting and architecture, wide learning, complex culture, developing sciences; an age of great empires and luxurious courts and cities; an age, above all, in which the physical beauty and grace of woman dominated the minds and imaginations of men.

The spirit of the times pulses through all Kalidasa's poetry. His pages are often ablaze with its light & colour, often pregnant, sometimes indeed overweighted with its rich and manifold learning, its keen pleasure in every phase and aspect of life fills them with a various vividness and infinite richness of matter. Language & verse thrill with the rustling of woman's raiment, the heavy scent of her cosmetics, the tinkling and lustre of her ornaments; they are sinuous with the swaying grace of her motion or subtle with the delicate charm of her ways and words; the beauty & pleasure of her body possesses & besieges the poet's

imagination. And behind the luxurious ease and sensuousness of court life we hear the clash of arms and glimpse the great & energetic motions of statesmanship and diplomacy. The variety of his genius specially fits Kalidasa for the interpretation of a rich & complex national life. From pages heavy with the obsession of the senses, the delight of the eye and the lust of the flesh we turn to others sweet and gracious with the virgin purity of the woodlands; the same poem which gives us a glowing picture of the luxurious voluptuousness of courts gives us also the sternest philosophy and the most vigorous expression of the noble, aspiring morality proper to an active and heroic age. His wonderful visualising power turns whole cantos into a series of almost physically vivid pictures. All his senses are on the alert, his ear for music and the sweetness of words and laughter, thunder, the cries of birds; his sense of smell for the scent of flowers, incense, the perfumes in women's attire, his sense of touch for every tactual pleasure, his mind for all subtlety of knowledge and all possible delicacies, richnesses, grandeurs in the world of thought. He will miss nothing; lose no joy of sense or intellect, throw away no chance of feeling himself alive.

And he has the touch of the perfect artist, turning all he handles to gold. Among his achievements we number the most exquisite, tender and delicately lovely of romantic dramas; the most varied and splendid panorama of human life; the noblest & most grandiose epic of our classical literature; and its one matchless poem of passionate love and descriptive beauty.

In Europe the *Shacountala* is the one poem of Kalidasa universally known and appreciated. In India the *Cloud* has gone even nearer home to the national imagination. For this there is good reason. It is, essentially and above all, the poem of India, the poem of the country, its soil and its scenes, its thoughts & its atmosphere. No one who has not lived the life of India, till it has become part of his breathing and woven in with every thread of his imagination, can fully appreciate the poem. If one does not know the charm of its hills, the scent of its flowers, the beauty of its skies, [the] flowing sacredness of its rivers with all the phases & emotions of an Indian river's life, if one cannot distinguish

& thrill to the touch of its various winds, if one cannot clothe its local places with ancient historic & mythical association or people them with the strange host of beautiful & weird figures & faces which the imagination of its people has created, if one does not recreate for himself the ancient splendours of its cities, the sense of peace & infinity in its temples & hermitages and the simple sweetness of its rural life, for him the Meghaduta offers only its shell. But all these, everything that is redolent of India, the visible, material, sensuous India has been fused and poured into one perfect mould by the genius of this supreme artist.

And then as if more utterly to ensnare the imagination of his race, after showing them the beautiful scenes, sights, sounds, scents, the sacred & cherished places, the historic cities of their country as they are — or alas as they were — he lifts these cherished things into a magic world, bathes them in an immortal beauty. Ullaca, the city without death, is but Kalidasa's beloved Ujjaini taken up into the clouds & transformed into a seat of ideal bliss & loveliness. In the same moment he strikes straight home at one of the most deepseated feelings in human nature, its repining at the shortness of life & the more tragic shortness of youth, and imaginative dream of an eternal beauty, youth & joy. These he satisfies and turns from a source of unrest into a new source of pleasure & joy, showing himself the great poet as well as the delicate artist.

The human interest which gives the breath of life to the poem, is exquisitely treated. A faery attendant of Cuvere, God of Wealth, banished for a year from his home & wife sends his imagination travelling on the wings of the northward-bound cloud over the sacred places, the great cities & rivers of India to the snowbound Himaloy and the homes of the Gods. There his mind sees his wife, breathes to her all its sorrow & longing and prays for an answering message. The love described may not be on the highest altitudes, but it is utterly real & human, full of enduring warmth, tenderness & passion, of strife & joy, tears & kisses, the daily food of love.

## On Translating Kalidasa

Since the different tribes of the human Babel began to study each other's literatures, the problem of poetical translation has constantly defied the earnest experimenter. There have been brilliant versions, successful falsifications, honest renderings, but some few lyrics apart a successful translation there has not been. Yet it cannot be that a form of effort so earnestly & persistently pursued and so necessary to the perfection of culture and advance of civilisation, is the vain pursuit of a chimera. Nothing which mankind earnestly attempts is impossible, not even the conversion of copper into gold or the discovery of the elixir of life or the power of aerial motion; but so long as experiment proceeds on mistaken lines, based on a mistaken conception of the very elements of the problem, it must necessarily fail. Man may go on fashioning wings for himself for ever but they will never lift him into the empyrean: the essence of the problem is to conquer the attraction of the earth which cannot be done by any material means. Poetical translation was long dominated by the superstition that the visible word is the chief factor in language and the unit which must be seized on as a basis in rendering; the result is seen in so-called translations which reproduce the sense of the original faultlessly & yet put us into an atmosphere which we at once recognize to be quite alien to the atmosphere of the original; we say then that the rendering is a faithful one or a success of esteem or a makeshift or a caput mortuum according to the nature of our predilections and the measure of our urbanity. The nineteenth century has been the first to recognize generally that there is a spirit behind the word & dominating the word which eludes the "faithful" translator and that it is more important to get at the spirit of a poet than his exact sense. But after its manner it has contented itself with the generalisation and not attempted to discover the lines on which the generalisation must

be crystallised into practice, its extent & its limitations. Every translator has been a law to himself; and the result is anarchic confusion. As the sole tangible benefit there has been discovered a new art not yet perfected of translation into prose poetry. Such translation has many advantages; it allows the translator to avail himself of manifold delicacies of rhythm without undergoing the labour of verse formation and to compromise with the orthodox superstition by rendering the word unit yet with some show of preserving the original flavour. But even in the best of these translations it is little more than a beautiful show. Poetry can only be translated by poetry and verse forms by verse forms. It remains to approach the task of translation in a less haphazard spirit, to realise our essential aim, to define exactly what elements in poetry demand rendering, how far & by what law of equivalent values each may be rendered and if all cannot be reproduced, which of them may in each particular case be sacrificed without injuring the essential worth of the translation. Most of the translations of Kalidasa here offered to the public have been written after the translator had arrived at such a definite account with himself and in conscientious conformity to its results. Others done while he yet saw his goal no more than dimly and was blindly working his way to the final solution, may not be so satisfactory. I do not pretend that I have myself arrived at the right method; but I am certain that reasoned & thoughtful attempts of this sort can alone lead to it. Now that nations are turning away from the study of the great classical languages to physical & practical science and resorting even to modern languages, if for literature at all then for contemporary literature, it is imperative that the ennobling influences spiritual, romantic & imaginative of the old tongues should be popularised in modern speech; otherwise the modern world, vain of its fancied superiority & limiting itself more & more to its own type of ideas with no opportunity of saving immersions in the past & recreative destructions of the present, will soon petrify & perish in the mould of a rigid realism & materialism. Among their influences the beauty & power of their secular & religious poetry is perhaps the most potent & formative.



The choice of meter is the first & most pregnant question that meets a translator. With the growth of Alexandrianism and the diffusion of undigested learning, more & more frequent attempts are being made to reproduce in poetical versions the formal metre of the original. Such attempts rest on a fundamental misconception of the bases of poetry. In poetry as in all other phenomena it is spirit that is at work and form is merely the outward expression & instrument of the spirit. So far is this true that form itself only exists as a manifestation of spirit and has no independent being. When we speak of the Homeric hexameter, we are speaking of a certain balance [of] spiritual force called by us Homer working through emotion into the material shape of a fixed mould of rhythmical sound which obeys both in its limiting sameness & in its variations the law of the spirit within.

The mere quantities are but the most mechanical & outward part of metre. A fanciful mind might draw a parallel between the elements of man & the elements of metre. Just as in man there is the outward food-plasm and within it the vital or sensational man conditioned by & conditioning the food-plasm & within the vital man the emotional or impressional man similarly related and again within that the intellectual man governing the others and again within that the delight of the spirit in its reasoning existence & within that delight like the moon within its halo the Spirit who is Lord of all these, the sitter in the chariot & the master of its driving, so in metre there is the quantitative or accentual arrangement which is its body, & within that body conditioning & conditioned by it the arrangement of pauses & sounds, such as assonance, alliteration, composition of related & varying letters, and again within it conditioning & conditioned by this sensational element & through it the mechanical element is the pure emotional movement of the verse and again within these understanding and guiding all three, bringing the element of restraint, management, subordination to a superior law of harmony, is the intellectual element, the driver of the chariot of sound; within this again is the poetic delight in the creation of

harmonious sound, the august & disinterested pleasure of the really great poet which has nothing in it of frenzy or rather has the exultation & increased strength of frenzy without its loss of self-control; and within this even is the spirit, that unanalysable thing behind metre, style & diction which makes us feel “This is Homer, this is Shakespeare, this is Dante.”

[All these are essential before really great verse can be produced; everyone knows that verse may scan well enough & yet be very poor verse; there may beyond this be skilful placings of pause & combinations of sound as in Tennyson’s blank verse, but the result is merely artificially elegant & skilful technique; if emotion movement is super-added, the result is melody, lyric sweetness or elegiac grace or flowing & sensuous beauty, as in Shelley, Keats, Gray, but the poet is not yet a master of great harmonies; for this intellect is necessary, a great mind seizing, manipulating & moulding all these by some higher law of harmony, the law of its own spirit. But such management is not possible without the august poetical delight of which I have spoken, and that again is but the outflow of the mighty spirit within, its sense of life & power & its pleasure in the use of that power with no ulterior motive beyond its own delight.]<sup>1</sup>

But just as the body of a man is also soul, has in each of its cells a separate portion of spirit, so it is with the mechanical form of a verse. The importance of metre arises from the fact that different arrangements of sound have different spiritual and emotional values, tend to produce that is to say by virtue of the fixed succession of sounds a fixed spiritual atmosphere & a given type of emotional exaltation & the mere creative power of sound though a material thing is yet near to spirit, is very great; great on the material & ascending in force through the moral & intellectual, culminating on the emotional plane. It is a factor of the first importance in music & poetry. In these different

<sup>1</sup> Paragraph bracketed in the manuscript. Written at the end of the piece, it was apparently intended for insertion here. — Ed.

arrangements of syllabic sound metre forms the most important, at least the most tangible element. Every poet who has sounded his own consciousness must be aware that management of metre is the gate of his inspiration and the law of his success. There is a double process, his state of mind and spirit suggesting its own syllabic measure, and the metre again confirming, prolonging and recreating the original state of mind and spirit. Inspiration itself seems hardly so much a matter of ideas or feeling as of rhythm. Even when the ideas or the feelings are active, they will not usually run into the right form, the words will not take their right places, the syllables will not fall into a natural harmony. But if one has or succeeds in awaking the right metrical mood, if the metrical form instead of being deliberately created, creates itself or *becomes*, a magical felicity of thought, diction & harmony attends it & seems even to be created by it. Ideas & words come rapidly & almost as rapidly take their right places as in a well ordered assembly where everyone knows his seat. When the metre comes right, everything else comes right; when the metre has to be created with effort, everything else has to be done with effort, and the result has to be worked on over & over again before it satisfies.

This supreme importance of the metrical form might seem at first sight to justify the transplanters of metre. For if it be the aim of good translation to reproduce not merely the mechanical meanings of words, the corresponding verbal counters used in the rough & ready business of interlingual commerce, but to create the same spiritual, emotional & aesthetic effect as the original, the first condition is obviously to identify our spiritual condition, as far as may be, with that of the poet at the time when he wrote & then to embody the emotion in verse. This cannot be done without finding a metre which shall have the same spiritual and emotional value as the metre of the original. Even when one has been found, there will naturally be no success unless the mind of the translator has sufficient kinship, sufficient points of spiritual & emotional contact and a sufficient basis of common poetical powers not only to enter into but to render the spiritual temperament & the mood of that temperament,

of which his text was the expression; hence a good poetical translation is the rarest thing in the world. Conversely even if all these requisites exist, they will not succeed to the full without the discovery of the right metre. Is the right metre then the metre of the original? Must an adequate version of Homer, a real *translation*, be couched in the hexameter? At first sight it would seem so. But the issue is here complicated by the hard fact that the same arrangement of quantities or of accents has very seldom the same spiritual & emotional value in two different languages. The hexameter in English, however skilfully managed, has not the same value as the Homeric, the English alexandrine does not render the French; terza rima in Latinised Saxon sounds entirely different from the noble movement of the Divina Commedia, the stiff German blank verse of Goethe & Schiller is not the golden Shakespearian harmony. It is not only that there are mechanical differences, a strongly accentuated language hopelessly varying from those which distribute accent evenly, or a language of ultimate accent like French from one of penultimate accent like Italian or initial accent like English, or one which courts elision from one which shuns it, a million grammatical & syllabic details besides, lead to fundamental differences of sound-notation. Beyond & beneath these outward differences is the essential soul of the language from which they arise, and which in its turn depends mainly upon the ethnological type always different in different countries because the mixture of different root races in two types even when they seem nearly related is never the same. The Swedish type for instance which is largely the same as the Norwegian is yet largely different, while the Danish generally classed in the same Scandinavian group differs radically from both. This is that curse of Babel, after all quite as much a blessing as a curse, which weighs upon no one so heavily as on the conscientious translator of poetry; for the prose translator being more concerned to render the precise idea than emotional effects and the subtle spiritual aura of poetry, treads an immeasurably smoother & more straightforward path. For some metres at least it seems impossible to find adequate equivalents in other languages. Why has there never been a real rendering of Homer

in English? It is not the whole truth to say that no modern can put himself back imaginatively into the half-savage Homeric period; a mind with a sufficient basis of primitive sympathies & sufficient power of imaginative self-control to subdue for a time the modern in him may conceivably be found. But the main, the insuperable obstacle is that no one has ever found or been able to create an English metre with the same spiritual & emotional equivalent as Homer's marvellous hexameters.

That transmetrisation is a false method, is therefore clear. The translator's only resource is to steep himself in the original, quelling that in him which conflicts with its spirit, and remain on the watch for the proper metrical mood in himself. Sometimes the right metre will come to him, sometimes it will not. In the latter case effort in this direction will not have been entirely wasted; for spirit, when one gives it a chance, is always stronger than matter & he will be able to impose something of the desired spiritual atmosphere even upon an unsuitable metrical form. But if he seize on the right metre, he has every chance, supposing him poetically empowered, of creating a translation which shall not only be classical, but shall be *the* translation. Wilful choice of metre is always fatal. William Morris' Homeric translation failed hopelessly partly because of his affected "Anglosaxon" diction, but still more because he chose to apply a metre good enough possibly for the Volsungasaga to the rendering of a far more mighty & complex spirit. On the other hand Fitzgerald might have produced a very beautiful version in English had he chosen for his Rubaiyat some ordinary English metre, but his unique success was his reward for discovering the true equivalent of the quatrain in English. One need only imagine to oneself the difference if Fitzgerald had chosen the ordinary English quatrain instead of the rhyme system of his original. His Rubaiyat in spite of the serious defect of unfaithfulness will remain the final version of Omar in English, not to be superseded by more faithful renderings, excluding therefore the contingency of a superior poetical genius employing the same metre for a fuller & closer translation.

In Kalidasa another very serious difficulty over & beyond

the usual pitfalls meets the unhappy translator. Few great Sanscrit poems employ the same metre throughout. In the dramas where metrical form is only used when the thought, image or emotion rises above the ordinary level, the poet employs whatever metre he thinks suitable to the mood he is in. In English however such a method would result in opera rather than in drama. I have therefore thought it best, taking into consideration the poetical feeling & harmonious flow of Kalidasa's prose, to use blank verse throughout varying its pitch according as the original form is metrical or prose & the emotion or imagery more or less exalted. In epic work the licence of metrical variation is not quite so great; yet there are several metres considered apt to epic narrative & Kalidasa varies them without scruple in different cantos, sometimes even in the same canto. If blank verse be, as I believe it is, a fair equivalent for the anustubh, the ordinary epic metre, how shall one find others which shall correspond as well to the "Indra's thunderbolt sloka", the "lesser Indra's thunderbolt sloka", the "gambolling of the tiger sloka" and all those other wonderful & grandiose rhythmic structures with fascinating names of which Kalidasa is so mighty a master? Nor would such variation be tolerated by English canons of taste. In the epic & drama the translator is driven to a compromise and therefore to that extent a failure; he may infuse good poems or plays reproducing the architecture & idea-sense of Kalidasa with something of his spirit; but it is a version & not a translation. It is only when he comes to the Cloud Messenger that he is free of this difficulty; for the Cloud Messenger is written throughout in a single & consistent stanza. This Mandakranta or "gently stepping" stanza is entirely quantitative and too complicated to be rendered into any corresponding accentual form. The arrangement of metrical divisions is as follows: spondee-long, dactyl, tribrach, two spondee-shorts, spondee; four lines of this build make up the stanza. Thus

śābdāyan|te madhu|ramani|lāiḥ kīca|kāḥ pūrya|mānāḥ|  
 samsaktā|bhis tripu|raviḥ|yo gīya|te kinna|rībhīḥ,|

nirhrādas|te mura|ja iva|cet kanda|reṣu dhva|niḥ syāt|  
 saṅgītār|tho nanu|paśūpa|tes tatra|bhāvi sa|māgrah|. |

In casting about for a metre I was only certain of one thing that neither blank verse nor the royal quatrain would serve my purpose; the one has not the necessary basis of recurring harmonies; in the other the recurrence is too rigid, sharply defined & unvarying to represent the eternal swell and surge of Kalidasa's stanza. Fortunately by an inspiration, & without deliberate choice, Kalidasa's lines as I began turning them flowed or slipped into the form of triple rhyme and that necessarily suggested the terza rima. This metre, as I have treated it, seems to me to reproduce with as much accuracy as the difference between the languages allows, the spiritual & emotional atmosphere of the Cloud Messenger. The terza rima in English lends itself naturally to the principle of variation in recurrence, which imparts so singular a charm to this poem, recurrence in especial of certain words, images, assonances, harmonies, but recurrence always with a difference so as to keep one note sounding through the whole performance underneath its various harmony. In terza rima the triple rhyme immensely helps this effect, for it allows of the same common rhymes recurring but usually with a difference in one or more of their company.

It is a common opinion that terza rima does not suit the English language and cannot therefore be naturalised, that it must always remain an exotic. This seems to me a fallacy. Any metre capable of accentual representation in harmony with the accentual law of the English language, can be naturalised in English. If it has not yet been done, we must attribute it to some initial error of conception. Byron & Shelley failed because they wanted to create the same effect with this instrument as Dante had done; but terza rima in English can never have the same effect as in Italian. In the one it is a metre of woven harmonies suitable to noble & intellectual narrative; in the other it can only be a metre of woven melodies suitable to beautiful description or elegiac sweetness. To occasional magnificences or sublimities it lends itself admirably, but I should doubt whether it could even

in the strongest hands sustain the burden of a long & noble epic of the soul & mind like the Divina Commedia. But it is not true that it cannot be made in English a perfectly natural, effective & musical form. It is certainly surprising that Shelley with his instinct for melody, did not perceive the conditions of the problem. His lyric metres & within certain limitations his blank verse are always fine, so fine that if the matter & manner were equal to the melody, he would have been one of the few great poets instead of one of the many who have just missed being great. But his *Triumph of Life* is a metrical failure. We feel that the poet is aiming at a metrical effect which he has not accomplished.

The second question, but a far simpler one, is the use of rhyme. It may be objected that as in the Sanscrit there is no rhyme, the introduction of this element into the English version would disturb the closeness of the spiritual equivalent by the intrusion of a foreign ornament. But this is to argue from a quantitative to an accentual language, which is always a mistake. There are certain effects easily created within the rich quantitative variety of ancient languages, of which an equivalent in English can only be found by the aid of rhyme. No competent critic would declare Tennyson's absurd experiment in *Boadicea* an equivalent to the rushing, stumbling & leaping metre of the *Attis* with its singular & rare effects. A proper equivalent would only be found in some rhymed system and preferably I should fancy in some system of unusually related but intricate & closely recurring rhymes. Swinburne might have done it; for Swinburne's work, though with few exceptions poor work as poetry, is a marvellous repertory of successful metrical experiments. I have already indicated the appropriateness of the triple rhyme system of the *terza rima* to the *Cloud Messenger*. English is certainly not a language of easy rhyming like the southern tongues of Europe; but given in the poet a copious command of words and a natural swing and felicity, *laeta* rather than *curiosa*, it is amply enough provided for any ordinary call upon its resources. There are however two critical superstitions which seriously interfere with the naturalness & ease rhymed poetry



demands, the superstition of the perfect rhyme and the superstition of the original rhyme. It is no objection to a rhyme that it is imperfect. There is nothing occult or cryptic in rhyme, no divine law compelling us to assimilate two rhymed endings to the very letter such as the law of the Védic chant by which a single letter mispronounced sterilizes the mantra. Rhyme is a convenience and an ornament intended to serve certain artistic purposes, to create certain sound-effects, and if the effect of a perfect rhyme is beautiful, melodious and satisfying, an imperfect rhyme has sometimes its own finer effect far more subtle, haunting and suggestive; by limiting the satisfaction of the ear, it sets a new chord vibrating in the soul. A poem with an excessive proportion of imperfect rhymes is unsatisfactory, because it would not satisfy the natural human craving for regularity & order; but the slavish use of perfect rhymes only would be still more inartistic because it would not satisfy the natural human craving for liberty & variety. In this respect and in a hundred others the disabilities of the English language have been its blessings; the artistic labour & the opportunity for calling a subtler harmony out of discord have given its best poetical literature a force & power quite out of proportion to the natural abilities of the race. There are of course limits to every departure from rigidity but the degree of imperfection admissible in a rhyme is very great so long as it does not evolve harshness or vulgarism. Mr<sup>s</sup> Browning's rhymes are bad in this respect, but why? Because "tyrants" & "silence" is no rhyme at all, while "candles" & "angels" involves a hideous vulgarism; and in less glaring instances the law of double rhymes generally requiring closer correspondence than single is totally disregarded. The right use of imperfect rhymes is not to be forbidden because of occasional abuse. It is also no objection to a rhyme that it is "hackneyed". A hackneyed thought, a hackneyed phrase there may be, but a hackneyed rhyme seems to me a contradiction in terms. Rhyme is no part of the intellectual warp & woof of a poem, but a pure ornament the only object of which is to assist the soul with beauty; it appeals to the soul not through the intellect or imagination but through the ear. Now the oldest & most often used rhymes are generally the most

beautiful and we ought not to sacrifice that beauty merely out of an unreasoning impatience of what is old. Common rhymes have a wonderful charm of their own and come to us laden with a thousand beautiful associations. The pursuit of mere originality can only lead us to such unpardonable extravagances as “haunches stir” & “Manchester”. Such rhymes any poet can multiply who chooses to prostitute his genius to the amusement of the gallery, or is sufficiently unpoetic to prefer the freedom of barbarous uncouthness to that self-denial which is the secret of grace & beauty. On the other hand if we pursue originality & beauty together, we end in preciosity or an artificial grace, and what are these but the spirit of Poetry lifting her wings to abandon that land and that literature for a long season or sometimes for ever? Unusual & peculiar rhymes demand to be sparingly used & always for the definite object of setting in relief common rhymes rather than for the sake of their own strangeness.

The question of metre and rhymes being satisfactorily settled there comes the crucial question of fidelity, on which every translator has to make his own choice at his own peril. On one side is the danger of sacrificing the spirit to the letter, on the other the charge of writing a paraphrase or a poem of one’s own under the cloak of translation. Here as elsewhere it seems to me that rigid rules are out of place. What we have to keep in mind is not any rigid law, but the object with which we are translating. If we merely want to render, to acquaint foreign peoples with the ideas & subject matter of the writer, as literal a rendering as idiom will allow, will do our business. If we wish to give a poetical version, to clothe the general sense & spirit of the writer in our own words, paraphrase & unfaithfulness become permissible; the writer has not intended to translate and it is idle to criticise him with reference to an ideal he never entertained. But the ideal of a translation is something different from either of these. The translator seeks first to place the mind of the reader in the same spiritual atmosphere as the original; he seeks next to produce in him the same emotions & the same kind of poetical delight and aesthetic gratification, and lastly he seeks to convey to him the thought of the poet & substance in such words as will create,

as far as may be, the same or a similar train of associations, the same pictures or the same sensuous impressions. This is an ideal to which one can never do more than approximate; but the nearer one approximates to it, the better the translation. How it shall be done, depends upon the judgment, the sympathetic instinct of the poet, the extent to which he is imbued with the associations of both languages and can render not merely word by word but shade by shade, not only signification by signification, but suggestion by suggestion. There is one initial stumbling block which can never be quite got over; the mythology, fauna & flora of Indian literature are absolutely alien to Europe. (We are in a different world; this is no peaceful English world of field or garden & woodland with the cheerful song of the thrush or the redbreast, the nightingale warbling in the night by some small & quiet river, the lark soaring in the morning to the pale blue skies; no country of deep snows & light suns & homely toil without spiritual presences save the borrowed fancies of the Greeks or shadowy metaphysical imaginations of the poet's brain that haunt thought's aery wildernesses, no people homely [and] matter of fact, never rising far above earth or sinking far below it. We have instead a mother of gigantic rivers, huge sombre forests and mountains whose lower slopes climb above the clouds;<sup>2</sup> the roar of the wild beasts fills those forests & the cry of innumerable birds peoples those rivers; & in their midst lives a people who have soared into the highest heavens of the spirit, experienced the grandest & most illimitable thoughts possible to the intellect & sounded the utmost depths of sensuous indulgence; so fierce is the pulse of life that even trees & inanimate things seem to have life, emotions, a real & passionate history and over all move mighty presences of gods & spirits who are still real to the consciousness of the people.)

The life & surroundings in which Indian poetry moves cannot be rendered in the terms of English poetry. Yet to give up

<sup>2</sup> *An alternative version reads, after "forests":*  
under a burning sun or a magical moonlight;

the problem and content oneself with tumbling out the warm, throbbing Indian word to shiver & starve in the inclement atmosphere of the English language seems to me not only an act of literary inhumanity & a poorspirited confession of failure, but a piece of laziness likely to defeat its own object. An English reader can gather no picture from & associate no idea of beauty with these outlandish terms. What can he understand when he is told that the *atimukta* creeper is flowering in the grove of *késara* trees and the *mullica* or the [ ] is sending out its fragrance into the night and the *chocrovaque* is complaining to his mate amid the still ripples of the river that flows through the *jambous*? Or how does it help him to know that the scarlet mouth of a woman is like the red *bimba* fruit or the crimson *bandhoul* flower? People who know Sanscrit seem to imagine that because these words have colour & meaning & beauty to them, they must also convey the same associations to their reader. This is a natural but deplorable mistake; this jargon is merely a disfigurement in English poetry. The cultured may read their work in spite of the jargon out of the unlimited intellectual curiosity natural to culture; the half-cultured may read it because of the jargon out of the ingrained tendency of the half-cultured mind to delight in what is at once unintelligible & inartistic. But their work can neither be a thing of permanent beauty nor serve a really useful object; & work which is neither immortal nor useful what self-respecting man would knowingly go out of his way to do? Difficulties are after all given us in order that we may brace our sinews by surmounting them; the greater the difficulty, the greater our chance of the very highest success. I can only point out rather sketchily how I have myself thought it best to meet the difficulty; a detailed discussion would require a separate volume. In the first place a certain concession may be made but within very narrow & guarded limits to the need for local colour; a few names of trees, flowers, birds etc. may be transliterated into English, but only when they do not look hopelessly outlandish in that form or else have a liquid or haunting beauty of sound; a similar indulgence may be yet more freely permitted in the transliteration of mythological names. But here

the licence ends; a too liberal use of it would entirely destroy the ideal of translation; what is perfectly familiar in the original language must not seem entirely alien to the foreign audience; there must be a certain toning down of strangeness, an attempt to bring home the association to the foreign intelligence, to give at least some idea to a cultured but not Orientaly erudite mind. This may be done in many ways & I have availed myself of all. A word may be rendered by some neologism which will help to convey any prominent characteristic or idea associated with the thing it expresses; blossom o' ruby may, for instance, render bandhoula, a flower which is always mentioned for its redness. Or else the word itself may be dropped & the characteristic brought into prominence; for instance instead of saying that a woman is lipped like a ripe bimba, it is, I think, a fair translation to write "Her scarlet mouth is a ripe fruit & red." This device of expressly declaring the characteristics which the original only mentions, I have frequently employed in the Cloud Messenger, even when equivalent words exist in English, because many objects known in both countries are yet familiar & full of common associations to the Indian mind while to the English they are rare, exotic and slightly associated or only with one particular & often accidental characteristic.<sup>3</sup> A kindred method especially with mythological allusions is to explain fully what in the original is implicit; Kalidasa for instance compares a huge dark cloud striding northwards from Crouncharundhra to "the dark foot of Vishnu lifted in impetuous act to quell Bali", *śyāmaḥ pādo baliniyamanābhyudyatasyeva viṣṇoḥ*. This I have translated

<sup>3</sup> The following passage was written in the top margins of these pages of the manuscript. Its place of insertion was not indicated:

It is an unfortunate tendency of the English mind to seize on what seems to it grotesque or ungainly in an unfamiliar object; thus the elephant & peacock have become almost impossible in English poetry, because the one is associated with lumbering heaviness & the other with absurd strutting. The tendency of the Hindu mind on the other hand is to seize on what is pleasing & beautiful in all things & even to see a charm where the English mind sees a deformity & to extract poetry & grace out of the ugly. The classical instances are the immortal verses in which Valmekie by a storm of beautiful & costly images & epithets has immortalised the hump of Manthara & the still more immortal passage in which he has made the tail of a monkey epic.

“Dark like the cloudy foot of highest God  
 When starting from the dwarfshape world-immense  
 With Titan-quelling step through heaven he strode.”

It will be at once objected that this is not translation, but the most licentious paraphrase. This is not so if my original contention be granted that the business of poetical translation is to reproduce not the exact words but the exact image, associations & poetical beauty & flavour of the original. There is not a single word in the translation I have instanced which does not represent something at once suggested to the Indian reader by the words of the text. Vishnu is nothing to the English reader but some monstrous & bizarre Hindu idol; to the Hindu He is God Himself; the word is therefore more correctly represented in English by “highest God” than by Vishnu; *śyāmaḥ pādāḥ* is closely represented by “dark like the cloudy foot”, the word cloudy being necessary both to point the simile which is not so apparent & natural to the English reader as to the Indian and to define the precise sort of darkness indicated by the term *śyāmaḥ*; Bali has no meaning or association in English, but in the Sanscrit it represents the same idea as “Titan”; only the particular name recalls a certain theosophic legend which is a household word to the Hindu, that of the dwarf-Vishnu who obtained from the Titan Bali as much land as he could cover with three steps, then filling the whole world with himself with one stride measured the earth, with another the heavens and with the third placing his foot on the head of Bali thrust him down into bottomless Hell. All this immediately arises before the mental eye of the Hindu as he reads Kalidasa’s finely chosen words. The impetuous & vigorous term *abhyudyatasya* both in sound & sense suggests the sudden starting up of the world-pervading deity from the dwarf shape he had assumed while the comparison to the cloud reminds him that the second step of the three is referred to, that of Vishnu striding “through heaven.” But to the English reader the words of Kalidasa literally transliterated would be a mere artificial conceit devoid of the original sublimity. It is the inability to seize the associations & precise poetical force of Sanscrit words that

has led so many European Sanscritists to describe the poetry of Kalidasa which is hardly surpassed for truth, bold directness & native beauty & grandeur as the artificial poetry of an artificial period. A literal translation would only spread this erroneous impression to the general reader. It must be admitted that in the opposite method one of Kalidasa's finest characteristics is, it is true, entirely lost, his power of expressing by a single simple direct & sufficient word ideas & pictures of the utmost grandeur or shaded complexity; but this is a characteristic which could in no case be possible in any language but the classical Sanscrit which Kalidasa did more than any man to create or at least to perfect. Even the utmost literalness could not transfer this characteristic into English. This method of eliciting all the idea-values of the original of which I have given a rather extreme instance, I have applied with great frequency where a pregnant mythological allusion or a strong or subtle picture or image calls for adequate representation; more especially perhaps in pictures or images connected with birds & animals unfamiliar or but slightly familiar to the English reader. (At the same time I must plead guilty to occasional excesses, to reading into Kalidasa perhaps in a dozen instances what is not there. I can only plead in apology that translators are always incorrigible sinners in this respect and that I have sinned less than others; moreover except in one or two instances these additions have always been suggested either by the sound or substance of the original. I may instance the line

A flickering line of fireflies seen in sleep,

Kalidasa says nothing equivalent to or suggesting "seen in sleep", but I had to render somehow the impression of night & dim unreality created by the dreamy movement & whispering assonances of the lines

*alpālpabhāsam  
kbadyotālīvilasitanibhām vidyudunmeṣadr̥ṣṭim*

with their soft dentals & their wavering & gliding liquids and sibilants. Unable to do this by sound I sought to do it by verbal

expression; and in so far made a confession of incompetence, but in a way that may perhaps carry its own pardon.)

There is yet another method which has to be applied far more cautiously, but is sometimes indispensable. Occasionally it is necessary or at least advisable to discard the original image altogether and replace it by a more intelligible English image. There is no commoner subject of allusion in Sanscrit poetry than the passionate monotoned threnody of the forlorn bird who is divided at night by some mysterious law from his mate, divided if by a single lotus leaf, yet fatally divided. Such at least was the belief suggested by its cry at night to the imaginative Aryans. Nothing can exceed the beauty, pathos & power with which this allusion is employed by Kalidasa. Hear for instance Pururavus as he seeks for his lost Urvasie

Thou wild drake when thy love,  
Her body hidden by a lotus-leaf,  
Lurks near thee in the pool, deemest her far  
And wailest musically to the flowers  
A wild deep dirge. Such is thy conjugal  
Yearning, thy terror such of even a little  
Division from her nearness. Me thus afflicted,  
Me so forlorn thou art averse to bless  
With just a little tidings of my love.

And again in the Shacountala, the lovers are thus gracefully warned

O Chocrovaque, sob farewell to thy mate.  
The night, the night comes down to part you.

Fable as it is, one who has steeped himself in Hindu poetry can never bring himself wholly to disbelieve it. For him the melancholy call of the bird will sound for ever across the chill dividing stream & make musical with pity the huge and solemn night. But when the Yaksha says to the cloud that he will recognize her who is his second life by her sweet rare speech and her loneliness in that city of happy lovers “sole like a lonely Chocrovaque with me her comrade far away”, the simile has no



pathos to an English mind and even when explained would only seem “an artificiality common to the court-poetry of the Sanscrit age”. I have therefore thought myself justified by the slightness of the allusion in translating “Sole like a widowed bird when all the nests Are making”, which translates the idea & the emotion while suggesting a slightly different but related image.

I have indicated above the main principles by which I have guided myself in the task of translation. But there still remains the question, whether while preserving the ideals one may not still adhere more or less closely to the text. The answer to this is that such closeness is imperative, but it must be a closeness of word-value, not merely of word-meaning; into this word-value there enter the elements of association, sound and aesthetic beauty. If these are not translated, the word is not translated, however correct the rendering may be. For instance the words *salila*, *āpah* and *jala* in Sanscrit all mean water, but if *jala* may be fairly represented by the common English word & the more poetic *āpah* by “waters” or “ocean” according to the context, what will represent the beautiful suggestions of grace, brightness, softness & clearness which accompany *salila*? Here it is obvious that we have to seek refuge in sound suggestions & verse-subtleties to do what is not feasible by verbal rendering. Everything therefore depends on the skill & felicity of the translator and he must be judged rather by the accuracy with which he renders the emotional & aesthetic value of each expression than brought to a rigid [accounting] for each word in the original. Moreover the idiom of Sanscrit, especially of classical Sanscrit, is too far divided from the idiom of English. Literal translation from the Greek is possible though sometimes disastrous, but literal translation from the Sanscrit is impossible. There is indeed a school endowed with more valour than discretion and more metaphor than sense who condemn the dressing up of the Aryan beauty in English clothes and therefore demand that not only should the exact words be kept, but the exact idiom. For instance they would perpetrate the following: “Covering with lashes water-heavy from anguish, her eye gone to meet from former pleasantness the nectar-cool lattice-path-entered feet of

the moon and then at once turned away, like a land-lotus-plant on a cloudy day not awake, not sleeping.” Now quite apart from the execrable English & the want of rhythm, the succession of the actions and the connexions of thought which are made admirably clear in the Sanscrit by the mere order of the words, is here entirely obscured & lost; moreover the poetic significance of the words *prītyā* (pleasantness) and *sābhre*, implying here rain as well as cloud and the beautiful force of *salilagurubhiḥ* (water-heavy) are not even hinted at; while the meaning & application of the simile quite apparent in the original needs bringing out in the English. For the purpose of immediate comparison I give here my own version. “The moon-beams.”<sup>4</sup> This I maintain though not literal is almost as close and meets without overstepping all the requirements of good translation. For the better illustration of the method, I prefer however to quote a more typical stanza.

*Śabdāyante madhuram anilaiḥ kīcakāḥ pūryamānāḥ,  
 Saṁsaktābhis tripuravijayo gīyate kinnarībhiḥ;  
 Nirhrādas te muraḥ iva cet kanda-reṣu dhvaniḥ syāt,  
 Saṅgītārtho nanu paśūpates tatra bhāvī samagraḥ.*

Rendered into [literal English] this is “The bamboos filling with the winds are noising sweetly, the Tripour-conquest is being sung by the glued-together Kinnaries; if thy thunder should be in the glens like the sound on a drum the material of the concert of the Beast-Lord is to be complete there, eh?” My own translation runs

Of Tripour slain in lovely dances joined  
 And linkèd troops the Oreads of the hill  
 Are singing and inspired with rushing wind  
 Sweet is the noise of bamboos fluting shrill;  
 Thou thundering in the mountain-glens with cry  
 Of drums shouldst the sublime orchestra fill.

<sup>4</sup> Sri Aurobindo apparently intended to transcribe a passage from his now-lost translation here. — Ed.

“Of Tripour slain are singing” (*tripuravijayo gīyate*) requires little comment. The word *tripura* means the “three cities” [and] refers to the three material qualities of *rajas*, *sattva* & *tamas*, light, passion & darkness, which have to be slain by Sheva the emancipator before the soul can rejoin God; but there is no reference here to the theosophic basis of the legend, but purely to the legend itself, the conquest of the demon Tripoura by Mahadeva. There was no means of avoiding the mythological allusion & its unfamiliarity had simply to be accepted. *Samsaktābhiḥ*, meaning “linked close together in an uninterrupted chain”, is here rendered by “joined in linkèd troops”; but this hardly satisfies the requirement of poetic translation, for the term suggests to an Indian a very common practice which does not, I think, exist in Europe, women taking each other’s hands and dancing as they sing, generally in a circle; to express this in English, so as to create the same picture as the Sanscrit conveys, it was necessary to add “in lovely dances”. The word Kinnaries presents a serious initial difficulty. The Purana mythologising partly from false etymology has turned these Kinnars into men & women with horsefaces & this description has been copied down into all Sanscrit dictionaries, but the Kinnaries of Valmekie had little resemblance with these Puranic grotesques; they are beings of superhuman beauty, unearthly sweetness of voice & wild freedom who seldom appear on the earth, their home is in the mountains & in the skies; he speaks of a young Kinnar snared & bound by men & the mother wailing over her offspring; and Kekayie lying on the ground in her passion of grief & anger is compared to a Kinnarie fallen from the skies. In all probability they were at first a fugitive image of the strange wild voices of the wind galloping and crying in the mountaintops. The idea of speed would then suggest the idea of galloping horses and by the usual principle of Puranic allegory, which was intellectual rather than artistic, the head, the most prominent & essential member of the human body, would be chosen as the seat of the symbol. Kalidasa had in this as in many other instances to take the Puranic allegorisation of the old poetic figure and new-subject it to the law of artistic beauty. In no case does he depart from the Puranic conception, but his

method is to suppress the ungainly elements of the idea, often preserving it only in an epithet, and bring into prominence all the elements of beauty. Here the horsefaces are entirely suppressed & the picture offered is that of women singing with unearthly voices on the mountain-tops. The use of the word Kinnarie here would have no poetic propriety; to the uninstructed it would mean nothing and to the instructed would suggest only the ungainly horseface which Kalidasa here ignores and conflict with the idea of wild & divine melody which is emphasized. I have therefore translated “the Oreads of the hills”; these spirits of the mountains are the only image in English which can at all render the idea of beauty & vague strangeness here implied; at the same time I have used the apparently tautologous enlargement “of the hills” because it was necessary to give some idea of the distant, wild & mystic which the Greek Oreads does not in itself quite bring out. I have moreover transposed the two lines in translation for very obvious reasons.

The first line demands still more careful translation. The word *śabdāyante* means literally “sound, make a noise,” but unlike its English rendering it is a rare word used by Kalidasa for the sake of a certain effect of sound and a certain shade of signification; while therefore rendering by “noise” I have added the epithet “shrill” to bring it up to the required value. Again the force & sound of *pūryamānāḥ* cannot be rendered by its literal rendering “filled” and *anila*, one of the many beautiful & significant Sanscrit words for wind, — *vāyu*, *anila*, *pavana*, *samīra*, *samīraṇa*, *vāta*, *prabhañjana*, *marut*, *sadāgati*, — suggests powerfully the breath and flowing of wind & is in the Upanishad used as equivalent to prana, the breath or emotional soul; to render adequately the word “inspired” has been preferred to “filled” and the epithet “rushing” added to “wind”. *Kīcakāḥ pūryamānāḥ anilaiḥ* in the original suggests at once the sound of the flute, because the flute is in India made of the hollow bamboo & the shrillness of the word *kīcakāḥ* assists the suggestion; in English it was necessary to define the metaphor. The last two lines of the stanza have been rendered with great closeness except for the omission of *nanu* and the substitution of

the epithet “sublime” for *paśupates*. *Nanu* is a Sanscrit particle which sometimes asks a rhetorical question but more often suggests one answered; the delicate shades suggested by the Sanscrit particles cannot be represented in English or only by gross effects which would be intolerably excessive & rhetorical. The omission of Pasupati, the name of Sheva as the Lord of Wildlife, though not necessary, is I think justified. He is sufficiently suggested by the last stanza & to those who understand the allusion, by the reference to Tripoura; the object of suggesting the wild & sublime which is served in Sanscrit by introducing this name, is equally served in English by the general atmosphere of wild remoteness & the insertion of the epithet “sublime”.

This analysis of a single stanza, *ex uno disce omnes*, will be enough to show the essential fidelity which underlies the apparent freedom of my translation. At the same time it would be disingenuous to deny that in at least a dozen places of each poem, — more perhaps in the longer ones — I have slipped into words & touches which have no justification in the original. This is a literary offence which is always condemnable and always committed. In mitigation of judgment I can only say that it has been done rarely and that the superfluous word or touch is never out of harmony with or unsuggested by the original; it has sprung out of the text and not been foisted upon it. I may instance the line<sup>5</sup>

The remarks I have made apply to all the translations but more especially to the Cloud Messenger. In the drama except in highly poetical passages I have more often than not sacrificed subtlety in order to preserve the directness & incisiveness of the Sanscrit, qualities of great importance to dramatic writing, and in the epic to the dread of diffuseness which would ruin the noble harmony of the original. But the Cloud Messenger demands rather than shuns the careful & subtle rendering of every effect of phrase, sound & association. The Meghaduta of Kalidasa is the most marvellously perfect descriptive and elegiac poem

<sup>5</sup> Sri Aurobindo did not write the line he intended to “instance” in his manuscript.

— Ed.

in the world's literature. Every possible beauty of phrase, every possible beauty of sound, every grace of literary association, every source of imaginative & sensuous beauty has been woven together into an harmony which is without rival & without fault; for amidst all its wealth of colour, delicacy & sweetness, there is not a word too much or too little, no false note, no excessive or defective touch; the colouring is just & subdued in its richness, the verse movement regular in its variety, the diction simple in its suggestiveness, the emotion convincing & fervent behind a certain high restraint, the imagery precise, right & helpful, not overdone as in the *Raghuvansa* & yet quite as full of beauty & power. The *Shacountala* and the *Cloud Messenger* are the ne plus ultra of Hindu poetic art. Such a poem asks for & repays the utmost pains a translator can give it; it demands all the wealth of word & sound effect, all the power of literary beauty, of imaginative & sensuous charm he has the capacity to extract from the English language. At the same time its qualities of diction & verse cannot be rendered. The diffuseness of English will neither lend itself to the brief suggestiveness of the Sanscrit without being too high-strung, nervous & bare in its strength & so falsifying its flowing harmony & sweetness; nor to its easy harmony without losing closeknit precision & so falsifying its brevity, gravity & majesty. We must be content to lose something in order that we may not lose all.

The prose of Kalidasa's dialogue is the most unpretentious & admirable prose in Sanscrit literature; it is perfectly simple, easy in pitch & natural in tone with a shining, smiling, rippling lucidity, a soft, carolling gait like a little girl running along in a meadow & smiling back at you as she goes. There is the true image of it; a quiet English meadow with wild flowers on a bright summer morning, breezes abroad, the smell of hay in the neighbourhood, honeysuckle on the bank, hedges full of convolvuli or wild roses, a ditch on one side with cress & forget-me-nots & nothing pronounced or poignant except perhaps a stray whiff of meadowsweet from a distance. This admirable unobtrusive charm and just observed music (Coleridge) makes it run easily

into verse in English. In translating one has at first some vague idea of reproducing the form as well as the spirit of the Sanscrit, rendering verse stanza by verse stanza & prose movement by prose movement. But it will soon be discovered that except in the talk of the buffoon & not always then Kalidasa's prose never evokes its just echo, never finds its answering pitch, tone or quality in English prose. The impression it creates is in no way different from Shakespeare's verse taken anywhere at its easiest & sweetest

Your lord does know my mind: I cannot love him:  
Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,  
Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;  
In voices well divulged, free, learned and valiant;  
And in dimension in the shape of nature  
A gracious person; but yet I cannot love him.  
He might have took his answer long ago.

Or again still more close in its subtle & telling simplicity

Ol.                               What is your parentage?  
Vi.       Above my fortunes, yet my state is well.  
          I am a gentleman.  
Ol.                               Get you to your lord;  
          I cannot love him: let him send no more;  
          Unless perchance you come to me again  
          To tell me how he takes it.

There is absolutely no difference between this & the prose of Kalidasa, since even the absence of metre is compensated by the natural majesty, grace & rhythmic euphony of the Sanscrit language & the sweet seriousness & lucid effectiveness it naturally wears when it is not tortured for effects.

## APPENDIX

### ALTERNATIVE AND UNUSED PASSAGES AND FRAGMENTS

#### 1

*[An early fragment]*

Kalidasa does best in more complicated & grandiose metres where his majesty of sound and subtle power of harmony have most opportunity; his treatment of the Anustubh is massive & noble, but compares unfavourably with the inexhaustible flexibility of Valmekie and the nervous ease of Vyasa.

#### 2

*[Alternative opening to “The Historical Method”]*

Kalidasa

Of Kalidasa the man we are fortunate to know nothing beyond what we can gather from the evidence of his own writings. There are many anecdotes current throughout India that have gathered around his name, some of them witty, some merely ribald, some purely strokes of scholastic ingenuity; they differ little in character from the stock facetiae which are associated with the name of famous jesters & wits like Akbar’s Rajah Birbal; in any case the ascription to Kalidasa is fanciful and arbitrary. Even the date of our chief classical poet is a subject for the unprofitable ingenuity of scholars; fixed yesterday in the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C. , today in the sixth, tomorrow in the 3<sup>d</sup>, there seems to be not even a remote prospect of any finality in the matter. Even to this day no valid reason has been alleged for questioning the traditional ascription of Kalidasa to the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. , a date with which nothing



in his poetry is inconsistent; on the contrary there is much that seems to demand it.

## 3

*[Passages from the manuscript of "The Seasons — I: Its Authenticity" that Sri Aurobindo did not include in the published version.]*

## The Seasons

Early and immature work of a great poet of which the authenticity is not put beyond doubt by definite external evidence, is always the especial joy of scholars, for it gives an opening to the spirit of denial which is the lifebreath of scholastic criticism. To show original scholarship by denying what the past has believed, is easy and congenial, but to establish one's originality by positive & helpful criticism is not so readily done. No one has suffered more in this respect at the hands of European scholars than Kalidasa, about whom we have no external evidence until the artificial revival of Sanscrit literature in the later centuries of the first millennium of the Christian era. Some

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Kalidasa's authorship of his earliest extant poem has been first questioned in very recent times by a number of European Sanscritists. It is doubtful whether the spirit of modern criticism, restless, revolutionary, & prizing novelty and inventiveness above truth, is superior in all respects to the saner if less subtle outlook of older scholarship.

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The old criticism was cautious and quiet, seldom doubting tradition, except under strong justifying reasons. Modern scholarship on the contrary is ready to pursue the most fleeting will-o'-the-

wisp of theory across the deepest morasses of assumption and *petitio principii* and once in pursuit shows a radical violence and obstinacy of prejudice to which the prejudice of the conservative is vacillating and feeble. New theories are born with each revolution of the seasons and each while it lasts is dogmatically & even hotly asserted as alone consistent with sane and enlightened scholarship. The arguments which are

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The Seasons is the only production included in the reasonable canon of his work which justifies the slightest doubt as to its authenticity. There is a marked difference between this and the rest of Kalidasa's admitted poetry, consisting mainly in a great inferiority of artistic execution and a far cruder yet not absolutely dissimilar verse & diction which sounds like a rough sketch for the mighty style & movement of Kalidasa. If it is not then an early work of the poet, it must be either a production of an earlier poet who influenced Kalidasa or of a later poet who imitated him. The first hypothesis is hardly credible, unless the writer died young; for it is otherwise impossible that the author of such a work as the Seasons should have executed no later & riper work of a more ambitious & enduring character. A similar difficulty attends though to a less degree the second alternative; a poet who could catch some of the finest characteristics of so great a model without slavishly copying his best work, must have had in him the capacity for much more serious and lasting accomplishment. On the other hand

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The imagination of the West has not been trained to recognize that the body is an entity different and initially independent of the spirit within. Yet such a division helps materially to the proper understanding of man & is indeed essential to it unless we rule out a great mass of recorded experience as false or illusory. Each cell out of which the body is built has a life of its own and

therefore tendencies of its own. These tendencies are largely, if not entirely determined by heredity. The spirit too comes into the womb with an individuality already determined, a future development already built up; and its struggle is to impose the law of that individuality and that development on the plasm of matter in which it has to encase itself. It is naturally attracted to birth in a race & a family where the previous dispositions are favourable to the production of a suitable body; and in the case of great minds this is oftenest where attempts at genius have occurred before, attempts which being unsuccessful have not unfrequently led to madness & physical or moral disease resulting from the refusal of the body to bear the strain of the spirit. Even from the womb it struggles to impose itself on the embryonic plasm, to build up the cells of the brain to its liking and stamp its individuality on every part of the body. Throughout childhood and youth the struggle proceeds; the spirit not so much developing itself, as developing the body into an image of itself, accustoming the body to express it & respond to its impulses as a musical instrument responds to the finger of the performer. And therefore it is that the Upanishad speaks of the body as the harp of the spirit. Hence natural gifts are much more valuable and work with much more freedom and power than acquired; for when we acquire, we are preparing fresh material for our individuality in another existence; when we follow our gifts, we are using what we have already prepared for this. In the first case we are painful & blundering learners, in the second to the extent we have prepared ourselves, masters. This process of subjecting the personality of the body to the personality of the spirit, of finding one's self, lasts for various periods with various men. But it is seldom really over before the age of 30 in men of a rich and varied genius, and even afterwards they never cease sounding themselves still farther, finding fresh possibilities, developing mightier masteries, until the encasing plasm wears away with the strain of life. The harp grows old & shabby, the strings are worn and frayed, the music deteriorates or ceases, and finally the spirit breaks & throws away its instrument and departs to assimilate its experiences and acquirements for a fresh

existence. But that the man of genius may successfully find himself, he must have fit opportunities, surroundings, influences, training. If he is not favoured with these, the genius will remain but it will be at the mercy of its body; it will express its body and not its self. The most famous ballads, those which never perish, have been written by such thwarted geniuses. Although the influence of romanticism has made it a literary fashion to couple these ballads with Homer, yet in truth balladwriting is the lowest form of the poetical art; its method is entirely sensational. The impact of outward facts on the body is carried through the vital principle, the sensational element in man, to the mind, and mind obediently answers the knocking outside, photographs the impression with force & definiteness. But there has been no exercise of the higher faculty of understanding, considering, choosing, moulding what it receives. Hence the bare force & realism which so powerfully attracts in the best ballads; but this force is very different from the high strength and this involuntary realism very different from the artistic imaginative & self-chosen realism of great poetry. There is the same difference as separates brilliant melodrama from great tragedy. Another sign of the undeveloped self is uncertainty of work. There are some poets who live by a single poem. In some moment of exaltation, of rapt excitement the spirit throws off for a moment the bonds of the flesh and compels the body to obey it. This is what is vulgarly termed inspiration. Everyone who has felt this state of mind, can recall its main features. There is a sudden exaltation, a glow, an excitement and a fiery and rapid activity of all the faculties; every cell of the body & of the brain feeling a commotion and working in excited unison under the law of something which is not themselves; the mind itself becomes illuminated as with a rush of light and grows like a crowded and surging thoroughfare in some brilliantly lighted city, thought treading on the heels of thought faster than the tongue can express or the hand write or the memory record them. And yet while the organs of sense remain overpowered and inactive, the main organs of action may be working with abnormal rapidity, not only the speech and the hand but sometimes even the feet, so that often the writer cannot

remain still, but has to walk up and down swiftly or if he sits down, is subject to an involuntary mechanical movement of the limbs. When this state reaches beyond bounds, when the spirit attempts to impose on the mind & body work for which they are not fitted, the result is, in the lower human organisms insanity, in the higher epilepsy. In this state of inspiration every thought wears an extraordinary brilliance and even commonplace ideas strike one as God-given inspirations. But at any rate the expression they take whether perfect or not is superior to what the same man could compass in his ordinary condition. Ideas & imaginations throng on the mind which one is not aware of having formerly entertained or even prepared for; some even seem quite foreign to our habit of mind. The impression we get is that thoughts are being breathed into us, expressions dictated, the whole poured in from outside; the saints who spoke to Joan of Arc, the daemon of Socrates, Tasso's familiar, the Angel Gabriel dictating the Koran to Mahomet are only exaggerated developments of this impression due to an epileptic, maniac or excited state of the mind; and this, as I have already suggested, is itself due to the premature attempts of the Spirit to force the highest work on the body.<sup>1</sup> Mahomet's idea that in his epileptic fits he went up into the seventh heaven & took the Koran from the lips of God, is extremely significant;<sup>2</sup> if Caesar & Richelieu had been Oriental prophets instead of practical & sceptical Latin statesmen they might well have recorded kindred impressions. In any case such an impression is purely sensational. It is always the man's own spirit that is speaking, but the sensational part of him feeling that it is working blindly in obedience to some

<sup>1</sup> Sri Aurobindo wrote the following passage at the top of two pages of the manuscript. He did not mark its place of insertion. A piece of the manuscript is broken off at the beginning; "supported by" is a conjectural reconstruction:

The fact, [supported by] overwhelming evidence, that Jeanne could foretell the immediate future in all matters affecting her mission, does not militate against this theory; past, present & future are merely conventions of the mind, to the spirit time is but one, tomorrow as present as today. At the same time I do not wish to exclude the possibility of supracorporeal beings outside her own guiding Jeanne within the limits of her mission; the subject is too profound & subtle a problem to be settled offhand.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Aurobindo put a question mark beside this clause in his manuscript. — Ed.

irresistible power which is not itself, conveys to the mind an erroneous impression that the power comes from outside, that it is an inspiration and not an inner process; for it is as naturally the impulse of the body as of the mind to consider itself *the* self of the organism and all impressions & impulses not of its own sphere as exterior to the organism. If the understanding happens to be firm and sane, it refuses to encourage the mind in its error, but if the understanding is overexcited or is not sufficiently master of its instruments, it easily allows itself to be deluded. Now when the spirit is no longer struggling with the body, but has become its master and lord, this state of inspiration ceases to be fortuitous and occasional, and becomes more and more within the will of the man and, subject to the necessarily long intervals of repose & recreation, almost a habitually recurring state. At the same time it loses its violent & abnormal character and the outward symptoms of it disappear; the outer man remains placid and the mind works with great power and illumination indeed, but without disturbance or loss of equilibrium. In the earlier stages the poet swears & tears his hair if a fly happens to be buzzing about the room; once he has found himself, he can rise from his poem, have a chat with his wife or look over & even pay his bills and then resume his inspiration as if nothing had happened. He needs no stimulant except healthy exercise and can no longer be classed with the genus *irritabile vatum*; nor does he square any better with the popular idea that melancholy, eccentricity and disease are necessary concomitants of genius. Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Goethe, the really great poets, were men of high sanity — except perhaps in the eyes of those to whom originality & strong character are in themselves madness.

But to arrive at this harmony requires time and effort and meanwhile the work will surely be unequal, often halting, varying between inspiration and failure. Especially will this be the case with a rich, many-sided and flexible genius like Kalidasa's.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *The passage that follows in the manuscript was incorporated in the final version of the second paragraph of "The Seasons — I: Its Authenticity". — Ed.*

## 4

[*Alternative and unused passages from the manuscript of  
“Vikramorvasie: The Characters”*]

We shall now understand why the Opsara is represented as the Hetaira of heaven. They represent all that is sensuous, attractive & voluptuous in the Universe, the element of desire which being unspiritual & non-moral, finds its sphere in the satisfaction of the sense of beauty and for that satisfaction needs freedom

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Vishnu, the Almighty Spirit, incarnate in Naraian, the saint and hermit, was meditating in the voiceless solitude of mountains. Indra, always jealous of austerity & sacrifice, sent the Opsaras to allure him & enslave him to the charm of beauty & sensuousness. They came to Naraian in the wilderness and displayed before him all their beauty & every feminine art of conversation, but in vain. Naraian, with an indulgent smile smote his thigh and produced from it a woman of so shining a loveliness that the beauty of all the Opsaras together was as nothing to her beauty

According to this story Naraian, the great Rishi, who is also Vishnu & therefore the type of the World-Saviour when he comes in the guise of the Ascetic, was meditating in the Himalayas. Indra, always hostile to ascetism, always distrustful of the contemplative & philosophic mind, sent the Opsaras to break down the concentration of Naraian's mind and lure him into sensuous feeling. They were the fairest of the worldsisters who went and they displayed before Naraian their most marvellous grace and their sweetest words & arts. So the World Saviour smiled and from his thigh there sprang all the beauty of sensuous existence concentrated into a single form. Then the temptresses covered their faces with their veils & silently returned to heaven. Thus was born Urvasie, she that lay hid in the thigh of the Supreme.

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The grace of childhood seems to have had a charm for the mind of Kalidasa; for whenever he introduces a child it is with a double measure of his magical felicity and naturalness. There is a child in each of his plays; the princess Vasuluxmie in *Malavica* does not appear on the stage in the course of the play, yet she twice intervenes with considerable effect in its action, and each time what a delightful fragrance of home, of the beauty and innocence and loveableness of childhood, comes breathing about the scene. It is part of the marvellous genius of Kalidasa that packing beauty into each word he writes with so little he can suggest so much. In *Ayus* we find not quite the same beauty, but the same tender and skilful portraiture and the same loving knowledge of child nature. It seems to me that in two respects at least Kalidasa far surpasses Shakespeare, in knowledge of a mother's heart, in knowledge of the child. Shakespeare's mothers, and how few of them there are! are either null or intolerable. In only one of his plays does Shakespeare really attempt to give us a mother's heart and a child. But *Arthur* is not a success, he is too voulu, too much dressed up for pathos, too eloquent and full of unchildlike sentimentality & posing. Children are fond of posing and children are sentimental, but not in that way. As for the Princes in *King Henry VI* and *Richard III* no real lover of children could endure them; one feels almost thankful to the crookback for mercifully putting them out of the way. Nor is *Constance* a sympathetic figure; her shrieking, her rant, her selfishness, her bold and bitter volubility, could Shakespeare give us no sweeter & truer picture of a mother?

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*Urvasie* seems at first sight to be deficient in feeling; she sends *Ayus* away from her at his birth & though there is an indication that she must have visited him occasionally, yet long years of separation are also implied which she appears to have borne with some equanimity. In reality she has no choice. By keeping him she would lose both husband & child, by

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Urvasie sends Ayus away from her at his birth, but it is as the choice between a mixed evil and an unmixed calamity; in sending him away she only anticipates the inevitable separation between a royal child & his parents which the necessity of education in the forest always imposed;<sup>4</sup> by keeping him she would lose both him and her husband. He returns to her & the mother in her at once wakes to life “her veiled bosom heaving towards him and wet with sacred milk”; so in her joy over her son she even forgets the impending separation from the husband who is all in all to her. It is consistent with Kalidasa’s conception of her that she says little or nothing to show her depth of emotion but reveals it rather by her actions & little side touches in her speech.

<sup>4</sup> Urvasie’s words “How he has grown” imply that she must have secretly seen him in the hermitage several times after his birth, though necessarily not for many years, since once the boy’s education began such visits would necessarily cease.



# On the Mahabharata



# Notes on the Mahabharata

of Krishna Dwypaiana Vyasa.

prepared with a view to disengage the original epic of Krishna of the island from the enlargements, accretions and additions made by Vyshampaian, Ugrosravas & innumerable other writers.

by Aurobind Ghose

Proposita.

An epic of the Bharatas was written by Krishna of the Island called Vyasa, in 24,000 couplets or something more, less at any rate than 27,000, on the subject of the great civil war of the Bharatas and the establishment of the Dhurmarajya or universal sovereignty in that house.

This epic can be disengaged almost in its entirety from the present poem of nearly 100,000 slokas.



It was hinted in a recent article of the Indian Review, an unusually able and searching paper on the date of the Mahabharata war that a society is about to be formed for discovering the genuine and original portions of our great epic. This is glad tidings to all admirers of Sanscrit literature and to all lovers of their country. For the solution of the Mahabharata problem is essential to many things, to any history worth having of Aryan civilisation & literature, to a proper appreciation of Vyasa's poetical genius and, far more important than either, to a definite understanding of the great ethical gospel which Srikrishna came down on earth to teach as a guide to mankind in the dark Kali yuga then approaching. But I fear that if the inquiry is to be pursued on the lines the writer of this article seemed to hint, if the Society is to rake out 8000 lines from the War Purvas & dub the result the Mahabharata of Vyasa, then the last state of the problem will be worse than its first. It is only by a patient scrutiny & weighing of the whole poem, disinterestedly, candidly & without preconceived notions, a consideration Canto by Canto, paragraph by paragraph, couplet by couplet that we can arrive at anything solid or permanent. But this implies a vast and heartbreaking labour. Certainly, labour however vast ought not to have any terrors for a scholar, still less for a Hindu scholar; yet before one engages in it, one requires to be assured that the game is worth the candle. For that assurance there are three necessary requisites, the possession of certain, sound and always applicable tests to detect later from earlier work, a reasonable chance that such tests if applied will restore the real epic roughly if not exactly in its original form and an assurance that the epic when recovered will repay from literary, historical or other points of view, the labour that has been bestowed on it. I believe that these three requisites are present in this case and shall attempt to adduce a few reasons for my judgment. I shall try to show that besides other internal evidence on which I do not propose just now to enter, there are certain traits of poetical

style, personality and thought which belong to the original work and are possessed by no other writer. I shall also try to show that these traits may be used and by whom they may be used as a safe guide through this huge morass of verse. In passing I shall have occasion to make clear certain claims the epic thus disengaged will possess to the highest literary, historical and practical value.

It is certainly not creditable to European scholarship that after so many decades of Sanscrit research, the problem of the Mahabharata which should really be the pivot for all the rest, has remained practically untouched. For it is not exaggeration to say that European scholarship has shed no light whatever on the Mahabharata beyond the bare fact that it is the work of more than one hand. All else it has advanced, and fortunately it has advanced little, has been rash, arbitrary or prejudiced; theories, theories, always theories without any honestly industrious consideration of the problem. The earliest method adopted was to argue from European analogies, a method pregnant of error & delusion. If we consider the hypothesis of a rude ballad-epic doctored by “those Brahmins” — anyone who is curious on the matter may study with both profit & amusement Frazer’s *History of Indian Literature* — we shall perceive how this method has been worked. A fancy was started in Germany that the *Iliad* of Homer is really a pastiche or clever rifacimento of old ballads put together in the time of Pisistratus. This truly barbarous imagination with its rude ignorance of the psychological bases of all great poetry has now fallen into some discredit; it has been replaced by a more plausible attempt to discover a nucleus in the poem, an Achilleid, out of which the larger *Iliad* has grown. Very possibly the whole discussion will finally end in the restoration of a single Homer with a single poem, subjected indeed to some inevitable interpolation and corruption, but mainly the work of one mind, a theory still held by more than one considerable scholar. In the meanwhile, however, haste has been made to apply the analogy to the Mahabharata; lynx-eyed theorists have discovered in the poem — apparently without taking the trouble to study it — an early and rude ballad epic worked up, doctored and defaced by those wicked Brahmins, who are made responsible for all the



literary and other enormities which have been discovered by the bushy, and not by European lynxes alone — in our literature and civilisation. Now whether the theory is true or not, and one sees nothing in its favour, it has at present no value at all; for it is a pure theory without any justifying facts. It is not difficult to build these intellectual cardhouses; anyone may raise them by the dozen who can find no better manner of wasting valuable time. A similar method of “arguing from Homer” is probably at the bottom of Professor Weber’s assertion that the War Purvas contain the original epic. An observant eye at once perceives that the War Purvas are far more hopelessly tangled than any that precede them except the first. It is here & here only that the keenest eye becomes confused & the most confident explorer begins to lose heart & self-reliance. But the Iliad is all battles and it therefore follows in the European mind that the original Mahabharata must have been all battles. Another method is that of ingenious, if forced argument from stray slokas of the poem or equally stray & obscure remarks in Buddhist compilations. The curious theory of some scholars that the Pandavas were a later invention and that the original war was between the Kurus and Panchalas only and Professor Weber’s singularly positive inference from a sloka which does not at first sight bear the meaning he puts on it, that the original epic contained only 8800 lines, are ingenuities of this type. They are based on the Teutonic art of building a whole mammoth out of a single and often problematical bone, and remind one strongly of Mr Pickwick and the historic inscription which was so rudely, if in a Pickwickian sense, challenged by the refractory [Mr Blotton.] All these theorisings are idle enough; they are made of too airy a stuff to last. ‘Only a serious scrutiny of the Mahabharata made with a deep sense of critical responsibility and according to the methods of patient scientific inference, can justify one in advancing any considerable theory on this wonderful poetic structure.’

Yet to extricate the original epic from the mass of accretions is not, I believe, so difficult a task as it may at first appear. One is struck in perusing the Mahabharata by the presence of a mass of poetry which bears the style and impress of a single,

strong and original, even unusual mind, differing in his manner of expression, tone of thought & stamp of personality not only from every other Sanscrit poet we know but from every other great poet known to literature. When we look more closely into the distribution of this peculiar style of writing, we come to perceive certain very suggestive & helpful facts. We realise that this impress is only found in those parts of the poem which are necessary to the due conduct of the story, seldom to be detected in the more miraculous, Puranistic or trivial episodes, but usually broken up by passages and sometimes shot through with lines of a discernibly different inspiration. Equally noteworthy is it that nowhere does this poet admit any trait, incident or speech which deviates from the strict propriety of dramatic characterisation & psychological probability. Finally Krishna's divinity is recognized, but more often hinted at than aggressively stated. The tendency is to keep it in the background as a fact to which, while himself crediting it, the writer does not hope for universal consent, still less is able to speak of it as of a general tenet & matter of dogmatic belief; he prefers to show Krishna rather in his human character, acting always by wise, discerning and inspired methods, but still not transgressing the limit of human possibility. All this leads one to the conclusion that in the body of poetry I have described, we have the real Bharata, an epic which tells plainly and straightforwardly of the events which led to the great war and the empire of the Bharata princes. Certainly if Prof. Weber's venturesome assertion as to the length of the original Mahabharata be correct, this conclusion falls to the ground; for the mass of this poetry amounts to considerably over 20,000 slokas. Professor Weber's inference, however, is worth some discussion; for the length of the original epic is a very important element in the problem. If we accept it, we must say farewell to all hopes of unravelling the tangle. His assertion is founded on a single & obscure verse in the huge prolegomena to the poem which take up the greater part of the *Adi Purva*, no very strong basis for so far-reaching an assumption. The sloka itself says no more than this that much of the Mahabharata was written in so difficult a style that Vyasa himself could remember only 8800 of

the slokas, Suka an equal amount and Sanjaya perhaps as much, perhaps something less. There is certainly here no assertion such as Prof. Weber would have us find in it that the Mahabharata at any time amounted to no more than 8800 slokas. Even if we assume what the text does not say that Vyasa, Suka & Sanjaya knew the same 8800 slokas, we do not get to that conclusion. The point simply is that the style of the Mahabharat was too difficult for a single man to keep in memory more than a certain portion of it. This does not carry us very far. If however we are to assume that there is more in this verse than meets the eye, that it is a cryptic way of stating the length of the original poem; and I do not deny that this is possible, perhaps even probable — we should note the repetition of वेत्ति — अहं वेत्ति शुको वेत्ति सञ्जयो वेत्ति वा न वा. Following the genius of the Sanscrit language we are led to suppose the repetition was intended to recall अष्टौ श्लोकसहस्राणि etc. with each name; otherwise the repetition has no *raison d'être*; it is otiose & inept. But if we understand it thus, the conclusion is irresistible that each knew a different 8800, or the writer would have no object in wishing us to repeat the number three times in our mind. The length of the epic as derived from this single sloka should then be 26,400 slokas or something less, for the writer hesitates about the exact number to be attributed to Sanjaya. Another passage further on in the prolegomena agrees remarkably with this conclusion and is in itself much more explicit. It is there stated plainly enough that Vyasa first wrote the Mahabharata in 24,000 slokas and afterwards enlarged it to 100,000 for the world of men as well as a still more unconscionable number of verses for the Gandhurva and other worlds. In spite of the embroidery of fancy, of a type familiar enough to all who are acquainted with the Puranic method of recording facts, the meaning of this is unmistakeable. The original Mahabharata consisted of 24,000 slokas, but in its final form it runs to 100,000. The figures are probably loose & slovenly, for at any rate the final form of the Mahabharata is considerably under 100,000 slokas. It is possible therefore that the original epic was something over 24,000 and under 26,400 slokas, in which case the two passages would agree well

enough. But it would be unsafe to found any dogmatic assertion on isolated couplets; at the most we can say that we are justified in taking the estimate as a probable and workable hypothesis and if it is found to be corroborated by other facts, we may venture to suggest its correctness as a moral certainty.

But it is not from European scholars that we must expect a solution of the Mahabharata problem. They have no qualifications for the task except a power of indefatigable research and collocation; and in dealing with the Mahabharata even this power seems to have deserted them. It is from Hindu scholarship renovated & instructed by contact with European that the attempt must come. Indian scholars have shown a power of detachment and disinterestedness and a willingness to give up cherished notions under pressure of evidence, which are not common in Europe. They are not, as a rule, prone to the Teutonic sin of forming a theory in accordance with their prejudices and then finding facts or manufacturing inferences to support it. When therefore they form a theory on their own account, it has usually some clear justification and sometimes an overwhelming array of facts and solid arguments behind it. German scholarship possesses infinite capacity of labour marred by an irresponsible & fantastic imagination, the French a sane acuteness of inference marred by insufficient command of facts, while in soundness of judgment Indian scholarship has both; it should stand first, for it must naturally move with a far greater familiarity and grasp in the sphere of Sanscrit studies than any foreign mind however able & industrious. But above all it must clearly have one advantage, an intimate feeling of the language, a sensitiveness to shades of style & expression and an instinctive feeling of what is or is not possible, which the European cannot hope to possess unless he sacrifices his sense of racial superiority and lives in some great centre like Benares as a Pundit among Pundits. I admit that even among Indians this advantage must vary with the amount of education and natural fineness of taste; but where other things are equal, they must possess it in an immeasurably greater degree than an European of similar information & critical power. For to the European Sanscrit words are

no more than dead counters which he can play with and throw as he likes into places the most unnatural or combinations the most monstrous; to the Hindu they are living things the very soul of whose temperament he understands & whose possibilities he can judge to a hair. That with these advantages Indian scholars have not been able to form themselves into a great & independent school of learning, is due to two causes, the miserable scantiness of the mastery in Sanscrit provided by our Universities, crippling to all but born scholars, and our lack of a sturdy independence which makes us overready to defer to European authority. These however are difficulties easily surmountable.

In solving the Mahabharat problem this intimate feeling for the language is of primary importance; for style & poetical personality must be not indeed the only but the ultimate test of the genuineness of any given passage in the poem. If we rely upon any other internal evidence, we shall find ourselves irresistibly tempted to form a theory and square facts to it. The late Rai Bahadur Bunkim Chundra Chatterji, a genius of whom modern India has not produced the parallel, was a man of ripe scholarship, literary powers of the very first order and a strong critical sagacity. In his *Life of Krishna* (*Krishnacharitra*), he deals incidentally with the Mahabharata problem; he perceived clearly enough that there were different recognizable styles in the poem, and he divided it into three layers, the original epic by a very great poet, a redaction of the original epic by a poet not quite so great and a mass of additions by very inferior hands. But being concerned with the Mahabharata only so far as it covered the *Life of Krishna*, he did not follow up this line of scrutiny and relied rather on internal evidence of a quite different kind. He saw that in certain parts of the poem Krishna's godhead is either not presupposed at all or only slightly affirmed, while in others it is the main objective of the writer; certain parts again give us a plain, unvarnished & straightforward biography & history, others are a mass of wonders and legends, often irrelevant extravagances; in some parts also the conception of the chief characters is radically departed from and defaced. He therefore took these differences as his standard and accepted

only those parts as genuine which gave a plain & consistent account of Krishna the man and of others in their relation to him. Though his conclusions are to a great extent justifiable, his *a priori* method led him to exaggerate them, to enforce them too rigidly without the proper flexibility & scrupulous hesitation and to resort occasionally to special pleading. His book is illuminating and full of insight, and the chief contentions will, I believe, stand permanently; but some parts of his argument are exaggerated & misleading and others, which are in the main correct, are yet insufficiently supported by reasons. It is the failure to refer everything to the ultimate test of style that is responsible for these imperfections. Undoubtedly inconsistencies of detail & treatment are of immense importance. If we find grave inconsistencies of character, if a man is represented in one place as stainlessly just, unselfish & truthful and in another as a base & selfish liar or a brave man suddenly becomes guilty of incomprehensible cowardice, we are justified in supposing two hands at work; otherwise we must either adduce very strong poetic and psychological justification for the lapse or else suppose that the poet was incompetent to create or portray consistent and living characters. But if we find that one set of passages belongs to the distinct and unmistakeable style of a poet who has shown himself capable of portraying great epic types, we shall be logically debarred from this saving clause. And if the other set of passages show not only a separate style, but quite another spirit and the stamp of another personality, our assurance will be made doubly sure. Further if there are serious inconsistencies of fact, if for instance Krishna says in one place that he can only do his best as a man & can use no divine power in human affairs and in another foolishly uses his divine power where it is quite uncalled for, or if a considerable hero is killed three or four times over, yet always pops up again with really commendable vitality but without warning or explanation until some considerate person gives him his *coup de grâce*, or if totally incompatible statements are made about the same person or the same event, we may find in either or all of these inconsistencies sufficient ground to assume diversity of authorship. Still even here we must ultimately refer to the

style as corroborative evidence; and when the inconsistencies are grave enough to raise suspicion, but not so totally incompatible as to be conclusive, difference of style will at once turn the suspicion into certainty, while similarity may induce us to suspend judgment. And where there is no inconsistency of fact or conception and yet the difference in expression & treatment is marked, the question of style & personality becomes all-important. Now in the Mahabharata we are struck at first by the presence of two glaringly distinct & incompatible styles. There is a mass of writing in which the verse & language is unusually bare, simple and great, full of firm and knotted thinking & a high & heroic personality, the imagination strong and pure, never florid or richly-coloured, the ideas austere, original & noble. There is another body of work sometimes massed together but far oftener interspersed in the other, which has exactly opposite qualities; it is Ramayanistic, rushing in movement, full & even overabundant in diction, flowing but not strict in thought, the imagination bold & vast, but often garish & highly-coloured, the ideas ingenious & poetical, sometimes of astonishing subtlety, but at others common & trailing, the personality much more relaxed, much less heroic, noble & severe. When we look closer we find that the Ramayanistic part may possibly be separated into two parts, one of which has less inspiration and is more deeply imbued with the letter of the Ramayan, but less with its spirit. The first portion again has a certain element often in close contact with it which differs from it in a weaker inspiration, in being a body without the informing spirit of high poetry. It attempts to follow its manner & spirit but fails and reads therefore like imitation of the great poet. We have to ask ourselves whether this is the work of an imitator or of the original poet in his uninspired moments. Are there besides the mass of inferior or obviously interpolated work which can be easily swept aside, three distinct & recognisable styles or four or only two? In the ultimate decision of this question inconsistencies of detail & treatment will be of great consequence. But in the meantime I find nothing to prevent me from considering the work of the first poet, undoubtedly the greatest of the four, if four there are, as the original epic.

It may, indeed, be objected that style is no safe test, for it is one which depends upon the personal preferences & ability of the critic. In an English literary periodical it was recently observed that a certain Oxford professor who had studied Stevenson like a classic, attempted to apportion to Stevenson & Lloyd Osbourne their respective work in the *Wrecker*, but his apportionment turned out [to] be hopelessly erroneous. To this the obvious answer is that the *Wrecker* is a prose work and not poetry. There was no prose style ever written that a skilful hand could not reproduce as accurately as a practised forger reproduces a signature. But poetry, at any rate original poetry of the first class is a different matter. The personality and style of a true poet are unmistakeable to a competent mind, for though imitation, echo & parody are certainly possible, it would be as easy to reproduce the personal note in the style as for the painter to put into his portrait the living soul of its original. The successful discrimination between original and copy depends then upon the competence of the critic, his fineness of literary feeling, his sensitiveness to style. On such points the dictum of a foreign critic is seldom of any value; one would not ask a mere labourer to pronounce on the soundness of a great engineering work, but still less would one ask a mathematician unacquainted with mechanics. To a Hindu mind well equipped for the task there ought to be no insuperable difficulty in disengaging the style of a marked poetic personality from a mass of totally different work. The verdict of great artistic critics on the genuineness of a professed Old Master may not be infallible, but if formed on a patient study of the technique & spirit of the work, it has at least considerable chances of being correct. But the technique & spirit of poetry are far less easy to catch by an imitator than those of great painting, the charm [of] words being more elusive & unanalysable than that of line & colour.

In unravelling the Mahabharata especially the peculiar & inimitable nature of the style of Vyasa immensely lightens the difficulties of criticism. Had his been poetry of which the predominant grace was mannerism, it would have been imitable with some closeness; or even had it been a rich & salient style



<sup>1</sup> Here an incomplete sentence is written between the lines in the manuscript:  
This unanalysable quantity is as sure

I have purposely selected passages of perfect simplicity and straightforwardness, because they appear to be the most imitable part of Shakespeare's work & are really the least imitable. Always one hears the same voice, the same personal note of style sounding through these very various passages, and one feels that there is in all the intimate & unmistakeable personality of Shakespeare. We turn next & take two passages from Marlowe, a poet whose influence counted for much in the making of Shakespeare, one from *Faustus*

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

and another from Edward II

I am that cedar, shake me not too much;  
And you the eagles; soar ye ne'er so high,  
I have the jesses that will pull you down;  
And Aequie tandem shall that canker cry  
Unto the proudest peer in Brittany.

The choice of words, the texture of style has a certain similarity, the run of the sentences differs little if at all; but what fine literary sense does not feel that here is another poetical atmosphere and the ring of a different voice? And yet to put a precise name on the difference would not be easy. The personal difference becomes still more marked if we take a passage from Milton in which the nameable merits are precisely the same, a simplicity in strength of diction, thought & the run of the verse "What though the field be lost".<sup>2</sup> And when we pass farther down in the stream of literature & read "Thy thunder, conscious of the new command"<sup>3</sup> we feel that the poet has nourished his genius on the greatness of Milton till his own soft & luxurious style rises into epic vigour; yet we feel too that the lines are only Miltonic, they are not Milton.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradise Lost* 1.105. *This sentence and the next were written in the margins of the manuscript. Sri Aurobindo apparently intended to cite longer passages.* — Ed.

<sup>3</sup> *Keats, Hyperion* 1.60. — Ed.

Now there are certain great poetical styles which are of a kind apart; they are so extraordinarily bare and restrained that the untutored mind often wonders what difficulty there can be in writing poetry like that; yet when the attempt is made, it is found that so far as manner goes it is easier to write somewhat like Shakespeare or Homer or Valmekie than to write like these. Just because the style is so bare, has no seizable mannerism, no striking & imitable peculiarities, the failure of the imitation appears complete & unsoftened; for in such poets there is but one thing to be caught, the unanalysable note, the personal greatness which like everything that comes straight from God it is impossible to locate or limit and precisely the one that most eludes the grasp. This poetry it is always possible to distinguish with some approach to certainty from imitative or spurious work. Very fortunately the style of Vyasa is exactly such a manner of poetry. Granted therefore *adhikara* in the critic, that is to say a natural gift of fine literary sensitiveness & the careful cultivation of that gift until it has become as sure a lactometer as the palate of the swan which rejects the water mingled with milk & takes the milk alone, we have in the peculiar characteristics of this poetry a test of unquestionable soundness & efficacy.

But there is another objection of yet more weight & requiring as full an answer. This method of argument from style seems after all as *a priori* & Teutonic as any other; for there is no logical reason why the mass of writing in this peculiar style should be judged to be the original epic and not any of the three others or even part of that inferior work which was brushed aside so contemptuously. The original Mahabharata need not have been a great poem at all; it was more probably an early, rude & uncouth performance. Certain considerations however may lead us to consider our choice less arbitrary than it seems. That the War Purvas contain much of the original epic may be conceded to Professor Weber; the war is the consummation of the story & without a war there could be no Mahabharata. But the war of the Mahabharata was not a petty contest between obscure barons or a brief episode in a much larger struggle or a romantic & chivalrous emprise for the rescue of a ravished or errant

beauty. It was a great political catastrophe implying the clash of a hundred nations and far-reaching political consequences; the Hindus have always considered it as the turningpoint in the history of their civilisation and the beginning of a new age, and it was long used as a historical standpoint and a date to reckon from in chronology. Such an event must have had the most considerable political causes and been caused by the collision of the most powerful personalities and the most important interests. If we find no record of or allusion to these in the poem, we shall be compelled to suppose that the poet living long after the event, regarded the war as a legend or romance which would form excellent matter for an epic and treated it accordingly. But if we find a simple and unvarnished though not necessarily connected & consecutive account of the political conditions which preceded the war and of the men who made it and their motives, we may safely say that this also is an essential part of the epic. The *Iliad* deals only with an episode of the legendary siege of Troy, it covers an action of [       ] days in a conflict lasting ten years, & its subject is not the Trojan War but the Wrath of Achilles. Homer was under no obligation therefore to deal with the political causes that led to hostilities, even supposing he knew them. The *Mahabharata* stands on an entirely different footing. The war there is related from beginning to end consecutively & without break, yet it is nowhere regarded as of importance sufficient to itself but depends for its interest on causes which led up to it & the characters & clashing interests it involved. The preceding events are therefore of essential importance to the epic. Without the war, no *Mahabharata*, is true of this epic; but without the causes of the war, no war, is equally true. And it must be remembered that the Hindu narrative poets had no artistic predilections like that of the Greeks for beginning a story in the middle. On the contrary they always preferred to begin at the beginning.

We therefore naturally expect to find the preceding political conditions and the immediate causes of the war related in the earlier part of the epic and this is precisely what we do find. Ancient India as we know, was a sort of continent, made up of many great & civilised nations who were united very much

like the nations of modern Europe by an essential similarity of religion and culture rising above & beyond their marked racial peculiarities; like the nations of Europe also they were continually going to war with each other; & yet had relations of occasional struggle, of action & reaction, with the other peoples of Asia whom they regarded as barbarous races outside the pale of the Aryan civilisation. Like the continent of Europe, the ancient continent of India was subject to two opposing forces, one centripetal which was continually causing attempts at universal empire, another centrifugal which was continually impelling the empires once formed to break up again into their constituent parts: but both these forces were much stronger in their action than they have usually been in Europe.

The Aryan nations may be divided into three distinct groups, the Eastern of whom the Coshalas, Magadhas, Chedies, Videhas & Haihayas were the chief; the Central among whom the Kurus, Panchalas & Bhojas were the most considerable; and the Western & Southern of whom there were many, small, & rude but yet warlike & famous peoples; among these there seem to have been none that ever became of the first importance. Five distinct times had these great congeries of nations been welded into Empire, twice by the Ixvaacous under Mandhata son of Yuvanuswa and King Marutta, afterwards by the Haihaya Arjouna Cartoverya, again by the Ixvaacou Bhogiratha and finally by the Kuru Bharata. That the first Kuru empire was the latest is evident not only from the Kurus being the strongest nation of their time but from the significant fact that the Coshalas by this time had faded into utter & irretrievable insignificance. The rule of the Haihayas had resulted in one of the great catastrophes of early Hindu civilization; belonging to the eastern section of the Continent which was always apt to break away from the strict letter of Aryanism, they had brought themselves by their pride & violence into collision with the Brahmins with the result of a civil war in which their Empire was broken for ever by Parshurama, son of Jamadagni, and the chivalry of India massacred and for the time broken. The fall of the Haihayas left the Ixvaacous & the Bharata or Ilian dynasty of the Kurus the two chief powers

of the continent. Then seems to have followed the golden age of the Ixvaacous under the beneficent empire of Bhogiratha & his descendants as far down at least as Rama. Afterwards the Coshalans, having reached their highest point, must have fallen into that state of senile decay, which once it overtakes a nation, is fatal & irremediable. They were followed by the empire of the Bharatas. By the times of Santanou, Vichitravirya and Pandou this empire had long been dissolved by the centrifugal force of Aryan politics into its constituent parts, yet the Kurus were yet among the first of the nations and the Bharata Kings of the Kurus were still looked up to as the head of civilisation. But by the time of Dhritarashtra the centripetal force had again asserted itself & the idea of another great empire loomed before the imaginations of all men; a number of nations had risen to the greatest military prestige & political force, the Panchalas under Drupada & his sons, the Bhojas under Bhishmuc & his brother Acirya who is described as equalling Parshurama in military skill & courage, the Chedies under the hero & great captain Shishupala, the Magadhas, built into a strong nation by Brihadruth; even distant Bengal under the Pundran Vasudave and distant Sindhu under [Vridhshakshatra] and his son Jayadrath began to mean something in the reckoning of forces. The Yadava nations counted as a great military force in the balance of politics owing to their abundant heroism and genius, but seem to have lacked sufficient cohesion and unity to nurse independent hopes. Strong, however, as these nations were none seemed able to dispute the prize of the coming empire with the Kurus, until under King Jarasundha the Barhadruth Magadha for a moment disturbed the political balance. The history of the first great Magadhan hope of empire and its extinction — not to be revived again until the final downfall of the Kurus — is told very briefly in the Sabhapurva of the Mahabharata. The removal of Jarasundha restored the original state of politics and it was no longer doubtful that to the Kurus alone could fall the future empire. But here a contest arose between the elder & younger branches of the Bharata house. The question being then narrowed to a personal issue, it was inevitable that it should become largely a history of

personal strife & discord; other & larger issues were involved in the dispute between the Kaurava cousins; but whatever interests, incompatibilities of temperament & differences of opinion may divide brothers, they do not engage in fratricidal conflict until they are driven to it by a long record of collision & jealousy, ever deepening personal hatreds & the worst personal injuries. We see therefore that not only the early discords, the slaying of Jarasundha & the Rajasuya sacrifice are necessary to the epic but the great gambling & the mishandling of Draupadie. It cannot, however, have been personal questions alone that affected the choice of the different nations between Duryodhana and Yudhisthere. Personal relations like the matrimonial connections of Dhritarashtra's family with the Sindhus and Gandharas and of the Pandavas with the Matsyas, Panchalas & Yadavas doubtless counted for much, but there must have been something more; personal enmities [counted] for something as in the feud cherished by the Trigartas against Arjouna. The Madras disregarded matrimonial ties when they sided with Duryodhan; the Magadhas & Chedies put aside the memory of personal wrongs when they espoused the cause of Yudhisthere. I believe the explanation we must gather from the hints of the Mahabharata is this, that the nations were divided into three classes, those who desired autonomy, those who desired to break the power of the Kurus and assert their own supremacy and those who imbued with old imperialistic notions desired an united India. The first followed Duryodhana because the empire of Duryodhana could not be more than the empire of a day while that of Yudhisthere had every possibility of permanence; even Queen Gandhari, Duryodhan's own mother, was able to hit this weak point in her son's ambition. The Rajasuya Sacrifice had also undoubtedly identified Yudhisthere in men's minds with the imperialistic impulse of the times. We are given some important hints in the Udyogapurva. When Vidura remonstrates with Krishna for coming to Hastinapura, he tells him it was highly imprudent for him to venture there knowing as he did that the city was full of kings all burning with enmity against him for having deprived them once of their greatness, driven by the fear of him to take refuge

with Duryodhan and all eager to war against the Pandavas.

आशंसते वै धृतराष्ट्रस्य पुत्रो महाराज्यमसपत्नं पृथिव्यां ।  
 तस्मिञ्छमः केवलो नोपलभ्यो बद्धं सन्तं मन्यते लब्धमर्थम् ॥  
 पर्यस्तेयं पृथिवी कालपक्वा दुर्योधनार्थं पाण्डवान्योद्धुकामाः ।  
 समागताः सर्वयोधाः पृथिव्यां राजानश्च क्षितिपालैः समेताः ॥  
 सर्वे चैते कृतवैराः पुरस्तात्त्वया राजानो हतसाराश्च कृष्ण ।  
 तवोद्वेगात्सञ्चिता धार्तराष्ट्रान्सुसंहताः सह कर्णेन वीराः ॥  
 त्यक्तात्मानः सह दुर्योधनेन हृष्टा योद्धुं पाण्डवान्सर्वयोधाः ।<sup>4</sup>

This can have no intelligible reference except to the Rajasuya sacrifice. Although it was the armies of Yudhisthere that had traversed India then on their mission of conquest, Krishna was generally recognised as the great moving & master mind whose hands of execution the Pandavas were and without whom they would have been nothing. His personality dominated men's imaginations for adoration or for hatred; for that many abhorred him as an astute & unscrupulous revolutionist in morals, politics & religion, we very clearly perceive. We have not only the fiery invectives of Shishupala but the reproach of Bhurishravas, the Vahlika, a man of high reputation & universally respected.

येषु येषु नरः पार्थ यत्र यत्र च वर्तते ।  
 आशु तच्छीलतामेति तदिदं त्वयि दृश्यते ॥  
 कथं हि राजवंश्यस्त्वं कौरवेयो विशेषतः ।  
 क्षत्रधर्मादपक्रान्तः सुवृत्तश्चरितव्रतः ॥  
 इदन्तु यदतिक्षुद्रं वाष्ण्यार्थं कृतं त्वया ।  
 वासुदेवमतं नूनं नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ॥  
 को हि नाम प्रमत्ताय परेण सह युध्यते ।  
 ईदृशं व्यसनं दद्याद्यो न कृष्णसखो भवेत् ॥  
 ब्राह्म्याः संश्लिष्टकर्माणः प्रकृत्यैव च गर्हिताः ।

<sup>4</sup> These lines (Udyoga Parva 92.23–26) are found at the top of the page in the manuscript. The next two Sanskrit quotations (Drona Parva 143.11–15 and Udyoga Parva 93.16) were written at the tops of the following two pages. Their place of insertion in the text was not indicated. — Ed.



वृष्ण्यन्धकाः कथं पार्थ प्रमाणं भवता कृताः ॥

Krishna himself is perfectly conscious of this; he tells Vidura that he must make efforts towards peace both to deliver his soul & to justify himself in the eyes of men.

न मां ब्रूयुरधर्मिष्ठा मूढा ह्यसुहृदस्तथा ।

शक्तो नावारयत्कृष्णः संरब्धान्कुरुपाण्डवान् ॥

The belief that Krishna's policy & statesmanship was the really effective force behind Yudhisthere's greatness, pervades the epic. But who were these nations that resented so strongly the attempt of Yudhisthere & Krishna to impose an empire on them? It is a significant fact that the Southern and Western peoples went almost solid for Duryodhana in this quarrel — Madra, the Decan, Avanti, Sindhu Sauvira, Gandhara, in one long line from southern Mysore to northern Candahar; the Aryan colonies in the yet half civilised regions of the Lower valley of the Ganges espoused the same cause. The Eastern nations, heirs of the Ix-vaacou imperial idea, went equally solid for Yudhisthere. The Central peoples, repositories of the great Kuru Panchala tradition as well as the Yadavas, who were really a Central nation though they had trekked to the West, were divided. Now this distribution is exactly what we should have expected. The nations which are most averse to enter into an imperial system & cherish most their separate existence are those which are outside the centre of civilisation, hardy, warlike, only partially refined; and their aversion is still more emphatic when they have never or only for a short time been part of an empire. This is the real secret of the invincible resistance which England has opposed to all Continental schemes of empire from Philip II to Napoleon; it is the secret of her fear of Russia; it is the reason of the singular fact that only now after many centuries of great national existence has she become imbued with the imperial idea on her own account. The savage attachment to their independence of small nations like the Dutch, the Swiss, the Boers is traceable to the same cause; the fierce resistance opposed by the

greater part of Spain to Napoleon was that of a nation which once imperial & central has fallen out of the main flood of civilisation & is therefore becoming provincial & attached to its own isolation. That the nations of the East & South and the Aryan colonies in Bengal should oppose the imperialist policy of Krishna & throw in their lot with Duryodhana is therefore no more than we should expect. On the other hand nations at the very heart of civilisation, who have formed at one time or another dominant parts of an empire fall easily into imperial schemes, but personal rivalry, the desire of each to be the centre of empire, divides them and brings them into conflict not any difference of political temperament. For nations have very tenacious memories and are always attempting to renew the great ages of their past. In the Eastern peoples the imperialistic idea was very strong and having failed to assert a new empire of their own under Jarasundha, they seem to have turned with one consent to Yudhisthere as the man who could alone realise their ideal. One of Shishupal's remarks in the Rajasuya sacrifice is very significant

वयं न तु भयादस्य कौन्तेयस्य महात्मनः ।  
 प्रयच्छामः करान्सर्वे न लोभान्न च सान्त्वनात् ॥  
 अस्य धर्मे प्रवृत्तस्य पार्थिवत्वं चिकीर्षतः ।  
 करानस्मै प्रयच्छामः सोऽयमस्मान्न मन्यते ॥

We remember that it was an Eastern poet who had sung perhaps not many centuries before in mighty stanzas the idealisation of Imperial Government & Aryan unity and enshrined in his imperishable verse the glories of the third Coshalan Empire. The establishment of Aryan unity was in the eyes of the Eastern nations a holy work and the desire of establishing universal lordship with that view a sufficient ground for one of the most self-willed & violent princes of his time [to] put aside his personal feelings & predilections in order to farther it. Shishupal had been one of the most considerable & ardent supporters of Jarasundha in his attempt to establish a Magadhan empire; that attempt having failed he like Jarasundha's own son turned in

spite of his enmity with Krishna to Yudhisthere as the coming Emperor. Even the great quarrel and the summary slaughter of Shishupal by Krishna could not divert his nation from its adhesion to the new Empire. The divisions of the Central nations follow an equally intelligible line. Throughout the Mahabharata we perceive that the great weakness of the Kurus lay in the division of their counsels. There was a peace party among them led by Bhishma, Drona, Kripa & Vidura, the wise & experienced statesmen who desired justice and reconciliation with Yudhisthere and a warparty of the hotblooded younger men led by Karna, Duhsasana & Duryodhana himself who were confident of their power of meeting the world in arms; King Dhritarashtra found himself hard put to it to flatter the opinions of the elders while secretly following his own predilections & the ambitions of the younger men. These are facts patent on the face of the epic. But it has not been sufficiently considered what a remarkable fact it is that men of such lofty character as Bhishma and Drona should have acted against their sense of right and justice and fought in what they had repeatedly condemned as an unjust cause. If Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Aswatthaman & Vikarna had plainly intimated to Duryodhan that they would support Yudhisthere with their arms or even that they would stand aloof from the war, it is clear there would have been no war at all. And I cannot but think that had it been a question purely between Kuru & Kuru, this is the course they would have adopted. But Bhishma & Drona must have perceived that behind the Pandavas were the Panchalas & Matsyas. They must have suspected that these nations were supporting Yudhisthere not out of purely disinterested motives but with certain definite political objects. Neither Drupada nor Virata would have been accepted by India as emperors in their own right, any more than say Sindhia or Holkar would have been in the last century. But by putting forward the just claims of a prince of the imperial Bharata line, the descendant of Bharata Ajamede connected with themselves by marriage, they could avoid this difficulty and at the same time break the power of the Kurus and replace them as the dominant partners in the new Empire. The

presence of personal interests is evident in their hot eagerness for war and their unwillingness to take any sincere steps towards a just and peaceful solution of the difficulty. Their action stands in striking contrast with the moderate, statesmanlike yet firm policy of Krishna. It can hardly be supposed that Bhishma and the Kuru statesmen of his party were autonomists; they must have been as eager for a Kuru empire as Duryodhana himself.

At any rate they eagerly welcomed the statesmanlike reasonings of Krishna when he proposed to King Dhritarashtra to unite the force of Pandava & Kaurava & build up a Kuru empire which should irresistibly dominate the world. "On yourself & myself" says Krishna "rests today the choice of peace or war & the destiny of the world; do your part in pacifying your sons, I will see to the Pandavas."

सहायभूता भरतास्तवैव स्युर्जनेश्वर ॥  
 धर्मार्थयोस्तिष्ठ राजन्पाण्डवैरभिरक्षितः ।  
 न हि शक्यास्तथाभूता यत्नादपि नराधिप ॥  
 न हि त्वां पाण्डवैर्जेतुं रक्ष्यमाणं महात्मभिः ।  
 इन्द्रोऽपि देवैः सहितः प्रसहेत कुतो नृपाः ॥  
 यत्र भीष्मश्च द्रोणश्च कृपः कर्णो विविंशतिः ।  
 अश्वत्थामा विकर्णश्च सोमदत्तोऽथ बाहूलिकः ॥  
 सैन्धवश्च कलिङ्गश्च काम्बोजश्च सुदक्षिणः ।  
 युधिष्ठिरो भीमसेनः सव्यसाची यमौ तथा ॥  
 सात्यकिश्च महातेजा युयुत्सुश्च महारथः ।  
 को नु तान्विपरीतात्मा युध्येत भरतर्षभ ॥  
 तस्य ते पृथिवीपालास्त्वत्समाः पृथिवीपते ।  
 श्रेयांसश्चैव राजानः सन्धास्यन्ते परन्तप ॥  
 स त्वं पुत्रैश्च पौत्रैश्च पितृभिर्भ्रातृभिस्तथा ।  
 सुहृद्भिः सर्वतो गुप्तः सुखं शक्यसि जीवितुम् ॥  
 एतानेव पुरोधाय सत्कृत्य च यथा पुरा ।  
 अखिलां भोक्ष्यसे सर्वां पृथिवीं पृथिवीपते ॥  
 एतैर्हि सहितः सर्वैः पाण्डवैः स्वैश्च भारत ।  
 अन्यान्विजेष्यसे शत्रूनेषु स्वार्थस्तवाखिलः ॥

तैरेवोपार्जितां भूमिं भोक्ष्यसे च परन्तप ।  
यदि संपत्स्यसे पुत्रैः सहामात्यैर्नराधिप ॥

But the empire of Yudhisthere enforced by the arms of Mutsya & Panchala or even by the armed threats meant to Bhishma & Kripa something very different from a Kuru Empire; it must have seemed to them to imply rather the overthrow & humiliation of the Kurus and a Panchala domination under a Bharata prince. This it concerned their patriotism and their sense of Kshatriya pride & duty to resist so long as there was blood in their veins. The inability to associate justice with their cause was a grief to them, but it could not alter their plain duty. Such as I take it is the clear political story of the Mahabharata. I have very scantily indicated some of its larger aspects only; but if my interpretation be correct, it is evident that we shall have in the disengaged Mahabharata not only a mighty epic, but a historical document of unique value.

What I wish, however, to emphasize at present is that the portions of the Mahabharata which bear the high, severe and heroic style and personality I have described, are also the portions which unfold consecutively, powerfully and without any incredible embroidery of legend this story of clashing political & personal passions & ambitions. It is therefore not a mere assumption, but a perfectly reasonable inference that these portions form the original epic. If we assume that the Ramayanistic portions of the epic or the rougher & more uncouth work precede these in antiquity, we assume that the legend was written first and history added to it afterwards; this is a sequence so contrary to all experience and to all accepted canons of criticism that it would need the most indisputable proof before it could command any credence. Where there is a plain history mixed up with legendary matter written by palpably different hands, criticism judges from all precedents that the latter must be later work embodying the additions human fancy always and most in countries where a scrupulous historic sense has not been developed weaves round a great event which has powerfully occupied the national imagination. Moreover in judging

the relative genuineness of different styles in the same work, we are bound to see the hand of the original writer in the essential parts of the story as we have it. It makes no difference to this question whether there was an original ballad epic or not, or whether it was used in the composition of the Mahabharata or not. We have a certain poem in a certain form and in resolving it to its original parts we must take it as we have it and not allow our judgment to be disturbed by visions of a poem which we have not. If the alleged ballad epic was included bodily or in part in the Mahabharata, our analysis will find it there without fail. If it was merely used as material just as Shakespeare used Plutarch or Hall & Holinshed, it is no longer germane to the matter. Now the most essential part of a story is the point from which the catastrophe started; in the Mahabharata this is the mishandling of Draupadie & the exile of the Pandavas; but this again leads us back to the Rajasuya sacrifice & the imperial Hall of the Pandavas from which the destroying envy of Duryodhan took its rise. In the Sabhapurva therefore we must seek omissis omittendis for the hand of the original poet; & the whole of the Sabhapurva with certain unimportant omissions is in that great & severe style which is the stamp of the personality of Vyasa. This once established we argue farther from the identity of style, treatment & personality between the Viratapurva & the Sabhapurva, certain passages being omitted, that this book is also the work of Vyasa. From these two large & mainly homogeneous bodies of poetical work we shall be able to form a sufficient picture of the great original poet, the drift of his thought and the methods of his building. This we shall then confirm, correct & supplement by a study of the Udyogapurva which up to the marching of the armies presents, though with more but still separable alloy breaking in, the same clear, continuous & discernible vein of pure gold running through it. Thus armed we may even rely on resolving roughly the tangle of the Adi & Vana Purvas and it is only when the war begins, that we shall have to admit doubt, faltering and guesswork; even here however we shall not be without some light even in its thickest darkness. That the poem can be disentangled, I hold then to be beyond

dispute, but it can only be done by a long and voluminous critical analysis, and even this must be supported by a detailed edition of the whole Mahabharat in which each canto & chapter shall be discussed on its own merits. At present therefore I propose to pass over the method after once indicating its general nature and present certain definite results only. I propose solely to draw a picture, in outline merely, of the sublime poetical personality which an analysis of the work reveals as the original poet, the Krishna Dwaipayana who wrote the Bharata of the 24,000 [slokas] and not the other Vyasa, if Vyasa he was, who enlarged it to something approaching its present dimensions. And let me express at once my deep admiration of the poetical powers & vast philosophic mind of this second writer; no mean poet was he who gave us the poem we know, in many respects the greatest and most interesting & formative work in the world's literature. If I seem to speak mainly in dispraise of him, it is because I am concerned here with his defects and not with his qualities; for the subject I wish to treat is Krishna of the Island, his most important characteristics and their artistic contrast with those of our other greater, but less perfect epic poet, Valmekie.

I have said that no foreigner can for a moment be trusted to apply the literary test to a poem in our language; the extraordinary blunders of the most eminent German critics in dealing with Elizabethan plays have settled that question once for all. Educated Indians on the other hand have their own deficiencies in dealing with Vyasa; for they have [been] nourished partly on the curious and elaborate art of Kalidasa and his gorgeous pomps of vision and colour, partly on the somewhat gaudy, expensive & meretricious spirit of English poetry. Like Englishmen they are taught to profess a sort of official admiration for Shakespeare & Milton but with them as with the majority of Englishmen the poets they really steep themselves in are Shelley, Tennyson & Byron and to a less degree Keats & perhaps Spenser. Now the manner of these poets, lax, voluptuous, artificial, all outward glitter and colour, but inwardly poor of spirit and wanting in genuine mastery and the true poetical excellence is a bad school for the appreciation of such severe & perfect work as Vyasa's.

For Vyasa is the most masculine of writers.<sup>5</sup> When Coleridge spoke of the femininity of genius he had in mind certain features of temperament which whether justly or not are usually thought to count for more in the feminine mould than in the masculine, the love of ornament, emotionalism, mobile impressionability, the tyranny of imagination over the reason, excessive sensitiveness to form and outward beauty; a tendency to be dominated imaginatively by violence & the show of strength, to be prodigal of oneself, not to husband the powers, to be for showing them off, to fail in self-restraint is also feminine. All these are natural properties of the quick artistic temperament prone by throwing all itself outward to lose balance and therefore seldom perfectly sane and strong in all its parts. So much did these elements form the basis of Coleridge's own temperament that he could not perhaps imagine a genius in which they were wanting. Yet Goethe, Dante & Sophocles show that the very highest genius can exist without them. But none of the great poets I have named is so singularly masculine, so deficient in femininity as Vyasa, none dominates so much by intellect and personality, yet satisfies so little the romantic imagination. Indeed no poet at all near the first rank has the same granite mind in which impressions are received with difficulty but once received are ineffaceable. In his austere self-restraint and economy of power he is indifferent to ornament for its own sake, to the pleasures of poetry as distinguished from its ardours, to little graces & self-indulgences of style; the substance counts for everything & the form has to limit itself to its proper work of expressing with precision & power the substance. Even his most romantic pieces have a virgin coldness & loftiness in their beauty. To intellects fed on the elaborate pomp and imagery of Kalidasa's numbers and

<sup>5</sup> *The passage below, uncanceled in the manuscript, was abandoned by Sri Aurobindo in favour of the corresponding passage in the printed text:*

Vyasa is the most masculine of writers. He has that is to say the masculine qualities, restraint, dignity, indifference to ornament, strength without ostentation, energy economised, a strong, pure and simple taste, a high & great spirit, more than any poet I know. The usual artifices of poetry, simile, metaphor, allusion, ornamental description, the decorative element of the art, he resorts to with unequalled infrequency and to a superficial or an untrained taste he appears to be even unimaginative and uninspiring.



the somewhat gaudy, expensive & meretricious spirit of English poetry, Vyasa may seem bald and unattractive. To be fed on the verse of Spenser, Shelley, Keats, Byron & Tennyson is no good preparation for the severest of classics. It is indeed, I believe, the general impression of many “educated” young Indians that the Mahabharata is a mass of old wives’ stories without a spark of poetry or imagination. But to those who have bathed even a little in the fountain-heads of poetry & can bear the keenness & purity of those mountain sources, the naked & unadorned poetry of Vyasa [is a perpetual refreshment.]<sup>6</sup> To read him is to bathe in a chill fountain in the heats of summer; they find that one has [available an unfailing source] of tonic & [refreshment] to the soul; one [comes into relation] with a [mind] whose [bare strong contact] has the [power] of infusing strength, courage and endurance.<sup>7</sup> There are certain things which have this power inborn & are accordingly valued by those who have felt deeply its properties, such are the air of the mountains or the struggle to a capable mind with hardship and difficulty; the Vedanta philosophy, the ideal of the निष्काम धर्म, the poetry of Vyasa, three closely related entities, are intellectual forces that exercise a similar effect & attraction.

The style of this powerful writer is perhaps the one example in literature of strength in its purity; a strength undefaced by violence & excess yet not weakened by flagging and negligence. It is even less propped or helped out by artifices and aids than any other poetical style. Vyasa takes little trouble with similes, metaphors, rhetorical turns, the usual paraphernalia of poetry; nor when he uses them, is he at pains to select such as shall be new & curiously beautiful; they are there to define more clearly what he has in mind, and he makes just enough of them for that purpose, never striving to convert them into a separate grace or

<sup>6</sup> Cancelled in manuscript. Several other words, also cancelled, were written above this phrase. The last complete version may have been “is a companion that never palls.”

—Ed.

<sup>7</sup> The words between brackets are cancelled in the manuscript. There are a number of uncanceled words between the lines whose connection with the text is not evident.

—Ed.

a decorative element. They have force & beauty in their context but cannot be turned into elegant excerpts; in themselves they are in fact little or nothing. When Bhema is spoken of as breathing hard like a weakling borne down by a load too heavy for him, there is nothing in the simile itself. It derives its force from its aptness to the heavy burden of unaccomplished revenge which the fierce spirit of the strong man was condemned to bear. We may say the same of his epithets, that great preoccupation of romantic artists; they are such as are most natural, crisp & firm, best suited to the plain idea & only unusual when the business in hand requires an unusual thought, but never *recherché* or existing for their own beauty. Thus when he is describing the greatness of Krishna and hinting his claims to be considered as identical with the Godhead, he gives him the one epithet अप्रमेयः immeasurable, which is strong and unusual enough to rise to the thought, but not to be a piece of literary decoration or a violence of expression. In brief, he religiously avoids overstress; his audacities of phrase are few, and they have a grace of restraint in their boldness. There is indeed a rushing vast Valmekeian style which intervenes often in the Mahabharata; but it is evidently the work of a different hand; for it belongs to a less powerful intellect, duller poetical insight and coarser taste, which has yet caught something of the surge and cry of Valmekie's Oceanic poetry. Vyasa in fact stands at the opposite pole from Valmekie. The poet of the Ramayan has a flexible & universal genius embracing the Titanic and the divine, the human and the gigantic at once or with an inspired ease of transition. But Vyasa is unmixed Olympian; he lives in a world of pure verse and diction, enjoying his own heaven of golden clearness. We have seen what are the main negative qualities of the style; pureness, strength, grandeur of intellect & personality are its positive virtues. It is the expression of a pregnant and forceful mind, in which the idea is sufficient to itself, conscious of its own intrinsic greatness; when this mind runs in the groove of narrative or emotion, the style wears an air of high and pellucid ease in the midst of which its strenuous compactness and brevity moves & lives as a saving and strengthening spirit; but when it begins to think rapidly

& profoundly as often happens in the great speeches, it is apt to leave the hearer behind; sufficient to itself, thinking quickly, briefly & greatly it does not care to pause on its own ideas or explain them at length, but speaks as it thinks, in a condensed often elliptical style, preferring to indicate rather than expatiate, often passing over the steps by which it should arrive at the idea and hastening to the idea itself; often also it is subtle & multiplies many shades & ramifications of thought in a short compass. From this arises that frequent knottiness & excessive compression of logical sequence, that appearance of elliptical & sometimes obscure expression, which so struck the ancient critics in Vyasa and which they expressed in the legend that when dictating the Mahabharata to Ganesha, the poet in order not to be outstripped by his divine scribe — for it was Ganesha's stipulation that not for one moment should he be left without matter to write — threw in frequently knotty and closeknit passages which forced the lightning-swift hand to pause & labour slowly over its work. To a strenuous mind these passages, from the exercise they give to the intellect, are an added charm just as a mountaineer takes an especial delight in steep ascents which let him feel his ability. Of one thing, however, we may be confident in reading Vyasa, that the expression will always be just to the thought; he never palters with or labours to dress up the reality within him. For the rest we must evidently trace this peculiarity to the compact, steep & sometimes elliptical, but always strenuous diction of the Upanishads in which the mind of the poet was trained & his personality tempered. At the same time like the Upanishads themselves or like the enigmatic Aeschylus, he can be perfectly clear, precise & full whenever he chooses; and he more often chooses than not. His expression of thought is usually strong and abrupt; his expression of fact and of emotion strong and precise. His verse has similar peculiarities. It is a golden and equable stream that sometimes whirls itself into eddies or dashes upon rocks; but it always runs in harmony with the thought. Vyasa has not Valmekie's movement as of the sea, that wide and unbroken surge with its infinite variety of waves, which enables him not only to find in the facile anustubh

metre a sufficient vehicle for his vast & ambitious work but to maintain it through [ ] couplets without its palling or losing its capacity of adjustment to evervarying moods & turns of narrative. But in his narrower limits & on the level of his lower flight Vyasa has great subtlety & finesse. Especially admirable is his use, in speeches, of broken effects such as would in less skilful hands have become veritable discords; and again in narrative of the simplest & barest metrical movements, as in the opening Sarga of the Sabhapurva to create certain calculated effects. But it would be idle to pretend for him any equality as a master of verse with Valmekie. When he has to rise from his levels to express powerful emotions, grandiose eloquence or swift & sweeping narrative, he cannot always effect it in the anustubh metre; he falls back more often than not on the rolling magnificence of the [tristubh] which best sets & ennobles his strong-winged austerity.

Be its limits what one will, this is certain that there was never a style & verse of such bare, direct & resistless strength as this of Vyasa's or one that went so straight to the heart of all that is heroic in a man. Listen to the cry of insulted Draupadie to her husband

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ किं शेषे भीमसेन यथा मृतः ।  
नामृतस्य हि पापीयान्भार्यामालभ्य जीवति ॥

“Arise, arise, O Bhemasena, wherefore sleepest thou like one that is dead? For nought but dead is he whose wife a sinful hand has touched and lives.”, or the reproach of Krishna to Arjoun for his weak pity which opens the second surga of the Bhagavadgita. Or again hear Krishna's description of Bhema's rage and solitary brooding over revenge and his taunting accusations of cowardice: “At other times, O Bhemasena, thou praisest war, thou art all for crushing Dhritarashtra's heartless sons who take delight in death; thou sleepest not at night, O conquering soldier, but wakest lying face downwards, and ever thou utterest dread speech of storm and wrath, breathing fire in the torment of thine own rage; and thy mind is without rest like a smoking fire; yea,

thou liest all apart breathing heavily like a weakling distressed by his load; so that some who know not even think thee mad. For as an elephant tramples on uprooted trees and breaks them to fragments, so thou stormest along with labouring breath hurting earth with thy feet. Thou takest no delight in all the people but cursest them in thy heart, O Bhema, son of Pandou, nor in aught else hast thou any pleasure night or day; but thou sittest in secret like one weeping and sometimes of a sudden laughest aloud, yea, thou sittest for long with thy head between thy knees & thy eyes closed; and then again thou starest before thee frowning and clenching thy teeth; thy every action is one of wrath. ‘Surely as our father Sun is seen in the East when luminously he ascendeth, & surely as wide with rays he wheeleth down to his release in the West, so sure is this oath I utter and never shall be broken. With this club I will meet & slay the haughty Duryodhan’, thus touching thy club thou swearest among thy brothers. And today thou, thou!, thinkest of peace, O warrior! Ah yes, I know the hearts of those that clamour for war, alter very strangely when war showeth its face, since fear findeth out even thee, O Bhema! Ah yes, son of Pritha, thou seest adverse omens both when thou sleepest & when thou wakest, therefore thou desirest peace. Ah yes, thou feelest no more the man in thyself, but an eunuch & thy heart sinketh with alarm, therefore art thou thus overcome. Thy heart quakes, thy mind fainteth, thou art seized with a trembling in thy thighs, therefore thou desirest peace. Verily, O son of Pritha, wavering & inconstant is the heart of a mortal man, like the pods of the silk cotton driven by the swiftness of every wind. This shameful thought of thine, monstrous as a human voice in a dumb beast, makes the hearts of Pandou’s sons to sink like (shipwrecked) men that have no raft. Look on thine own deeds, O seed of Bharat, remember thy lofty birth! arise, put off thy weakness; be firm, O heart of a hero; unworthy of thee is this languor; what he cannot win by the mightiness of him, that a Kshatriya will not touch.”

This passage I have quoted at some length because it is eminently characteristic of Vyasa’s poetical method. Another poet would

have felt himself justified by the nature of the speech in using some wild and whirling words, in seeking vividness by exaggeration, at the very least in raising his voice a little. Contrast with this the perfect temperance of this passage, the confident & unemotional reliance on the weight of what is said, not on the manner of saying it. The vividness of the portraiture arises from the quiet accuracy of vision and the care in the choice of simple but effective words; not from any seeking after the salient and graphic such as gives Kalidasa his wonderful power of description; and the bitterness of the taunts arises from the quiet & searching irony with which [each] shaft is tipped and not from any force used in driving them home. Yet every line goes straight as an arrow to its mark; every word is the utterance of a strong man speaking to a strong man and gives iron to the mind. Strength is one constant term of the Vyasic style; temperance, justness of taste is the other.

Strength and a fine austerity are then the two tests which give us safe guidance through the morass of the Mahabharata; where these two exist together, we may reasonably presume some touch of Vyasa; where they do not exist or do not conjoin, we feel at once the redactor or the interpolator. I have spoken of another poet whose more turbid & vehement style breaks continually into the pure gold of Vyasa's work. The whole temperament of this redacting poet, for he is something more than an interpolator, has its roots in Valmekie; but like most poets of a secondary and fallible genius, he exaggerates while adopting the more audacious and therefore the more perilous tendencies of his master. The love of the wonderful touched with the grotesque, the taste for the amorphous, a marked element in Valmekie's complex temperament, is with his follower something like a malady. He grows impatient with the apparent tameness of Vyasa's inexorable self-restraint, and restlessly throws in here couplets, there whole paragraphs of a more flamboyant vigour. Occasionally this is done with real ability & success, but as a rule they are true purple patches, daubs of paint on the stainless dignity of marble. For his rage for the wonderful is not always accompanied by the prodigious sweep of imagination which in

Valmekie successfully grasps and compels the most reluctant materials. The result is that puerilities and gross breaches of taste fall easily & hardily from his pen. Not one of these could we possibly imagine as consistent with the severe, self-possessed intellect of Vyasa. Fineness, justness, discrimination & propriety of taste are the very soul of the man.

Nowhere is his restrained & quiet art more visible than when he handles the miraculous. But since the Mahabharata is so honeycombed with the work of inept wondermongers, we are driven for an undisturbed appreciation of it to works which are no parts of the original Mahabharata and are yet by the same hand, the Nala & the Savitrie. These poems have all the peculiar qualities which we have decided to be very Vyasa, the style, the diction, the personality are identical and refer us back to him as clearly as the sunlight refers us back to the sun; and yet they have something which the Mahabharata has not. Here we have the very morning of Vyasa's genius, when he was young and ardent; perhaps still under the immediate influence of Valmekie (one of the most pathetic touches in the Nala is borrowed straight out of the Ramayana); at any rate able without ceasing to be finely restrained to give some rein to his fancy. The Nala therefore has the delicate & unusual romantic grace of a young & severe classic who has permitted himself to go-a-maying in the fields of romance. There is a remote charm of restraint in the midst of abandon, of vigilance in the play of fancy which is passing sweet & strange. The Savitrie is a maturer & nobler work, perfect & restrained in detail, but it has still some glow of the same youth and grace over it. This then is the rare charm of these two poems that we find there the soul of the pale & marble Rishi, the austere philosopher, the great statesman, the strong and stern poet of war & empire, when it was yet in its radiant morning, far from the turmoil of courts & cities & the roar of the battlefield and had not yet scaled the mountaintops of thoughts. Young, a Brahmachari & a student, Vyasa dwelt with the green silences of earth, felt the fascination & loneliness of the forests of which his earlier poetry is full, walked by many a clear & lucid river white with

the thronging waterfowl, perhaps Payoshni, that ocean-seeking stream, or heard the thunder of multitudinous crickets in some lone tremendous forest; with Valmekie's mighty stanzas in his mind, saw giant-haunted glooms, dells where faeries gathered, brakes where some Python from the underworld came out to bask or listened to the voices of Kinnaries on the mountaintops. In such surroundings wonders might seem natural and deities as in Arcadia might peep from under every tree. Nala's messengers to Damayanti are a troop of goldenwinged swans that speak with a human voice; he is intercepted on his way by gods who make him their envoy to a mortal maiden; he receives from them gifts more than human; fire and water come to him at his bidding and flowers bloom in his hands; in his downfall the dice become birds which fly away with his remaining garment; when he wishes to cut in half the robe of Damayanti, a sword comes ready to his hand in the desolate cabin; he meets the Serpent-King in the ring of fire and is turned by him into the deformed charioteer, Vahuka; the tiger in the forest turns away from Damayanti without injuring her and the lustful hunter falls consumed by the power of offended chastity. The destruction of the caravan by wild elephants, the mighty driving of Nala, the counting of the leaves of the [      ], the cleaving of the Vibhitaka tree; every incident almost is full of that sense of beauty & wonder which were awakened in Vyasa by his early surroundings. We ask whether this beautiful fairy-tale is the work of that stern and high poet with whom the actualities of life were everything and the flights of fancy counted for so little. Yet if we look carefully, we shall see in the Nala abundant proof of the severe touch of Vyasa, just as in his share of the Mahabharata fleeting touches of wonder & strangeness, gone as soon as glimpsed, evidence a love of the ultranatural, severely bitted and reined in. Especially do we see the poet of the Mahabharata in the artistic vigilance which limits each supernatural incident to a few light strokes, to the exact place and no other where it is wanted & the exact amount and no more that is necessary. (It is this sparing economy of touch almost unequalled in its beauty of just rejection, which makes the poem an epic instead of a fairy



tale in verse.) There is for instance the incident of the swans; we all know to what prolixities of pathos & bathos vernacular poets like the Gujarati Premanund have enlarged this feature of the story. But Vyasa introduced it to give a certain touch of beauty & strangeness and that touch once imparted the swans disappear from the scene; for his fine taste felt that to prolong the incident by one touch more would have been to lower the poem and run the risk of raising a smile. Similarly in the Savitrie what a tremendous figure a romantic poet would have made of Death, what a passionate struggle between the human being and the master of tears and partings! But Vyasa would have none of this; he had one object, to paint the power of a woman's silent love and he rejected everything which went beyond this or which would have been merely decorative. We cannot regret his choice. There have been plenty of poets who could have given us imaginative and passionate pictures of Love struggling with Death, but there has been only one who could give us a Savitrie.

In another respect also the Nala helps us materially to appreciate Vyasa's genius. His dealings with nature are a strong test of a poet's quality; but in the Mahabharata proper, of all epics the most pitilessly denuded of unnecessary ornament, natural description is rare. We must therefore again turn for aid to the poems which preceded his hard and lofty maturity. Vyasa's natural description as we find it there, corresponds to the nervous, masculine and hardstrung make of his intellect. His treatment is always puissant and direct without any single pervasive atmosphere except in sunlit landscapes, but always effectual, realizing the scene strongly or boldly by a few simple but sufficient words. There are some poets who are the children of Nature, whose imagination is made of her dews, whose blood thrills to her with the perfect impulse of spiritual kinship; Wordsworth is of these and Valmekie. Their voices in speaking of her unconsciously become rich and liquid and their words are touched with a subtle significance of thought or emotion. There are others who hold her with a strong sensuous grasp by virtue of a ripe, sometimes an overripe delight in beauty; such are Shakespeare, Keats, Kalidasa. Others again approach her

with a fine or clear intellectual sense of her charm as do some of the old classical poets. Hardly in the rank of poets are those who like Dryden & Pope use her, if at all, only to provide them with a smooth or well-turned literary expression. Vyasa belongs to none of these, and yet often touches the first three at particular points without definitely coinciding with any. He takes the kingdom of Nature by violence. Approaching her from outside his masculine genius forces its way to her secret, insists and will take no denial. Accordingly he is impressed at first contact by the harmony in the midst of variety of her external features, absorbs these into a strong and retentive imagination, meditates on them and so reads his way to the closer impression, the inner sense behind that which is external, the personal temperament of a landscape. In his record of what he has seen, this impression more often than not comes first as that which abides & prevails; sometimes it is all he cares to record; but his tendency towards perfect faithfulness to the vision within leads him, when the scene is still fresh to his eye, to record the data through which the impression was reached. We have all experienced the way in which our observation of a scene, conscious or unconscious, forms itself out of various separate & often uncoordinated impressions, which if we write a description at the time or soon after and are faithful to ourselves, find their way into the picture even at the expense of symmetry; but if we allow a long time to elapse before we recall the scene, there returns to us only a single self-consistent impression which without accurately rendering it, retains its essence and its atmosphere. Something of this sort occurs in our poet; for Vyasa is always faithful to himself. When he records the data of his impression, he does it with force and clearness, frequently with a luminous atmosphere around the object, especially with a delight in the naked beauty of the single clear word which at once communicates itself to the hearer. First come the strong and magical epithets or the brief and puissant touches by which the soul of the landscape is made visible and palpable, then the enumeration sometimes only stately, at others bathed in a clear loveliness. The fine opening of the twelfth surga of the Nala is a signal example of this method. At the

threshold we have the great & sombre line वनं प्रतिभयं शून्यं  
झिल्लिकागणनादितं ।

A void tremendous forest thundering  
With crickets

striking the keynote of gloom & loneliness, then the cold stately enumeration of the forest's animal & vegetable peoples, then again the strong and revealing epithet in his "echoing woodlands sound-pervaded"; then follows "river & lake and pool and many beasts and many birds" and once more the touch of wonder & weirdness

She many alarming shapes  
of fiend and snake and giant. . . . .  
. . . . . beheld;

making magical the bare following lines and especially the nearest, पत्वलानि तडागानि गिरिकूटानि सर्वशः "and pools & tarns & summits everywhere", with its poetical delight in the bare beauty of words. It is instructive to compare with this passage the wonderful silhouette of night in Valmekie's Book of the Child

निष्पन्दास्तरवः सर्वे निलीना मृगपक्षिणः ।  
नैशेन तमसा व्याप्ता दिशश्च रघुनन्दन ॥  
शनैर्विसृज्यते सन्ध्या नभो नेत्रैरिवावृतम् ।  
नक्षत्रतारागहनं ज्योतिर्भिरवभासते ॥  
उत्तिष्ठते च शीतांशुः शशी लोकतमोनुदः ।  
ह्लादयन्प्राणिनां लोके मनांसि प्रभया स्वया ॥  
नैशानि सर्वभूतानि विचरन्ति ततस्ततः ।  
यक्षराक्षससङ्घाश्च रौद्राश्च पिशिताशनाः ॥

"Motionless are all trees and shrouded the beasts & birds and the quarters filled, O joy of Raghu, with the glooms of night; slowly the sky parts with evening and grows full of eyes; dense with stars & constellations it glitters with points of light; and now yonder with cold beams rising up the moon thrusts away the shadows from the world gladdening the hearts of living

things on earth with its luminousness. All creatures of the night are walking to and fro and spirit bands and troops of giants and the carrion-feeding jackals begin to roam.”

Here every detail is carefully selected to produce a certain effect, the charm and weirdness of falling night in the forest; not a word is wasted, every epithet, every verb, every image is sought out and chosen so as to aid this effect, while the vowellation is subtly managed and assonance and the composition of sounds skilfully & unobtrusively woven so as to create a delicate, wary & listening movement as of one walking in the forests by moonlight and afraid that the leaves may speak under his footing or his breath grow loud enough to be heard by himself or by beings whose presence he does not see but fears. Of such delicately imaginative art as this Vyasa was not capable; he could not sufficiently turn his strength into sweetness. Neither had he that rare, salient and effective architecture of style which makes Kalidasa's "night on the verge of dawn with her faint gleaming moon and a few just-decipherable stars"

तनुप्रकाशेन विचेयतारका प्रभातकल्पा शशिनेव शर्वरी ।

Vyasa's art, as I have said, is singularly disinterested निष्काम; he does not write with a view to sublimity or with a view to beauty, but because he has certain ideas to impart, certain events to describe, certain characters to portray. He has an image of these in his mind and his business is to find an expression for it which will be scrupulously just to his conception. This is by no means so facile a task as the uninitiated might imagine; it is in fact considerably more difficult than to bathe the style in colour and grace and literary elegance, for it demands vigilant concentration, firm intellectual truthfulness and unsparing rejection, the three virtues most difficult to the gadding, inventive and self-indulgent spirit of man. The art of Vyasa is therefore a great, strenuous and difficult art; but it unfitted him, as a similar spirit, unfitted the Greeks, to voice fully the outward beauty of Nature. For to delight infinitely in Nature one must be strongly

possessed with the sense of colour and romantic beauty, and allow the fancy equal rights with the intellect.

For all his occasional strokes of fine Nature description he was not therefore quite at home with her. Conscious of his weakness Vyasa as he emancipated himself from Valmekie's influence, ceased to attempt a kind for which his genius was not the best fitted. He is far more in his element in the expression of the feelings, of the joy and sorrow that makes this life of men; his description of emotion far excels his description of things. When he says of Damayanti

विललाप सुदुःखिता ।  
भर्तृशोकपरीताङ्गी शिलातलमथान्विता ॥

In grief she wailed,  
Erect upon a cliff, her body aching  
With sorrow for her husband,

the clear figure of the abandoned woman lamenting on the cliff seizes indeed the imagination, but has a lesser inspiration than the single puissant & convincing epithet भर्तृशोकपरीताङ्गी, her whole body affected with grief for her husband. Damayanti's longer laments are also of the finest sweetness & strength; there is a rushing flow of stately and sorrowful verse, the wailing of a regal grief; then as some more exquisite pain, some more piercing gust of passion traverses the heart of the mourner, golden felicities of sorrow leap out on the imagination like lightning in their swift clear greatness.

हा वीर ननु नामाहमिष्टा किल तवानघ ।  
अस्यामटव्यां घोरायां किं मां न प्रतिभाषसे ॥

Still more strong, simple and perfect is the grief of Damayanti when she wakes to find herself alone in that desolate cabin. The restraint of phrase is perfect, the verse is clear, equable and unadorned, yet hardly has Valmekie himself written a truer utterance of emotion than this

हा नाथ हा महाराज हा स्वामिन्किं जहासि मां ।  
 हा हतास्मि विनष्टास्मि भीतास्मि विजने वने ॥  
 ननु नाम महाराज धर्मज्ञः सत्यवागसि ।  
 कथमुक्त्वा तथा सत्यं सुप्तामुत्सृज्य मां गतः ॥ ...  
 पर्याप्तः परिहासोऽयमेतावान्पुरुषर्षभ ।  
 भीताहमतिदुर्धर्षं दर्शयात्मानमीश्वर ॥  
 दृश्यसे दृश्यसे राजन्नेष दृष्टोऽसि नैषध ।  
 आचार्य गुल्मैरात्मानं किं मां न प्रतिभाषसे ॥  
 नृशंस बत राजेन्द्र यन्मामेवङ्गतामिह ।  
 विलपन्तीं समागम्य नाश्वासयसि पार्थिव ॥  
 न शोचाम्यहमात्मानं न चान्यदपि किञ्चन ।  
 कथं नु भवितास्येक इति त्वां नृप रोदिमि ।  
 कथं नु राजंस्तृषितः क्षुधितः श्रमकर्षितः ।  
 सायाह्ने वृक्षमूलेषु मामपश्यन्भविष्यसि ॥

“Ah my lord! Ah my king! Ah my husband! why hast thou forsaken me? Alas, I am slain, I am undone; I am afraid in the lonely forest. Surely, O King, thou wert good & truthful; how then having sworn to me so, hast thou abandoned me in my sleep & fled? Long enough hast thou carried this jest of thine, O lion of men; I am frightened, O unconquerable; show thyself, my lord & prince. I see thee! I see thee! Thou art seen, lord of the Nishadhas, covering thyself there with the bushes; why dost thou not speak to me? Cruel king! that thou dost not come to me thus terrified here & wailing and comfort me! It is not for myself I grieve nor for aught else; it is for thee I weep thinking what will become of thee left all alone. How wilt thou fare under some tree at evening hungry & thirsty & weary not beholding me, O my King?”

The whole of this passage with its first pang of terror & the exquisite anticlimax “I am slain, I am undone, I am afraid in the desert wood” passing quickly into sorrowful reproach, the despairing & pathetic attempt to delude herself by thinking the whole a practical jest, and the final outburst of that deep maternal love which is a part of every true woman’s passion, is

great in its truth & simplicity. Steep and unadorned is Vyasa's style, but at times it has far more power to move & to reach the heart than more elaborate & ambitious poetry.

As Vyasa progressed in years, his personality developed towards intellectualism and his manner of expressing emotion became sensibly modified. In the *Savitri* he first reveals his power of imparting to the reader a sense of poignant but silent feeling, feeling in the air, unexpressed or rather expressed in action, sometimes even in very silence; this power is a notable element in some of the great scenes of the *Mahabharata*; the silence of the Pandavas during the mishandling of *Draupadi*, the mighty silence of Krishna while the assembly of kings rage and roar around him and *Shishupal* again & again hurls forth on him his fury & contempt and the hearts of all men are troubled, the stern self-restraint of his brothers when *Yudhisthira* is smitten by *Virata*; are instances of the power I mean. In the *Mahabharata* proper we find few expressions of pure feeling, none at least which have the triumphant power of *Damayanti's* laments in the *Nala*. Vyasa had by this time taken his bent; his heart and imagination had become filled with the pomp of thought and genius and the greatness of all things mighty and bold and regal; when therefore his characters feel powerful emotion, they are impelled to express it in the dialect of thought. We see the heart in their utterances but it is not the heart in its nakedness, it is not the heart of the common man; or rather it is the universal heart of man but robed in the intellectual purple. The note of Sanscrit poetry is always aristocratic; it has no answer to the democratic feeling or to the modern sentimental cult of the average man, but deals with exalted, large and aspiring natures, whose pride it is that they do not act like common men (प्राकृतो जनः). They are the great spirits, the महाजनाः, in whose footsteps the world follows. Whatever sentimental objections may be urged against this high and arrogating spirit, it cannot be doubted that a literature pervaded with the soul of hero worship and noblesse oblige and full of great examples is eminently fitted to elevate and strengthen a nation and prepare it for a great part in history. It was as Sanscrit literature ceased to be universally read and understood,

as it became more & more confined to the Brahmins that the spirit of our nation began to decline. And it is because the echoes of that literature still lasted that the nation even in its downfall has played not altogether an ignoble part, that it has never quite consented as so many formerly great nations have done to the degradation Fate seemed determined to impose on it, that it has always struggled to assert itself, to live, to be something in the world of thought and action. And with this high tendency of the literature there is no poet who is so deeply imbued as Vyasa. Even the least of his characters is an intellect and a personality and of intellect and personality their every utterance reeks, as it were, and is full. I have already quoted the cry of Draupadie to Bhema; it is a supreme utterance of insulted feeling, and yet note how it expresses itself, in the language of intellect; in a thought.

उत्तिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ किं शेषे भीमसेन यथा मृतः ।  
नामृतस्य हि पापीयान्भार्यामालभ्य जीवति ॥

The whole personality of Draupadie breaks out in that cry, her chastity, her pride, her passionate & unforgiving temper, but it flashes out not in an expression of pure feeling, but in a fiery and pregnant apophthegm. It is this temperament, this dynamic force of intellectualism blended with heroic fire and a strong personality that gives its peculiar stamp to Vyasa's writing and distinguishes it from that of all other epic poets. The heroic & profoundly intellectual national type of the great Bharata races, the Kurus, Bhojas and Panchalas who created the Veda & the Vedanta, find in Vyasa their fitting poetical type and exponent, just as the mild and delicately moral temper of the more eastern Coshalas has realised itself in Valmekie and through the Ramayana so largely dominated Hindu character. Steeped in the heroic ideals of the Bharata, attuned to their profound and daring thought & temperament, Vyasa has made himself the poet of the highminded Kshatriya caste, voices their resonant speech, breathes their aspiring and unconquerable spirit, mirrors their rich and varied life with a loving detail and moves through his



subject with a swift yet measured movement like the march of an army towards battle.

A comparison with Valmekie is instructive of the varying genius of these great masters. Both excel in epical rhetoric — if such a term as rhetoric can be applied to Vyasa's direct & severe style, but Vyasa's has the air of a more intellectual, reflective & experienced stage of poetical advance. The longer speeches in the Ramayan, those even which have most the appearance of set, argumentative oration, proceed straight from the heart; the thoughts, words, reasonings come welling up from the dominant emotion or conflicting feelings of the speaker; they palpitate and are alive with the vital force from which they have sprung. Though belonging to a more thoughtful, gentle and cultured civilisation than Homer's they have, like his, the large utterance which is not of primitive times, but of the primal emotions. Vyasa's have a powerful but austere force of intellectuality. In expressing character they firmly expose it rather than spring half-unconsciously from it; their bold and finely-planned consistency with the original conception reveals rather the conscientious painstaking of an inspired but reflective artist than the more primary and impetuous creative impulse. In their management of emotion itself a similar difference becomes prominent. Valmekie when giving utterance to a mood or passion simple or complex, surcharges every line, every phrase, turn of words or movement of verse with it; there are no lightning flashes but a great depth of emotion swelling steadily, inexhaustibly and increasingly in a wonder of sustained feeling, like a continually rising wave with low crests of foam. Vyasa has a high level of style with a subdued emotion behind it occasionally breaking into poignant outbursts. It is by sudden beauties that he rises above himself and not only exalts, stirs and delights as at his ordinary level, but memorably seizes the heart and imagination. This is the natural result of his peculiarly disinterested art which never seeks out anything striking for its own sake, but admits it only when it arises uncalled for from the occasion.

From this difference in temper and mode of expression arises a difference in the mode also of portraying character.

Vyasa's knowledge of character is not so intimate, emotional and sympathetic as Valmekie's; it has more of a heroic inspiration, less of a divine sympathy. He has reached it not like Valmekie immediately through the heart and imagination, but deliberately through intellect and experience, a deep criticism and reading of men; the spirit of shaping imagination has come afterwards like a sculptor using the materials labour has provided for him. It has not been a light leading him into the secret places of the heart. Nevertheless the characterisation, however reached, is admirable and firm. It is the fruit of a lifelong experience, the knowledge of a statesman who has had much to do with the ruling of men and has been himself a considerable part in some great revolution full of astonishing incidents and extraordinary characters. With that high experience his brain and his soul are full. It has cast his imagination into colossal proportions & provided him with majestic conceptions which can dispense with all but the simplest language for expression; for they are so great that the bare precise statement of what is said and done seems enough to make language epic. His character-drawing indeed is more epic, less psychological than Valmekie's. Truth of speech and action give us the truth of nature and it is done with strong purposeful strokes that have the power to move the heart & enlarge and ennoble the imagination which is what we mean by the epic in poetry. In Valmekie there are marvellous & revealing touches which show us the secret something in character usually beyond the expressive power either of speech or action; they are touches oftener found in the dramatic artist than the epic, and seldom fall within Vyasa's method. It is the difference between strong and purposeful artistic synthesis and the beautiful subtle & involute symmetry of an organic existence evolved and inevitable rather than shaped or purposed.

Vyasa is therefore less broadly human than Valmekie, he is at the same time a wider & more original thinker. His supreme intellect rises everywhere out of the mass of insipid or turbulent redaction and interpolation with bare and grandiose outlines. A wide searching mind, historian, statesman, orator, a deep and keen looker into ethics and conduct, a subtle and high aiming

politician, a theologian & philosopher, — it is not for nothing that Hindu imagination makes the name of Vyasa loom so large in the history of Aryan thought and attributes to him work so important and manifold. The wideness of the man's intellectual empire is evident throughout his work; we feel the presence of the Rishi, the original thinker who has enlarged the boundaries of ethical & religious outlook.

Modern India, since the Musulman advent, has accepted the politics of Chanakya in preference to Vyasa's. Certainly there was little in politics concealed from that great and sinister spirit. Yet Vyasa perhaps knew its subtleties quite as well, but he had to ennoble and guide him a high ethical aim and an august imperial idea. He did not, like European imperialism, unable to rise above the idea of power, accept the Jesuitic doctrine of any means to a good end, still less justify the goodness of the end by that profession of an utterly false disinterestedness which ends in the soothing belief that plunder, arson, outrage & massacre are committed for the good of the slaughtered nation. Vyasa's imperialism frankly accepts war & empire as the result of man's natural lust for dominion, but demands that empire should be won by noble and civilized methods, not in the spirit of the savage, and insists once it is won not on its powers, but on its duties. Valmekie too has included politics in his wide sweep; his picture of an ideal imperialism is sound and noble and the spirit of the Coshalan Ixvaacous that monarchy must be broad-based on the people's will and yet broader-based on justice, truth and good government, is admirably developed as an undertone of the poem. But it is an undertone only, not as in the Mahabharata its uppermost and weightiest drift. Valmekie's approach to politics is imaginative, poetic, made from outside. He is attracted to it by the unlimited curiosity of an universal mind and still more by the appreciation of a great creative artist; only therefore when it gives opportunities for a grandiose imagination or is mingled with the motives of conduct and acts on character. He is a poet who makes occasional use of public affairs as part of his wide human subject. The reverse may with some appearance of truth be said of Vyasa that he is interested in human action

and character mainly as they move and work in relation to a large political background.

His deep preoccupation with the ethical issues of speech and action is very notable. His very subject is one of practical ethics, the establishment of a Dharmyarajya, an empire of the just, by which is meant no millennium of the saints but the practical ideal of a government with righteousness, purity and unselfish toil for the common good as its saving principles.<sup>8</sup> It is true that Valmekie has a more humanely moral spirit than Vyasa, in as much as ordinary morality is most effective when steeped in emotion, proceeding from the heart & acting through the heart. Vyasa's ethics like everything else in him takes a double stand on intellectual scrutiny and acceptance and on personal strength of character; his characters having once adopted by intellectual choice & in harmony with their temperaments a given line of conduct, throw the whole heroic force of their nature into its pursuit. He is therefore preeminently a poet of action. Krishna is his authority in all matters religious and ethical and it is noticeable that Krishna lays far more stress on action and far less on quiescence than any other Hindu philosopher. Quiescence in God is with him as with others the ultimate goal of existence; but he insists that this quiescence must be reached through action and so far as this life is concerned, must exist in action; quiescence of the soul from desires there must be but there should not be and there cannot be quiescence of the Prakriti from action.

न कर्मणामनारम्भान्नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।  
 न च सन्न्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥  
 न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।  
 कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥ . . .  
 नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।  
 शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥

“Not by refraining from actions can a man enjoy actionlessness

<sup>8</sup> This sentence was written at the top of the manuscript page. It seems to have been meant for insertion here. — Ed.

nor by mere renunciation does he reach his soul's perfection; for no man in the world can even for one moment remain without doing works; everyone is forced to do works, whether he will or not, by the primal qualities born of Prakriti. . . . Thou do action self-controlled (or else "thou do action ever"), for action is better than inaction; if thou actest not, even the maintenance of thy body cannot be effected."

Hence it follows that merely to renounce action and flee from the world to a hermitage is but vanity, and that those who rely on such a desertion of duty for attaining God lean on a broken reed. The professed renunciation of action is only a nominal renunciation, for they merely give up one set of actions to which they are called for another to which in a great number of cases they have no call or fitness. If they have that fitness, they may certainly attain God, but even then action is better than Sannyasa. Hence the great & pregnant paradox that in action is real actionlessness, while inaction is merely another form of action itself.

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।  
 इन्द्रियार्थान्विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥ . . .  
 सन्न्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ ।  
 तयोस्तु कर्मसन्न्यासात्कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते ॥  
 ज्ञेयः स नित्यसन्न्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न काङ्क्षति ।  
 निर्वन्दो हि महाबाहो सुखं बन्धात्प्रमुच्यते ॥  
 कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः ।  
 स बुद्धिमान्मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत् ॥

"He who quells his sense-organs of action but sits remembering in his heart the objects of sense, that man of bewildered soul is termed a hypocrite." "Sannyasa (renunciation of works) and Yoga through action both lead to the highest good but of the two Yoga through action is better than renunciation of action. Know him to be the perpetual Sannyasi who neither loathes nor longs; for he, O great-armed, being free from the dualities is

easily released from the chain.” “He who can see inaction in action and action in inaction, he is the wise among men, he does all actions with a soul in union with God.”

From this lofty platform the great creed rises to its crowning ideas, for since we must act but neither for any human or future results of action nor for the sake of the action itself, and yet action must have some goal to which it is devoted, there is no goal left but God. We must devote then our actions to God & through that rise to complete surrender of the personality to him, whether in the idea of him manifest through Yoga or the idea of him Unmanifest through Godknowledge. “They who worship me as the imperishable, illimitable, unmanifest, controlling all the organs, oneminded to all things, they doing good to all creatures attain to me. But far greater is their pain of endeavour whose hearts cleave to the Unmanifest; for hardly can salvation in the unmanifest be attained by men that have a body. But they who reposing all actions in Me, to Me devoted contemplate and worship me in singleminded Yoga, speedily do I become their saviour from the gulfs of death & the world, for their hearts, O Partha, have entered into me. On Me repose thy mind, pour into Me thy reason, in Me wilt thou have then thy dwelling, doubt it not. Yet if thou canst not steadfastly repose thy mind in Me, desire, O Dhananjaya, to reach me by Yoga through askesis. If that too thou canst not, devote thyself to action for Me; since also by doing actions for My sake thou wilt attain thy soul’s perfection. If even for this thou art too feeble then abiding in Yoga with me with a soul subdued abandon utterly desire for the fruits of action. For better than askesis is knowledge, and better than knowledge is concentration and better than concentration is renunciation of the fruit of deeds, for upon such renunciation followeth the soul’s peace”. Such is the ladder which Vyasa has represented Krishna as building up to God with action for its firm & sole basis. If it is questioned whether the Bhagavadgita is the work of Vyasa (whether he be Krishna of the Island is another question to be settled on its own merits), I answer that there is nothing to disprove his

authorship, while on the other hand allowing for the exigencies of philosophical exposition the style is undoubtedly either his or so closely modelled on his as to defy differentiation. Moreover the whole piece is but the philosophical justification and logical enlargement of the gospel of action, preached by Krishna in the Mahabharat proper, the undoubted work of this poet. I have here no space for anything more than a quotation. Sanjaya has come to the Pandavas from Dhritarashtra and dissuaded them from battle in a speech taught him by that wily & unwise monarch; it is skilfully aimed at the most subtle weakness of the human heart, representing the abandonment of justice & their duty as a holy act of self-abnegation and its pursuit as no better than wholesale murder and parricide. It is better for the sons of Pandou to be dependents, beggars & exiles all their lives than to enjoy the earth by the slaughter of their brothers, kinsmen and spiritual guides: contemplation is purer & nobler than action & worldly desires. Although answering firmly to the envoy, the children of Pandou are in their hearts shaken; for as Krishna afterward tells Karna, when the destruction of a nation is at hand wrong comes to men's eyes clothed in the garb of right. Sanjaya's argument is one Christ & Buddha would have endorsed; Christ & Buddha would have laboured to confirm the Pandavas in their scruples. On Krishna rests the final word & his answer is such as to shock seriously the conventional ideas of a religious teacher to which Christianity & Buddhism have accustomed us. In a long & powerful speech he deals at great length with Sanjaya's arguments. We must remember therefore that he is debating a given point and speaking to men who have not like Arjouna the adhikar to enter into the "highest of all mysteries". We shall then realise the close identity between his teaching here and that of the Gita.

अस्मिन्विधौ वर्तमाने यथावदुच्चावचा मतयो ब्राह्मणानाम् ।  
 कर्मणाहुः सिद्धिमेके परत्र हित्वा कर्म विद्याया सिद्धिमेके ।  
 नाभुञ्जानो भक्ष्यभोज्यस्य तृप्येद्विद्वानपीह विहितं ब्राह्मणानाम् ॥  
 या वै विद्याः साधयन्तीह कर्म तासां फलं विद्यते नेतरासाम् ।  
 तत्रेह वै दृष्टफलं तु कर्म पीत्वोदकं शाम्यति तृष्णयार्तः ॥

सोऽयं विधिर्विहितः कर्मणैव संवर्तते सञ्जय तत्र कर्म ।  
 तत्र योऽन्यत्कर्मणः साधु मन्येन्मोघं तस्यालपितं दुर्बलस्य ॥  
 कर्मणापि भान्ति देवाः परत्र कर्मणैव प्लवते मातरिश्वा ।  
 अहोरात्रे विदधत्कर्मणैव अतन्द्रितो नित्यमुदेति सूर्यः ॥  
 मासार्धमासानथ नक्षत्रयोगानतन्द्रितश्चन्द्रमाश्चाभ्युपैति ।  
 अतन्द्रितो दहते जातवेदाः समिध्यमानः कर्म कुर्वन् प्रजाभ्यः ॥  
 अतन्द्रिता भारमिमं महान्तं बिभर्ति देवी पृथिवी बलेन ।  
 अतन्द्रिताः शीघ्रमपो वहन्ति सन्तर्पयन्त्यः सर्वभूतानि नद्यः ॥  
 अतन्द्रितो वर्षति भूरितेजाः सन्नादयन्नन्तरीक्षं दिशश्च ।  
 अतन्द्रितो ब्रह्मचर्यं चचार श्रेष्ठत्वमिच्छन्बलभिद्देवतानाम् ॥  
 हित्वा सुखं मनसश्च प्रियाणि तेन शक्रः कर्मणा श्रेष्ठ्यमाप ।  
 सत्यं धर्ममप्रमत्तो

The drift of Vyasa's ethical speculation has always a definite and recognizable tendency; there is a basis of customary morality and there is a higher ethic of the soul which abolishes in its crowning phase the terms virtue and sin, because to the pure all things are pure through an august and selfless disinterestedness. This ethic takes its rise naturally from the crowning height of the Vedantic philosophy, where the soul becomes conscious of its identity with God who whether acting or actionless is untouched by either sin or virtue. But the crown of the Vedanta is only for the highest; the moral calamities that arise from the attempt of an unprepared soul to identify Self with God is sufficiently indicated in the legend of Indra and Virochana. Similarly this higher ethic is for the prepared, the initiated only, because the raw and unprepared soul will seize on the nondistinction between sin and virtue without first compassing the godlike purity without which such nondistinction is neither morally admissible nor actually conceivable. From this arises the unwillingness of Hinduism, so ignorantly attributed by Europeans to priestcraft and the Brahmin, to shout out its message to the man in the street or declare its esoteric thought to the shoeblack & the kitchenmaid. The sword of knowledge is a doubleedged weapon; in the hands of the hero it can save the world, but it must not be made a plaything for children. Krishna himself ordinarily insists on all



men following the duties & rules of conduct to which they are born and to which the cast of their temperaments predestined them. Arjouna he advises, if incapable of rising to the higher moral altitudes, to fight in a just cause because that is the duty of the caste, the class of souls to which he belongs. Throughout the Mahabharata he insists on this standpoint that every man must meet the duties to which his life calls him in a spirit of disinterestedness, — not, be it noticed, of self-abnegation, which may be as much a fanaticism and even a selfishness as the grossest egoism itself. It is because Arjouna has best fulfilled this ideal, has always lived up to the practice of his class in a spirit of disinterestedness and self-mastery that Krishna loves him above all human beings and considers him and him alone fit to receive the higher initiation.

स एवायं मया तेऽद्य योगः प्रोक्तः सनातनः ।  
भक्तोऽसि मे सखा चेति रहस्यं ह्येतदुत्तमम् ॥

“This is that ancient Yoga which I tell thee today; because thou art My adorer and My heart’s comrade; for this is the highest mystery of all.”

And even the man who has risen to the heights of the initiation must cleave for the good of society to the pursuits and duties of his order; for if he does not, the world which instinctively is swayed by the examples of its greatest, will follow in his footsteps; the bonds of society will then crumble asunder and chaos come again; mankind will be baulked of its destiny. Srikrishna illustrates this by his own example, the example of God in his manifest form.

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि ॥  
यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।  
स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥  
न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।  
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥  
यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥  
 उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेदहम् ।  
 सङ्करस्य च कर्ता स्यामुपहन्यामिमाः प्रजाः ॥  
 सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।  
 कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥  
 न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।  
 योजयेत्सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान्युक्तः समाचरन् ॥

“Looking also to the maintenance of order in the world thou shouldst act; for whatever the best practises, that other men practise; for the standard set by him is followed by the whole world. In all the Universe there is for Me no necessary action, for I have nothing I do not possess or wish to possess, and lo I abide always doing. For if I abide not at all doing action vigilantly, men would altogether follow in my path, O son of Pritha; these worlds would sink if I did not actions, and I should be the author of confusion (literally illegitimacy, the worst & primal confusion, for it disorders the family which is the fundamental unit of society) and the destroyer of the peoples. What the ignorant do, O Bharata, with their minds enslaved to the work, that the wise man should do with a free mind to maintain the order of the world; the wise man should not upset the mind of the ignorant who are slaves of their deeds, but should apply himself to all works doing customary things with a mind in Yoga.”

It is accordingly not by airy didactic teaching so much as in the example of Krishna — & this is the true epic method — that Vyasa develops his higher ethic which is the morality of the liberated mind. But this is too wide a subject to be dealt with in the limits I have at my command. I have dwelt on Vyasa’s ethical standpoint because it is of the utmost importance in the present day. Before the Bhagavadgita with its great epic commentary, the Mahabharata of Vyasa, had time deeply to influence the national mind, the heresy of Buddhism seized hold of us. Buddhism with its exaggerated emphasis on quiescence & the quiescent virtue of self-abnegation, its unwise creation of a separate class of

quiescents & illuminati, its sharp distinction between monks & laymen implying the infinite inferiority of the latter, its all too facile admission of men to the higher life and its relegation of worldly action to the lowest importance possible stands at the opposite pole from the gospel of Srikrishna and has had the very effect he deprecates; it has been the author of confusion and the destroyer of the peoples. Under its influence half the nation moved in the direction of spiritual passivity & negation, the other by a natural reaction plunged deep into a splendid but enervating materialism. As a result our race lost three parts of its ancient heroic manhood, its grasp on the world, its magnificently ordered polity and its noble social fabric. It is by clinging to a few spars from the wreck that we have managed to perpetuate our existence, and this we owe to the overthrow of Buddhism by Shankaracharya. But Hinduism has never been able to shake off the deep impress of the religion it vanquished; and therefore though it has managed to survive, it has not succeeded in recovering its old vitalising force. The practical disappearance of the Kshatriya caste (for those who now claim that origin seem to be with a few exceptions Vratya Kshatriyas, Kshatriyas who have fallen from the pure practice and complete temperament of their caste) has operated in the same direction. The Kshatriyas were the proper depositaries of the gospel of action; Srikrishna himself declares

इमं विवस्वते योगं प्रोक्तवानहमव्ययम् ।  
 विवस्वान्मनवे प्राह मनुर्निश्वाकवेऽब्रवीत् ॥  
 एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदुः ।

“This imperishable Yoga I revealed to Vivaswan, Vivaswan declared it to Manou, Manou to Ixvaacou told it; thus did the royal sages learn this as a hereditary knowledge”,

and when in the immense lapse of time it was lost, Srikrishna again declared it to a Kshatriya. But when the Kshatriyas disappeared or became degraded, the Brahmins remained the sole interpreters of the Bhagavadgita, and they, being the highest

caste or temperament and their thoughts therefore naturally turned to knowledge and the final end of being, bearing moreover still the stamp of Buddhism in their minds, have dwelt mainly on that in the Gita which deals with the element of quiescence. They have laid stress on the goal but they have not echoed Srikrishna's emphasis on the necessity of action as the one sure road to the goal. Time, however, in its revolution is turning back on itself and there are signs that if Hinduism is to last and we are not to plunge into the vortex of scientific atheism and the breakdown of moral ideals which is engulfing Europe, it must survive as the religion for which Vedanta, Sankhya & Yoga combined to lay the foundations, which Srikrishna announced & which Vyasa formulated. No apeings or distorted editions of Western religious modes, no Indianised Christianity, no fair rehash of that pale & consumptive shadow English Theism, will suffice to save us.

But Vyasa has not only a high political & religious thought and deepseeing ethical judgments; he deals not only with the massive aspects & worldwide issues of human conduct, but has a keen eye for the details of government and society, the ceremonies, forms & usages, the religious & social order on the due stability of which the public welfare is grounded. The principles of good government & the motives & impulses that move men to public action no less than the rise and fall of States & the clash of mighty personalities and great powers form, incidentally & epically treated, the staple of Vyasa's epic. The poem was therefore, first & foremost, like the Iliad and Aeneid and even more than the Iliad and Aeneid, national — a poem in which the religious, social and personal temperament and ideals of the Aryan nation have found a high expression and its institutions, actions, heroes in the most critical period of its history received the judgments and criticisms of one of its greatest and soundest minds. If this had not been so we should not have had the Mahabharata in its present form. Valmekie had also dealt with a great historical period in a yet more universal spirit and with finer richness of detail but he approached it in a poetic and dramatic manner; he created rather than criticised; while Vyasa

in his manner was the critic far more than the creator. Hence later poets found it easier and more congenial to introduce their criticisms of life and thought into the Mahabharata than into the Ramayana. Vyasa's poem has been increased to threefold its original size; the additions to Valmekie's, few in themselves if we set apart the Uttarakanda, have been immaterial & for the most part of an accidental nature.

Gifted with such poetical powers, limited by such intellectual and emotional characteristics, endowed with such grandeur of soul and severe purity of taste, what was the special work which Vyasa did for his country and in what beyond the ordinary elements of poetical greatness lies his claim to world-wide acceptance? It has been suggested already that the Mahabharata is the great national poem of India. It is true the Ramayan also represents an Aryan civilisation idealised: Rama & Sita are more intimately characteristic types of the Hindu temperament as it finally shaped itself than are Arjouna & Draupadie; Srikrishna though his character is founded in the national type, yet rises far above it. But although Valmekie writing the poem of mankind drew his chief figures in the Hindu model and Vyasa, writing a great national epic, lifted his divine hero above the basis of national character into an universal humanity, yet the original purpose of either poem remains intact. In the Ramayan under the disguise of an Aryan golden age the wide world with all its elemental impulses and affections finds itself mirrored. The Mahabharata reflects rather a great Aryan civilization with the types, ideas, aims and passions of a heroic and pregnant period in the history of a high-hearted and deep-thoughted nation. It has, moreover, as I have attempted to indicate, a formative ethical and religious spirit which is absolutely corrective to the faults that have most marred in the past and mar to the present day the Hindu character and type of thought. And it provides us with this corrective not in the form of an alien civilisation difficult to assimilate and associated with other elements as dangerous to us as this is salutary, but in a great creative work of our own literature written by the mightiest of our sages (मुनीनामप्यहं व्यासः Krishna has said), one therefore who speaks our own language,

thinks our own thoughts and has the same national cast of mind, nature & conscience. His ideals will therefore be a corrective not only to our own faults but to the dangers of that attractive but unwholesome Asura civilisation which has invaded us, especially its morbid animalism and its neurotic tendency to abandon itself to its own desires.

But this does not say all. Vyasa too beyond the essential universality of all great poets, has his peculiar appeal to humanity in general making his poem of worldwide as well as national importance. By comparing him once again with Valmekie we shall realize more precisely in what this appeal consists. The Titanic impulse was strong in Valmekie. The very dimensions of his poetical canvas, the audacity and occasional recklessness of his conceptions, the gust with which he fills in the gigantic outlines of his Ravana are the essence of Titanism; his genius was so universal & Protean that no single element of it can be said to predominate, yet this tendency towards the enormous enters perhaps as largely into it as any other. But to the temperament of Vyasa the Titanic was alien. It is true he carves his figures so largely (for he was a sculptor in creation rather than a painter like Valmekie) that looked at separately they seem to have colossal stature but he is always at pains so to harmonise them that they shall appear measurable to us and strongly human. They are largely & boldly human, impressive & sublime, but never Titanic. He loves the earth and the heavens but he visits not Pataala nor the stupendous regions of Vrishopurvan. His Rakshasas, supposing them to be his at all, are epic giants or matter-of-fact ogres, but they do not exhale the breath of midnight and terror like Valmekie's demons nor the spirit of worldshaking anarchy like Valmekie's giants. This poet could never have conceived Ravana. He had neither unconscious sympathy nor a sufficient force of abhorrence to inspire him. The passions of Duryodhana though presented with great force of antipathetic insight, are human and limited. The Titanic was so foreign to Vyasa's habit of mind that he could not grasp it sufficiently either to love or hate. His humanism shuts to him the outermost gates of that sublime and menacing region; he has not the secret of the storm

nor has his soul ridden upon the whirlwind. For his particular work this was a real advantage. Valmekie has drawn for us both the divine and anarchic in extraordinary proportions; an Akbar or a Napoleon might find his spiritual kindred in Rama or Ravana; but with more ordinary beings such figures impress the sense of the sublime principally and do not dwell with them as daily acquaintances. It was left for Vyasa to create epically the human divine and the human anarchic so as to bring idealisms of the conflicting moral types into line with the daily emotions and imaginations of men. The sharp distinction between Deva & Asura is one of the three distinct & peculiar contributions to ethical thought which India has to offer. The legend of Indra & Virochana is one of its fundamental legends. Both of them came to Vrihaspati to know from him of God; he told them to go home & look in the mirror. Virochana saw himself there & concluding that he was God, asked no farther; he gave full rein to the sense of individuality in himself which he mistook for the deity. But Indra was not satisfied: feeling that there must be some mistake he returned to Vrihaspati and received from him the true Godknowledge which taught him that he was God only because all things were God, since nothing existed but the One. If he was the one God, so was his enemy; the very feelings of separateness and enmity were no permanent reality but transient phenomena. The Asura therefore is he who is profoundly conscious of his own separate individuality & yet would impose it on the world as the sole individuality; he is thus blown along on the hurricane of his desires & ambitions until he stumbles & is broken, in the great phrase of Aeschylus, against the throne of Eternal Law. The Deva on the contrary stands firm in the luminous heaven of self-knowledge; his actions flow not inward towards himself but outwards toward the world. The distinction that India draws is not between altruism and egoism but between disinterestedness and desire. The altruist is profoundly conscious of himself and he is really ministering to himself even in his altruism; hence the hot & sickly odour of sentimentalism and the taint of the Pharisee which clings about European altruism. With the perfect Hindu the feeling of self

has been merged in the sense of the universe; he does his duty equally whether it happens to promote the interests of others or his own; if his action seems oftener altruistic than egoistic it is because our duty oftener coincides with the interests of others than with our own. Rama's duty as a son calls him to sacrifice himself, to leave the empire of the world and become a beggar & a hermit; he does it cheerfully and unflinchingly: but when Sita is taken from him, it is his duty as a husband to rescue her from her ravisher and as a Kshatriya to put Ravana to death if he persists in wrongdoing. This duty also he pursues with the same unflinching energy as the first. He does not shrink from the path of the right because it coincides with the path of self-interest. The Pandavas also go without a word into exile & poverty, because honour demands it of them; but their ordeal over, they will not, though ready to drive compromise to its utmost verge, consent to succumb utterly to Duryodhana, for it is their duty as Kshatriyas to protect the world from the reign of injustice, even though it is at their own expense that injustice seeks to reign. The Christian & Buddhistic doctrine of turning the other cheek to the smiter, is as dangerous as it is impracticable. The continual European see-saw between Christ on the one side and the flesh & the devil on the other with the longer trend towards the latter comes straight from a radically false moral distinction & the lip profession of an ideal which mankind has never been either able or willing to carry into practice. The disinterested & desireless pursuit of duty is a gospel worthy of the strongest manhood; that of the cheek turned to the smiter is a gospel for cowards & weaklings. Babies & sucklings may practise it because they must, but with others it is a hypocrisy.

The gospel of the निष्काम धर्म and the great poetical creations which exemplify & set it off by contrast, this is the second aspect of Vyasa's genius which will yet make him interesting and important to the whole world.



## Vyasa; some Characteristics.<sup>1</sup>

The Mahabharata, although neither the greatest nor the richest masterpiece of the secular literature of India, is at the same time its most considerable and important body of poetry. Being so it is the pivot on which the history of Sanscrit literature, and incidentally the history of Aryan civilisation in India, must perforce turn. To the great discredit of European scholarship the problem of this all-important work is one that remains not only unsolved, but untouched. Yet until it is solved, until the confusion of its heterogeneous materials is reduced to some sort of order, the different layers of which it consists separated, classed and attributed to their relative dates, and its relations with the Ramayan on the one hand and the Puranic and classic literature on the other fully & patiently examined, the history of our civilisation must remain in the air, a field for pedantic wranglings and worthless conjectures. The world knows something of our origins because much labour has been bestowed on the Vedas, something of our decline because post-Buddhistic literature has been much read, annotated and discussed, but of our great medial and flourishing period it knows little, and that little is neither coherent nor reliable.

All that we know of the Mahabharata at present is that it is the work of several hands and of different periods — this is literally the limit of the reliable knowledge European scholarship has so far been able to extract from it. For the rest we have to be content with arbitrary conjectures based either upon an unwarrantable application of European analogies to Indian things or random assumptions snatched from a word here or a line there, but never proceeding from that weighty, careful & unbiassed

<sup>1</sup> This original opening of "Notes on the Mahabharata" was left uncanceled in the manuscript. See the Note on the Texts for an explanation of how the essay was revised.

—Ed.

study of the work canto by canto, passage by passage, line by line, which can alone bring us to any valuable conclusions. A fancy was started in Germany that the Iliad of Homer is really a pastiche or clever rifacimento of old ballads put together in the time of Pisistratus.<sup>2</sup> This truly barbarous imagination with its rude ignorance of the psychological bases of all great poetry has now fallen into some discredit; it has been replaced by a more plausible attempt to discover a nucleus in the poem, an Achilleid, out of which the larger Iliad has grown. Very possibly the whole discussion will finally end in the restoration of a single Homer with a single poem subjected indeed to some inevitable interpolation and corruption, but mainly the work of one mind, a theory still held by more than one considerable scholar. In the meanwhile, however, haste has been made to apply the analogy to the Mahabharata; lynx-eyed theorists have discovered in the poem — apparently without taking the trouble to study it — an early and rude ballad epic worked up, doctored and defaced by those wicked Brahmins, who are made responsible for all the literary and other enormities which have been discovered by the bushy, and not by European lynxes alone — in our literature and civilisation. Now whether the theory is true or not, and one sees nothing in its favour, it has at present no value at all; for it is a pure theory without any justifying facts. It is not difficult to build these intellectual cardhouses; anyone may raise them by the dozen who can find no better manner of wasting valuable time. A similar method of “arguing from Homer” is probably at the bottom of Professor Weber’s assertion that the War Purvas contain the original epic. An observant eye at once perceives that the War Purvas are far more hopelessly tangled than any that precede them except the first. It is here & here only that the keenest eye becomes confused & the most confident explorer begins to lose heart & self-reliance. But the Iliad is all battles and it therefore follows in the European mind that the original Mahabharata must have been all battles. Another method is

<sup>2</sup> The four-page passage beginning with this sentence and ending with “moral certainty” on page 341 was incorporated by Sri Aurobindo in the rewritten version of this piece (pages 280–84). — Ed.

that of ingenious, if forced argument from stray slokas of the poem or equally stray & obscure remarks in Buddhist compilations. The curious theory of some scholars that the Pandavas were a later invention and that the original war was between the Kurus and Panchalas only and Professor Weber's singularly positive inference from a sloka which does not at first sight bear the meaning he puts on it, that the original epic contained only 8800 lines, are ingenuities of this type. They are based on the Teutonic art of building a whole mammoth out of a single and often problematical bone, and remind one strongly of Mr Pickwick and the historic inscription which was so rudely, if in a Pickwickian sense, challenged by the refractory [Mr Blotton.] All these theorisings are idle enough; they are made of too airy a stuff to last. (Only a serious scrutiny of the Mahabharat made with a deep sense of critical responsibility and according to the methods of patient scientific inference, can justify on in advancing any considerable theory on this wonderful poetic structure.)

Yet to extricate the original epic from the mass of accretions is not, I believe, so difficult a task as it may at first appear. One is struck in perusing the Mahabharata by the presence of a mass of poetry which bears the style and impress of a single, strong and original, even unusual mind, differing in his manner of expression, tone of thought & stamp of personality not only from every other Sanscrit poet we know but from every other great poet known to literature. When we look more closely into the distribution of this peculiar style of writing, we come to perceive certain very suggestive & helpful facts. We realise that this impress is only found in those parts of the poem which are necessary to the due conduct of the story, seldom to be detected in the more miraculous, Puranistic or trivial episodes, but usually broken up by passages and sometimes shot through with lines of a discernibly different inspiration. Equally noteworthy is it that nowhere does this poet admit any trait, incident or speech which deviates from the strict propriety of dramatic characterisation & psychological probability. Finally Krishna's divinity is recognized, but more often hinted at than aggressively stated. The tendency is to keep it in the background as a fact to which,

while himself crediting it, the writer does not hope for universal consent, still less is able to speak of it as of a general tenet & matter of dogmatic belief; he prefers to show Krishna rather in his human character, acting always by wise, discerning and inspired methods, but still not transgressing the limit of human possibility. All this leads one to the conclusion that in the body of poetry I have described, we have the real Bharata, an epic which tells plainly and straightforwardly of the events which led to the great war and the empire of the Bharata princes. Certainly if Prof. Weber's venturesome assertion as to the length of the original Mahabharata be correct, this conclusion falls to the ground; for the mass of this poetry amounts to considerably over 20,000 slokas. Professor Weber's inference, however, is worth some discussion; for the length of the original epic is a very important element in the problem. If we accept it, we must say farewell to all hopes of unravelling the tangle. His assertion is founded on a single & obscure verse in the huge prolegomena to the poem which take up the greater part of the *Adi Purva*, no very strong basis for so far-reaching an assumption. The sloka itself says no more than this that much of the Mahabharata was written in so difficult a style that Vyasa himself could remember only 8800 of the slokas, Suka an equal amount and Sanjaya perhaps as much, perhaps something less. There is certainly here no assertion such as Prof. Weber would have us find in it that the Mahabharata at any time amounted to no more than 8800 slokas. Even if we assume what the text does not say that Vyasa, Suka & Sanjaya knew the same 8800 slokas, we do not get to that conclusion. The point simply is that the style of the Mahabharat was too difficult for a single man to keep in memory more than a certain portion of it. This does not carry us very far. If however we are to assume that there is more in this verse than meets the eye, that it is a cryptic way of stating the length of the original poem; and I do not deny that this is possible, perhaps even probable — we should note the repetition of वेत्ति — अहं वेत्ति शुको वेत्ति सञ्जयो वेत्ति वा न वा. Following the genius of the Sanscrit language we are led to suppose the repetition was intended to recall अष्टौ श्लोकसहस्राणि etc. with each name; otherwise the repetition has

no *raison d'être*; it is otiose & inept. But if we understand it thus, the conclusion is irresistible that each knew a different 8800, or the writer would have no object in wishing us to repeat the number three times in our mind. The length of the epic as derived from this single sloka should then be 26,400 slokas or something less, for the writer hesitates about the exact number to be attributed to Sanjaya. Another passage further on in the prolegomena agrees remarkably with this conclusion and is in itself much more explicit. It is there stated plainly enough that Vyasa first wrote the Mahabharata in 24,000 slokas and afterwards enlarged it to 100,000 for the world of men as well as a still more unconscionable number of verses for the Gandhurva and other worlds. In spite of the embroidery of fancy, of a type familiar enough to all who are acquainted with the Puranic method of recording facts, the meaning of this is unmistakeable. The original Mahabharata consisted of 24,000 slokas, but in its final form it runs to 100,000. The figures are probably loose & slovenly, for at any rate the final form of the Mahabharata is considerably under 100,000 slokas. It is possible therefore that the original epic was something over 24,000 and under 26,400 slokas, in which case the two passages would agree well enough. But it would be unsafe to found any dogmatic assertion on isolated couplets; at the most we can say that we are justified in taking the estimate as a probable and workable hypothesis and if it is found to be corroborated by other facts, we may venture to suggest its correctness as a moral certainty.

This body of poetry then, let us suppose, is the original Mahabharata. Tradition attributes it to Krishna of the Island called Vyasa who certainly lived about this time and was an editor of the Vedas; and since there is nothing in this part of the poem which makes the tradition impossible and much which favours it, we may, as a matter both of convenience and of probability, accept it at least provisionally. Whether these hypotheses can be upheld is a question for long and scrupulous consideration and analysis. In this article I wish to formulate, assuming their validity, the larger features of poetical style, the manner of thought & creation & the personal note of Vyasa.

## Mahabharata.

The problem of the Mahabharata, its origin, date and composition, is one that seems likely to elude scholarship to times indefinite if not for ever. It is true that several European scholars have solved all these to their own satisfaction, but their industrious & praiseworthy efforts [*incomplete*]

In the following pages I have approached the eternal problem of the Mahabharata from the point of view mainly of style & literary personality, partly of substance; but in dealing with the substance I have deferred questions of philosophy, allusion & verbal evidence to which a certain school attach great importance and ignored altogether the question of minute metrical details on which they base far-reaching conclusions. It is necessary therefore out of respect for these scholars to devote some little space to an explanation of my standpoint. I contend that owing to the peculiar manner in which the Mahabharat has been composed, these minutiae of detail & word have very little value. The labour of this minute school has proved beyond dispute one thing and one only, that the Mahabharat was not only immensely enlarged, crusted with interpolations & accretions and in parts rewritten and modified, but even its oldest parts were verbally modified in the course of preservation. The extent to which this happened, has I think been grossly exaggerated, but that it did happen, one cannot but be convinced. Now if this is so, it is obvious that arguments from verbal niceties must be very dangerous. It has been sought to prove from a single word *suranga*, an underground tunnel, which European scholars believe to be identical with the Greek σῦριγξ that the account in the Adi Purva of the Pandavas' escape from the burning house of Purochana through an underground tunnel must be later than another account in the Vana Purva which represents Bhema as carrying his brothers & mother out of the flames; for the

former they say, must have been composed after the Indians had learned the Greek language & culture and the latter, it is to be assumed, before that interesting period. Now whether *suranga* was derived from the Greek σῦριγγ or not, I cannot take upon me to say, but will assume on the authority of better linguists than myself that it was so though I think it is as well to be sceptical of all such Greek derivations until the connection is proved beyond doubt, for such words even when not accounted for by Sanscrit itself, may very easily be borrowed from the aboriginal languages. Bengali for instance preserves the form *sudanga* where the cerebral letter is Dravidian. But if so, if this word came into fashion along with Greek culture, and became *the* word for a tunnel, what could be more natural than that the reciter should substitute for an old and now disused word the one which was familiar to his audience? Again much has been made of the frequent occurrence of Yavana, Vahlika, Pehlava, Saka, Huna. As to Yavana its connection with Ἰάων does not seem to me beyond doubt. It had certainly been at one time applied to the Bactrian Greeks, but so it has been and is to the present day applied to the Persians, Afghans & other races to the northwest of India. Nor is the philological connection between Ἰάων and Yavana very clear to my mind. Another form Yauna seems to represent Ἰάων fairly well; but are we sure that Yauna and Yavana were originally identical? A mere resemblance however close is the most misleading thing in philology. Upon such resemblances Pocock made out a very strong case for his theory that the Greeks were a Hindu colony. The identity of the Sakas & Sakyas was for a long time a pet theory of European Sanscritists and on this identity was based the theory that Buddha was a Scythian reformer of Hinduism. This identity is now generally given up, yet it is quite as close as that of Yavana & Yauna and as closely in accordance with the laws of the Sanscrit language. If Yauna is the original form, why was it changed to Yavana; it is no more necessary than that mauna be changed to mavana; if Yavana be earlier & Yauna a Pracrit corruption, how are we to account for the short a & the v; there was no digamma in Greek in the time of Alexander. But since the Greeks are always called

Yavanas in Buddhist writings we will waive the demand for strict philological intelligibility and suppose that Yavana answers to Ἰάων. The question yet remains when did the Hindus become acquainted with the existence of the Greeks. Now here the first consideration is why did they call the Greeks Ionians, and not Hellenes or Macedonians? That the Persians should know the Greeks by that name is natural enough, for it was with the Ionians that they first came in contact; but it was not Ionians who invaded India under Alexander, it was not an Ionian prince who gave his daughter to Chundragupta, it was not an Ionian conqueror who crossed the Indus & besieged [ ]. Did the Macedonians on their victorious march give themselves out as Ionians? I for my part do not believe it. It is certain therefore that if the Hindus took the word Yavana from Ἰάων, it must have been through the Persians and not direct from the Greek language. But the connection of the Persians with India was as old as Darius Hystaspes who had certainly reason to know the Greeks. It is therefore impossible to say that the Indians had not heard about the Greeks as long ago as 500 B.C. Even if they had not, the mention of Yavanas & Yavan kings does not carry us very far; for it is evident that in the earlier parts of the Mahabharata they are known only as a strong barbarian power of the Northwest; there is no sign of their culture being known to the Hindus. It is therefore quite possible that the word Yavana now grown familiar may have been substituted by the later reciters for an older name no longer familiar. It is now known beyond reasonable doubt that the Mahabharata war was fought out in or about 1190 B.C.; Dhritarashtra, son of Vichitravirya, Krishna, son of Devaki & Janamejaya are mentioned in Vedic works of a very early date. There is therefore no reason to doubt that an actual historical event is recorded with whatever admixture of fiction in the Mahabharata. It is also evident that the Mahabharata, not any “Bharata” or “Bharati Katha” but the Mahabharata existed before the age of Panini, and tho’ the radical school bring down Panini [*incomplete*]



# Notes on the Mahabharata

by Aurobind Ghose

dealing with the authenticity of each separate canto, i.e. whether it belongs or not to the original epic of 24,000 slokas on the great catastrophe of the Bharatas.

Udyogapurva.

## Canto I.

- 1 कुरुप्रवीराः . . स्वपक्षाः. This may mean in Vyasa's elliptic manner the great Kurus (i.e. the Pandavas) & those of their side. Otherwise "The Kuru heroes of his own side" i.e. Abhimanyu's which is awkward
- 3 वृद्धौ this supplies the reason of their preeminence
- 5 प्रद्युम्नसाम्बौ च युधि प्रवीरौ. This establishes Pradyumna & Samba as historical sons of Krishna  
विराटपुत्रैश्च Virata has therefore several sons, three at least.
- 7 The simile is strictly in the style of Vyasa who cares little for newness or ingenuity, so long as the image called up effects its purpose. The assonance रराज सा राजवती is an epic assonance altogether uncommon in Vyasa & due evidently to the influence of Valmekie.
- 8 strong brief & illumining strokes of description which add to the naturalness of the scene e.g. ततः कथास्ते समवाययुक्ताः while also adding a touch that reveals the inwardness of the situation कृत्वा विचित्राः पुरुषप्रवीराः । तस्थुर्मुहूर्तं परिचिन्तयन्तः कृष्णं नृपास्ते समुदीक्षमाणाः ॥
- 9 संघट्टिताः surely means "assembled" and nothing else. P. C. Roy in taking it as "drew their attention to" shows his usual slovenliness. Lele also errs in his translation. He interprets it

“as soon as the talk was over Krishna assembled the kings for the affairs of the Pandavas.” But the kings were already assembled & seated; not only so but they were waiting for Krishna to begin. It is absurd to suppose that as soon as Krishna began speaking they left their seats and clustered round him like a pack of schoolboys. Yet this is the only sense in which we can take Lele’s rendering. I prefer to take the obvious sense of the words. “As soon as they had reached an end of talk, those lion kings assembled by the Son of Modhou in the interests of the Pandava listened in a body to his high thoughted and fateful speech.”

सुमहोदयं having mighty consequences.

- 10 अयं here beside me. See verse 4. Yudhisthere is sitting just by Krishna, separated by him [from] Virata.

अक्षवती not given by Apte.

- 11 तरसा. तरस् expresses any swift, violent & impetuous act; anything that has the momentum of strength & impulse or fire & energy<sup>1</sup>

सत्यरथैर् This is a word of doubtful import. It may [mean] “of unerring chariots” i.e. skilful fighters, or else “honourable fighters”, रथः being used as in महारथः, अधिरथः = fighter in a chariot. Cf. सत्यपराक्रमः In the first case the epithet would be otiose & ornamental & an epic assonance. I cannot think however that Vyasa was capable of putting a purely decorative epic epithet in so emphatic a place. It must surely mean either 2 [i.e. “honourable fighters”] or “making truth their chariot”; रथ being used as in मनोरथ etc. The latter however is almost too much a flight of fancy for Vyasa.

- 12 त्रयोदशैव — agreeing with संवत्सरः which the mind supplies from वर्षाणि in the last line; a verb also has to be supplied from चीर्ण. This is the true Vyasa style.

निविष्ट. निविष् to abide. This sense, though not given in Apte may be deduced from निवेशः Impersonal. It has been dwelt [incomplete]

<sup>1</sup> Another gloss: तरसा energy, speed, violence, force. The word always gives an idea of swiftness & strength.

- 13<sup>2</sup> It will be seen from Krishna's attitude here as elsewhere that he was very far from being the engineer & subtle contriver of war into which later ideas have deformed him. That he came down to force on war & destroy the Kshatriya caste whether to open India to the world or for other cause, is an idea that was not present to the mind of Vyasa. Later generations writing when the pure Kshatriya caste had almost disappeared, attributed this motive for God's descent upon earth, just as a modern English Theosophist, perceiving British rule established in India, has added the corollary that he destroyed the Kshatriyas (five thousand years ago, according to her own belief) in order to make the line clear for the English. What Vyasa on the other hand makes us feel is that Krishna, though fixed to support justice at every cost, was earnestly desirous to support it by peaceful means if possible. His speech is an evident attempt to restrain the eagerness of the Mutsyas & Panchalas who were bent on war as the only means of overthrowing the Kuru domination.
- 14 Krishna's testimony to Yudhisthere's character is here of great importance.

अधर्मयुक्तं न च कामयेत राज्यं सुराणामपि धर्मराजः ।  
धर्मार्थयुक्तं तु महीपतित्वं ग्रामेऽपि कस्मिंश्चिदयं बुभूषेत् ॥

That Yudhisthere has deserved this character to the letter so far anyone who has followed the story will admit. If he acts in diametrical opposition to this character in any future passage we shall have some ground to pause before we admit the genuineness of the passage.

बुभूषेत् would wish to obtain, in the second sense of भू get, obtain.<sup>3</sup>

- 15 मिथ्योपचारेण by dishonest procedure; not in accordance with straightforward & chivalrous rules of conduct.
- 16 That is, if Duryodhana had taken the kingdom from the Pandavas in fair war by his own energy & genius (स्वतेजसा),

<sup>3</sup> Another gloss: बुभूषेत् desiderative of भू in the sense of "get, obtain": would aspire after

he would not have transgressed the ordinary धर्म of the Kshatriya. In that case the Pandavas might have accepted the verdict of Fate and refrained from plunging the country in farther bloodshed.

- 17 This seems to point to the “Digvijayapurva”; but the reference is general & may apply to the Rajasuya generally.

प्रपीड्य by force, pressure; as a result of conquest in open battle.

- 18 बालास्त्वमे An allusion to the early persecution of the Pandavas by Duryodhana. If we accept this *purva* in its completeness, we must accept the genuineness in the main of the early narrative of the Adi Purva in so far as it [is] covered by this sloka. Notice especially विविधैरुपायैः

तु The force is “But you know what the Dhartarastras are, their fierceness, falseness & landhunger; how even in the childhood of the Pandavas these, their banded foemen, sought to slay them by various means.”

- 22 तथापि = for all their good will. It is part of the inverted commas implied in इति

एव = at least.

यत्तेयुरेव would at least do their utmost.

- 23 यथावत् definitely; though they may form a shrewd guess.

- 24 राज्यार्थदानाय Krishna does not, at present at any rate suggest a compromise; let them first make their full claim to which they are entitled. (Notice Genitive).

पुरोहितयान This title is evidently a misnomer; there is no mention of the Purohit, far less does he set out as yet nor need we suppose he is hinted at in the description of a suitable envoy. It is doubtful whether Krishna would have singled out a Panchala Purohit as the best intermediary between the Kurus for he evidently desired to try conciliation first, before resorting to threats. The choice of the Purohita was that of King Drupada and the leaders of the Brahmavarta nations who desired to break the supremacy among them of the Kurus.

This Canto is in the very finest & most characteristic style of Vyasa; precise, simple & hardy in phrasing, with a strong, curt, decisive movement & a pregnant mode of expression, in which a kernel of thought is expressed & its corollaries suggested so as to form a thought-atmosphere around it. There is no superfluous or lost word or sentence, but each goes straight to its mark and says something which wanted to be said. The speech of Krishna is admirably characteristic of the man as we have seen him in the Sabhapurva; firm & precise in outlook and sure of its own drift, it is yet full of an admirably disinterested & statesmanlike broadmindedness.<sup>4</sup>

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Canto 2.

- 11 [दीव्यमानः]<sup>5</sup> प्रतिदीव्य Can this not mean “being challenged to dice played against Saubala or in acceptance of the challenge” or must it mean “gambled & that against Saubala”?

<sup>4</sup> A briefer statement is found in the other notebook used for these notes:

Every line of this Canto is characteristic of Vyasa in style, atmosphere & thought. It is also indispensable to the conduct of the epic.

<sup>5</sup> MS दीव्यमानेनः

[Notes on Adi Purva, Adhyaya 1]

*Importance attached to गृहस्थाश्रमः. I. 73. (Other) poets have not genius enough to improve on this poem just as the three other asramas are unable to improve on the householder's asrama.*

*Application of the word “काव्य” to poetry. “You have called this a poem; a poem therefore it shall be.” How far does this bear on the date of the Prolegomena?*

*Story of Ganesha as bearing on the length of the original poem. Slokas 78 . . 83.*

*Sense that the ethical & historical is the main drift of the poem.*

Repeated statements that the Mahabharata is a popular exposition of the teaching of the Veda & Vedanta (श्रुति).

*General (passim): Application of “Puran” & “Itihas” to Mahabharata. Ancient idea of the universality of the poem.*

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Mahabharat — Dronapurva.

1. उदीर्ण . . व्यावृत्तेऽयं आत्ययिकः

In this adhyaya slokas 26<sup>1</sup> to 35 & half 36 & 46 belong to the epic: the rest is introduction, framework and padding.

2. The first three verses are alternative openings. 1 belongs to the epic.

संमृज्य . . उल्लालयन् भावं कुर्वीत शौण्ड. उपासङ्ग नागकक्ष्या  
भाण्ड संप्रहारोपपन्न सन्नहनोपपन्ना ज्या कांस्यं कूबर वरूथिनं

Sloka 31. may be rejected, perhaps, as a mere repetition of a former verse.

<sup>1</sup> This refers probably to the verse beginning with the words पतिते भरतश्रेष्ठे, which is numbered 24 or 25 in some editions. — Ed.

## Part Three

### On Education

Sri Aurobindo wrote the pieces in this part at different times between 1899 and 1920. All of them except “Education” and “National Education” were published in periodicals shortly after they were written.





## Address at the Baroda College Social Gathering

IN ADDRESSING you on an occasion like the present, it is inevitable that the mind should dwell on one feature of this gathering above all others. Held as it is towards the close of the year, I am inevitably reminded that many of its prominent members are with us for the last time in their College life, and I am led to speculate with both hope and anxiety on their future careers, and this not only because several familiar faces are to disappear from us and scatter into different parts of the country and various walks of life, but also because they go out from us as our finished work, and it is by their character and life that our efforts will be judged. When I say, our efforts, I allude not merely to the professorial work of teaching, not to book-learning only, but to the entire activity of the College as a great and complex educational force, which is not solely meant to impart information, but to bring out or give opportunities for bringing out all the various intellectual and other energies which go to make up a man. And here is the side of collegiate institutions of which this Social Gathering especially reminds us, the force of the social life it provides in moulding the character and the mind. I think it will not be out of place, if in dwelling on this I revert to the great Universities of Oxford and Cambridge which are our famous exemplars, and point out a few differences between those Universities and our own and the thoughts those differences may well suggest.

I think there is no student of Oxford or Cambridge who does not look back in after days on the few years of his undergraduate life as, of all the scenes he has moved in, that which calls up the happiest memories, and it is not surprising that this should be so, when we remember what that life must have meant to him. He

*Delivered in Baroda on 22 July 1899. Text published in the Baroda College Miscellany, September 1899.*

goes up from the restricted life of his home and school and finds himself in surroundings which with astonishing rapidity expand his intellect, strengthen his character, develop his social faculties, force out all his abilities and turn him in three years from a boy into a man. His mind ripens in the contact with minds which meet from all parts of the country and have been brought up in many various kinds of trainings, his unwholesome eccentricities wear away and the unsocial, egoistic elements of character are to a large extent discouraged. He moves among ancient and venerable buildings, the mere age and beauty of which are in themselves an education. He has the Union which has trained so many great orators and debaters, has been the first trial ground of so many renowned intellects. He has, too, the athletics clubs organized with a perfection unparalleled elsewhere, in which, if he has the physique and the desire for them he may find pursuits which are also in themselves an education. The result is that he who entered the University a raw student, comes out of it a man and a gentleman, accustomed to think of great affairs and fit to move in cultivated society, and he remembers his College and University with affection, and in after days if he meets with those who have studied with him he feels attracted towards them as to men with whom he has a natural brotherhood. This is the social effect I should like the Colleges and Universities of India also to exercise, to educate by social influences as well as those which are merely academical and to create the feeling among their pupils that they belong to the community, that they are children of one mother. There are many obstacles to this result in the circumstances of Indian Universities. The Colleges are not collected in one town but are scattered among many and cannot assemble within themselves so large and various a life. They are new also, the creation of not more than fifty years — and fifty years is a short period in the life of a University. But so far as circumstances allow, there is an attempt to fill up the deficiency, in your Union, your Debating Club and Reading Room, your athletic sports and Social Gathering. For the success of this attempt time is needed, but your efforts are also needed: and I ask you who are soon to go out into the world, not to forget your

College or regard it as a mere episode in your life, but rather as one to whose care you must look back and recompense it by your future life and work, and if you meet fellow-students, alumni of the same College, to meet them as friends, as brothers.

There is another point in which a wide difference exists. What makes Oxford and Cambridge not local institutions but great and historic Universities? It is the number of great and famous men, of brilliant intellects in every department which have issued from them. I should like you to think seriously of this aspect of the question also. In England the student feels a pride in his own University and College, wishes to see their traditions maintained, and tries to justify them to the world by his own success. This feeling has yet to grow up among us. And I would appeal to you — who are leaving us — to help to create it, to cherish it yourselves, to try and justify the College of its pupils. Of course, there is one preliminary method by which the students can add fame to their College. Success in examinations, though preliminary merely, and not an end in itself, is nevertheless of no small effect or importance. You all know how the recent success of an Indian student has filled the whole country with joy and enthusiasm. That success reflects fame not only on India but on his University and College, and when the name of the first Indian Senior Wrangler is mentioned, it will also be remembered that he belonged to Cambridge and to St. John's. But examinations, however important, are only a preliminary. I lay stress upon this because there is too much of a tendency in this country to regard education as a mere episode, finished when once the degree is obtained. But the University cannot and does not pretend to complete a man's education; it merely gives some materials to his hand or points out certain paths he may tread, and it says to him, — "Here are the materials I have given into your hands, it is for you to make of them what you can;" or — "These are the paths I have equipped you to travel; it is yours to tread them to the end, and by your success in them justify me before the world."

I would ask you therefore to remember these things in your future life, not to drop the effects of your College training as

no longer necessary, but, to strive for eminence and greatness in your own lines, and by the brilliance of your names add lustre to the first nursing home of your capacities, to cherish its memory with affection as that which equipped your intellects, trained you into men, and strove to give you such social life as might fit you for the world. And finally I would ask you not to sever yourselves in after days from it, but if you are far, to welcome its alumni when you meet them with brotherly feelings and if you are near to keep up connection with it, not to regard the difference of age between yourselves and its future students but associate with them, be present at such occasions as this social gathering and evince by your acts your gratitude for all that it did for you in the past.

# Education

Your Highness and Gentlemen,

The subject on which I wish to address you this evening, and if you are sufficiently interested and have sufficient patience to pursue the subject farther with me, for perhaps another evening or two, is Education. Some of you may ask yourselves, why this subject rather than another? It is not a new subject but rather quite a threadbare one; you have already heard and read much about it and probably listened to much better lectures on the subject than any I can give you; it has besides been handled by a great many men in high places of authority; most of all, it has been taken up by no less a person than Lord Curzon himself and measures are to be formulated and perhaps carried into execution for the reform of what is defective in the present system. "What more do you want," you will perhaps ask, "or why should we trouble ourselves about it? The Government of India will in its own good time reform the whole business and of course when their new system is in force the Baroda Schools and Colleges will assimilate themselves to it. Meanwhile it is quite superfluous for us to bother our heads about the matter." Now in answer to that attitude I have to say this that the Government of India is in the first place not the fit body to formulate the necessary improvements and in the second place not the fit instrument to put them into force. It is not fit to formulate them because it cannot realise and feel as we do where the shoe pinches us and therefore in mending it [*incomplete*]

## INTELLECTUAL

We now come to the intellectual part of education, which is certainly larger and more difficult, although not more important than physical training and edification of character. The Indian

University system has confined itself entirely to this branch and it might have been thought that this limitation & concentration of energy ought to have been attended by special efficiency & thoroughness in the single branch it had chosen. But unfortunately this is not the case. If the physical training it provides is contemptible and the moral training nil, the mental training is also meagre in quantity and worthless in quality. People commonly say that it is because the services & professions are made the object of education that this state of things exists. This I believe to be a great mistake. A degree is necessary for service and therefore people try to get a degree. Good! let it remain so. But in order for a student to get a degree let us make it absolutely necessary that he shall have a good education. If a worthless education is sufficient in order to secure his object & a good education quite unessential, it is obvious that the student will not incur great trouble and diversion of energy in order to acquire what he feels to be unnecessary. But change this state of things, make culture & true science essential and the same interested motive which now makes him content with a bad education will then compel him to strive after culture and true science. As practical men we must recognise that the pure enthusiasm of knowledge for knowledge's sake operates only on exceptional minds or in exceptional eras. In civilised countries a general desire for knowledge as a motive for education does exist but it is largely accompanied with the earthier feeling that knowledge is necessary to keep up one's position in society or to succeed in certain lucrative or respectable pursuits & professions. We in India have become so barbarous that we send our children to school with the grossest utilitarian motives unmixed with any disinterested desire for knowledge; but the education we receive is itself responsible for this. Nobody can cherish disinterested enthusiasm for a bad education; it can only be regarded as a means to some practical end. But make the education good, thorough & interesting and the love of knowledge will of itself awake in the mind and so mingle with & modify more selfish objects.

The real source of the evil we complain of is therefore something different; it is a fundamental & deplorable error by which

we in this country have confused education with the acquisition of knowledge and interpreted knowledge itself in a singularly narrow & illiberal sense. To give the student knowledge is necessary, but it is still more necessary to build up in him the power of using his knowledge. It would hardly be a good technical education for a carpenter to be taught how to fell trees so as to provide himself with wood & never to learn how to prepare tables, chairs & cabinets or even what tools were necessary for his craft. Yet this is precisely what our system of education does. It trains the memory and provides the student with a store of facts & secondhand ideas. The memory is the woodcutter's axe and the store he acquires is the wood he has cut down in his course of tree felling. When he has done this, the University says to him "We now declare you a Bachelor of Carpentry; we have given you a good & sharp axe and a fair nucleus of wood to begin with. Go on, my son, the world is full of forests and provided the Forest Officer does not object you can cut down trees & provide yourself with wood to your heart's content." Now the student who goes forth thus equipped, may become a great timber-merchant but unless he is an exceptional genius he will never be even a moderate carpenter. Or to return from the simile to the fact, the graduate from our colleges may be a good clerk, a decent *vakil* or a tolerable medical practitioner, but unless he is an especial genius, he will never be a great administrator or a great lawyer or an eminent medical specialist. These eminences have to be filled up mainly by Europeans. If an Indian wishes to rise to them, he has to travel thousands of miles over the sea in order to breathe an atmosphere of liberal knowledge, original science and sound culture. And even then he seldom succeeds, because his lungs are too debilitated to take in a good long breath of that atmosphere.

The first fundamental mistake has been, therefore, to confine ourselves to the training of the storing faculty memory and the storage of facts and to neglect the training of the three great manipulating faculties, viz. the power of reasoning, the power of comparison and differentiation and the power of expression. These powers are present to a certain extent in all men above the

state of the savage and even in a rudimentary state in the savage himself; but they exist especially developed in the higher classes of civilised nations, wherever these higher classes have long centuries of education behind them. But, however highly developed by nature, these powers demand cultivation, they demand that bringing out of natural abilities which is the real essence of education. If not so brought out in youth, they become rusted & stopped with dirt, so that they cease to act except in a feeble, narrow & partial manner. Exceptional genius does indeed assert itself in spite of neglect and discouragement, but even genius self-developed does not often achieve as happy results and as free & large a working as the same genius properly equipped & trained. Amount of knowledge is in itself not of the first importance; but to make the best use of what we know. The easy assumption of our educationists that we have only to supply the mind with a smattering of facts in each department of knowledge & the mind can be trusted to develop itself and take its own suitable road, is contrary to science, contrary to human experience and contrary to the universal opinion of civilised countries. Indeed the history of intellectual degeneration in gifted races always begins with the arrest of these three mental powers by the excessive cultivation of mere knowledge at their expense. Much as we have lost as a nation, we have always preserved our intellectual alertness, quickness & originality; but even this last gift is threatened by our University system, & if it goes, it will be the beginning of irretrievable degradation & final extinction.

The very first step in reform must therefore be to revolutionize the whole aims & methods of our education. We must accustom teachers to devote nine-tenths of their energies to the education of the active mental faculties, while the passive retaining faculty, which we call the memory, should occupy a recognised & well-defined but subordinate place, and we must direct our school & university examinations to the testing of these active faculties & not of the memory. For this is an object which cannot be effected by the mere change or rearrangement of the curriculum. It is true that certain subjects are more apt to develop certain faculties than others; the power of accurate



reasoning is powerfully assisted by Geometry, Logic & Political Economy; one of the most important results of languages is to refine & train the power of expression, and nothing more enlarges the power of comparison & differentiation than an intelligent study of history. But no particular subject except language is essential, still less exclusively appropriated, to any given faculty. There are types of intellect, for instance, which are constitutionally incapable of dealing with geometrical problems or even with the formal machinery of Logic, and are yet profound, brilliant & correct reasoners in other intellectual spheres. There is in fact hardly any subject, the sciences of calculation excepted, which in the hands of a capable teacher, does not give room for the development of all the general faculties of the mind. The first thing needed therefore is the entire and unsparing rejection of the present methods of teaching in favour of those which are now being universally adopted in the more advanced countries of Europe.

But even in the narrower sphere of knowledge acquisition to which our system has confined itself, it has been guilty of other blunders quite as serious. Apart from pure mathematics, which stands on a footing of its own, knowledge may be divided into two great heads, the knowledge of things & the knowledge of men, i.e. to say of human thought, human actions, human nature and human creations as recorded, preserved or pictured in literature, history, philosophy & art. The latter is covered in the term humanities or humane letters, and the idea of a liberal education was formerly confined to these, though it was subsequently widened to include mathematics & has again been widened in modern times to include a modicum of science. The humanities, mathematics & science are therefore the three sisters in the family of knowledge and any self-respecting system of education must in these days provide facilities for mastery in any one of these as well as for a modicum of all. The first great error of our system comes in here. While we insist on passing our students through a rigid & cast-iron course of knowledge in everything, we give them real knowledge in nothing. [What does an average Bombay graduate who has taken English Literature for

his optional subject, know of that literature? He has read a novel of Jane Austen or the Vicar of Wakefield, a poem of Tennyson or a book of Milton, at most two plays of Shakespeare, a work of Bacon's or Burke's full of ideas which he is totally incompetent to digest and one or two stray books of Pope, Dryden, Spenser or other, & to crown this pretentious little heap a mass of secondhand criticism dealing with poets & writers of whom he has not studied a single line. When we remember that English is the main study of our schools & colleges, what a miserable outturn is this, what a wretched little mouse out of that mountain of drudgery from which the voice of the oppressed student is heard painfully & monotonously repeating like Valmekie under his mound the lesson with which he has been crammed. But he is far more unfortunate than Valmekie, his mar mar mar has not been converted into Ram Ram Ram; for while he thinks he has been repeating the saving word which gives intellectual salvation, it has been unknown to him converted into a death dealing word which causes intellectual sterility & impotence.]<sup>1</sup>

Mathematics for instance is a subject in which it ought not to be difficult to give thorough knowledge, for most of its paths are well beaten and being a precise & definite subject it does not in itself demand so much & such various powers of original thought & appreciation as literature & history; yet it is the invariable experience of the most brilliant mathematical students who go from Calcutta or Bombay to Cambridge that after the first year they have exhausted all they have already learned and have to enter on entirely new & unfamiliar result. It is surely a deplorable thing that it should be impossible to acquire a thorough mathematical education in India, that one should have to go thousands of miles and spend thousands of rupees in order to get it. Again if we look at Science, what is the result of the pitiful modicum of science acquired under our system? At the best it turns out good teachers who can turn others through the same mill in which they themselves have been ground. But the object of scientific instruction [*incomplete*]

<sup>1</sup> Passage bracketed by Sri Aurobindo in the manuscript. — Ed.

# The Brain of India



# I

THE TIME has perhaps come for the Indian mind, long pre-occupied with political and economic issues, for a widening of its horizon. Such a widening is especially necessary for Bengal.

The Bengali has always led and still leads the higher thought of India, because he has eminently the gifts which are most needed for the new race that has to arise. He has the emotion and imagination which is open to the great inspirations, the mighty heart-stirring ideas that move humanity when a great step forward has to be taken. He has the invaluable gift of thinking with the heart. He has, too, a subtle brain which is able within certain limits to catch shades of meaning and delicacies of thought, both those the logic grasps and those which escape the mere logical intellect. Above all, he has in a greater degree than other races the yet undeveloped faculty of direct knowledge, latent in humanity and now to be evolved, which is above reason and imagination, the faculty which in Sri Ramakrishna, the supreme outcome of the race, dispensed with education and commanded any knowledge he desired easily and divinely. It is a faculty which now works irregularly in humanity, unrecognised and confused by the interference of the imagination, of the limited reason and of the old associations or *samskāras* stored in the memory of the race and the individual. It cannot be made a recognised and habitual agent except by the discipline which the ancient Indian sages formulated in the science of Yoga. But certain races have the function more evolved or more ready for evolution than the generality of mankind, and it is these that will lead in the future evolution. In addition, the race has a mighty will-power which comes from the long worship of Shakti and practice of the Tantra that has been a part of our culture for many centuries. No other people could have revolutionised its

whole national character in a few years as Bengal has done. The Bengali has always worshipped the Divine Energy in her most terrible as well as in her most beautiful aspects; whether as the Beautiful or the Terrible Mother he has never shrunk from her whether in fear or in awe. When the divine force flowed into him he has never feared to yield himself up to it and follow the infinite prompting, careless whither it led. As a reward he has become the most perfect *ādhāra* of Shakti, the most capable and swiftly sensitive and responsive receptacle of the Infinite Will and Energy the world now holds. Recently that Will and Energy has rushed into him and has been lifting him to the level of his future mission and destiny. He has now to learn the secret of drawing the Mother of Strength into himself and holding her there in a secure possession. That is why we have pointed to a religious and a spiritual awakening as the next necessity and the next inevitable development.

But along with his great possessions the Bengali has serious deficiencies. In common with the rest of India he has a great deficiency of knowledge, the result of an education meagre in quantity and absolutely vicious in method and quality. And he is inferior to other Indian races, such as the Madrasi and Maratha, in the capacity of calm, measured and comprehensive deliberation which is usually called intellect or reasoning power, and which, though it is far from the whole of thought, is essential to the completeness of thought and action. By itself the logical or reasoning intellect creates the accurate and careful scholar, the sober critic, the rationalist and cautious politician, the conservative scientist, that great mass of human intelligence which makes for slow and careful progress. It does not create the hero and the originator, the inspired prophet, the mighty builder, the maker of nations; it does not conquer nature and destiny, lay its hand on the future, command the world. The rest of India is largely dominated by this faculty and limited by it, therefore it lags behind while Bengal rushes forward. The rest of India has feared to deliver itself to the Power that came down from above to uplift the nation; it has either denied its call or made reservations and insisted on guiding it and reining it in. A few

mighty men have stridden forward and carried their race or a part of it with them, but the whole race must be infused with the spirit before it can be fit for the work of the future.

On his side the Bengali, while in no way limiting the divine inrush or shortening the Titan stride, must learn to see the way he is going while he treads it. For want of a trained thought-power, he follows indeed the ideas that seize him, but he does not make them thoroughly his own. He thinks them out, if at all, rapidly but not comprehensively, and, in consequence, though he has applied them with great energy to the circumstances immediately around him, a new set of circumstances finds him perplexed and waiting for a lead from the few men to whom he has been accustomed to look for the source of his thought and action. This is a source of weakness. For the work of the present, and still more, for the work of the future, it is imperatively necessary to create a centre of thought and knowledge which will revolutionise the brain of the nation to as great an extent as its character and outlook has been revolutionised. A new heart was necessary for our civilisation, and, though the renovation is not complete, the work that has been done in that direction will ensure its own fulfilment. A new brain is also needed, and sufficiency of knowledge for the new brain to do its work with thoroughness.

## II

A NEW centre of thought implies a new centre of education. The system prevailing in our universities is one which ignores the psychology of man, loads the mind laboriously with numerous little packets of information carefully tied with red tape, and, by the methods used in this loading process, damages or atrophies the faculties and instruments by which man assimilates, creates and grows in intellect, manhood and energy. The new National Education, as inaugurated in Bengal, sought immensely to enlarge the field of knowledge to which the student was introduced, and in so far as it laid stress on experiment and observation, employed the natural and easy instrument of the vernacular and encouraged the play of thought on the subject of study, corrected the habit of spoiling the instruments of knowledge by the use of false methods. But many of the vicious methods and ideas employed by the old system were faithfully cherished by the new, and the domination of the Council by men wedded to the old lines was bound to spell a most unfavourable effect on the integrity of the system in its most progressive features. Another vital defect of the new education was that it increased the amount of information the student was required to absorb without strengthening the body and brain sufficiently to grapple with the increased mass of intellectual toil, and it shared with the old system the defect of ignoring the psychology of the race. The mere inclusion of the matter of Indian thought and culture in the field of knowledge does not make a system of education Indian, and the instruction given in the Bengal National College was only an improved European system, not Indian or National. Another error which has to be avoided and to which careless minds are liable, is the reactionary idea that in order to be national, education must reproduce the features of the old *tol* system of Bengal. It is not eighteenth



century India, the India which by its moral and intellectual deficiencies gave itself into the keeping of foreigners, that we have to revive, but the spirit, ideals and methods of the ancient and mightier India in a yet more effective form and with a more modern organisation.

What was the secret of that gigantic intellectuality, spirituality and superhuman moral force which we see pulsating in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, in the ancient philosophy, in the supreme poetry, art, sculpture and architecture of India? What was at the basis of the incomparable public works and engineering achievements, the opulent and exquisite industries, the great triumphs of science, scholarship, jurisprudence, logic, metaphysics, the unique social structure? What supported the heroism and self-abandonment of the Kshatriya, the Sikh and the Rajput, the unconquerable national vitality and endurance? What was it that stood behind that civilisation second to none in the massiveness of its outlines or the perfection of its details? Without a great and unique discipline involving a perfect education of soul and mind, a result so immense and persistent would have been impossible. It would be an error to look for the secret of Aryan success in the details of the instruction given in the old ashrams and universities so far as they have come down to us. We must know what was the principle and basis on which the details were founded. We shall find the secret of their success in a profound knowledge of human psychology and its subtle application to the methods of intellectual training and instruction.

At the basis of the old Aryan system was the all-important discipline of Brahmacharya. The first necessity for the building up of a great intellectual superstructure is to provide a foundation strong enough to bear it. Those systems of education which start from an insufficient knowledge of man, think they have provided a satisfactory foundation when they have supplied the student with a large or well-selected mass of information on the various subjects which comprise the best part of human culture at the time. The school gives the materials, it is for the student to use them, — this is the formula. But the error here is fundamental. Information cannot be the foundation of intelligence, it

can only be part of the material out of which the knower builds knowledge, the starting-point, the nucleus of fresh discovery and enlarged creation. An education that confines itself to imparting knowledge, is no education. The various faculties of memory, judgment, imagination, perception, reasoning, which build the edifice of thought and knowledge for the knower, must not only be equipped with their fit and sufficient tools and materials, but trained to bring fresh materials and use more skilfully those of which they are in possession. And the foundation of the structure they have to build, can only be the provision of a fund of force and energy sufficient to bear the demands of a continually growing activity of the memory, judgment and creative power. Where is that energy to be found?

The ancient Aryans knew that man was not separate from the universe, but only a homogeneous part of it, as a wave is part of the ocean. An infinite energy, Prakriti, Maya or Shakti, pervades the world, pours itself into every name and form, and the clod, the plant, the insect, the animal, the man are, in their phenomenal existence, merely more or less efficient *ādhāras* of this Energy. We are each of us a dynamo into which waves of that energy have been generated and stored, and are being perpetually conserved, used up and replenished. The same force which moves in the star and the planet, moves in us, and all our thought and action are merely its play and born of the complexity of its functionings. There are processes by which man can increase his capacity as an *ādhāra*. There are other processes by which he can clear of obstructions the channel of communication between himself and the universal energy and bring greater and greater stores of it pouring into his soul and brain and body. This continual improvement of the *ādhāra* and increase in quantity and complexity of action of the informing energy, is the whole aim of evolution. When that energy is the highest in kind and the fullest in amount of which the human *ādhāra* is capable, and the *ādhāra* itself is trained utterly to bear the inrush and play of the energy, then is a man *siddha*, the fulfilled or perfect man, his evolution is over and he has completed in the individual that utmost development which the

mass of humanity is labouring towards through the ages.

If this theory be correct, the energy at the basis of the operation of intelligence must be in ourselves and it must be capable of greater expansion and richer use to an extent practically unlimited. And this also must be a sound principle, that the more we can increase and enrich the energy, the greater will be the potential range, power and activity of the functions of our mind and the consequent vigour of our intellectuality and the greatness of our achievement. This was the first principle on which the ancient Aryans based their education and one of the chief processes which they used for the increased storage of energy, was the practice of Brahmacharya.

### III

THE PRACTICE of Brahmacharya is the first and most necessary condition of increasing the force within and turning it to such uses as may benefit the possessor or mankind. All human energy has a physical basis. The mistake made by European materialism is to suppose the basis to be everything and confuse it with the source. The source of life and energy is not material but spiritual, but the basis, the foundation on which the life and energy stand and work, is physical. The ancient Hindus clearly recognised this distinction between *kāraṇa* and *pratiṣṭhā*, the north pole and the south pole of being. Earth or gross matter is the *pratiṣṭhā*, Brahman or spirit is the *kāraṇa*. To raise up the physical to the spiritual is Brahmacharya, for by the meeting of the two the energy which starts from one and produces the other is enhanced and fulfils itself.

This is the metaphysical theory. The application depends on a right understanding of the physical and psychological conformation of the human receptacle of energy. The fundamental physical unit is the *retas*, in which the *tejas*, the heat and light and electricity in a man, is involved and hidden. All energy is latent in the *retas*. This energy may be either expended physically or conserved. All passion, lust, desire wastes the energy by pouring it, either in the gross form or a sublimated subtler form, out of the body. Immorality in act throws it out in the gross form; immorality of thought in the subtle form. In either case there is waste, and unchastity is of the mind and speech as well as of the body. On the other hand, all self-control conserves the energy in the *retas*, and conservation always brings with it increase. But the needs of the physical body are limited and the excess of energy must create a surplus which has to turn itself to some use other than the physical. According to the ancient theory *retas* is *jala* or water, full of light and heat and electricity, in one word, of

*tejas*. The excess of the *retas* turns first into heat or *tapas* which stimulates the whole system, and it is for this reason that all forms of self-control and austerity are called *tapas* or *tapasyā*, because they generate the heat or stimulus which is a source of powerful action and success; secondly, it turns to *tejas* proper, light, the energy which is at the source of all knowledge; thirdly, it turns to *vidyut* or electricity, which is at the basis of all forceful action whether intellectual or physical. In the *vidyut* again is involved the *ojas*, or *prāṇaśakti*, the primal energy which proceeds from ether. The *retas* refining from *jala* to *tapas*, *tejas* and *vidyut* and from *vidyut* to *ojas*, fills the system with physical strength, energy and brain-power and in its last form of *ojas* rises to the brain and informs it with that primal energy which is the most refined form of matter and nearest to spirit. It is *ojas* that creates a spiritual force or *vīrya*, by which a man attains to spiritual knowledge, spiritual love and faith, spiritual strength. It follows that the more we can by Brahmacharya increase the store of *tapas*, *tejas*, *vidyut* and *ojas*, the more we shall fill ourselves with utter energy for the works of the body, heart, mind and spirit.

This view of the human soul was not the whole of the knowledge on which ancient Hinduism based its educational discipline. In addition it had the view that all knowledge is within and has to be evoked by education rather than instilled from outside. The constitution of man consists of three principles of nature *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the comprehensive, active and passive elements of universal action, which, in one of their thousandfold aspects, manifest as knowledge, passion and ignorance. *Tamas* is a constitutional dullness or passivity which obscures the knowledge within and creates ignorance, mental inertia, slowness, forgetfulness, disinclination to study, inability to grasp and distinguish. *Rajas* is an undisciplined activity which obscures knowledge by passion, attachment, prejudgment, predilection and wrong ideas. *Sattva* is an illumination which reveals the hidden knowledge and brings it to the surface where the observation can grasp and the memory record it. This conception of the constitution of the knowing faculty made the removal of *tamas*, the disciplining of *rajas* and the awakening of *sattva* the main

problem of the teacher. He had to train the student to be receptive of illumination from within. The disciplining of *rajas* was effected by a strict moral discipline which induced a calm, clear, receptive state of mind free from intellectual self-will and pride and the obscuration of passion, — the famous discipline of the *brahmacārin* which was the foundation of Aryan culture and Aryan morals; and the interference of wrong ideas was sought to be removed by strict mental submission to the teacher during the receptive period, when the body of ascertained knowledge or right ideas already in man's possession was explained to him and committed to memory. The removal of *tamas* was effected by the discipline of moral purity, which awakened the energy of *tejas* and electricity in the system and by the power of *tapasyā* trained it to be a reservoir of mental force and clarity. The awakening of illumination was actively effected by the triple method of repetition, meditation and discussion. *Āvṛtti* or repetition was meant to fill the recording part of the mind with the *śabda* or word, so that the *artha* or meaning might of itself rise from within. Needless to say, a mechanical repetition was not likely to produce this effect. There must be that clear still receptivity and that waiting upon the word or thing with the contemplative part of the mind which is what the ancient Indians meant by *dhyāna* or meditation. All of us have felt, when studying a language, difficulties which seemed insoluble while grappling with a text, suddenly melt away and a clear understanding arise without assistance from book or teacher after putting away the book from our mind for a brief period. Many of us have experienced also, the strangeness of taking up a language or subject, after a brief discontinuance, to find that we understand it much better than when we took it up, know the meanings of words we had never met with before and can explain sentences which, before we discontinued the study, would have baffled our understanding. This is because the *jñātā* or knower within has had his attention called to the subject and has been busy in the interval drawing upon the source of knowledge within in connection with it. This experience is only possible to those whose sattwic or illuminative element has been powerfully aroused or consciously or

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unconsciously trained to action by the habit of intellectual clarity and deep study. The highest reach of the sattwic development is when one can dispense often or habitually with outside aids, the teacher or the text book, grammar and dictionary and learn a subject largely or wholly from within. But this is only possible to the Yogin by a successful prosecution of the discipline of Yoga.

## IV

WE HAVE stated, as succinctly as is consistent with clearness, the main psychological principles on which the ancient Indians based their scheme of education.

By the training of Brahmacharya they placed all the energy of which the system was capable and which could be spared from bodily functions, at the service of the brain. In this way they not only strengthened the *medhā* or grasping power, the *dhī* or subtlety and swiftness of thought conception, the memory and the creative intellectual force, making the triple force of memory, invention, judgment comprehensive and analytic, but they greatly enlarged the range, no less than the intensity, of the absorbing, storing and generative mental activities. Hence those astonishing feats of memory, various comprehension and versatility of creative work of which only a few extraordinary intellects have been capable in Occidental history, but which in ancient India were common and usual. Mr. Gladstone was considered to be the possessor of an astonishing memory because he could repeat the whole of Homer's Iliad, beginning from any passage suggested to him and flowing on as long as required; but to a Brahmin of the old times this would have been a proof of a capacity neither unusual nor astonishing, but rather, petty and limited. The many-sidedness of an Eratosthenes or the range of a Herbert Spencer have created in Europe admiring or astonished comment; but the universality of the ordinary curriculum in ancient India was for every student and not for the exceptional few, and it implied, not a tasting of many subjects after the modern plan, but the thorough mastery of all. The original achievement of a Kalidasa accomplishing the highest in every line of poetic creation is so incredible to the European mind that it has been sought to cleave that mighty master of harmonies into a committee of three. Yet it is paralleled by the accomplishment



in philosophy of Shankara in a short life of thirty-two years and dwarfed by the universal mastery of all possible spiritual knowledge and experience of Sri Ramakrishna in our own era. These instances are not so common as the others, because pure creative genius is not common; but in Europe they are, with a single modern exception, non-existent. The highest creative intellects in Europe have achieved sovereignty by limitation, by striving to excel only in one field of a single intellectual province or at most in two; when they have been versatile it has been by sacrificing height to breadth. But in India it is the greatest who have been the most versatile and passed from one field of achievement to another without sacrificing an inch of their height or an iota of their creative intensity, easily, unfalteringly, with an assured mastery. This easy and unfailing illumination crowning the unfailing energy created by Brahmacharya was due to the discipline which developed *sattva* or inner illumination. This illumination makes the acquisition of knowledge and all other intellectual operations easy, spontaneous, swift, decisive and comparatively unfatiguing to body or brain. In these two things lies the secret of Aryan intellectual achievement. Brahmacharya and sattwic development created the brain of India: it was perfected by Yoga.

It is a common complaint that our students are too heavily burdened with many subjects and the studying of many books. The complaint is utterly true and yet it is equally true that the range of studies is pitifully narrow and the books read miserably few. What is the reason of this paradox, the justification of these two apparently contradictory truths? It is this, that we neglect the basis and proceed at once to a superstructure small in bulk, disproportionately heavy in comparison with that bulk, and built on a foundation too weak to bear even the paltry and meagre edifice of our imparted knowledge. The Indian brain is still in potentiality what it was; but it is being damaged, stunted and defaced. The greatness of its innate possibilities is hidden by the greatness of its surface deterioration. The old system hampered it with study in a foreign language which was not even imperfectly mastered at a time when the student was called upon to learn in that impossible medium a variety of alien and unfamiliar

subjects. In this unnatural process it was crippled by the disuse of judgment, observation, comprehension and creation, and the exclusive reliance on the deteriorating relics of the ancient Indian memory. Finally, it was beggared and degraded by having to deal with snippets and insufficient packets of information instead of being richly stored and powerfully equipped.

The new system of National Education sought to undo the evil by employing the mother-tongue, restoring the use of the disused intellectual functions and providing for a richer and more real equipment of information, of the substance of knowledge and the materials for creation. If it could not triumphantly succeed, that was partly because it had to deal with minds already vitiated by the old system and not often with the best even of these, because its teachers had themselves seldom a perfect grasp of the requirements of the new system, and because its controllers and directors were men of the old school who clung to familiar shibboleths and disastrous delusions. But in the system itself there was a defect, which, though it would matter less in other epochs or other countries, is of primary importance in such periods of transition when bricks have to be made out of straw and the work now done will determine the future achievement of our nation. While calling itself national, it neglected the very foundation of the great achievement of our forefathers and especially the perfection of the instrument of knowledge.

It is not our contention that the actual system of ancient instruction should be restored in its outward features, — a demand often made by fervid lovers of the past. Many of them are not suited to modern requirements. But its fundamental principles are for all time and its discipline can only be replaced by the discovery of a still more effective discipline, such as European education does not offer us. The object of these articles has been to indicate the nature and psychological ideas of the old system and point out its essential relation of cause and effect to the splendid achievement of our ancestors. How its principles can be reapplied or be completed and to some extent replaced by a still deeper psychology and a still more effective discipline is a subject fit for separate treatment.

# A System of National Education

*Some Preliminary Ideas*



## Publisher's Note to the 1924 Edition

These essays were first published in the *Karmayogin* in the year 1910. They are, however, incomplete, and the subject of national education proper has not been touched except in certain allusions. It was not the author's intention to have them reprinted in their present form, but circumstances have made necessary the bringing out of an authorised edition. As it at present stands the book consists of a number of introductory essays insisting on certain general principles of a sound system of teaching applicable for the most part to national education in any country. As such it may stand as a partial introduction to the subject of national education in India.



## The Human Mind

THE TRUE basis of education is the study of the human mind, infant, adolescent and adult. Any system of education founded on theories of academical perfection, which ignores the instrument of study, is more likely to hamper and impair intellectual growth than to produce a perfect and perfectly equipped mind. For the educationist has to do, not with dead material like the artist or sculptor, but with an infinitely subtle and sensitive organism. He cannot shape an educational masterpiece out of human wood or stone; he has to work in the elusive substance of mind and respect the limits imposed by the fragile human body.

There can be no doubt that the current educational system of Europe is a great advance on many of the methods of antiquity, but its defects are also palpable. It is based on an insufficient knowledge of human psychology, and it is only safeguarded in Europe from disastrous results by the refusal of the ordinary student to subject himself to the processes it involves, his habit of studying only so much as he must to avoid punishment or to pass an immediate test, his resort to active habits and vigorous physical exercise. In India the disastrous effects of the system on body, mind and character are only too apparent. The first problem in a national system of education is to give an education as comprehensive as the European and more thorough, without the evils of strain and cramming. This can only be done by studying the instruments of knowledge and finding a system of teaching which shall be natural, easy and effective. It is only by strengthening and sharpening these instruments to their utmost capacity that they can be made effective for the increased work which modern conditions require. The muscles of the mind must be thoroughly trained by simple and easy means; then, and not till then, great feats of intellectual strength can be required of them.

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to the child, is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching. Difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it does not change its nature.

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own *dharma* is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common. Every man has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of strength and perfection in however small a sphere, which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it, use it. The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.

The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. The basis of a



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man's nature is almost always, in addition to his soul's past, his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sustenance, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly. From that then we must begin. We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life which is alien to that in which it must physically move. If anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development. There are souls which naturally revolt from their surroundings and seem to belong to another age and clime. Let them be free to follow their bent; but the majority languish, become empty, become artificial, if artificially moulded into an alien form. It is God's arrangement for mankind that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education.

## II

# The Powers of the Mind

THE INSTRUMENT of the educationist is the mind or *antaḥkāraṇa*, which consists of four layers. The reservoir of past mental impressions, the *citta* or storehouse of memory, which must be distinguished from the specific act of memory, is the foundation on which all the other layers stand. All experience lies within us as passive or potential memory; active memory selects and takes what it requires from that storehouse. But the active memory is like a man searching among a great mass of locked-up material: sometimes he cannot find what he wants; often in his rapid search he stumbles across many things for which he has no immediate need; often too he blunders and thinks he has found the real thing when it is something else, irrelevant if not valueless, on which he has laid his hand. The passive memory or *citta* needs no training, it is automatic and naturally sufficient to its task; there is not the slightest object of knowledge coming within its field which is not secured, placed and faultlessly preserved in that admirable receptacle. It is the active memory, a higher but less perfectly developed function, which is in need of improvement.

The second layer is the mind proper or *manas*, the sixth sense of our Indian psychology, in which all the others are gathered up. The function of the mind is to receive the images of things translated into sight, sound, smell, taste and touch by the five senses and translate these again into thought-sensations. It receives also images of its own direct grasping and forms them into mental impressions. These sensations and impressions are the material of thought, not thought itself; but it is exceedingly important that thought should work on sufficient and perfect material. It is therefore the first business of the educationist to develop in the child the right use of the six senses, to see that they are not stunted or injured by disuse, but trained by the

child himself under the teacher's direction to that perfect accuracy and keen subtle sensitiveness of which they are capable. In addition, whatever assistance can be gained by the organs of action, should be thoroughly employed. The hand, for instance, should be trained to reproduce what the eye sees and the mind senses. The speech should be trained to a perfect expression of the knowledge which the whole *antahkarana* possesses.

The third layer is the intellect or *buddhi*, which is the real instrument of thought and that which orders and disposes of the knowledge acquired by the other parts of the machine. For the purposes of the educationist this is infinitely the most important of the three I have named. The intellect is an organ composed of several groups of functions, divisible into two important classes, the functions and faculties of the right hand and the functions and faculties of the left hand. The faculties of the right hand are comprehensive, creative and synthetic; the faculties of the left hand critical and analytic. To the right hand belong Judgment, Imagination, Memory, Observation; to the left hand Comparison and Reasoning. The critical faculties distinguish, compare, classify, generalise, deduce, infer, conclude; they are the component parts of the logical reason. The right-hand faculties comprehend, command, judge in their own right, grasp, hold and manipulate. The right-hand mind is the master of knowledge, the left-hand its servant. The left hand touches only the body of knowledge, the right hand penetrates its soul. The left hand limits itself to ascertained truth, the right hand grasps that which is still elusive or unascertained. Both are essential to the completeness of the human reason. These important functions of the machine have all to be raised to their highest and finest working-power, if the education of the child is not to be imperfect and one-sided.

There is a fourth layer of faculty which, not as yet entirely developed in man, is attaining gradually to a wider development and more perfect evolution. The powers peculiar to this highest stratum of knowledge are chiefly known to us from the phenomena of genius, — sovereign discernment, intuitive perception of truth, plenary inspiration of speech, direct vision of knowledge

to an extent often amounting to revelation, making a man a prophet of truth. These powers are rare in their higher development, though many possess them imperfectly or by flashes. They are still greatly distrusted by the critical reason of mankind because of the admixture of error, caprice and a biased imagination which obstructs and distorts their perfect workings. Yet it is clear that humanity could not have advanced to its present stage if it had not been for the help of these faculties, and it is a question with which educationists have not yet grappled, what is to be done with this mighty and baffling element, the element of genius in the pupil. The mere instructor does his best to discourage and stifle genius, the more liberal teacher welcomes it. Faculties so important to humanity cannot be left out of our consideration. It is foolish to neglect them, it is criminal to discourage them. Their imperfect development must be perfected, the admixture of error, caprice and biased fancifulness must be carefully and wisely removed. But the teacher cannot do it; he would eradicate the good corn as well as the tares if he interfered. Here, as in all educational operations, he can only put the growing soul into the way of its own perfection.

### III

## The Moral Nature

IN THE economy of man the mental nature rests upon the moral, and the education of the intellect divorced from the perfection of the moral and emotional nature is injurious to human progress. Yet, while it is easy to arrange some kind of curriculum or syllabus which will do well enough for the training of the mind, it has not yet been found possible to provide under modern conditions a suitable moral training for the school and college. The attempt to make boys moral and religious by the teaching of moral and religious text-books is a vanity and a delusion, precisely because the heart is not the mind and to instruct the mind does not necessarily improve the heart. It would be an error to say that it has no effect. It throws certain seeds of thought into the *antaḥkaraṇa* and, if these thoughts become habitual, they influence the conduct. But the danger of moral text-books is that they make the thinking of high things mechanical and artificial, and whatever is mechanical and artificial is inoperative for good.

There are three things which are of the utmost importance in dealing with a man's moral nature, the emotions, the *saṃskāras* or formed habits and associations, and the *svabhāva* or nature. The only way for him to train himself morally is to habituate himself to the right emotions, the noblest associations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and the following out in right action of the fundamental impulses of his essential nature. You can impose a certain discipline on children, dress them into a certain mould, lash them into a desired path, but unless you can get their hearts and natures on your side, the conformity to this imposed rule becomes a hypocritical and heartless, a conventional, often a cowardly compliance. This is what is done in Europe, and it leads to that remarkable phenomenon known as the sowing of wild oats as soon as the yoke of discipline

at school and at home is removed, and to the social hypocrisy which is so large a feature of European life. Only what the man admires and accepts, becomes part of himself; the rest is a mask. He conforms to the discipline of society as he conformed to the moral routine of home and school, but considers himself at liberty to guide his real life, inner and private, according to his own likings and passions. On the other hand, to neglect moral and religious education altogether is to corrupt the race. The notorious moral corruption in our young men previous to the saving touch of the Swadeshi movement was the direct result of the purely mental instruction given to them under the English system of education. The adoption of the English system under an Indian disguise in institutions like the Central Hindu College is likely to lead to the European result. That it is better than nothing, is all that can be said for it.

As in the education of the mind, so in the education of the heart, the best way is to put the child into the right road to his own perfection and encourage him to follow it, watching, suggesting, helping, but not interfering. The one excellent element in the English boarding school is that the master at his best stands there as a moral guide and example leaving the boys largely to influence and help each other in following the path silently shown to them. But the method practised is crude and marred by the excess of outer discipline, for which the pupils have no respect except that of fear, and the exiguity of the inner assistance. The little good that is done is outweighed by much evil. The old Indian system of the *guru* commanding by his knowledge and sanctity the implicit obedience, perfect admiration, reverent emulation of the student was a far superior method of moral discipline. It is impossible to restore that ancient system; but it is not impossible to substitute the wise friend, guide and helper for the hired instructor or the benevolent policeman which is all that the European system usually makes of the pedagogue.

The first rule of moral training is to suggest and invite, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily converse and the books read from day to day. These books should contain, for the younger student,

the lofty examples of the past given, not as moral lessons, but as things of supreme human interest, and, for the elder student, the great thoughts of great souls, the passages of literature which set fire to the highest emotions and prompt the highest ideals and aspirations, the records of history and biography which exemplify the living of those great thoughts, noble emotions and aspiring ideals. This is a kind of good company, *satsaṅga*, which can seldom fail to have effect, so long as sententious sermonising is avoided, and becomes of the highest effect if the personal life of the teacher is itself moulded by the great things he places before his pupils. It cannot, however, have full force unless the young life is given an opportunity, within its limited sphere, of embodying in action the moral impulses which rise within it. The thirst of knowledge, the self-devotion, the purity, the renunciation of the Brahmin, — the courage, ardour, honour, nobility, chivalry, patriotism of the Kshatriya, — the beneficence, skill, industry, generous enterprise and large open-handedness of the Vaishya, — the self-effacement and loving service of the Shudra, — these are the qualities of the Aryan. They constitute the moral temper we desire in our young men, in the whole nation. But how can we get them if we do not give opportunities to the young to train themselves in the Aryan tradition, to form by the practice and familiarity of childhood and boyhood the stuff of which their adult lives must be made?

Every boy should, therefore, be given practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in his nature. If he has bad qualities, bad habits, bad *saṃskāras* whether of mind or body, he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the Rajayogic method of *saṃyama*, rejection and substitution. He should be encouraged to think of them, not as sins or offences, but as symptoms of a curable disease alterable by a steady and sustained effort of the will, — falsehood being rejected whenever it rises into the mind and replaced by truth, fear by courage, selfishness by sacrifice and renunciation, malice by love. Great care will have to be taken that unformed virtues are not rejected as faults. The wildness and recklessness of many young natures

are only the overflowings of an excessive strength, greatness and nobility. They should be purified, not discouraged.

I have spoken of morality; it is necessary to speak a word of religious teaching. There is a strange idea prevalent that by merely teaching the dogmas of religion children can be made pious and moral. This is an European error, and its practice either leads to mechanical acceptance of a creed having no effect on the inner and little on the outer life, or it creates the fanatic, the pietist, the ritualist or the unctuous hypocrite. Religion has to be lived, not learned as a creed. The singular compromise made in the so-called National Education of Bengal, making the teaching of religious beliefs compulsory, but forbidding the practice of *anuṣṭhāna* or religious exercises, is a sample of the ignorant confusion which distracts men's minds on this subject. The prohibition is a sop to secularism declared or concealed. No religious teaching is of any value unless it is lived, and the use of various kinds of *sādhana*, spiritual self-training and exercise, is the only effective preparation for religious living. The ritual of prayer, homage, ceremony is craved for by many minds as an essential preparation and, if not made an end in itself, is a great help to spiritual progress; if it is withheld, some other form of meditation, devotion or religious duty must be put in its place. Otherwise, religious teaching is of little use and would almost be better ungiven.

But whether distinct teaching in any form of religion is imparted or not, the essence of religion, to live for God, for humanity, for country, for others and for oneself in these, must be made the ideal in every school which calls itself national. It is this spirit of Hinduism pervading our schools which, far more than the teaching of Indian subjects, the use of Indian methods or formal instruction in Hindu beliefs and Hindu scriptures, should be the essence of Nationalism in our schools distinguishing them from all others.



#### IV

## Simultaneous and Successive Teaching

A VERY remarkable feature of modern training which has been subjected in India to a *reductio ad absurdum* is the practice of teaching by snippets. A subject is taught a little at a time, in conjunction with a host of others, with the result that what might be well learnt in a single year is badly learned in seven and the boy goes out ill-equipped, served with imperfect parcels of knowledge, master of none of the great departments of human knowledge. The system of education adopted by the National Council, an amphibious and twy-natured creation, attempts to heighten this practice of teaching by snippets at the bottom and the middle and suddenly change it to a grandiose specialism at the top. This is to base the triangle on its apex and hope that it will stand.

The old system was to teach one or two subjects well and thoroughly and then proceed to others, and certainly it was a more rational system than the modern. If it did not impart so much varied information, it built up a deeper, nobler and more real culture. Much of the shallowness, discursive lightness and fickle mutability of the average modern mind is due to the vicious principle of teaching by snippets. The one defect that can be alleged against the old system was that the subject earliest learned might fade from the mind of the student while he was mastering his later studies. But the excellent training given to the memory by the ancients obviated the incidence of this defect. In the future education we need not bind ourselves either by the ancient or the modern system, but select only the most perfect and rapid means of mastering knowledge.

In defence of the modern system it is alleged that the attention of children is easily tired and cannot be subjected to the strain of long application to a single subject. The frequent change of subject gives rest to the mind. The question naturally

arises, are the children of modern times then so different from the ancients, and, if so, have we not made them so by discouraging prolonged concentration? A very young child cannot, indeed, apply himself; but a very young child is unfit for school teaching of any kind. A child of seven or eight, and that is the earliest permissible age for the commencement of any regular kind of study, is capable of a good deal of concentration if he is interested. Interest is, after all, the basis of concentration. We make his lessons supremely uninteresting and repellent to the child, a harsh compulsion the basis of teaching and then complain of his restless inattention! The substitution of a natural self-education by the child for the present unnatural system will remove this objection of inability. A child, like a man, if he is interested, much prefers to get to the end of his subject rather than leave it unfinished. To lead him on step by step, interesting and absorbing him in each as it comes, until he has mastered his subject is the true art of teaching.

The first attention of the teacher must be given to the medium and the instruments, and, until these are perfected, to multiply subjects of regular instruction is to waste time and energy. When the mental instruments are sufficiently developed to acquire a language easily and swiftly, that is the time to introduce him to many languages, not when he can only partially understand what he is taught and masters it laboriously and imperfectly. Moreover, one who has mastered his own language, has one very necessary facility for mastering another. With the linguistic faculty unsatisfactorily developed in one's own tongue, to master others is impossible. To study science with the faculties of observation, judgment, reasoning and comparison only slightly developed is to undertake a useless and thankless labour. So it is with all other subjects.

The mother-tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium. Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy. These should be interested in the literature and history of the nation. Instead of stupid and dry spelling and

reading books, looked on as a dreary and ungrateful task, he should be introduced by rapidly progressive stages to the most interesting parts of his own literature and the life around him and behind him, and they should be put before him in such a way as to attract and appeal to the qualities of which I have spoken. All other study at this period should be devoted to the perfection of the mental functions and the moral character. A foundation should be laid at this time for the study of history, science, philosophy, art, but not in an obtrusive and formal manner. Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation's history. Every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to these qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiry. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the groundwork of the faculty of the artist.

It is by allowing Nature to work that we get the benefit of the gifts she has bestowed on us. Humanity in its education of children has chosen to thwart and hamper her processes and, by so doing, has done much to thwart and hamper the rapidity of its own forward march. Happily, saner ideas are now beginning to prevail. But the way has not yet been found. The past hangs about our necks with all its prejudices and errors and will not leave us; it enters into our most radical attempts to return to the guidance of the all-wise Mother. We must have the courage to take up clearer knowledge and apply it fearlessly in the interests of posterity. Teaching by snippets must be relegated to the lumber-room of dead sorrows. The first work is to interest the child in life, work and knowledge, to develop his instruments of knowledge with the utmost thoroughness, to give him mastery of the medium he must use. Afterwards, the rapidity with which he will learn will make up for any delay in taking up

regular studies, and it will be found that, where now he learns a few things badly, then he will learn many things thoroughly well.

## The Training of the Senses

THERE are six senses which minister to knowledge, sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, mind, and all of these except the last look outward and gather the material of thought from outside through the physical nerves and their end-organs, eye, ear, nose, skin, palate. The perfection of the senses as ministers to thought must be one of the first cares of the teacher. The two things that are needed of the senses are accuracy and sensitiveness. We must first understand what are the obstacles to the accuracy and sensitiveness of the senses, in order that we may take the best steps to remove them. The cause of imperfection must be understood by those who desire to bring about perfection.

The senses depend for their accuracy and sensitiveness on the unobstructed activity of the nerves which are the channels of their information and the passive acceptance of the mind which is the recipient. In themselves the organs do their work perfectly. The eye gives the right form, the ear the correct sound, the palate the right taste, the skin the right touch, the nose the right smell. This can easily be understood if we study the action of the eye as a crucial example. A correct image is reproduced automatically on the retina, if there is any error in appreciating it, it is not the fault of the organ, but of something else.

The fault may be with the nerve currents. The nerves are nothing but channels, they have no power in themselves to alter the information given by the organs. But a channel may be obstructed and the obstruction may interfere either with the fullness or the accuracy of the information, not as it reaches the organ where it is necessarily and automatically perfect, but as it reaches the mind. The only exception is in case of a physical defect in the organ as an instrument. That is not a matter for the educationist, but for the physician.

If the obstruction is such as to stop the information reaching the mind at all, the result is an insufficient sensitiveness of the senses. The defects of sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste, anaesthesia in its various degrees, are curable when not the effect of physical injury or defect in the organ itself. The obstructions can be removed and the sensitiveness remedied by the purification of the nerve system. The remedy is a simple one which is now becoming more and more popular in Europe for different reasons and objects, the regulation of the breathing. This process inevitably restores the perfect and unobstructed activity of the channels and, if well and thoroughly done, leads to a high activity of the senses. The process is called in Yogic discipline *nāḍī-śuddhi* or nerve-purification.

The obstruction in the channel may be such as not absolutely to stop in however small a degree, but to distort the information. A familiar instance of this is the effect of fear or alarm on the sense action. The startled horse takes the sack on the road for a dangerous living thing, the startled man takes a rope for a snake, a waving curtain for a ghostly form. All distortions due to actions in the nervous system can be traced to some kind of emotional disturbance acting in the nerve channels. The only remedy for them is the habit of calm, the habitual steadiness of the nerves. This also can be brought about by *nāḍī-śuddhi* or nerve-purification, which quiets the system, gives a deliberate calmness to all the internal processes and prepares the purification of the mind.

If the nerve channels are quiet and clear, the only possible disturbance of the information is from or through the mind. Now the *manas* or sixth sense is in itself a channel like the nerves, a channel for communication with the *buddhi* or brain-force. Disturbance may happen either from above or from below. The information from outside is first photographed on the end organ, then reproduced at the other end of the nerve system in the *citta* or passive memory. All the images of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste are deposited there and the *manas* reports them to the *buddhi*. The *manas* is both a sense organ and a channel. As a sense organ it is as automatically perfect as the

others, as a channel it is subject to disturbance resulting either in obstruction or distortion.

As a sense organ the mind receives direct thought impressions from outside and from within. These impressions are in themselves perfectly correct, but in their report to the intellect they may either not reach the intellect at all or may reach it so distorted as to make a false or partially false impression. The disturbance may affect the impression which attends the information of eye, ear, nose, skin or palate, but it is very slightly powerful here. In its effect on the direct impressions of the mind, it is extremely powerful and the chief source of error. The mind takes direct impressions primarily of thought, but also of form, sound, indeed of all the things for which it usually prefers to depend on the sense organs. The full development of this sensitiveness of the mind is called in our Yogic discipline *sūkṣmadṛṣṭi* or subtle reception of images. Telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, presentiment, thought-reading, character-reading and many other modern discoveries are very ancient powers of the mind which have been left undeveloped, and they all belong to the *manas*. The development of the sixth sense has never formed part of human training. In a future age it will undoubtedly take a place in the necessary preliminary training of the human instrument. Meanwhile there is no reason why the mind should not be trained to give a correct report to the intellect so that our thought may start with absolutely correct if not with full impressions.

The first obstacle, the nervous emotional, we may suppose to be removed by the purification of the nervous system. The second obstacle is that of the emotions themselves warping the impression as it comes. Love may do this, hatred may do this, any emotion or desire according to its power and intensity may distort the impression as it travels. This difficulty can only be removed by the discipline of the emotions, the purifying of the moral habits. This is a part of moral training and its consideration may be postponed for the moment. The next difficulty is the interference of previous associations formed or ingrained in the *citta* or passive memory. We have a habitual way of looking

at things and the conservative inertia in our nature disposes us to give every new experience the shape and semblance of those to which we are accustomed. It is only more developed minds which can receive first impressions without an unconscious bias against the novelty of novel experience. For instance, if we get a true impression of what is happening — and we habitually act on such impressions true or false — if it differs from what we are accustomed to expect, the old association meets it in the *citta* and sends a changed report to the intellect in which either the new impression is overlaid and concealed by the old or mingled with it. To go farther into this subject would be to involve ourselves too deeply into the details of psychology. This typical instance will suffice. To get rid of this obstacle is impossible without *cittaśuddhi* or purification of the mental and moral habits formed in the *citta*. This is a preliminary process of Yoga and was effected in our ancient system by various means, but would be considered out of place in a modern system of education.

It is clear, therefore, that unless we revert to our old Indian system in some of its principles, we must be content to allow this source of disturbance to remain. A really national system of education would not allow itself to be controlled by European ideas in this all-important matter. And there is a process so simple and momentous that it can easily be made a part of our system.

It consists in bringing about passivity of the restless flood of thought sensations rising of its own momentum from the passive memory independent of our will and control. This passivity liberates the intellect from the siege of old associations and false impressions. It gives it power to select only what is wanted from the storehouse of the passive memory, automatically brings about the habit of getting right impressions and enables the intellect to dictate to the *citta* what *saṁskāras* or associations shall be formed or rejected. This is the real office of the intellect, — to discriminate, choose, select, arrange. But so long as there is not *cittasūddhi*, instead of doing this office perfectly, it itself remains imperfect and corrupt and adds to the confusion in the



mind channel by false judgment, false imagination, false memory, false observation, false comparison, contrast and analogy, false deduction, induction and inference. The purification of the *citta* is essential for the liberation, purification and perfect action of the intellect.

## Sense-Improvement by Practice

**A**NOTHER cause of the inefficiency of the senses as gatherers of knowledge, is insufficient use. We do not observe sufficiently or with sufficient attention and closeness and a sight, sound, smell, even touch or taste knocks in vain at the door for admission. This tamasic inertia of the receiving instruments is no doubt due to the inattention of the *buddhi*, and therefore its consideration may seem to come properly under the training of the functions of the intellect, but it is more convenient, though less psychologically correct, to notice it here. The student ought to be accustomed to catch the sights, sounds, etc., around him, distinguish them, mark their nature, properties and sources and fix them in the *citta* so that they may be always ready to respond when called for by the memory.

It is a fact which has been proved by minute experiments that the faculty of observation is very imperfectly developed in men, merely from want of care in the use of the senses and the memory. Give twelve men the task of recording from memory something they all saw two hours ago and the accounts will all vary from each other and from the actual occurrence. To get rid of this imperfection will go a long way towards the removal of error. It can be done by training the senses to do their work perfectly, which they will do readily enough if they know the *buddhi* requires it of them, and giving sufficient attention to put the facts in their right place and order in the memory.

Attention is a factor in knowledge, the importance of which has been always recognised. Attention is the first condition of right memory and of accuracy. To attend to what he is doing is the first element of discipline required of the student, and, as I have suggested, this can easily be secured if the object of attention is made interesting. This attention to a single thing is called concentration. One truth is, however, sometimes

overlooked, that concentration on several things at a time is often indispensable. When people talk of concentration, they imply centring the mind on one thing at a time; but it is quite possible to develop the power of double concentration, triple concentration, multiple concentration. When a given incident is happening, it may be made up of several simultaneous happenings or a set of simultaneous circumstances, a sight, a sound, a touch or several sights, sounds, touches occurring at the same moment or in the same short space of time. The tendency of the mind is to fasten on one and mark others vaguely, many not at all or, if compelled to attend to all, to be distracted and mark none perfectly. Yet this can be remedied and the attention equally distributed over a set of circumstances in such a way as to observe and remember each perfectly. It is merely a matter of *abhyāsa* or steady natural practice.

It is also very desirable that the hand should be capable of coming to the help of the eye in dealing with the multitudinous objects of its activity so as to ensure accuracy. This is of an use so obvious and imperatively needed, that it need not be dwelt on at length. The practice of imitation by the hand of the thing seen is of use both in detecting the lapses and inaccuracies of the mind in noticing the objects of sense and in registering accurately what has been seen. Imitation by the hand ensures accuracy of observation. This is one of the first uses of drawing and it is sufficient in itself to make the teaching of this subject a necessary part of the training of the organs.

## The Training of the Mental Faculties

THE FIRST qualities of the mind that have to be developed are those which can be grouped under observation. We notice some things, ignore others. Even of what we notice, we observe very little. A general perception of an object is all we usually carry away from a cursory half-attentive glance. A closer attention fixes its place, form, nature as distinct from its surroundings. Full concentration of the faculty of observation gives us all the knowledge that the three chief senses can gather about the object, or if we touch or taste, we may gather all that the five senses can tell of its nature and properties. Those who make use of the sixth sense, the poet, the painter, the Yogin, can also gather much that is hidden from the ordinary observer. The scientist by investigation ascertains other facts open to a minuter observation. These are the components of the faculty of observation, and it is obvious that its basis is attention, which may be only close or close and minute. We may gather much even from a passing glance at an object, if we have the habit of concentrating the attention and the habit of sattwic receptivity. The first thing the teacher has to do is to accustom the pupil to concentrate attention.

We may take the instance of a flower. Instead of looking casually at it and getting a casual impression of scent, form and colour, he should be encouraged to know the flower — to fix in his mind the exact shade, the peculiar glow, the precise intensity of the scent, the beauty of curve and design in the form. His touch should assure itself of the texture and its peculiarities. Next, the flower should be taken to pieces and its structure examined with the same careful fulness of observation. All this should be done not as a task, but as an object of interest by skilfully arranged questions suited to the learner which will draw him on to observe and investigate one thing after the other until he has

almost unconsciously mastered the whole.

Memory and judgment are the next qualities that will be called upon, and they should be encouraged in the same unconscious way. The student should not be made to repeat the same lesson over again in order to remember it. That is a mechanical, burdensome and unintelligent way of training the memory. A similar but different flower should be put in his hands and he should be encouraged to note it with the same care, but with the avowed object of noting the similarities and differences. By this practice daily repeated the memory will naturally be trained. Not only so, but the mental centres of comparison and contrast will be developed. The learner will begin to observe as a habit the similarities of things and their differences. The teacher should take every care to encourage the perfect growth of this faculty and habit. At the same time the laws of species and genus will begin to dawn on the mind and, by a skilful following and leading of the young developing mind, the scientific habit, the scientific attitude and the fundamental facts of scientific knowledge may in a very short time be made part of its permanent equipment. The observation and comparison of flowers, leaves, plants, trees will lay the foundations of botanical knowledge without loading the mind with names and that dry set acquisition of informations which is the beginning of cramming and detested by the healthy human mind when it is fresh from nature and unspoiled by unnatural habits. In the same way by the observation of the stars, astronomy, by the observation of the earth, stones, etc., geology, by the observation of insects and animals, entomology and zoology may be founded. A little later chemistry may be started by interesting observation of experiments without any formal teaching or heaping on the mind of formulas and book knowledge. There is no scientific subject the perfect and natural mastery of which cannot be prepared in early childhood by this training of the faculties to observe, compare, remember and judge various classes of objects. It can be done easily and attended with a supreme and absorbing interest in the mind of the student. Once the taste is created, the boy can be trusted to follow it up with all the enthusiasm of youth in his leisure

hours. This will prevent the necessity at a later age of teaching him everything in class.

The judgment will naturally be trained along with the other faculties. At every step the boy will have to decide what is the right idea, measurement, appreciation of colour, sound, scent, etc., and what is the wrong. Often the judgments and distinctions made will have to be exceedingly subtle and delicate. At first many errors will be made, but the learner should be taught to trust his judgment without being attached to its results. It will be found that the judgment will soon begin to respond to the calls made on it, clear itself of all errors and begin to judge correctly and minutely. The best way is to accustom the boy to compare his judgments with those of others. When he is wrong, it should at first be pointed out to him how far he was right and why he went wrong, afterwards he should be encouraged to note these things for himself. Every time he is right, his attention should be prominently and encouragingly called to it so that he may get confidence.

While engaged in comparing and contrasting, another centre is certain to develop, the centre of analogy. The learner will inevitably draw analogies and argue from like to like. He should be encouraged to use this faculty while noticing its limitations and errors. In this way he will be trained to form the habit of correct analogy, which is an indispensable aid in the acquisition of knowledge.

The one faculty we have omitted, apart from the faculty of direct reasoning, is imagination. This is a most important and indispensable instrument. It may be divided into three functions, the forming of mental images, the power of creating thoughts, images and imitations or new combinations of existing thoughts and images, the appreciation of the soul in things, beauty, charm, greatness, hidden suggestiveness, the emotion and spiritual life that pervades the world. This is in every way as important as the training of the faculties which observe and compare outward things. But that demands a separate and fuller treatment.

The mental faculties should first be exercised on things, afterwards on words and ideas. Our dealings with language are

much too perfunctory and the absence of a fine sense for words impoverishes the intellect and limits the fineness and truth of its operation. The mind should be accustomed first to notice the word thoroughly, its form, sound, sense; then to compare the form with other similar forms in the points of similarity and difference, thus forming the foundation of the grammatical sense; then to distinguish between the fine shades of sense of similar words and the formation and rhythm of different sentences, thus forming the foundation of the literary and the syntactical faculties. All this should be done informally, drawing on the curiosity and interest, avoiding set teaching and memorising of rules. The true knowledge takes its base on things, *arthas*, and only when it has mastered the thing, proceeds to formalise its information.

## VIII

# The Training of the Logical Faculty

THE TRAINING of the logical reason must necessarily follow the training of the faculties which collect the material on which the logical reason must work. Not only so but the mind must have some development of the faculty of dealing with words before it can deal successfully with ideas. The question is, once this preliminary work is done, what is the best way of teaching the boy to think correctly from premises. For the logical reason cannot proceed without premises. It either infers from facts to a conclusion, or from previously formed conclusions to a fresh one, or from one fact to another. It either induces, deduces or simply infers. I see the sun rise day after day, I conclude or induce that it rises as a law daily after a varying interval of darkness. I have already ascertained that wherever there is smoke, there is fire. I have induced that general rule from an observation of facts. I deduce that in a particular case of smoke there is a fire behind. I infer that a man must have lit it from the improbability of any other cause under the particular circumstances. I cannot deduce it because fire is not always created by human kindling; it may be volcanic or caused by a stroke of lightning or the sparks from some kind of friction in the neighbourhood.

There are three elements necessary to correct reasoning, first, the correctness of the facts or conclusions I start from, secondly, the completeness as well as accuracy of the data I start from, thirdly, the elimination of other possible or impossible conclusions from the same facts. The fallibility of the logical reason is due partly to avoidable negligence and looseness in securing these conditions, partly to the difficulty of getting all the facts correct, still more to the difficulty of getting all the facts complete, most of all, to the extreme difficulty of eliminating all possible conclusions except the one which happens to



be right. No fact is supposed to be more perfectly established than the universality of the law of gravitation as an imperative rule, yet a single new fact inconsistent with it would upset this supposed universality. And such facts exist. Nevertheless, by care and keenness the fallibility may be reduced to its minimum.

The usual practice is to train the logical reason by teaching the science of Logic. This is an instance of the prevalent error by which book knowledge of a thing is made the object of study instead of the thing itself. The experience of reasoning and its errors should be given to the mind and it should be taught to observe how these work for itself; it should proceed from the example to the rule and from the accumulating harmony of rules to the formal science of the subject, not from the formal science to the rule, and from the rule to the example.

The first step is to make the young mind interest itself in drawing inferences from the facts, tracing cause and effect. It should then be led on to notice its successes and its failures and the reason of the success and of the failure; the incorrectness of the fact started from, the haste in drawing conclusions from insufficient facts, the carelessness in accepting a conclusion which is improbable, little supported by the data or open to doubt, the indolence or prejudice which does not wish to consider other possible explanations or conclusions. In this way the mind can be trained to reason as correctly as the fallibility of human logic will allow, minimising the chances of error. The study of formal logic should be postponed to a later time when it can easily be mastered in a very brief period, since it will be only the systematising of an art perfectly well known to the student.



## Message for National Education Week (1918)

NATIONAL Education is, next to Self-Government and along with it, the deepest and most immediate need of the country, and it is a matter of rejoicing for one to whom an earlier effort in that direction gave the first opportunity for identifying himself with the larger life and hope of the Nation, to see the idea, for a time submerged, moving so soon towards self-fulfilment.

Home Rule and National Education are two inseparable ideals, and none who follows the one, can fail the other, unless he is entirely wanting either in sincerity or in vision. We want not only a free India, but a great India, India taking worthily her place among the Nations and giving to the life of humanity what she alone can give. The greatest knowledge and the greatest riches man can possess are hers by inheritance; she has that for which all mankind is waiting. But she can only give it if her hands are free, her soul free, full and exalted, and her life dignified in all its parts. Home Rule, bringing with it the power of self-determination, can give the free hands, space for the soul to grow, strength for the life to raise itself again from darkness and narrow scope into light and nobility. But the full soul rich with the inheritance of the past, the widening gains of the present, and the large potentiality of her future, can come only by a system of National Education. It cannot come by any extension or imitation of the system of the existing universities with its radically false principles, its vicious and mechanical methods, its dead-alive routine tradition and its narrow and sightless spirit. Only a new spirit and a new body born from the heart of the Nation and full of the light and hope of its resurgence can create it.

We have a right to expect that the Nation will rise to the level of its opportunity and stand behind the movement as it has stood behind the movement for Home Rule. It should not

be difficult to secure its intellectual sanction or its voice for National Education, but much more than that is wanted. The support it gives must be free from all taint of lip-service, passivity and lethargic inaction, evil habits born of long political servitude and inertia, and of that which largely led to it, subjection of the life and soul to a blend of unseeing and mechanical custom. Moral sympathy is not enough; active support from every individual is needed. Workers for the cause, money and means for its sustenance, students for its schools and colleges, are what the movement needs that it may prosper. The first will surely not be wanting; the second should come, for the control of the movement has in its personnel both influence and energy, and the habit of giving as well as self-giving for a great public cause is growing more widespread in the country. If the third condition is not from the beginning sufficiently satisfied, it will be because, habituated individually always to the customary groove, we prefer the safe and prescribed path, even when it leads nowhere, to the great and effective way, and cannot see our own interest because it presents itself in a new and untried form. But this is a littleness of spirit which the Nation must shake off that it may have the courage of its destiny.

If material and prudential considerations stand in the way, then let it be seen that, even in the vocational sphere, the old system opens only the doors of a few offices and professions overcrowded with applicants, whence the majority must go back disappointed and with empty hands, or be satisfied with a dwarfed life and a sordid pittance; while the new education will open careers which will be at once ways of honourable sufficiency, dignity and affluence to the individual, and paths of service to the country. For the men who come out equipped in every way from its institutions will be those who will give that impetus to the economic life and effort of the country without which it cannot survive in the press of the world, much less attain its high legitimate position. Individual interest and National interest are the same and call in the same direction. Whether as citizen, as worker or as parent and guardian, the duty of every Indian in this matter is clear: it lies in the great and new road the pioneers

have been hewing, and not in the old stumbling cart-ruts.

This is an hour in which, for India as for all the world, its future destiny and the turn of its steps for a century are being powerfully decided, and for no ordinary century, but one which is itself a great turning-point, an immense turn-over in the inner and outer history of mankind. As we act now, so shall the reward of our karma be meted out to us, and each call of this kind at such an hour is at once an opportunity, a choice, and a test offered to the spirit of our people. Let it be said that it rose in each to the full height of its being and deserved the visible intervention of the Master of Destiny in its favour.

## National Education

The whole movement of the national life of India at the present moment may be described in one phrase,—a pressure from within towards self-liberation from all unnatural conditions which obstruct or divert its free and spontaneous development. It is the movement of a stream trying to break open a natural path for its dammed-up waters. This effort takes inevitably many sides and aspects; for in politics and administration, in society, in commerce, in education, this national life finds itself bound up in forms, condemned to move in grooves which give no natural play to the new aspirations, powers and tendencies which have become its inner impelling motives. The effort to discover and organise a system of national education is part of this general effort of self-liberation, of self-finding, but perhaps the most central movement of all, in the end even the most important; for it is this which will give shape to the spirit of the nation at present in a state of rather formless flux. It is in fact no more than a chaotic press of tendencies; a national culture alone can give it form and consistency; and national education is the attempt to create and organise that culture.

## A Preface on National Education

These two chapters appeared in the last two issues of the *Arya* in 1920 and 1921.





THE NECESSITY and unmixed good of universal education has become a fixed dogma to the modern intelligence, a thing held to be beyond dispute by any liberal mind or awakened national conscience, and whether the tenet be or not altogether beyond cavil, it may at any rate be presumed that it answers to a present and imperative need of the intellectual and vital effort of the race. But there is not quite so universal an agreement or common attainment to a reasoned or luminous idea on what education is or practically or ideally should be. Add to this uncertainty the demand—naturally insistent and clamorous with the awakening of the spirit of independence in a country like our own which is peculiarly circumstanced not only by the clash of the Asiatic and the European or occidental consciousness and the very different civilisations they have created and the enforced meeting of the English and the Indian mind and culture, but by a political subjection which has left the decisive shaping and supreme control of education in the hands of foreigners,—add the demand for a national type of education, and in the absence of clear ideas on the subject we are likely to enter, as we have in fact entered into an atmosphere of great and disconcerting confusion.

For if we do not know very clearly what education in general truly is or should be, we seem still less to know what we mean by national education. All that appears to be almost unanimously agreed on is that the teaching given in the existing schools and universities has been bad in kind and in addition denationalising, degrading and impoverishing to the national mind, soul and character because it is overshadowed by a foreign hand and foreign in aim, method, substance and spirit. But this purely negative agreement does not carry us very far: it does not tell us what in principle or practice we desire or ought to put in

its place. There may be much virtue in an epithet but to tag on the word “national” to a school or college or even a Council or Board of Education, to put that into the hands of an indigenous agency, mostly of men trained in the very system we are denouncing, to reproduce that condemned system with certain differences, additions, subtractions, modifications of detail and curriculum, to tack on a technical side and think we have solved the problem does not really change anything. To be satisfied with a trick of this kind is to perform a somersault round our centre of intellectual gravity, land ourselves where we were before and think we have got into quite another country, — obviously a very unsatisfactory proceeding. The institutions that go by the new name may or may not be giving a better education than the others, but in what they are more national, is not altogether clear even to the most willingly sympathetic critical intelligence.

The problem indeed is one of surpassing difficulty and it is not easy to discover from what point of thought or of practice one has to begin, on what principle to create or on what lines to map out the new building. The conditions are intricate and the thing that is to be created in a way entirely new. We cannot be satisfied with a mere resuscitation of some past principle, method and system that may have happened to prevail at one time in India, however great it was or in consonance with our past civilisation and culture. That reversion would be a sterile and impossible effort hopelessly inadequate to the pressing demands of the present and the far greater demands of our future. On the other hand to take over the English, German or American school and university or some variation on them with a gloss of Indian colour is a course attractively facile and one that saves the need of thinking and of new experiment; but in that case there is no call for this loud pother about nationalising education, all that is needed is a change of control, of the medium of instruction, of the frame and fitting of the curriculum and to some extent of the balance of subjects. I presume that it is something more profound, great and searching that we have in mind and that, whatever the difficulty of giving it shape, it is an

education proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of, not indeed something faithful merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit. It is this that we have to get clear in our minds and for that we must penetrate down to fundamentals and make those firm before we can greatly execute. Otherwise nothing is easier than to start off on a false but specious cry or from an unsound starting-point and travel far away from the right path on a tangent that will lead us to no goal but only to emptiness and failure.

But first let us clear out of the way or at least put in its proper place and light the preliminary disabling objection that there is and can be no meaning at all or none worth troubling about in the idea of a national education and that the very notion is the undesirable and unprofitable intrusion of a false and narrow patriotism into a field in which patriotism apart from the need of a training in good citizenship has no legitimate place. And for that one purpose no special kind or form of education is needed, since the training to good citizenship must be in all essentials the same whether in the east or the west, England or Germany or Japan or India. Mankind and its needs are the same everywhere and truth and knowledge are one and have no country; education too must be a thing universal and without nationality or borders. What, for an instance, could be meant by a national education in Science, and does it signify that we are to reject modern truth and modern method of science because they come to us from Europe and go back to the imperfect scientific knowledge of classical India, exile Galileo and Newton and all that came after and teach only what was known to Bhaskara, Aryabhatta and Varahamihira? Or how should the teaching of Sanskrit or the living indigenous tongues differ in kind and method from the teaching of Latin or the living modern tongues in Europe? Are we then to fetch back to the methods of the tols of Nadiya or to the system, if we can find out what it was, practised in ancient Takshashila or Nalanda? At most what can be demanded is a larger place for

the study of the past of our country, the replacement of English by the indigenous tongues as a medium and the relegation of the former to the position of a second language, — but it is possible to challenge the advisability even of these changes. After all we live in the twentieth century and cannot revive the India of Chandragupta or Akbar; we must keep abreast with the march of truth and knowledge, fit ourselves for existence under actual circumstances, and our education must be therefore up to date in form and substance and modern in life and spirit.

All these objections are only pertinent if directed against the travesty of the idea of national education which would make of it a means of an obscurantist retrogression to the past forms that were once a living frame of our culture but are now dead or dying things; but that is not the idea nor the endeavour. The living spirit of the demand for national education no more requires a return to the astronomy and mathematics of Bhaskara or the forms of the system of Nalanda than the living spirit of Swadeshi a return from railway and motor traction to the ancient chariot and the bullock-cart. There is no doubt plenty of retrogressive sentimentalism about and there have been some queer violences on common sense and reason and disconcerting freaks that prejudice the real issue, but these inconsequent streaks of fantasy give a false hue to the matter. It is the spirit, the living and vital issue that we have to do with, and there the question is not between modernism and antiquity, but between an imported civilisation and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future. It is not a return to the fifth century but an initiation of the centuries to come, not a reversion but a break forward away from a present artificial falsity to her own greater innate potentialities that is demanded by the soul, by the Shakti of India.

The argument against national education proceeds in the first place upon the lifeless academic notion that the subject, the acquiring of this or that kind of information is the whole or the central matter. But the acquiring of various kinds of information is only one and not the chief of the means and necessities of

education: its central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit, it is the formation or, as I would prefer to view it, the evoking of knowledge and will and of the power to use knowledge, character, culture, — that at least if no more. And this distinction makes an enormous difference. It is true enough that if all we ask for is the acquisition of the information put at our disposal by science, it may be enough to take over the science of the West whether in an undigested whole or in carefully packed morsels. But the major question is not merely what science we learn, but what we shall do with our science and how too, acquiring the scientific mind and recovering the habit of scientific discovery — I leave aside the possibility of the Indian mentality working freely in its own nature discovering new methods or even giving a new turn to physical science — we shall relate it to other powers of the human mind and scientific knowledge, to other knowledge more intimate to other and not less light-giving and power-giving parts of our intelligence and nature. And there the peculiar cast of the Indian mind, its psychological tradition, its ancestral capacity, turn, knowledge bring in cultural elements of a supreme importance. A language, Sanskrit or another, should be acquired by whatever method is most natural, efficient and stimulating to the mind and we need not cling there to any past or present manner of teaching; but the vital question is how we are to learn and make use of Sanskrit and the indigenous languages so as to get to the heart and intimate sense of our own culture and establish a vivid continuity between the still living power of our past and the yet uncreated power of our future, and how we are to learn and use English or any other foreign tongue so as to know helpfully the life, ideas and culture of other countries and establish our right relations with the world around us. This is the aim and principle of a true national education, not, certainly, to ignore modern truth and knowledge, but to take our foundation on our own being, our own mind, our own spirit.

The second ground openly or tacitly taken by the hostile argument is that modern, that is to say, European civilisation is the thing that we have to acquire and fit ourselves for, so only

can we live and prosper and it is this that our education must do for us. The idea of national education challenges the sufficiency of this assumption. Europe built up her ancient culture on a foundation largely taken from the East, from Egypt, Chaldea, Phoenicia, India, but turned in a new direction and another life-idea by the native spirit and temperament, mind and social genius of Greece and Rome, lost and then recovered it, in part from the Arabs with fresh borrowings from the near East and from India and more widely by the Renaissance, but then too gave it a new turn and direction proper to the native spirit and temperament, mind and social genius of the Teutonic, and the Latin, the Celtic and Slav races. It is the civilisation so created that has long offered itself as the last and imperative word of the mind of humanity, but the nations of Asia are not bound so to accept it, and will do better, taking over in their turn whatever new knowledge or just ideas Europe has to offer, to assimilate them to their own knowledge and culture, their own native temperament and spirit, mind and social genius and out of that create the civilisation of the future. The scientific, rationalistic, industrial, pseudo-democratic civilisation of the West is now in process of dissolution and it would be a lunatic absurdity for us at this moment to build blindly on that sinking foundation. When the most advanced minds of the occident are beginning to turn in this red evening of the West for the hope of a new and more spiritual civilisation to the genius of Asia, it would be strange if we could think of nothing better than to cast away our own self and potentialities and put our trust in the dissolving and moribund past of Europe.

And, finally, the objection grounds itself on the implicit idea that the mind of man is the same everywhere and can everywhere be passed through the same machine and uniformly constructed to order. That is an old and effete superstition of the reason which it is time now to renounce. For within the universal mind and soul of humanity is the mind and soul of the individual with its infinite variation, its commonness and its uniqueness, and between them there stands an intermediate power, the mind of a nation, the soul of a people. And of all these three education

must take account if it is to be, not a machine-made fabric, but a true building or a living evocation of the powers of the mind and spirit of the human being.

THESE preliminary objections made to the very idea of national education and, incidentally, the misconceptions they oppose once out of the way, we have still to formulate more positively what the idea means to us, the principle and the form that national education must take in India, the thing to be achieved and the method and turn to be given to the endeavour. It is here that the real difficulty begins because we have for a long time, not only in education but in almost all things, in our whole cultural life, lost hold of the national spirit and idea and there has been as yet no effort of clear, sound and deep thinking or seeing which would enable us to recover it and therefore no clear agreement or even clear difference of opinion on essentials and accessories. At the most we have been satisfied with a strong sentiment and a general but shapeless idea and enthusiasm corresponding to the sentiment and have given to it in the form whatever haphazard application chanced to be agreeable to our intellectual associations, habits or caprices. The result has been no tangible or enduring success, but rather a maximum of confusion and failure. The first thing needed is to make clear to our own minds what the national spirit, temperament, idea, need demands of us through education and apply it in its right harmony to all the different elements of the problem. Only after that is done can we really hope with some confidence and chance of utility and success to replace the present false, empty and mechanical education by something better than a poor and futile chaos or a new mechanical falsity, by a real, living and creative upbringing of the Indian manhood of the future.

But first it is necessary to disengage from all ambiguities what we understand by a true education, its essential sense, its fundamental aim and significance. For we can then be sure of our



beginnings and proceed securely to fix the just place and whole bearing of the epithet we seek to attach to the word. I must be sure what education itself is or should be before I can be sure what a national education is or should be. Let us begin then with our initial statement, as to which I think there can be no great dispute that there are three things which have to be taken into account in a true and living education, the man, the individual in his commonness and in his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity. It follows that that alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member. It is by considering the whole question in the light of this large and entire principle that we can best arrive at a clear idea of what we would have our education to be and what we shall strive to accomplish by a national education. Most is this largeness of view and foundation needed here and now in India, the whole energy of whose life purpose must be at this critical turning of her destinies directed to her one great need, to find and rebuild her true self in individual and in people and to take again, thus repossessed of her inner greatness, her due and natural portion and station in the life of the human race.

There are however very different conceptions possible of man and his life, of the nation and its life and of humanity and the life of the human race, and our idea and endeavour in education may well vary considerably according to that difference. India has always had her own peculiar conception and vision of these things and we must see whether it is not really, as it is likely to be, that which will be or ought to be at the very root of our education and the one thing that will give it its truly national character. Man has not been seen by the thought of India as a living body developed by physical Nature which has evolved certain vital propensities, an ego, a mind and a reason,

an animal of the genus homo and in our case of the species *homo indicus*, whose whole life and education must be turned towards a satisfaction of these propensities under the government of a trained mind and reason and for the best advantage of the personal and the national ego. It has not been either the turn of her mind to regard man preeminently as a reasoning animal, or let us say, widening the familiar definition, a thinking, feeling and willing natural existence, a mental son of physical Nature, and his education as a culture of the mental capacities, or to define him as a political, social and economic being and his education as a training that will fit him to be an efficient, productive and well disciplined member of the society and the State. All these are no doubt aspects of the human being and she has given them a considerable prominence subject to her larger vision, but they are outward things, parts of the instrumentation of his mind, life and action, not the whole or the real man.

India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his *paramārtha* and highest *puruṣārtha*. And similarly India has not understood by the nation or people an organised State or an armed and efficient community well prepared for the struggle of life and putting all at the service of the national ego, — that is only the disguise of iron armour which masks and encumbers the national Purusha, — but a great communal soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a Swabhava and Swadharma, and embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, dynamic, social and political forms and culture. And equally then our cultural

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conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal manifesting in the human race, evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim, — it must be the idea of the spirit, the soul of humanity advancing through struggle and concert towards oneness, increasing its experience and maintaining a needed diversity through the varied culture and life motives of its many peoples, searching for perfection through the development of the powers of the individual and his progress towards a diviner being and life, but feeling out too though more slowly after a similar perfectibility in the life of the race. It may be disputed whether this is a true account of the human or the national being, but if it is once admitted as a true description, then it should be clear that the only true education will be that which will be an instrument for this real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation. That is the principle on which we must build, that the central motive and the guiding ideal. It must be an education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its dharma and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being.



## Part Four

### On Art

Sri Aurobindo wrote these essays in 1909–10. He published all of them except the last in the *Karmayogin*, a weekly newspaper of which he was the editor and principal writer.



# The National Value of Art





# I

THERE is a tendency in modern times to depreciate the value of the beautiful and overstress the value of the useful, a tendency curbed in Europe by the imperious insistence of an age-long tradition of culture and generous training of the aesthetic perceptions; but in India, where we have been cut off by a mercenary and soulless education from all our ancient roots of culture and tradition, it is corrected only by the stress of imagination, emotion and spiritual delicacy, submerged but not yet destroyed, in the temperament of the people. The value attached by the ancients to music, art and poetry has become almost unintelligible to an age bent on depriving life of its meaning by turning earth into a sort of glorified anthep or beehive and confusing the lowest, though most primary in necessity, of the means of human progress with the aim of this great evolutionary process. The first and lowest necessity of the race is that of self-preservation in the body by a sufficient supply and equable distribution of food, shelter and raiment. This is a problem which the oldest communistic human societies solved to perfection, and without communism it cannot be solved except by a convenient but inequitable arrangement which makes of the majority slaves provided with these primary wants and necessities and ministering under compulsion to a few who rise higher and satisfy larger wants. These are the wants of the vital instincts, called in our philosophy the *prāṇa koṣa*, which go beyond and dominate the mere animal wants, simple, coarse and indiscriminating, shared by us with the lower creation. It is these vital wants, the hunger for wealth, luxury, beautiful women, rich foods and drinks, which disturbed the first low but perfect economy of society and made the institution of private property, with its huge train of evils, inequality, injustice, violence, fraud, civil commotion and hatred, class selfishness, family selfishness and

personal selfishness, an inevitable necessity of human progress. The Mother of All works through evil as well as good, and through temporary evil she brings about a better and lasting good. These disturbances were complicated by the heightening of the primitive animal emotions into more intense and complex forms. Love, hatred, vindictiveness, anger, attachment, jealousy and the host of similar passions, — the *citta* or mind-stuff suffused by the vital wants of the *prāṇa*, that which the Europeans call the heart — ceased to be communal in their application and, as personal wants, clamoured for separate satisfaction. It is for the satisfaction of the vital and emotional needs of humanity that modern nations and societies exist, that commerce grows and Science ministers to human luxury and convenience. But for these new wants, the establishment of private property, first in the clan or family, then in the individual, the institution of slavery and other necessary devices the modern world would never have come into existence; for the satisfaction of the primary economic wants and bodily necessities would never have carried us beyond the small commune or tribe. But these primary wants and necessities have to be satisfied and satisfied universally, or society becomes diseased and states convulsed with sedition and revolution.

The old arrangement of a mass of slaves well fed and provided and a select class or classes enjoying in greater or less quantity the higher wants of humanity broke down in the mediaeval ages, because the heart began to develop too powerfully in humanity and under the influence of philosophy, ethics and religion began to spread its claim beyond the person, the class, the family, the clan to the nation and to humanity or to all creation. A temporary makeshift was invented to replace slavery, called free labour, by which men were paid and bribed to accept voluntarily the position of slaves, contenting themselves with the coarse satisfaction of the animal necessities and in return providing by their labour the higher wants of their masters now called superiors or higher classes. This also has become a solution which will no longer serve. The whole of humanity now demands not merely the satisfaction of the body, the *anna*,

but the satisfaction also of the *prāṇa* and the *citta*, the vital and emotional desires. Wealth, luxury, enjoyment for oneself and those dear to us, participation in the satisfaction of national wealth, pride, lordship, rivalry, war, alliance, peace, once the privilege of the few, the higher classes, of prince, burgess and noble are now claimed by all humanity. Political, social and economic liberty and equality, two things difficult to harmonise, must now be conceded to all men and harmonised as well as the present development of humanity will allow. It is this claim that arose, red with fury and blinded with blood, in the French Revolution. This is Democracy, this Socialism, this Anarchism; and, however fiercely the privileged and propertied classes may rage, curse and denounce these forerunners of Demogorgon, they can only temporarily resist. Their interests may be hoary and venerable with the sanction of the ages, but the future is mightier than the past and evolution proceeds relentlessly in its course trampling to pieces all that it no longer needs. Those who fight against her fight against the will of God, against a decree written from of old, and are already defeated and slain in the *kāraṇa jagat*, the world of types and causes where Nature fixes everything before she works it out in the visible world. *Nihatāḥ pūrvameva*.

The mass of humanity has not risen beyond the bodily needs, the vital desires, the emotions and the current of thought-sensations created by these lower strata. This current of thought-sensations is called in Hindu philosophy the *manas* or mind, it is the highest to which all but a few of the animals can rise, and it is the highest function that the mass of mankind has thoroughly perfected. Beyond the *manas* is the *buddhi*, or thought proper, which, when perfected, is independent of the desires, the claims of the body and the interference of the emotions. But only a minority of men have developed this organ, much less perfected it. Only great thinkers in their hours of thought are able to use this organ independently of the lower strata, and even they are besieged by the latter in their ordinary life and their best thought suffers continually from these lower intrusions. Only developed Yogins have a *viśuddha-buddhi*, a thought-organ cleared of the

interference of the lower strata by *cittaśuddhi* or purification of the *citta*, the mind-stuff, from the *prāṇa* full of animal, vital and emotional disturbances. With most men the *buddhi* is full of *manas* and the *manas* of the lower strata. The majority of mankind do not think, they have only thought-sensations; a large minority think confusedly, mixing up desires, predilections, passions, prejudgments, old associations and prejudices with pure and disinterested thought. Only a few, the rare aristocrats of the earth, can really and truly think. That is now the true aristocracy, not the aristocracy of the body and birth, not the aristocracy of vital superiority, wealth, pride and luxury, not the aristocracy of higher emotions, courage, energy, successful political instinct and the habit of mastery and rule, — though these latter cannot be neglected, — but the aristocracy of knowledge, undisturbed insight and intellectual ability. It emerges, though it has not yet emerged, and in any future arrangement of human society this natural inequality will play an important part.

Above the *buddhi* are other faculties which are now broadly included in the term spirituality. This body of faculties is still rarer and more imperfectly developed even in the highest than the thought-organ. Most men mistake intellectuality, imaginative inspiration or emotional fervour for spirituality, but this is a much higher function, the highest of all, of which all the others are coverings and veils. Here we get to the fountain, the source to which we return, the goal of human evolution. But although spirituality has often entered into humanity in great waves, it has done so merely to create a temporary impetus and retire into the souls of a few, leaving only its coverings and shadows behind to compose and inform the thing which is usually called religion. Meanwhile the thought is the highest man has really attained and it is by the thought that the old society has been broken down. And the thought is composed of two separate sides, judgment or reason and imagination, both of which are necessary to perfect ideation. It is by science, philosophy and criticism on the one side, by art, poetry and idealism on the other that the old state of humanity has been undermined and is now collapsing, and the foundations have been laid for the

new. Of these science, philosophy and criticism have established their use to the mass of humanity by ministering to the luxury, comfort and convenience which all men desire and arming them with justification in the confused struggle of passions, interests, cravings and aspirations which are now working with solvent and corrosive effect throughout the world. The value of the other side, more subtle and profound, has been clouded to the mass of men by the less visible and sensational character of its workings.

## II

THE ACTIVITY of human thought divides itself broadly into two groups of functions, those of the right hand, contemplation, creation, imagination, the centres that see the truth, and those of the left hand, criticism, reasoning, discrimination, inquiry, the centres that judge the truth when it is seen. In education the latter are fostered by scientific and manual training, but the only quality of the right hand that this education fosters is observation. For this reason a purely scientific education tends to make thought keen and clear-sighted within certain limits, but narrow, hard and cold. Even in his own sphere the man without any training of the right hand can only progress in a settled groove; he cannot broaden the base of human culture or enlarge the bounds of science. Tennyson describes him as an eye well practised in Nature, a spirit bounded and poor, and the description is just. But a cultivated eye without a cultivated spirit makes by no means the highest type of man. It is precisely the cultivation of the spirit that is the object of what is well called a liberal education, and the pursuits best calculated to cultivate the growth of the spirit are language, literature, the Arts, music, painting, sculpture or the study of these, philosophy, religion, history, the study and understanding of man through his works and of Nature and man through the interpretative as well as through the analytic faculties. These are the pursuits which belong to the intellectual activities of the right hand, and while the importance of most of these will be acknowledged, there is a tendency to ignore Art and poetry as mere refinements, luxuries of the rich and leisurely rather than things that are necessary to the mass of men or useful to life. This is largely due to the misuse of these great instruments by the luxurious few who held the world and its good things in their hands in the intermediate period of human progress.

But the aesthetic faculties entering into the enjoyment of the world and the satisfaction of the vital instincts, the love of the beautiful in men and women, in food, in things, in articles of use and articles of pleasure, have done more than anything else to raise man from the beast, to refine and purge his passions, to ennoble his emotions and to lead him up through the heart and the imagination to the state of the intellectual man. That which has helped man upward, must be preserved in order that he may not sink below the level he has attained. For man intellectually developed, mighty in scientific knowledge and the mastery of gross and subtle nature, using the elements as his servants and the world as his footstool, but undeveloped in heart and spirit, becomes only an inferior kind of Asura using the powers of a demigod to satisfy the nature of an animal. According to dim traditions and memories of the old world, of such a nature was the civilisation of old Atlantis, submerged beneath the Ocean when its greatness and its wickedness became too heavy a load for the earth to bear, and our own legends of the Asuras represent a similar consciousness of a great but abortive development in humanity.

The first and lowest use of Art is the purely aesthetic, the second is the intellectual or educative, the third and highest the spiritual. By speaking of the aesthetic use as the lowest, we do not wish to imply that it is not of immense value to humanity, but simply to assign to it its comparative value in relation to the higher uses. The aesthetic is of immense importance and until it has done its work, mankind is not really fitted to make full use of Art on the higher planes of human development. Aristotle assigns a high value to tragedy because of its purifying force. He describes its effect as *katharsis*, a sacramental word of the Greek mysteries, which, in the secret discipline of the ancient Greek Tantrics, answered precisely to our *cittaśuddhi*, the purification of the *citta* or mass of established ideas, feelings and actional habits in a man either by *samīyama*, rejection, or by *bhoga*, satisfaction, or by both. Aristotle was speaking of the purification of feelings, passions and emotions in the heart through imaginative treatment in poetry but the truth the idea

contains is of much wider application and constitutes the justification of the aesthetic side of art. It purifies by beauty. The beautiful and the good are held by many thinkers to be the same and, though the idea may be wrongly stated, it is, when put from the right standpoint, not only a truth but the fundamental truth of existence. According to our own philosophy the whole world came out of *ānanda* and returns into *ānanda*, and the triple term in which *ānanda* may be stated is Joy, Love, Beauty. To see divine beauty in the whole world, man, life, nature, to love that which we have seen and to have pure unalloyed bliss in that love and that beauty is the appointed road by which mankind as a race must climb to God. That is the reaching to *vidyā* through *avidyā*, to the One Pure and Divine through the manifold manifestation of Him, of which the Upanishad repeatedly speaks. But the bliss must be pure and unalloyed, unalloyed by self-regarding emotions, unalloyed by pain and evil. The sense of good and bad, beautiful and unbeautiful, which afflicts our understanding and our senses, must be replaced by *akhaṇḍa rasa*, undifferentiated and unabridged delight in the delightfulness of things, before the highest can be reached. On the way to this goal full use must be made of the lower and abridged sense of beauty which seeks to replace the less beautiful by the more, the lower by the higher, the mean by the noble.

At a certain stage of human development the aesthetic sense is of infinite value in this direction. It raises and purifies conduct by instilling a distaste for the coarse desires and passions of the savage, for the rough, uncouth and excessive in action and manner, and restraining both feeling and action by a striving after the decent, the beautiful, the fit and seemly which received its highest expression in the manners of cultivated European society, the elaborate ceremonious life of the Confucian, the careful *ācāra* and etiquette of Hinduism. At the present stage of progress this element is losing much of its once all-important value and, when overstressed, tends to hamper a higher development by the obstruction of soulless ceremony and formalism. Its great use was to discipline the savage animal instincts of the body, the vital instincts and the lower feelings in the heart. Its disadvantage



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to progress is that it tends to trammel the play both of the higher feelings of the heart and the workings of originality in thought. Born originally of a seeking after beauty, it degenerates into an attachment to form, to exterior uniformity, to precedent, to dead authority. In the future development of humanity it must be given a much lower place than in the past. Its limits must be recognised and the demands of a higher truth, sincerity and freedom of thought and feeling must be given priority. Mankind is apt to bind itself by attachment to the means of its past progress forgetful of the aim. The bondage to formulas has to be outgrown, and in this again it is the sense of a higher beauty and fitness which will be most powerful to correct the lower. The art of life must be understood in more magnificent terms and must subordinate its more formal elements to the service of the master civilisers, Love and Thought.

### III

THE WORK of purifying conduct through outward form and habitual and seemly regulation of expression, manner and action is the lowest of the many services which the artistic sense has done to humanity, and yet how wide is the field it covers and how important and indispensable have its workings been to the progress of civilisation! A still more important and indispensable activity of the sense of beauty is the powerful help it has given to the formation of morality. We do not ordinarily recognise how largely our sense of virtue is a sense of the beautiful in conduct and our sense of sin a sense of ugliness and deformity in conduct. It may easily be recognised in the lower and more physical workings, as for instance in the shuddering recoil from cruelty, blood, torture as things intolerably hideous to sight and imagination or in the aesthetic disgust at sensual excesses and the strong sense, awakened by this disgust, of the charm of purity and the beauty of virginity. This latter feeling was extremely active in the imagination of the Greeks and other nations not noted for a high standard in conduct, and it was purely aesthetic in its roots. Pity again is largely a vital instinct in the ordinary man associated with *jugupsā*, the loathing for the hideousness of its opposite, *ghṛṇā*, disgust at the sordidness and brutality of cruelty, hardness and selfishness as well as at the ugliness of their actions, so that a common word for cruel in the Sanskrit language is *nirghṛṇa*, the man without disgust or loathing, and the word *ghṛṇā* approximates in use to *krpā*, the lower or vital kind of pity. But even on a higher plane the sense of virtue is very largely aesthetic and, even when it emerges from the aesthetic stage, must always call the sense of the beautiful to its support if it is to be safe from the revolt against it of one of the most deep-seated of human instincts. We can see the largeness of this element if we study the

ideas of the Greeks, who never got beyond the aesthetic stage of morality. There were four gradations in Greek ethical thought, — the *euprepēs*, that which is seemly or outwardly decorous; the *dikaion*, that which is in accordance with *dikē* or *nomos*, the law, custom and standard of humanity based on the sense of fitness and on the codified or uncoded mass of precedents in which that sense has been expressed in general conduct, — in other words the just or lawful; thirdly, the *agathon*, the good, based partly on the seemly and partly on the just and lawful, and reaching towards the purely beautiful; then, final and supreme, the *kalon*, that which is purely beautiful, the supreme standard. The most remarkable part of Aristotle's moral system is that in which he classifies the parts of conduct not according to our idea of virtue and sin, *pāpa* and *punya*, but by a purely aesthetic standard, the excess, defect and golden, in other words correct and beautiful, mean of qualities. The Greeks' view of life was imperfect even from the standpoint of beauty, not only because the idea of beauty was not sufficiently catholic and too much attached to a fastidious purity of form and outline and restraint, but because they were deficient in love. God as beauty, Srikrishna in Brindavan, Shyamasundara, is not only Beauty, He is also Love, and without perfect love there cannot be perfect beauty, and without perfect beauty there cannot be perfect delight. The aesthetic motive in conduct limits and must be exceeded in order that humanity may rise. Therefore it was that the Greek mould had to be broken and humanity even revolted for a time against beauty. The *agathon*, the good, had to be released for a time from the bondage of the *kalon*, the aesthetic sense of beauty, just as it is now struggling to deliver itself from the bondage of the *euprepēs* and the *dikaion*, mere decorousness, mere custom, mere social law and rule. The excess of this anti-aesthetic tendency is visible in Puritanism and the baser forms of asceticism. The progress of ethics in Europe has been largely a struggle between the Greek sense of aesthetic beauty and the Christian sense of a higher good marred on the one side by formalism, on the other by an unlovely asceticism. The association of the latter with virtue has largely driven the sense of beauty to the side of vice. The good

must not be subordinated to the aesthetic sense, but it must be beautiful and delightful, or to that extent it ceases to be good. The object of existence is not the practice of virtue for its own sake but *ānanda*, delight, and progress consists not in rejecting beauty and delight, but in rising from the lower to the higher, the less complete to the more complete beauty and delight.

The third activity of the aesthetic faculty, higher than the two already described, the highest activity of the artistic sense before it rises to the plane of the intellect, is the direct purifying of the emotions. This is the *katharsis* of which Aristotle spoke. The sense of pleasure and delight in the emotional aspects of life and action, this is the poetry of life, just as the regulating and beautiful arrangement of character and action is the art of life. We have seen how the latter purifies, but the purifying force of the former is still more potent for good. Our life is largely made up of the eight *rasas*. The movements of the heart in its enjoyment of action, its own and that of others, may either be directed downwards, as is the case with the animals and animal men, to the mere satisfaction of the ten sense-organs and the vital desires which make instruments of the senses in the average sensual man, or they may work for the satisfaction of the heart itself in a predominatingly emotional enjoyment of life, or they may be directed upwards through the medium of the intellect, rational and intuitional, to attainment of delight through the seizing on the source of all delight, the Spirit, the *satyam, sundaram, ānandam* who is beyond and around, the source and the basis of all this world-wide activity, evolution and progress. When the heart works for itself, then it enjoys the poetry of life, the delight of emotions, the wonder, pathos, beauty, enjoyableness, lovable-ness, calm, serenity, clarity and also the grandeur, heroism, passion, fury, terror and horror of life, of man, of Nature, of the phenomenal manifestation of God. This is not the highest, but it is higher than the animal, vital and externally aesthetic developments. The large part it plays in life is obvious, but in life it is hampered by the demands of the body and the vital passions. Here comes in the first mighty utility, the triumphant activity of the most energetic forms of art and poetry.

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They provide a field in which these pressing claims of the animal can be excluded and the emotions, working disinterestedly for the satisfaction of the heart and the imagination alone, can do the work of *katharsis*, emotional purification, of which Aristotle spoke. *Cittaśuddhi*, the purification of the heart, is the appointed road by which man arrives at his higher fulfilment, and, if it can be shown that poetry and art are powerful agents towards that end, their supreme importance is established. They are that, and more than that. It is only one of the great uses of these things which men nowadays are inclined to regard as mere ornaments of life and therefore of secondary importance.

## IV

WE NOW come to the kernel of the subject, the place of art in the evolution of the race and its value in the education and actual life of a nation. The first question is whether the sense of the beautiful has any effect on the life of a nation. It is obvious, from what we have already written, that the manners, the social culture and the restraint in action and expression which are so large a part of national prestige and dignity and make a nation admired like the French, loved like the Irish or respected like the higher-class English, are based essentially on the sense of form and beauty, of what is correct, symmetrical, well-adjusted, fair to the eye and pleasing to the imagination. The absence of these qualities is a source of national weakness. The rudeness, coarseness and vulgar violence of the less cultured Englishman, the overbearing brusqueness and selfishness of the Prussian have greatly hampered those powerful nations in their dealings with foreigners, dependencies and even their own friends, allies, colonies. We all know what a large share the manner and ordinary conduct of the average and of the vulgar Anglo-Indian has had in bringing about the revolt of the Indian, accustomed through ages to courtesy, dignity and the amenities of an equal intercourse, against the mastery of an obviously coarse and selfish community. Now the sense of form and beauty, the correct, symmetrical, well-adjusted, fair and pleasing is an artistic sense and can best be fostered in a nation by artistic culture of the perceptions and sensibilities. It is noteworthy that the two great nations who are most hampered by the defect of these qualities in action are also the least imaginative, poetic and artistic in Europe. It is the South German who contributes the art, poetry and music of Germany, the Celt and Norman who produce great poets and a few great artists in England without altering the characteristics of the dominant

Saxon. Music is even more powerful in this direction than Art and by the perfect expression of harmony insensibly steeps the man in it. And it is noticeable that England has hardly produced a single musician worth the name. Plato in his Republic has dwelt with extraordinary emphasis on the importance of music in education; as is the music to which a people is accustomed, so, he says in effect, is the character of that people. The importance of painting and sculpture is hardly less. The mind is profoundly influenced by what it sees and, if the eye is trained from the days of childhood to the contemplation and understanding of beauty, harmony and just arrangement in line and colour, the tastes, habits and character will be insensibly trained to follow a similar law of beauty, harmony and just arrangement in the life of the adult man. This was the great importance of the universal proficiency in the arts and crafts or the appreciation of them which was prevalent in ancient Greece, in certain European ages, in Japan and in the better days of our own history. Art galleries cannot be brought into every home, but, if all the appointments of our life and furniture of our homes are things of taste and beauty, it is inevitable that the habits, thoughts and feelings of the people should be raised, ennobled, harmonised, made more sweet and dignified.

A similar result is produced on the emotions by the study of beautiful or noble art. We have spoken of the purification of the heart, the *cittaśuddhi*, which Aristotle assigned as the essential office of poetry, and have pointed out that it is done in poetry by the detached and disinterested enjoyment of the eight *rasas* or forms of emotional aestheticism which make up life, unalloyed by the disturbance of the lower self-regarding passions. Painting and sculpture work in the same direction by different means. Art sometimes uses the same means as poetry but cannot do it to the same extent because it has not the movement of poetry; it is fixed, still, it expresses only a given moment, a given point in space and cannot move freely through time and region. But it is precisely this stillness, this calm, this fixity which gives its separate value to Art. Poetry raises the emotions and gives each its separate delight. Art stills the emotions and teaches them the

delight of a restrained and limited satisfaction, — this indeed was the characteristic that the Greeks, a nation of artists far more artistic than poetic, tried to bring into their poetry. Music deepens the emotions and harmonises them with each other. Between them music, art and poetry are a perfect education for the soul; they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its onward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used, great educating, edifying and civilising forces.



## V

THE VALUE of art in the training of intellectual faculty is also an important part of its utility. We have already indicated the double character of intellectual activity, divided between the imaginative, creative and sympathetic or comprehensive intellectual centres on the one side and the critical, analytic and penetrative on the other. The latter are best trained by science, criticism and observation, the former by art, poetry, music, literature and the sympathetic study of man and his creations. These make the mind quick to grasp at a glance, subtle to distinguish shades, deep to reject shallow self-sufficiency, mobile, delicate, swift, intuitive. Art assists in this training by raising images in the mind which it has to understand not by analysis, but by self-identification with other minds; it is a powerful stimulator of sympathetic insight. Art is subtle and delicate, and it makes the mind also in its movements subtle and delicate. It is suggestive, and the intellect habituated to the appreciation of art is quick to catch suggestions, mastering not only, as the scientific mind does, that which is positive and on the surface, but that which leads to ever fresh widening and subtilising of knowledge and opens a door into the deeper secrets of inner nature where the positive instruments of science cannot take the depth or measure. This supreme intellectual value of Art has never been sufficiently recognised. Men have made language, poetry, history, philosophy agents for the training of this side of intellectuality, necessary parts of a liberal education, but the immense educative force of music, painting and sculpture has not been duly recognised. They have been thought to be by-paths of the human mind, beautiful and interesting, but not necessary, therefore intended for the few. Yet the universal impulse to enjoy the beauty and attractiveness of sound, to look at and live among pictures, colours, forms ought to have warned

mankind of the superficiality and ignorance of such a view of these eternal and important occupations of human mind. The impulse, denied proper training and self-purification, has spent itself on the trivial, gaudy, sensuous, cheap or vulgar instead of helping man upward by its powerful aid in the evocation of what is best and highest in intellect as well as in character, emotion and the aesthetic enjoyment and regulation of life and manners. It is difficult to appreciate the waste and detriment involved in the low and debased level of enjoyment to which the artistic impulses are condemned in the majority of mankind.

But beyond and above this intellectual utility of Art, there is a higher use, the noblest of all, its service to the growth of spirituality in the race. European critics have dwelt on the close connection of the highest developments of art with religion, and it is undoubtedly true that in Greece, in Italy, in India, the greatest efflorescence of a national Art has been associated with the employment of the artistic genius to illustrate or adorn the thoughts and fancies or the temples and instruments of the national religion. This was not because Art is necessarily associated with the outward forms of religion, but because it was in the religion that men's spiritual aspirations centred themselves. Spirituality is a wider thing than formal religion and it is in the service of spirituality that Art reaches its highest self-expression. Spirituality is a single word expressive of three lines of human aspiration towards divine knowledge, divine love and joy, divine strength, and that will be the highest and most perfect Art which, while satisfying the physical requirements of the aesthetic sense, the laws of formal beauty, the emotional demand of humanity, the portrayal of life and outward reality, as the best European Art satisfies these requirements, reaches beyond them and expresses inner spiritual truth, the deeper not obvious reality of things, the joy of God in the world and its beauty and desirableness and the manifestation of divine force and energy in phenomenal creation. This is what Indian Art alone attempted thoroughly and in the effort it often dispensed, either deliberately or from impatience, with the lower, yet not negligible perfections which the more material European demanded. Therefore Art has

flowed in two separate streams in Europe and Asia, so diverse that it is only now that the European aesthetic sense has so far trained itself as to begin to appreciate the artistic conventions, aims and traditions of Asia. Asia's future development will unite these two streams in one deep and grandiose flood of artistic self-expression perfecting the aesthetic evolution of humanity.

But if Art is to reach towards the highest, the Indian tendency must dominate. The spirit is that in which all the rest of the human being reposes, towards which it returns and the final self-revelation of which is the goal of humanity. Man becomes God, and all human activity reaches its highest and noblest when it succeeds in bringing body, heart and mind into touch with spirit. Art can express eternal truth, it is not limited to the expression of form and appearance. So wonderfully has God made the world that a man using a simple combination of lines, an unpretentious harmony of colours, can raise this apparently insignificant medium to suggest absolute and profound truths with a perfection which language labours with difficulty to reach. What Nature is, what God is, what man is can be triumphantly revealed in stone or on canvas.

Behind a few figures, a few trees and rocks the supreme Intelligence, the supreme Imagination, the supreme Energy lurks, acts, feels, is, and, if the artist has the spiritual vision, he can see it and suggest perfectly the great mysterious Life in its manifestations brooding in action, active in thought, energetic in stillness, creative in repose, full of a mastering intention in that which appears blind and unconscious. The great truths of religion, science, metaphysics, life, development, become concrete, emotional, universally intelligible and convincing in the hands of the master of plastic Art, and the soul of man, in the stage when it is rising from emotion to intellect, looks, receives the suggestion and is uplifted towards a higher development, a diviner knowledge.

So it is with the divine love and joy which pulsates throughout existence and is far superior to alloyed earthly pleasure. Catholic, perfect, unmixed with repulsion, radiating through all things, the common no less than the high, the mean and shabby

no less than the lofty and splendid, the terrible and the repulsive no less than the charming and attractive, it uplifts all, purifies all, turns all to love and delight and beauty. A little of this immortal nectar poured into a man's heart transfigures life and action. The whole flood of it pouring in would lift mankind to God. This too Art can seize on and suggest to the human soul, aiding it in its stormy and toilsome pilgrimage. In that pilgrimage it is the divine strength that supports. Shakti, Force, pouring through the universe supports its boundless activities, the frail and tremulous life of the rose no less than the flaming motions of sun and star. To suggest the strength and virile unconquerable force of the divine Nature in man and in the outside world, its energy, its calm, its powerful inspiration, its august enthusiasm, its wildness, greatness, attractiveness, to breathe that into man's soul and gradually mould the finite into the image of the Infinite is another spiritual utility of Art. This is its loftiest function, its fullest consummation, its most perfect privilege.

## VI

THE ENORMOUS value of Art to human evolution has been made sufficiently apparent from the analysis, incomplete in itself, which we have attempted. We have also incidentally pointed out its value as a factor in education. It is obvious that no nation can afford to neglect an element of such high importance to the culture of its people or the training of some of the higher intellectual, moral and aesthetic faculties in the young. The system of education which, instead of keeping artistic training apart as a privilege for a few specialists, frankly introduces it as a part of culture no less necessary than literature or science, will have taken a great step forward in the perfection of national education and the general diffusion of a broad-based human culture. It is not necessary that every man should be an artist. It is necessary that every man should have his artistic faculty developed, his taste trained, his sense of beauty and insight into form and colour and that which is expressed in form and colour, made habitually active, correct and sensitive. It is necessary that those who create, whether in great things or small, whether in the unusual masterpieces of art and genius or in the small common things of use that surround a man's daily life, should be habituated to produce and the nation habituated to expect the beautiful in preference to the ugly, the noble in preference to the vulgar, the fine in preference to the crude, the harmonious in preference to the gaudy. A nation surrounded daily by the beautiful, noble, fine and harmonious becomes that which it is habituated to contemplate and realises the fullness of the expanding Spirit in itself.

In the system of National education that was inaugurated in Bengal, a beginning was made by the importance attached to drawing and clay-modelling as elements of manual training. But the absence of an artistic ideal, the misconception of the true

aim of manual training, the imperative financial needs of these struggling institutions making for a predominant commercial aim in the education given, the mastery of English ideas, English methods and English predilections in the so-called national education rendered nugatory the initial advantage. The students had faculty, but the teaching given them would waste and misuse the faculty. The nation and the individual can gain nothing by turning out figures in clay which faithfully copy the vulgarity and ugliness of English commercial production or by multiplying mere copies of men or things. A free and active imaging of form and hue within oneself, a free and self-trained hand reproducing with instinctive success not the form and measurement of things seen outside, for that is a smaller capacity easily mastered, but the inward vision of the relation and truth of things, an eye quick to note and distinguish, sensitive to design and to harmony in colour, these are the faculties that have to be evoked, and the formal and mechanical English method is useless for this purpose.

In India the revival of a truly national Art is already an accomplished fact and the masterpieces of the school can already challenge comparison with the best work of other countries. Under such circumstances it is unpardonable that the crude formal teaching of English schools and the vulgar commercial aims and methods of the West should subsist in our midst. The country has yet to evolve a system of education which shall be really national. The taint of Occidental ideals and alien and unsuitable methods has to be purged out of our minds, and nowhere more than in the teaching which should be the foundation of intellectual and aesthetic renovation. The spirit of old Indian Art must be revived, the inspiration and directness of vision which even now subsists among the possessors of the ancient traditions, the inborn skill and taste of the race, the dexterity of the Indian hand and the intuitive gaze of the Indian eye must be recovered and the whole nation lifted again to the high level of the ancient culture — and higher.

## Two Pictures

THE *Modern Review* and *Prabasi* are doing monthly a service to the country the importance of which cannot be exaggerated. The former review is at present the best conducted and the most full of valuable matter of any in India. But good as are the articles which fill the magazine from month to month, the whole sum of them is outweighed in value by the single page which gives us the reproduction of some work of art by a contemporary Indian painter. To the lover of beauty and the lover of his country every one of these delicately executed blocks is an event of importance in his life within. The reviews by bringing these masterpieces to the thousands who have no opportunity of seeing the originals are restoring the sense of beauty and artistic emotion inborn in our race but almost blotted out by the long reign in our lives of the influence of Anglo-Saxon vulgarity and crude tasteless commercialism. The pictures belong usually to the new school of Bengali art, the only living and original school now developing among us and the last issues have each contained a picture — especially important not only by the intrinsic excellence of the work but by the perfect emergence of that soul of India which we attempted to characterise in an article in our second issue.<sup>1</sup>

The picture in the July number is by Mahomed Hakim Khan, a student of the Government School of Art, Calcutta, and represents Nadir Shah ordering a general massacre. It is not one of those pictures salient and imposing which leap at once at the eye and hold it. A first glance only shows three figures almost conventionally Indian in poses which also seem conventional.

<sup>1</sup> See “*The Awakening Soul of India*”, published on pages 61–66 of Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910, volume 8 of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*. — Ed.

But as one looks again and again the soul of the picture begins suddenly to emerge, and one realises with a start of surprise that one is in the presence of a work of genius. The reason for this lies in the extraordinary restraint and simplicity which conceals the artist's strength and subtlety. The whole spirit and conception is Indian and it would be difficult to detect in the composition a single trace of foreign influence. The grace and perfection of the design and the distinctness and vigour of form which support it are not European; it is the Saracenic sweetness and grace, the old Vedantic massiveness and power transformed by some new nameless element of harmony into something original and yet Indian. The careful and minute detail in the minutiae of the dresses, of the armour of the warrior seated on the right, of the flickering lines of the pillar on the left are inherited from an intellectual ancestry whose daily vision was accustomed to the rich decoration of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri or to the fullness and crowded detail which informed the massive work of the old Vedantic artists and builders, Hindu, Jain and Buddhist. Another peculiarity is the fixity and stillness which, in spite of the Titanic life and promise of motion in the figure of Nadir, pervade the picture. A certain stiffness of design marks much of the old Hindu art, a stiffness courted by the artists perhaps in order that no insistence of material life in the figures might distract attention from the expression of the spirit within which was their main object. By some inspiration of genius the artist has transformed this conventional stiffness into a hint of rigidity which almost suggests the lines of stone. This stillness adds immensely to the effect of the picture. The petrified inaction of the three human beings contrasted with the expression of the faces and the formidable suggestion in the pose of their sworded figures affects us like the silence of murder crouching for his leap.

The central figure of Nadir Shah dominates his surroundings. It is from this centre that the suggestion of something terrible coming out of the silent group has started. The strong, proud and regal figure is extraordinarily impressive, but it is the face and the arm that give the individuality. That bare arm and hand grasping the rigid upright scimitar are inhuman in



their savage force and brutality; it is the hand, the fingers, one might almost say the talons of the human wild beast. This arm and hand have action, murder, empire in them: the whole history of Nadir is there expressed. The grip and gesture have already commenced the coming massacre and the whole body behind consents. The face corresponds in the hard firmness and strength of the nose, the brute cruelty of the mouth almost lost in the moustache and beard. But the eyes are the master-touch in this figure. They overcome us with surprise when we look at them, for these are not the eyes of the assassin, even the assassin upon the throne. The soul that looks out of these eyes is calm, aloof and thoughtful, yet terrible. Whatever order of massacre has issued from these lips, did not go forth from an ordinary energetic man of action moved by self-interest, rage or blood-thirst. The eyes are the eyes of a Yogin but a terrible Yogin; such might be the look of some adept of the left-hand ways, some mighty Kapalik lifted above pity and shrinking as above violence and wrath. Those eyes in that face, over that body, arm, hand seem to be those of one whose spirit is not affected by the actions of the body, whose natural part and organs are full of the destroying energy of Kali while the soul, the witness within, looks on at the sanguinary drama tranquil, darkly approving but hardly interested. And then it dawns on one that this is not so much the Nadir of history; unconsciously perhaps the artist has given a quiet but effective delineation of the Scourge of God, the man who is rather a force than a human being, the Asura with a mission who has come to do God's work of destruction and help on the evolution by carnage and ruin. The soul within is not that of a human being. Some powerful Yogin of a Lemurian race has incarnated in this body, one born when the simian might and strength of the *vānara* had evolved into the perfection of the human form and brain with the animal still uneliminated, who having by tapasya and knowledge separated his soul from his nature has elected this reward that after long beatitude, *prāpya puṇyakṛtām lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ*, he should reincarnate as a force of nature informed by a human soul and work out in a single life the savage strength of the outward self, taking upon

himself the foreordained burden of empire and massacre.

From Nadir the coming carnage has passed into the seated warrior and looks out from his eyes at the receiver of the order. The gaze is contemplative but not inward like Nadir's, and it is human and indifferent envisaging massacre as part of the activities of the soldier with a matter-of-fact approval. The figure is almost a piece of sculpture, so perfect is the rigidity of arrested and expectant action. The straight strong sword over the shoulder has the same rigid preparedness. There is a certain defect in the unnatural pose and obese curve of the hand which is not justified by any similar detail or motive in the rest of the figure. We notice a similar motiveless strain in the position of Nadir's left arm, though here something is perhaps added to the force of the attitude. A standing figure receives the sanguinary command. The folded hands and the scimitar suspended in front are full of the spirit of ready obedience and there is an expression of pleasure, almost amusement which makes even this commonplace face terrible, for the decree dooming thousands is taken as lightly as if it were order for nautch or banquet. The three mighty swords, by a masterly effect of balanced design, fill with death and menace the terrace on which the men are seated. Behind these formidable figures is a part of the palace gracious with the simple and magical lines of Indo-Saracenic architecture and in the distance on the right from behind a mass of heavy impenetrable green a slender tapering tower rises into the peaceful quiet of Delhi.

On another page of the same review we have a picture by one of the greatest Masters of European Art, Raphael's "Vision of the Knight". The picture is full of that which Greece and Italy perfected as the aim of Art, beauty and such soul-expression as heightens physical beauty. It is beauty that is expressed in the robust body and feminine face of the armed youth both full of an exquisite languor of sleep, in the sweet face, the voluptuous figure, the gracious pose of the temptress offering her delicate allurements of flowers, in the other's grave, strong and benign countenance, the vigorous physique and open gesture of promise and aspiration extending a book and a fine slender sword, in the



NADIR SHAH ORDERING A GENERAL MASSACRE.  
By Hakim Muhammad Khan.

1. *Nadir Shah Ordering a General Massacre*  
(as reproduced in *The Modern Review*)



THE VISION OF THE KNIGHT.  
By Raphael.

2. Engraving of *The Vision of the Knight*  
(as reproduced in *The Modern Review*)

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delicacy of the landscape behind and the tree under which the dreamer lies. There is suggestion but it is the suggestion of more and more beauty, there is harmony and relation but it is the harmony and relation of loveliness of landscape as a background to the loveliness of the nobly-grouped figures. There is an attempt to express spiritual meanings but it is by outward symbols only and not by making the outward expression a vehicle for something that comes from within and overpowers impalpably. This is allegory, the other is the drawing and painting of the very self of things. Only in the delicate spiritual face of the Knight is there some approach to the Eastern spirit. This is one kind of art and a great art, but is the other less? Beauty for beauty's sake can never be the spirit of art in India, beauty we must seek and always beauty, but never lose sight of the end which India holds more important, the realisation of the Self in things. Europeans create out of the imagination. India has always sought to go deeper within and create out of the Power behind imagination, by passivity and plenary inspiration, in Yoga, from samadhi.

## Indian Art and an Old Classic

WE HAVE before us a new edition of Krittibas's Ramayan, edited and published by that indefatigable literary and patriotic worker, Sj. Ramananda Chatterji. Ramananda Babu is well known to the Bengali public as a clear-minded, sober and fearless political speaker and writer; as editor of the *Modern Review* and the *Prabasi* he has raised the status and quality of Indian periodical literature to an extraordinary extent, and has recently been doing a yet more valuable and lasting service to his country by introducing the masterpieces of the new school of Art to his readers. His present venture is not in itself an ambitious one, as it purports only to provide a well-printed and beautifully illustrated edition of Krittibas for family reading. With this object the editor has taken the Battala prints of the Ramayan as his text and reproduced them with the necessary corrections and the omission of a few passages which offend modern ideas of decorum. Besides, the book is liberally illustrated with reproductions of recent pictures by artists of Bombay and Calcutta on subjects chosen from the Ramayan.

The place of Krittibas in our literature is well established. He is one of the most considerable of our old classics and one of the writers who most helped to create the Bengali language as a literary instrument. The sweetness, simplicity, lucidity, melody of the old language is present in every line that Krittibas wrote, but, in this recension at least, we miss the racy vigour and nervous vernacular force which was a gift of the early writers. Our impression is that the modern editions do not faithfully reproduce the old classic and that copyists of more learning and puristic taste than critical imagination or poetical sympathy have polished away much that was best in the Bengali Ramayan. The old copies, we believe, reveal a style much more irregular

in diction and metre, but more full of humanity, strength and the rough and natural touch of the soil. In no case can our Ramayan compare with the great epic of Tulsidas, that mine of poetry, strong and beautiful thought and description and deep spiritual force and sweetness. But it must have been greater in its original form than in its modern dress.

The great value of the edition lies however in the illustrations. All the pictures are not excellent; indeed we must say quite frankly that some of them are an offence to the artistic perceptions and an affliction to the eye and the soul. Others are masterpieces of the first rank. But in this collection of pictures, most of them now well-known, we have a sort of handy record of the progress of Art in India in recent times. Turning over the pages we are struck first by the numerous reproductions of Ravivarma's pictures which were only recently so prominent in Indian houses and, even now, are painfully common, and we recall with wonder the time when we could gaze upon these crude failures without an immediate revolt of all that was artistic within us. Could anything be more gross, earthy, un-Indian and addressed purely to the eye than his "Descent of Ganges", or more vulgar and unbeautiful than the figure of Aja in the "Death of Indumati", or more soulless and commonplace than the "Ahalya", a picture on a level with the ruck of the most ordinary European paintings for the market by obscure hands? Some of these efforts are absolutely laughable in the crudeness of their conception and the inefficiency of their execution; take for instance the fight between Ravan and Jatayu. Raja Rukmangad's "Ekadashi" is one of the few successes, but spirited as the work undoubtedly is, it is so wholly an imitation of European workmanship that it establishes no claim to real artistic faculty. All that can be said for this painter is that he turned the Indian mind to our own mythology and history for the subject of art, and that he manifests a certain struggling towards outward beauty and charm which is occasionally successful in his women and children. But he had neither the power to develop original conceptions, nor the skill to reproduce finely that which he tried to learn from Europe. He represents in Art that dark period when,

in subjection to foreign teaching and ideals, we did everything badly because we did everything slavishly. It is fortunate that the representative of this period was a man without genius: otherwise he might have done infinitely more permanent harm to our taste than he has done.

The art of Sj. M. V. Durandhar shows a great advance. The basis is European but we see something Indian and characteristic struggling to express itself in this foreign mould. Unlike Ravivarma Sj. Durandhar has always a worthy and often poetic conception, even when he fails to express it in line and colour. In the stillness and thoughtfulness of the figures in the second illustration of the book there is a hint of the divine presence which is suggested, and Indian richness, massiveness and dignity support this great suggestion. There is augustness and beauty in the picture of Rama and Sita about to enter Guhyaka's boat. Others of his pictures are less successful. Another intermediate worker in the field who is very largely represented, is Sj. Upendra Kishore Ray. This artist has an essentially imitative genius whose proper field lies in reproduction. There are attempts here to succeed in the European style and others which seek to capture the secret of the new school, especially where it is original, strange and remote in its greatness; but these are secrets of original genius which do not yield themselves to imitation and the attempt, though it reproduces some of the mannerisms of the school, often ends merely in grotesqueness of line and conception.

We have not left ourselves the space to do justice to the really great art represented in the book, the wonderful suggestions of the landscape in Sj. Abanindranath Tagore's "Slaying of the Enchanted Deer", the decorative beauty of the "Last Days of Dasarath", and the epic grandeur and grace and strange romantic mystery of "Mahadev receiving the Descent of the Ganges". We would only suggest to the readers whose artistic perceptions are awakened but in need of training, to use the comparative method for which Sj. Ramananda Chatterji has supplied plentiful materials in this book; for instance, the three illustrations of the Kaikayi and Manthara incident which are given one after the other, — Sj. Nandalal Bose's original and



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suggestive though not entirely successful picture, S. J. Durandhar's vigorous and character-revealing but too imitatively European work, and S. J. U. Ray's attempt to master the new style with its striking evidence of a great reproductive faculty but small success where originality is the aim. Finally, let him look at the few examples of old art in the book, then at the work of the new school, especially the two pictures against page 22, and last at Raja Ravivarma's failures. He will realise the strange hiatus in the history of Indian Art brought about by the enslavement of our minds to the West and recognise that the artists of the new school are merely recovering our ancestral heritage with a new development of spiritual depth, power and originality, which is prophetic of the future.

# The Revival of Indian Art

## THE MAIN DIFFERENCE

THE GREATNESS of Indian art is the greatness of all Indian thought and achievement. It lies in the recognition of the persistent within the transient, of the domination of matter by spirit, the subordination of the insistent appearances of Prakriti to the inner reality which, in a thousand ways, the Mighty Mother veils even while she suggests. The European artist, cabined within the narrow confines of the external, is dominated in imagination by the body of things and the claims of the phenomenon. Western painting starts from the eye or the imagination; its master word is either beauty or reality, and, according as he is the slave of his eye or the playfellow of his imagination, the painter produces a photograph or a poem. But, in painting, the European imagination seldom travels beyond an imaginative interpretation or variation of what the physical eye has seen. Imitation is the key-word of creation, according to Aristotle; Shakespeare advises the artist to hold up the mirror to Nature; and the Greek scientist and the English poet reflect accurately the mind of Europe.

But the Indian artist has been taught by his philosophy and the spiritual discipline of his forefathers that the imagination is only a channel and an instrument of some source of knowledge and inspiration that is greater and higher; by meditation or by Yoga he seeks within himself that ultimate centre of knowledge where there is direct and utter vision of the thing that lies hidden in the forms of man, animal, tree, river, mountain. It is this *samyag jñāna*, this *sākṣād darśana*, the utter, revealing and apocalyptic vision, that he seeks, and when he has found it, whether by patient receptivity or sudden inspiration, his whole aim is

to express it utterly and revealingly in line and colour. Form is only a means of expressing the spirit, and the one thought of the artist should be how best to render the spiritual vision. He is not bound by the forms that compose the world of gross matter, though he takes them as a starting-point for his formal expression of the vision within him; if by modifying them or departing from them he can reveal that vision more completely, his freedom and his duty as an artist emancipate him from the obligation of the mere recorder and copyist. The ancient Asiatic artists were not incapable of reproducing outward Nature with as perfect and vigorous an accuracy as the Europeans; but it was their ordinary method deliberately to suppress all that might hamper the expression of their spiritual vision.

Reality for its own sake, one of the most dominant notes of Art in Europe, Indian artistic theory would not have recognised; for we have always regarded the reality of the Europeans as an appearance; to us the true reality is that which is hidden; otherwise, there would be no need of the prophet, the philosopher, the poet and the artist. It is they who see with the *sūkṣma dṛṣṭi*, the inner vision, and not like the ordinary man with the eye only. Beauty for beauty's sake, the other great note of European Art is recognised by us, but not in the higher work of the artist. Just as in the first ideal, the tyranny of the eye is acknowledged, so in the second the tyranny of the aesthetic imagination. The Indian seeks freedom, and the condition of freedom is the search for ultimate Truth. But in this search the imagination is an unsafe and capricious guide; it misinterprets as often as it interprets. The claim of the eye to separate satisfaction can only be answered by the response of decorative beauty; the claim of the imagination to separate satisfaction can only receive the response of fancy playing with scene and legend, form and colour, idea and dream, for pure aesthetic delight; but in the interpretation of things the eye and the imagination can assert no right to command, they are only subordinate instruments and must keep their place. Whenever, therefore, the Indian artist put away from him his high spiritual aim, it was to seek decorative beauty informed by the play of the imagination. Here he held decorative beauty to be

his paramount aim and declined to be bound by the seen and the familiar. If by other lines than the natural, by subtler or richer methods than those of outward Nature, our old masters could gain in decorative suggestion and beauty, they held themselves free to follow their inspiration. Here, too, they often deliberately changed and suppressed in order to get their desired effect. If they had been asked to deny themselves this artistic gain for the sake of satisfying the memory in the physical eye, they would have held the objector to be the bonds slave of an unmeaning superstition.

We of today have been overpowered by the European tradition as interpreted by the English, the least artistic of civilised nations. We have therefore come to make on a picture the same demand as on a photograph, — the reproduction of the thing as the eye sees it, not even as the retrospective mind or the imagination sees it, exact resemblance to the beings or objects we know, or, if anything more, then a refinement on Nature in the direction of greater picturesqueness and prettiness and the satisfaction of the lower and more external sense of beauty. The conception that Art exists not to copy, but for the sake of a deeper truth and vision, and we must seek in it not the object but God in the object, not things but the soul of things, seems to have vanished for a while from the Indian consciousness.

Another obstacle to the appreciation of great art, to which even those Indians who are not dominated by European ideas are liable, is the exaggerated respect for the symbols and traditions which our art or literature has used at a certain stage of development. I am accustomed for instance to a particular way of representing Shiva or Kali and I refuse to have any other. But the artist has nothing to do with my prejudices. He has to represent the essential truth of Shiva or Kali, that which makes their Shiva hood or Kali hood, and he is under no obligation to copy the vision of others. If he has seen another vision of Shiva or Kali, it is that vision to which he must be faithful. The curious discussion which arose recently as to the propriety or otherwise of representing the gods without beard or moustache, is an instance of this literalism which is a survival of the enslavement

to form and rule characteristic of the eighteenth century. The literalist cannot see that it is not the moustache or beard or the symbol which makes the godhead, but the divine greatness, immortal strength, beauty, youth, purity or peace within. It is that godhead which the artist must draw and paint, and in the forms he chooses he is bound only by the vision in *dhyaṇa*. Whether his interpretation will gain an abiding place in the thought and imagination of the race, depends on its power to awake the deeper vision in the race. All that we can demand is that it shall be a real God, a real Shiva, a real Kali, and not a freak of his imagination or an outcome of some passing *samskāra* of his education or artistic upbringing. He must go to the fountainhead of knowledge within himself or his claim to freedom does not stand. It has already been said that the condition of freedom is the search for truth, and the artist must not allow his imagination to take the place of the higher quality.

Indian Art demands of the artist the power of communion with the soul of things, the sense of spiritual taking precedence of the sense of material beauty, and fidelity to the deeper vision within; of the lover of art it demands the power to see the spirit in things, the openness of mind to follow a developing tradition, and the sattwic passivity, discharged of prejudgments, which opens luminously to the secret intention of the picture and is patient to wait until it attains a perfect and profound divination.

## An Answer to a Critic

ONE HAD thought that the Ravi Varma superstition in India had received its quietus. Unsupported by a single competent voice, universally condemned by critics of eminence Asiatic and European, replaced by a style of Art national, noble and suggestive, it is as hopeless to revive this grand debaser of Indian taste and artistic culture as to restore life to the slain. But even causes hopelessly lost and deserving to be lost will find their defenders and unworthy altars do not lack incense. A belated lance is lifted in the August number of the *Modern Review* for the fallen idol. Neither writing nor substance is of such a calibre that it would have demanded any answer if it had not found hospitality in a periodical which is now a recognised centre of culture and opinion. The writer is not richly endowed either with artistic taste, logical faculty or correct English; but he possesses in compensation a trenchant though ill-inspired manner of writing, and excels in that Rooseveltian style of argument which by its very commonness and doubtful taste imposes on minds imperfectly instructed in the subject of dispute. It may be necessary, in the present state of Art appreciation in India, to counteract the possible evil that may be done by even so insufficient an apology for the Goliath of artistic Philistinism in India.

I may perhaps be suffered to express my wonder at the ideas of manners and good breeding which this apologist thinks permissible in critical controversy. D<sup>r</sup> Coomaraswamy is a critic of established reputation, whose contributions to the study of Indian Art are valued in every country in Europe and Asia where the subject itself is studied. Sister Nivedita's literary genius, exquisite sympathetic insight and fine artistic culture are acknowledged by all who have the faculty of judging both in England and India. M<sup>r</sup> Havell has a recognised position in the

criticism of Art. One may differ from such authorities, but one is at least bound to treat them with some show of respect. M<sup>r</sup> Havell seems to have been protected by his recent official position from the writer's disrespect, though his authority is dismissed cavalierly enough. Against Sister Nivedita he does not vent his spleen unguardedly, though he cannot refrain from vindicating his superiority by patronisingly describing her as "the good Sister Nivedita". But towards D<sup>r</sup> Coomaraswamy, possibly because he is an Indian like the writer himself, he seems to think himself entitled to be as offensive as he chooses. He gets rid of the Doctor's acknowledged authority by introducing him as "a Geologist", and emphasizes the spirit of this introduction by sprinkling his pages with similar phrases, "the Geologist", "the Doctor". The intention seems to be to represent D<sup>r</sup> Coomaraswamy as an unknown man without credit in other countries who is trying to pass himself off as an authority in India. It is possible the disciple of Ravi Varma holds this view; if so, one can only wonder what Himalayan cave of meditation has been his cloister in the last few years of his existence! And what are we to say of this characteristic specimen of wit? "We cannot expect anything better from a Geologist, who naturally loves and is made to love everything rigid and stony." Am I to answer him in his own style by retorting that we cannot expect anything better from a student of Ravi Varma than theatrical wit and schoolboy impertinence? I prefer to suggest to him that manners which are allowed on the platform, at the hustings and in newspaper controversy in matters of political passion and interest are not expected in the urbanity of literature, Art and good society. I have felt myself compelled to comment thus at length and severely, because it is too much a habit in our country to have resort to this kind of illegitimate controversy in matters where only superior taste, knowledge and insight should tell. I have done with this unpleasant part of my duty and proceed to the writer's arguments as distinct from his witticisms. *[Incomplete]*





## Part Five

### Conversations of the Dead

Sri Aurobindo wrote these dialogues in 1910 or shortly before. He published the first two in the *Karmayogin* in 1910. The other three were published in 1920–23 without his editorial supervision; they are reproduced here from his manuscripts.



## I

# Dinshah, Perizade

DINSHAH

Perizade, the shades of Iran were not so cool and sweet as these in our city of Mazinderan. The gardens that bloom on the banks of the river of peace are carpeted with lovelier and sweeter-scented flowers; and the birds that sing upon every tree and make the day melodious with the unearthly delight of their clamorous harmonies, are of so various a plumage and hue that one is content to satiate the eye with the softness and splendour without caring to know name and kind. Here for two thousand years we have tasted the bliss of the angels; but, I know not why, it seems to me that memories of Iran come back to my heart. The waters of the Jihun and the tents of the Tartars where the tribes of Afrasiab wander, Damascus the opulent, and our own cities, where the houses of our parents adjoined and we leaned from the balcony and talked in soft whispers, seem to me again desirable.

PERIZADE

I too would not mind returning to our old haunts. It is not that I am weary of Mazinderan, but something calls to me to have joy again that is mortal and fleeting, but not without its poignant sense of a swiftly-snatched and perfect bliss. Yet Dinshah, two thousand years have passed and shall we not consider, before we go, what has come to the places we loved? Other men, other tongues, other manners may now possess them, and we should come as strangers into a world for which we are no longer fit.

DINSHAH

I will go and see. Wait for me, Perizade.

## 2

DINSHAH

Perizade, Perizade, let us not return to earth, but remain for ever in Mazinderan. I have seen the earth and it is changed. How wise wert thou, my angel!

PERIZADE

What didst thou see or hear, beloved?

DINSHAH

I saw a world stripped of beauty. Mean and clumsy were the buildings, or pretentious and aimed at a false elegance. Miles of brick, with hardly a bit of green here and there, these are the cities. Ever a raucous roar goes up from them, the glint of furnaces and the clang of metal; a dull, vicious smoke clouds the sky; the gardens are blasted and there is no beauty in them. Men wear a hideous dress uglier than their joyless faces and awkward limbs. It is a world of barbarians; the gnomes have come up from under the earth to work in the sunlight.

PERIZADE

Dinshah, this is sorrowful news, for go we must. Do you not know that these urgings are the signal?

DINSHAH

Yes, my Perizade, but not to this hideousness did our hearts move us to resort, but to the towers and gardens of Iran.

PERIZADE

It may be, Dinshah, that we go down to make the world once more what it was, a place of beauty, song and delight. Surely, if we enter into the world you describe, we shall not be content to leave it till it is utterly changed into the likeness of our desire.

DINSHAH

I think you are right, Perizade, as you always are. Let us then arise and go.

## II

# Turiu, Uriu

### TURIU

Goddess Leda who from heaven descendest, how beautiful are thy feet as they gild the morning. The roses of Earth are red, but the touch of vermillion with which thy feet stain the heavens, is redder, — it is the crimson of love, the glory of passion.

Goddess Leda, look down upon men with gracious eyes. The clang of war is stilled, silent the hiss of the shafts and the shields clamour no more against each other in the shock of the onset. We have hung up our swords on the walls of our mansions. The young men have returned unhurt, the girls of Asilon cry through the corn sweet and high to the hearts of their lovers.

Goddess Leda, lady of laughter, lady of bliss! in the chambers of love, in the song of the bridal, in the gardens and by the delightful streams where boy and girl look into each other's eyes, speak low to the heart, enter in. Drive out hatred, drive out wrath. Let love embrace the world and silence the eager soul of strife with kisses.

### URIU

The song of Turiu is beautiful, but the chant of Uriu is mighty. Listen to the Hymn of Tanyth.

Tanyth, terrible Mother! laced with a garland of skulls, thou that drinkest the blood of the victim upon the altar loud with the death-shriek, mighty and merciless Mother!

Tanyth, thou in the shock of the fighting, with the raucous cry that rises high and drowns the crash of the car and the roar of the battle, — blood-stained, eager and terrible, pitiless, huge and swift, — wonderful, adorable Mother!

Hear me! I who fear thee not, I who love thee, ask of thee, art thou weary, art thou satiate now with the blood of the foe and the flesh of the victims? Why has it sunk to rest, the thunder

of war in Asilon, land of the mighty?

I am not weary, I am not satiate. I charge thee, awake and give me again delight of the slaughter, trampling the face of the fallen foe as I scatter with shafts the ranks that boasted and shouted, forgetting that Uriu fought in the van of the battle.

Mother, arise! leave to Leda her gardens and delicate places, the faces lovely and smooth of Asilon's boys and the joyous beauty of women. I am old and grey in the council and battle. She has nothing for me; what shall I do with her boon of peace and her promptings of love and beauty?

Mother, arise, Tanyth the terrible! shake the world with thy whisper, loom in the heavens, madden men's hearts with the thirst of blood, the rapture of death and the joy of the killing. We will give thee thy choice of the captives, women and men to fall and to bleed on thy altar.

Tanyth, lady of death, queen of the battle! there is a joy in the clash of death that is more than woman's sweet embrace, a pleasure in pain that the touch of her lips cannot give us; lovelier far is the body torn by the spears than her white limbs covered with shining gems. Tanyth's skulls are more than the garland upon thy breasts, O Leda.

TURIU

It is great, Uriu, master of war and song, but mine too is beautiful. It is long since we met in the temples and marketplaces of Asilon. Ages have rolled by and the earth is changed, Prince of the Asa.

URIU

I have lived in the heavens of the great where we fight all day and meet to feast in the evening.

TURIU

And I in gardens of love and song where the sea murmurs low on flower-skirted beaches. But the time comes when I must go down and take up again the song and the sweetness in mortal places of pleasure.

URIU

I also go down, for the warrior too is needed and not only the poet and lover.

TURIU

The world is changed, Uriu, Prince of the Asa. Thou wilt not get again the joy of slaughter and pitilessness. Men have grown merciful, full of tenderness and shrinking.

URIU

I know not. What Tanyth gives me to do, that I will do. If there were no sternness, no grimness in the world that she creates, I should not be called.

TURIU

We will go down together and see what this world is in which after so many millions of years we are again wanted.



### III

## Mazzini, Cavour, Garibaldi

MAZZINI

The state of Italy now is the proof that my teaching was needed. Machiavellianism rose again in the policy of Cavour and Italy, grasping too eagerly at the speedy fruit of her efforts, fell from the clearness of the revelation that I gave her. Therefore she suffers. We must work for the fruit, but there must not be such attachment to the fruit that to hasten it the true means is sacrificed; for that leads eventually to the sacrifice of the true end.

CAVOUR

The state of Italy is the proof of the soundness of my policy. Mazzini, you speak still as the ideologist, the man of notions. The statesman recognises ideals, but he has nothing to do with notions. He strikes always at his main objective and is willing to sacrifice much in details.

MAZZINI

What you say is true, but the sacrifice has been not of details, but of the essential.

CAVOUR

Italy is one, Italy is free.

GARIBALDI

The unity was my work. I did not use Machiavellianism or rely on statecraft and kingcraft. I did not buy liberty by mutilating my country. But I called to the soul of the nation and the soul of the nation awoke and shook itself free of the great tyrants and the petty. It was on the heroism and kingliness of the Italian soul, the resurrection in Florence and Rome and Naples of the ancient

Roman, Etruscan and Samnite that Cavour should have relied, not on the false-hearted huckster of states and principalities, Louis Napoleon.

MAZZINI

Italy is one, Italy is free, but in the body, not in the soul. Garibaldi, you gave united Italy to a man, not to the nation.

GARIBALDI

I gave it to the King and hero, Italy's representative. I do not yet think that I did ill. The nation said, "He stands for me", and as a democrat I bowed to the voice of the nation.

CAVOUR

It was the best-inspired action of your life. If there are problems unsolved, if there are parts of the body politic that are still ailing, that was to be expected. Only the dreamer demands a rapid convalescence from a disease so long and wasting. We did the work of the surgeon, that of the physician is being done quietly and without ostentation. There is a man in Italy, and he belongs to the house that was chosen.

MAZZINI

Italy has not fulfilled her mission; my heart is full of sorrow when I look upon her. She whom I would have educated to lead the world, is only an inferior Power leaning for support upon the selfish and unscrupulous Teuton. She who should have reorganised government and society into a fit mould for the ideas of an age of emancipation, is a laggard lingering in the steps of the Gaul and the Saxon. She who should have been the fountain of a new European culture, hardly figures among the leaders of humanity. The semi-Asiatic Muscovite is doing more for mankind than the heirs of the Roman.

CAVOUR

The statesman must have patience and work quietly towards his goal, securing each step as he goes. When the economic ills

of Italy have been removed and the Church no longer opposes progress, the ideal of Mazzini may be fulfilled. The brain and sword of Italy may yet lead and rule Europe.

MAZZINI

It is not the diplomatist and the servant of the moment who can bring about that great consummation, but the heroic soul and the mighty brain that command Time and create opportunity. I sought to cast Italy into a Roman mould. I knew that a third revelation had to be made to Europe and that Italy was the chosen channel. So I was told when I went down from this world of the Ancients to be born again into humanity, "Twice has Italy given a new civilisation to Europe, the third time she shall give it." The voice that speaks when we are sent, does not lie.

CAVOUR

No, but the fruit does not always come at once. There is sometimes a long probation, a slow agony of purification, and the thing destined seems a dream that has come to nothing. We have to work knowing that the fruit will come, not impatient, not embittered and disappointed by its postponement. It is possible we shall be called again to bring about the consummation. We have helped Italy always; once more we shall help her.

MAZZINI

I know not, but the days grow long to me in the world of the Happy. When the call comes, I pray that it may be to conquer, not by diplomacy, but by truth and ardent courage, —

GARIBALDI

Not by bargaining, but by the sword of the hero, —

MAZZINI

Not by kingcraft, but by love for humanity and a noble wisdom.

CAVOUR

I shall be content, so that Italy conquers.

GARIBALDI

When the sword that was struck out of her hand by the Abyssinian, is lifted again, I shall be there to lift it.

#### IV

## Shivaji, Jaysingh

JAYSINGH

Neither of us has prevailed. A third force has entered into the land and taken the fruits of your work, and as for mine, it is broken; the ideal I cherished has gone down into the dust.

SHIVAJI

For the fruit I did not work and by the failure I am not amazed nor discouraged.

JAYSINGH

Neither did I work for a reward, but to uphold the ideal of the Rajput. Unflinching courage in honourable warfare, chivalry to friend and foe, a noble loyalty to the sovereign of my choice, this seemed to me the true Indian tradition, preferable even to the unity and predominance of the Hindu races. Therefore I could not accept your overtures. But I gave you the opportunity to accept my own tradition and, when faith was not kept with either of us, I saved my honour and assisted your escape.

SHIVAJI

God extended to me His protection and moved the heart of a woman to give me love and aid. Traditions change. The ideal of the Rajput has its future, but the mould had to be broken in order that what was temporary in it might pass. Loyalty to the sovereign of my choice, that is good; but loyalty to the sovereign of my nation's choice, that is better. The monarch is divine by the power of God expressed within him, but he has the power because he is the incarnation of the people. God in the nation is the deity of which the monarch must be the servant and the devotee. Vithoba, Virat of the Mahrattas, — Bhavani, incarnate as India, — in that strength I conquered.

JAYSINGH

Your political ideal was great, but your standard of means was abhorrent to our morality. Ruse, treachery, pillage, assassination were never excluded from your activity.

SHIVAJI

Not for myself I fought and ruled, but for God and the Maharashtra dharma, the religion of Hindu nationality which Ramdas enunciated. I offered my head to Bhavani and She bade me keep it to scheme and plot for the greatness of the nation. I gave my kingdom to Ramdas and he bade me take it back as a gift from God and the Mahrattas. I obeyed their commands. I slew when God commanded me, plundered because it was the means He pointed out to me. Treacherous I was not, but I helped my weakness in resource and numbers by ruse and stratagem, I conquered physical force by keenness of wit and brain-power. The world has accepted ruse in war and politics, and the chivalrous openness of the Rajput is not practiced either by the European or the Asiatic nations.

JAYSINGH

I hold the dharma as supreme and even the voice of God could not persuade me to abandon it.

SHIVAJI

I gave up all to Him and did not keep even the dharma. His will was my religion; for He was my captain and I his soldier. That was my loyalty, — not to Aurangzebe, not to a code of morals, but to God who sent me.

JAYSINGH

He sends us all, but for different purposes, and according to the purpose He moulds the ideal and the character. I am not grieved that the Mogul has fallen. Had he deserved to retain sovereignty, he could not have lost it; but even when he ceased to deserve, I kept my faith, my service, my loyalty. It was not for me to dispute the will of my emperor. God who appointed him might

judge him; it was not my office.

SHIVAJI

God also appoints the man who rebels and refuses to prolong unjust authority by acquiescence. He is not always on the side of power; sometimes He manifests as the deliverer.

JAYSINGH

Let Him come down Himself, then, as He promised. Then alone would rebellion be justified.

SHIVAJI

From whence will He come down who is here already in our hearts? Because I saw Him there, therefore I was strong to carry out my mission.

JAYSINGH

Where is the seal upon your work, the pledge of His authority?

SHIVAJI

I undermined an empire, and it has not been rebuilt. I created a nation, and it has not yet perished.

V

## Littleton, Percival

LITTLETON

After so long a time, Percival, we meet. It is strange that our ways, upon earth associated and parallel, should in this other world be so entirely divergent.

PERCIVAL

Why is it strange to you, Littleton? The world in which we find ourselves, is made, as we have both discovered, of the stuff of our earthly dreams and the texture of our mortal character. Physically, our ways on earth were parallel. We walked together over Cumberland mountains or watched the whole sea leap and thunder Titanically against the Cornwall cliffs. You were stroke and I was cox in the same boat on the Isis. We bracketed always for College honours and took the same class in the same subject in the Tripos. Afterwards too, we entered Parliament side by side in the same party and by an august and noble silence helped to administer the affairs of our country. But what greater difference could divide men than that which existed between our bodily frames and moral constitutions? You, the tall, fair, robust descendant of the Vikings; I, dark, spare and short from the Welsh mountains. You, the hardheaded, practical, successful lawyer; I, the dilettante and connoisseur, who knew something about everything except my own affairs and could deal successfully with every business that did not concern me.

LITTLETON

Yet we clung together; our tastes often lay in the same direction; our affections were similar, and even our sins connected us.

PERCIVAL

We completed each other, I think. Our tastes were very dissim-



ilarly similar. We read the same book; but you tore the essence out of it briefly, masterfully, and then flung it aside, satisfied that you had made even the dead useful to you; I wound my way into the heart of its meaning like a serpent and lay there coiled till I had become one with it, then wound myself out again replete and affectionately reminiscent of the soul that had given me harbourage. As for our sins, let us not talk of them. We have been too tediously familiar with them after death to cherish their memory. But even there we differed. You sinned voraciously, robustly, with gusto but with very little of feeling; I stumbled in out of excess of emotion and could not recover myself because of the vibrant intensity of my memories.

LITTLETON

Let me know what worlds harboured you, since we parted.

PERCIVAL

Let me rather hear your experiences.

LITTLETON

The details fade in the retrospect and will not bear telling. Certain periods of mortal agony there were, each with its own physical surroundings, that I long to forget but cannot. Some of them recalled strangely, not in detail, but in kind, Greek Tartarus and Catholic Inferno. I was the prey of harpies, I was hunted and torn and devoured, I experienced the agonies of the men I had sent to the deliberate and brutal torture of our jails or beggared of their honour or their property. I renewed the successes of my life and sickened of their selfishness, boldness, hardness. Money became as redhot metal in my hands and luxury was a gnawing fire that embraced my body. I lingered in regions where love was not known and the souls of the inhabitants were hard and strong as bronze, dry and delightless as the Sahara. O Percival, Percival, when I go again upon earth, I shall know love and execute mercy.

PERCIVAL

Had you no hours of respite, entered no regions of happiness?

LITTLETON

That, I believe, is yet before me.

PERCIVAL

I too have had experiences similar to yours, though different in their nature and quality. I have sickened of the repeated weakness and selfishness of my life, I have experienced in my soul the sufferings of those I had injured. I can understand why the Christians believed Hell to be eternal; it was a memory in the self of the moral endlessness of those torments. But I had my release. I have lived in Elysium, I have trod the fields of asphodel. And in those happy experiences I have deepened the strength and quality of my love, intensified the swiftness of my emotions, refined and purified my taste and intellect.

LITTLETON

What is this world in which we meet?

PERCIVAL

The heaven of comrades.

## Part Six

### The Chandernagore Manuscript

Sri Aurobindo wrote all the pieces in this part in 1910. He did not publish any of them himself, but many were published in 1920–22 without his editorial supervision. They are reproduced here from his manuscripts.



# Passing Thoughts [1]

## Religion in Europe

There is no word so plastic and uncertain in its meaning as the word religion. The word is European and, therefore, it is as well to know first what the Europeans mean by it. In this matter we find them, — when they can be got to think clearly on the matter at all, which is itself unusual, — divided in opinion. Sometimes they use it as equivalent to a set of beliefs, sometimes as equivalent to morality, coupled with a belief in God, sometimes as equivalent to a set of pietistic actions and emotions. Faith, works and pious observances, these are the three recognized elements of European religion. From works, however, the ordinary work of the world is strictly excluded. Religion and daily life are, in the European opinion, two entirely different things which it is superstitious, barbarous, unenlightened and highly inconvenient to mix up together. Altruistic works are sometimes brought under religion, sometimes excluded from it. The idea of knowledge being part of religion is a conception which the European cannot receive into his intellect; religion and knowledge are to him two things absolutely and eternally unconnected, if not opposed and mutually contradictory of each other. The place of knowledge is taken by faith or belief stripped of any reason for the belief. The average Christian believes that the Bible is God's book, but ordinarily he does not consider anything in God's book binding on him in practice except to believe in God and go to Church once a week; the rest is only meant for the exceptionally pious. On the whole, therefore, to believe in God, to believe that He wrote a book, — only one book in all these ages, — and to go to Church on Sunday is the minimum of religion in Europe; on these essentials piety and morality may supervene and deepen the meaning.

## Religion In India

Religion in India is a still more plastic term and may mean anything from the heights of Yoga to strangling your fellow man and relieving him of the worldly goods he may happen to be carrying with him. It would therefore take too long to enumerate everything that can be included in Indian religion. Briefly, however, it is dharma or living religiously, the whole life being governed by religion. But again what is living religiously? It means, in ordinary practice, living according to authority. The authority generally accepted is the Shastra; but when one studies the Shastra and Indian life side by side, one finds that the two have very little to do with each other; the Indian governs his life not by the Shastra but by custom and the opinion of the nearest Brahmin. In practice this resolves itself into certain observances and social customs of which he understands neither the spiritual meaning nor the practical utility. To venerate the Scriptures without knowing them and to obey custom in their place; to reverence all Brahmins whether they are venerable or despicable; to eat nothing cooked by a social inferior; to marry one's daughter before puberty and one's son as soon as possible after it; to keep women ignorant and domestically useful; to bathe scrupulously and go through certain fixed ablutions; to eat on the floor and not at a table; to do one's devotions twice a day without understanding them; to observe a host of meaningless minutiae in one's daily conduct; to keep the Hindu holidays, when an image is set up, worshipped and thrown away, — this in India is the minimum of religion. This is glorified as Hinduism and the Sanatana Dharma. If, in addition, a man has emotional or ecstatic piety, he is a Bhakta; if he can talk fluently about the Veda, Upanishads, Darshanas & Puranas, he is a Jnani. If he puts on a yellow robe and does nothing, he is a tyagi or sannyasin. The latter is liberated from the ordinary dharma, but only if he does nothing but beg and vegetate. All work must be according to custom and the Brahmin. The one superiority of average Indian religion is that it does really reverence the genuine Bhakta or Sannyasin provided he does not come with too strange a garb

or too revolutionary an aspect. The European almost invariably sets him down as a charlatan, professional religionist, idle drone or religious maniac.

### **The Real Minimum**

Turning away from this sorrowful debris of ancient religious forms in India and Europe, we may fix the genuine minimum of religion at this, — to know God, to love and to serve him. The Europeans think that to fear God is a noble part of religion, forgetting the dictum of the Bible that perfect love casteth out fear and that the devils also believe and tremble. Perfect knowledge, perfect service also cast out fear. One may know, love and serve God as the Master, Lover, Friend, Mother; or as the Higher Self; or as Humanity; or as the Self in all creatures. If it be objected that this gives scope to Atheism, it must be remembered that Buddha also has been termed an Atheist. The average Hindu is right in his conception of religion as dharma, to live according to holy rule; but the holy rule is not a mass of fugitive and temporary customs, but this, to live for God in oneself and others and not for oneself only, to make the whole life a sadhana the object of which is to realise the Divine in the world by work, love and knowledge.

### **The Maximum**

There is a maximum as well as a minimum, and that is to rise beyond this life into a higher existence, not necessarily for oneself alone or in order to leave the world and vanish into the Universal, but as the highest have done, as God Himself habitually does, to bring down the bliss, illumination and greatness of that higher existence into the material world of creatures. All that rises beyond the minimum to the maximum, even though it may not attain it, is the Para Dharma; the minimum is the apara. To be a good, unselfish and religious man is the apara or lower dharma; to reach God revealed and bring Him down to earth where He hides Himself, is the higher. This is the Secret

Wisdom, which defeats itself if it remains for ever secret. For this the great Avatars, Teachers and Lovers come, to reveal Him in divine knowledge, to reveal Him in mighty action, to reveal Him in utter delight and love.



## Passing Thoughts [2]

### The Object of Government

It is the habit of men to blind themselves by customary trains of associated thought, to come to look on the means as an end and honour it with a superstitious reverence as a wonderworking fetish. Government and its great formulas, law and order, efficiency, administration, have been elevated into such a fetish. The principle of good government is not merely to keep men quiet, but to keep them satisfied. It is not its objective to have loyal servants and subjects, but to give all individuals in the nation the utmost possible facilities for becoming men and realising their manhood. The ideal of a State is not a hive of bees or a herd of cattle shepherded by strong watchdogs, but an association of freemen for mutual help and human advancement. The mere fact of a government doing what it does well and firmly, is nothing in its favour. It is more important to know what it does and where it is leading us.

### The European Jail

The European jail is a luminous commentary on the humanitarian boasts of the Occident and its pious horror at Oriental barbarities. To mutilate, to impale, to torture, how shocking, how Oriental! And we are occasionally reminded that if we had independence, such punishments would again be our portion. England forgets that to half hang a man, draw out his entrails and burn them before his eyes was an English practice in the eighteenth century. France has forgotten the wheel and the galleys. But these things have gone out. What of the penal system? It strikes us as a refined and efficient organisation of the methods of savages against their enemies, savages who have indeed progressed and have learned that the torture of the soul

is a more terrible revenge than the torture of the body, to murder the human nature a greater satisfaction than to slay the animal frame. Ancient nations punished their enemies by death, slavery, torture, humiliation and degradation. The jail system is an organisation of these four principles. Physical death has been reduced to a minimum; it is now only a punishment for murder and rebellion. A century or more ago every crime, almost, was punished with death in England. The principle was, Your life for my shilling, your life for my handkerchief! It is now, Your life for the life you have taken, your life for the mortal fear you put me into of the loss of my powers, emoluments and pleasures! The organisation of penal slavery is the first principle of the system. I take my enemy, put him on a dog's diet, load him with chains, set guards to beat and kick him into obedience and diligence and make him work for my profit for a period fixed by myself, careless whether his nature is brutalised or his life shortened in the process, — for he is my slave to do my will with and, if I do not kill him for taking my shilling or my handkerchief, it is because I am civilised and merciful, not a barbarous Oriental. For the same reason, I do not inflict physical torture on him, unless he is unwilling or unable to do the amount of daily work I have fixed for him, or either deliberately or accidentally remembers that he was a human being, or else behaves like the brute I have successfully laboured to make him. Even then I torture him according to his physical capacity and take care not to maim or kill this serviceable animal. Degradation and humiliation are as well organised as the slavery. It is not done once in a way, but driven in daily, hourly, momentarily, in every detail of dress, food, conduct, discipline. In every possible way I brand in upon my victim's soul that he is no longer such an one, no longer possessed of the name, rights or nature of humanity, but my slave, beast and property and the slave, beast and property of my servants. It is my object to wipe out every trace of the human in him and I stamp my foot daily on anything in him that may remind him of such human qualities as modesty, culture, self-respect, generosity, fellow-feeling. If everything else fails, I have the exquisite rack of mental torture called solitary imprisonment

to shake his reason or destroy his manhood. And if in the end I have not succeeded, if he comes out a man and not a brute or an idiot, it is not my fault but his; I have done my best. This is the European prison system and it is inflicted on all alike with machinelike efficiency. The curious thing is that it is inflicted in part even on undertrial prisoners who may be perfectly innocent. This also is probably dictated by the finer feelings of Europe and intended mercifully to prepare their gentle and easy descent into the Inferno around them.

### European Justice

The European Court of Justice is also a curious and instructive institution. Under a civilised disguise it is really the mediaeval ordeal by battle; only, in place of the swords or lances of military combatants, it is decided by the tongues of pleaders and the imagination of witnesses. Whoever can lie most consistently, plausibly and artistically, has the best chance of winning. In one aspect it is an exhilarating gamble, a very Monte Carlo of surprising chances. But there is skill in it, too, and it satisfies the intellect as well as the sensations. It is a sort of human game of Bridge combining luck and skill, or an intellectual gladiatorial show. The stake in big cases is a man's property or his soul. *Vae victis!* Woe to the conquered! If it is a criminal case, the tortures of the jail are in prospect, be he innocent or be he guilty. And as he stands there, — for to add to the pleasurable of his case the physical ache of long standing is usually added to the strain on his emotions, — he looks eagerly, not to the truth or falsehood of the evidence for or against him, but to the skill with which this counsel or the other handles the proofs or the witnesses and the impression they are making on the judge or jury. One understands, as one watches, the passion of the Roman poet's eulogy of the defence lawyer, *praesidium maestis reis*, a bulwark to the sorrowful accused. For in this strange civilised game of pitch and toss where it is impossible to be certain about guilt or innocence, one's sympathies naturally go to the sufferer who may be innocent and yet convicted. If one

could eliminate this element of human pity, it would be a real intellectual pleasure to watch the queer semibarbarous battle, appraise the methods of the chief players, admire, in whatever climes, the elusiveness and fine casualness of Indian perjury or the robust manly downrightness of Saxon cross-swearing. And if one were to complain that modern civilisation eliminates from life danger and excitement, one could well answer him, "Come into the Courts and see!" But, after all, praise must be given where it is due, and the English system must be lauded for not normally exposing the accused to the torture of savage pursuit by a prosecuting judge or the singular methods of investigation favoured by the American police. If the dice are apt to be loaded, it is on both sides and not on one.

## Passing Thoughts [3]

### *Achar*

*Achar* is a mould in which the thing itself rests and feels stable; it is not the thing itself. It is this sense of stability which is the great value of *achar*, it gives the thing itself the *sraddha*, the faith that it is meant to abide. It is a conservative force, it helps to preserve things as they are. But it is also a danger and hindrance when change becomes necessary. Conservative forces are either sattwic or tamasic. *Achar* with knowledge, observance full of the spirit of the thing itself, is sattwic and preserves the thing itself; *achar* without knowledge, looking to the letter of custom and observance, disregarding the spirit, is tamasic and destroys the thing itself. Intelligent observance and custom are always ready to change when change is needed, for they know themselves to be important but not essential. Ignorant observance and custom consider themselves the thing itself, rage against the hand that touches them and prefer to rot rather than change. Tamasic *achar* is a rotten mould which has often to be broken to pieces in order that the thing itself may be preserved. But if it is broken to pieces by anger and prejudice, the thing itself is likely to withdraw from us. It must be loosened and split asunder by the heat of knowledge. The present mould of Hinduism has to be broken and replaced, but by knowledge and yoga, not by the European spirit, and it is an Indian and not an English mould that must replace it.

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### *Vichar*

The need of *vichar* is urgent in times of transition. Revolutionary times generate two sorts of mind who are *avichari*, without perception and deliberation, the mind which clings fiercely to

the old because it is old and the mind which runs violently after the new because it is new. Between them rises the self-styled moderate man who says, Let us have something of the old and something of the new. The moderate man is no less *avichari* than the men of extremes. He swears by moderation as a formula and a fetish and runs after an impossible reconciliation. It was this kind of thought which Christ had in view when he said, You cannot put new wine into old bottles. Vichar never sets up a formula, never prejudges, but questions everything, weighs everything. If a man says, Alter your notions and habits on the lines of enlightened Europe, vichar answers, "Let me consider that. Why should I assume Europe to be enlightened, India barbarous? It is possible the people of Europe may be the real barbarians, Indian knowledge the true enlightenment. I must see." On the other hand if a man says, "Be an Indian and do as the Indians," vichar replies, "I am not sure that I ought to do as the Indians in order to be an Indian. It may be that the present men of the country have become something Indians were not intended to be. I must see what Indians have been in the various epochs of our civilisation and find out what is eternal in the civilisation and what is temporary. It may even be that the Europeans have certain things really Indian which we have lost." It is good to be Indian, but to be Indian because of knowledge, not because of prejudice. Hinduism itself is based on vichar, vivek and jnanam deciding what achar is the best for the preservation of human society and the fulfilment of our individual and associated manhood.

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### *Vivek*

Indian vichar guides itself by vivek. Vichar by itself questions and considers, weighs, examines and ponders and so arrives at certain perceptions and conclusions by which it guides itself. This is European vichar and its supreme example is Socrates. The danger of vichar is that if it does not start with certain premises and assumptions, it will end in the absolute uncertainty of the

Academic philosophers who could not even be sure whether they existed or not. On the other hand if it starts with premises and assumptions, there is a danger of the premises and assumptions being erroneous and vitiating the conclusion. For this reason modern Science insists on all the premises being thoroughly proved before the *vichar* commences, and its method of proof is experiment. Modern European progress is an application of this principle of experiment to politics, society and every human belief and institution. This is a rather dangerous business. In the process of experiment you may get an explosion which will blow society out of existence and bring a premature end to the experiment. Moreover, you may easily think a premise proved when it is not. Science has had to abandon notion after notion which it thought based on unshakably proven premises. Nothing was thought more certainly proved than that the process of breathing was necessary to life. But we know in India that a man can live without breathing. The principle of proof by experiment was known to the ancient Indians, but just as the Europeans, dissatisfied with *vichar*, progressed beyond it to *vichar* guided by experiment, so the Indians, dissatisfied with experiment, progressed beyond it to *vichar* and experiment guided by *vivek*, intuitive and inspired judgment gained by a previous purification of the organs of thought and knowledge. The modern Indians have lost this guide and are compelled to rely on *aptavakya* or authority, the recorded opinions of men who had *vivek*, or traditions and customs founded on an ancient enlightenment. This is unsatisfactory, because we do not know that we have the opinions correctly or completely recorded or that the traditions and customs have not been distorted by time and error. We must recover and go back to the fountainhead.

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### *Jnanam*

There are four operations in the Indian method of knowledge. First, the inquirer purifies his intellect by the stilling of passion, emotion, prejudice and old *sanskaras* or associations.

Secondly, he subjects received knowledge to a rigid scrutiny by sceptical *vichar*, separating opinion from ascertained truth, mere conclusions from facts. Even the facts he takes as only provisionally true and is prepared to find his whole knowledge to be erroneous, misapplied or made up of half-truths. Thirdly, he experiments in order to get *upalabdhi* or personal experience. Fourthly, he again uses *vichar* in order to ascertain how far his experience really carries him and what he is or is not justified in concluding from it. Lastly, he turns the light of the *vishuddha buddhi* on the subject and by inspired discrimination arrives at *jnanam*. The conclusions of the *vivek* he does not question, because he knows by experience that it is a fine and accurate instrument. Only, he is on his guard against mistaking *vichar* for *vivek*, and is always prepared to balance and amplify his conclusions by fresh truths he had not considered and to find that there is another side to truth than the one with which he is familiar. He does not, like the European scientist, wed himself to previous generalisations and theories or consider every fresh enlargement of knowledge on new lines charlatanry and imposture.



# Hathayoga

The evolution of man has been upwards from the body to the spirit, and there are three stages in his progress. He bases himself upon body, rises through soul and culminates in spirit. And to each stage of his evolution belong certain kinds of sadhana, a particular type of Yoga, a characteristic fulfilment. There was no aeon in man's history, no *kalpa*, to use the Indian term, in which the Yoga was withheld from man or fulfilment denied to him. But the fulfilment corresponded to his stage of progress, and the Yoga corresponded to the fulfilment. In his earlier development he was realising himself in the body and the divinity of the body was his fulfilment. He is now realising himself in the heart and mind, and the divinity of the heart and mind will be his culmination. Eventually he will realise himself in the spirit and the divinity of his true spiritual self will round off his history.

Yoga is the realisation of one's capacity of harmony, communion or unity with God. Whatever religious standpoint, creed or philosophy one adopt, Yoga is possible, so long as God's existence or omnipresence is admitted, whether it be as a Personality, a Presence, a Force or a Condition of Things. The Infinite in some form or idea must be admitted. To be in tune with the Infinite, that is harmony. To be in touch with the Infinite, that is communion. To be one in kind, extent or self-realisation with the Infinite, that is unity. But fulfilment is not possible unless the So Aham, "He am I," is recognised and practised as the ultimate truth of things. The realisation of God in self with the eye on the body is the fulfilment of the tamasic or material man. The realisation of God in self with the eye on the antahkaran or heart and mind is the fulfilment of the rajasic or psychic man. The realisation of God in self with the eye on the spirit is the fulfilment of the sattwic or spiritual man. And each fulfils himself by rising beyond himself. When the material man fulfils

the divinity of the body, he does so by rising into the psychic part and finding his strength in the ahankara or psychic principle of egoism. The psychic man fulfils the divinity of the soul by rising into the spirit and finding his strength in the superpsychic Will or Intelligent Force in things. The spiritual man fulfils the divinity of the spirit by rising beyond the human spirit, the Jivatman, and finding his strength in the Parameswara and Parabrahman, the Sa and the Tat, God revealed and unrevealed, the Universal and Supreme Spirit who supports and contains the individual. To put it in language easier but more capable of misconception, the material man realises himself by identifying God with his own ego; the psychical man by identifying God with passionless, intelligent, blissful Will in himself; the spiritual man by identifying God with the All in whom everything abides. The first is the Rakshasa or the Asura of the lower order; the second is the Deva or the Asura of the higher order; the third is the Siddha or Siddha Purusha, the perfect being.

The pure Hathayoga is the means of the fulfilment through the body. Its processes are physical, strenuous, colossal, complex, difficult. They centre in Asana, Pranayam and the purification of the body. The number of Asanas in the modern or mixed Hathayoga is limited, but even then they are numerous and painful; in the ancient or pure Hathayoga, they were innumerable and the old Hathayogins practised them all. The Asana means simply a particular position of the body and is perfect or “conquered”, in the technical language, when a man can stay in a single posture, however strained or apparently impossible, for an indefinite period without being forced by strain to remember the body. The first object of the Asana is to conquer the body, — for the body must be conquered before it can become divine, — to be able to lay any command upon it and never be commanded by it. The second object was to conquer physical nature, by developing the four physical siddhis, laghima, anima, garima, mahima. By perfect laghima man can rise into the air and tread the winds as his natural element; by perfect anima he can bring the nature of the subtle body into the gross body, which the fire will no longer burn, nor weapons wound, nor

want of air stifle, nor the waters drown; by perfect garima he can develop an adamantine steadiness which the shock of the avalanche cannot overbear; by perfect mahima he can, without muscular development, outdo the feats of a Hercules. These powers in their fullness are no longer visible in men, but in some degree they belong to all adepts in Hathayoga. Their existence no one can doubt who has gone deep into Yoga at all or had any personal experience of siddhis. The third object is to develop in the body Yogic force, which is called tapah or viryam or the fire of Yoga. The fourth object is to become urddhwaretah, that is to say, to draw up the whole virile force in the body into the brain and return so much of it as is needed for the body purified and electricised.

Pranayam is the mastery of the vital force, the mobile energy which keeps the universe going. In the human body the most noticeable function of the prana or vital force is the breathing, which is in ordinary men necessary to life and motion. The Hathayogin conquers it and renders himself independent of it. But he does not confine his attention to this single vital operation. He distinguishes five major vital forces and several minor, to each of which he has given a name, and he learns to control all the numerous pranic currents in which they operate. As there are innumerable asanas, so there are a great number of different kinds of Pranayam, and a man is not a perfect Hathayogin till he has mastered them all. The conquest of the Prana confirms the perfect health, vigour and vitality gained by the Asanas; it confers the power of living as long as one pleases and it adds to the four physical siddhis, the five psychical, — prakamya or absolute keenness of the mind and senses including telepathy, clairvoyance and other faculties commonly supposed to be supernormal; vyapti or the power of receiving other men's thoughts, powers and feelings and projecting one's own thoughts, feelings, powers or personality into others; aiswaryam or control over events, lordship, wealth and all objects of desire; vashita or the power of exacting implicit and instantaneous obedience to the spoken or written word; ishita, the perfect control over the powers of nature and over things inert or unintelligent. Some of these

powers have recently been discovered in Europe as phenomena of hypnotism or will-force; but the European experiences are feeble and unscientific if compared with the achievements of the ancient Hathayogins or even with those of some of the modern. The will power developed by Pranayam is, it should be noted, psychical and not spiritual.

Besides these two great practices the Hathayogins have numerous others such as the extraordinary means by which they clean out daily all the physical impurities of the body. By these numerous and difficult physical practices they attain an extraordinary power, vitality, virility, longevity, and are also able to attain knowledge transcending the ordinary human bounds, leave the body in Samadhi and, in one word, exercise every mere power that comes by Yoga. But the practice of unmixed Hathayoga generates a colossal egoism and the Yogin seldom exceeds it. The modern Hathayoga is mixed with the Rajayoga and, therefore, neither so virile and potent nor so dangerous as the ancient. The modern Hathayogin often falls a prey to egoism but he knows he has to transcend it. The ancient embraced it as a fulfilment; only he managed and directed it by the use of the psychical will-power which he identified with the Force of Nature and the supreme Will of God.

## Rajayoga

Man fulfilling himself in the body is given Hathayoga as his means. When he rises above the body, he abandons Hathayoga as a troublesome and inferior process and rises to the Rajayoga, the discipline peculiar to the aeon in which man now evolves. The first condition of success in Rajayoga is to rise superior to the dehatmak bodh, the state of perception in which the body is identified with the self. A time comes to the Rajayogin when his body seems not to belong to him or he to have any concern with it. He is not troubled by its troubles or gladdened by its pleasures; it has them to itself and very soon, because he does not give his sanction to them, they fall away from it. His own troubles and pleasures are in the heart and mind, for he is the rajasic and psychical man, not the tamasic material. It is these that he has to conquer in order that he may realise God in his heart or in his buddhi or in both. God seen in the heart, that is the quest of the Rajayogin. He may recover the perception and enjoyment of the body afterwards, but it is only to help the enjoyment of God as Love and God as Knowledge.

The processes of the Rajayoga are mental and emotional. Patanjali's science is not the pure Rajayoga; it is mixed and allows an element of the Hatha in its initial processes. It admits the Asana, it admits the Pranayam. It is true it reduces each to one of its kind, but the method of conquest is physical and therefore not Rajayogic. It may be said that the stillness of the body is essential to concentration or to samadhi; but this is a convention of the Hathayoga. The Rajayogin concedes no such importance to the body; he knows by experience that concentration can be secured in any easy and unconstrained posture which allows one to forget the body; it is often as much helped by rhythmic motion as by stillness. Samadhi, when it comes, itself secures stillness of the body. The pure Rajayogin dispenses

therefore with the physical practice of Asana.

The real reason why Patanjali laid so much stress on Asana was that he thought Pranayam essential to samadhi and Asana essential to Pranayam. It is difficult, though not impossible, to do the practice of Pranayam according to Patanjali's system without perfect bodily stillness. It can be done and has been done even while walking about, but this is not so easy or usual. Now Pranayam in its proper sense, the mastery of the vital force in oneself and Nature, is essential to every Rajayogin, but it can be brought about by much simpler methods. The only physical process that the Rajayogin finds helpful enough to be worth doing, is *nadishuddhi* or purification of the nerve system by regular breathing and this can be done while lying, sitting, reading, writing, walking. This process has great virtues. It has a wonderfully calming effect on the whole mind & body, drives out every lurking disease in the system, awakens the yogic force accumulated in former lives and, even where no such latent force exists, removes the physical obstacles to the wakening of the Kundalini shakti.

But even this process is not essential. The Rajayogin knows that by tranquillising the mind he can tranquillise the body, by mastering the mind he can master both the body and the prana. This is the great secret of the Rajayoga that mind is the master of the body, creates it and conditions it, body is not the master, creator or lawgiver of the mind. It may be said that the body at least affects the mind, but this is the other discovery of the Rajayogin that the body need not in the least affect the mind *unless by our consent we allow it to do so*. The kumbhak or natural cessation of the breathing is essential to the deeper kinds of Samadhi, not to all; but even so he finds that by the cessation of the lawless restlessness of the mind, which we mistakenly call thought, we can easily, naturally and spontaneously bring about the cessation of the breathing, a calm, effortless and perfect kumbhak. He therefore dispenses with physical processes, easy or laborious, and goes straight to the root of the problem, the mind.

Rajayoga is of three kinds, *sachesta*, *salpachesta* and *nischesta*, with effort, with little effort, and without effort.

Patanjali's, the only systematised kind, though each is quite methodical, is *sachesta*, involving great strain and effort throughout. We may best compare the systems by taking each of Patanjali's steps separately and seeing how the three kinds of Rajayogins will deal with them. In the present article we shall deal with Patanjali. The first step is the preparation of the moral nature, the discipline of the heart, its perfection in the four great qualities of love, purity, courage and calm, without which *siddhi* in the Rajayoga is impossible. Patanjali prescribes the practice of the five *yamas* or regulating moral exercises, truth, justice and honesty, harmlessness, chastity and refusal of ownership, and the five *niyamas* or regulating moral habits, cleanliness and purity, contentment, austerity, meditation on Scripture, worship and devotion to God. In order to establish these habits and exercises and remove the impurities of the heart it is evident that Patanjali intends us to use the method of *abhyasa* or constant practice. Anyone who has made the attempt will realise how difficult it is to compass all these qualities and how long and tedious a discipline is required to establish them even imperfectly. Patanjali seeks to purify and quiet the life while the mind and heart are yet impure and restless, a system possible only to hermits in an *asrama*. For this reason the Rajayoga has fled from the homes of men and taken refuge in the forest and the cavern.

Afterwards Patanjali recommends the quieting of the body and the mastering of the *Prana* by *Asana* and *Pranayam*. The reason of this is clear enough. The *Pranayam* of the *Hathayoga* does not lead to purity, but to force and intensity; every quality that it finds potent in the system it raises to tenfold activity and power. Unless therefore the life and character be previously made quiet and pure, *Pranayam* done in one's own strength may do immense moral, physical and mental mischief. Allowing for the overcoming of his initial difficulty and for the admission of *Hatha* into Rajayoga, it must be admitted that Patanjali's system is admirably logical and reasonable in its arrangement.

Next comes the mastery of the mind, that restless, self-willed and shifting force which is so difficult to control. Again, as in

his previous steps, Patanjali relies wholly on abhyasa or practice. He arranges concentration in four stages of development, Pratyahara or the drawing inward of the senses from their objects; Dharana, or the success in this process resulting in the fixing of the mind for a moment on a single thought, feeling or object, — such as a single part of the body, the tip of the nose or the centre of the brows for preference; Dhyana or the continuation of this state for a fixed period; Samadhi or the entire withdrawing into oneself for an indefinite time. The preliminary process once successful, the rest follows with comparative ease, but the preliminary process is itself so enormously difficult that one would be amazed at Patanjali's putting it first, if one did not perceive that he is relying on the rigorous and thorough mastery of each step before the next is attempted; he trusts to the Hathayogic kumbhak to bring about Pratyahara with comparative ease. Even as it is, most Yogins prefer to take the Dharana or concentration on a single object first, trusting to the practice of Dharana to bring about Pratyahara by a natural process. This is undoubtedly the more easy and straightforward process, though Patanjali's is the more logical and scientific, and, if mastered, may lead to greater results.

Concentration once attained, we proceed to what Patanjali evidently considers the essence of Yoga, the coercion of all vrittis or functionings of the mental and moral qualities so as to arrive at *sanyama* or turning of the whole passionless intelligent Will in the spirit on whatsoever the Yogin wishes to possess, from the realisation of God to the enjoyment of mundane objects. But how is this silencing of the vrittis to be effected? for the yamas and niyamas only establish certain good habits of life, they do not thoroughly purify mind and heart. We have to do it by a process of removal by replacement, always depending on abhyasa, replacing bad vrittis by good, the many good by the few better, the few better by the one best, until we arrive at absolute sanyama. This can be done, not easily but without insuperable difficulty if the power of concentration is thoroughly attained by Patanjali's method.

Sanyama is a mighty power. Whatever the Yogin does



sanyama upon, says Patanjali, that he masters. The knowledge of one's past lives, of the thoughts of men, of men in this world and spirits in the other, the vision of the past and the future, the knowledge of all that is in the present, the mastery of Nature, the siddhis of the Hathayogin, the realisation of God, all power, all bliss, all knowledge is in his grasp. As to what he shall do with the power, Patanjali leaves the choice to the successful Yogin.

# Historical Impressions

## The French Revolution

The greatness of the French Revolution lies not in what it effected, but in what it thought and was. Its action was chiefly destructive. It prepared many things, it founded nothing. Even the constructive activity of Napoleon only built a halfway house in which the ideas of 1789 might rest until the world was fit to understand them better and really fulfil them. The ideas themselves were not new; they existed in Christianity and before Christianity they existed in Buddhism; but in 1789 they came out for the first time from the Church and the Book and sought to remodel government and society. It was an unsuccessful attempt, but even the failure changed the face of Europe. And this effect was chiefly due to the force, the enthusiasm, the sincerity with which the idea was seized upon and the thoroughness with which it was sought to be applied. The cause of the failure was the defect of knowledge, the excess of imagination. The basal ideas, the types, the things to be established were known; but there had been no experience of the ideas in practice. European society, till then, had been permeated, not with liberty, but with bondage and repression; not with equality, but with inequality and injustice; not with brotherhood, but with selfish force and violence. The world was not ready, nor is it even now ready for the fullness of the practice. It is the goal of humanity, and we are yet far off from the goal. But the time has come for an approximation being attempted. And the first necessity is the discipline of brotherhood, the organisation of brotherhood, — for without the spirit and habit of fraternity neither liberty nor equality can be maintained for more than a short season. The French were ignorant of this practical principle; they made liberty the basis, brotherhood the superstructure, founding the triangle upon its apex. For owing to the dominance of Greece & Rome in their imagination they were saturated with the idea of liberty and

only formally admitted the Christian and Asiatic principle of brotherhood. They built according to their knowledge, but the triangle has to be reversed before it can stand permanently.

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The action of the French Revolution was the vehement death-dance of Kali trampling blindly, furiously on the ruins She made, mad with pity for the world and therefore utterly pitiless. She called the Yatudhani in her to her aid and summoned up the Rakshasi. The Yatudhani is the delight of destruction, the fury of slaughter, Rudra in the Universal Being, Rudra, the bhuta, the criminal, the lord of the animal in man, the lord of the demoniac, Pashupati, Pramathanatha. The Rakshasi is the unbridled, licentious self-assertion of the ego which insists on the gratification of all its instincts good and bad and furiously shatters all opposition. It was the Yatudhani and the Rakshasi who sent their hoarse cry over France, adding to the luminous mantra, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, the stern and terrible addition "or Death." Death to the Asura, death to all who oppose God's evolution, that was the meaning. With these two terrible Shaktis Kali did Her work. She veiled Her divine knowledge with the darkness of wrath and passion, She drank blood as wine, naked of tradition and convention She danced over all Europe and the whole continent was filled with the warcry and the carnage and rang with the hunkara and the attahasyam. It was only when She found that She was trampling on Mahadeva, God expressed in the principle of Nationalism, that She remembered Herself, flung aside Napoleon, the mighty Rakshasa, and settled down quietly to her work of perfecting nationality as the outer shell within which brotherhood may be securely and largely organised.

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The Revolution was also great in its men filling them all with its vehemence, its passion, its fierce demand on the world, its colossal impetus. Through four of them chiefly it helped itself, through Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre and Napoleon. Mirabeau initiated, Danton inspired, Robespierre slew,

Napoleon fulfilled. The first three appeared for the moment, the man in the multitude, did their work and departed. The pace was swift and, if they had remained, they would have outstayed their utility and injured the future. It is always well for the man to go the moment his work is done and not to outstay the Mother's welcome. They are fortunate who get that release or are wise enough, like Garibaldi, to take it. Not altogether happy is their lot who, like Napoleon or Mazzini, outstay the lease of their appointed greatness.

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Mirabeau ruled the morning twilight, the *sandhya* of the new age. Aristocratic tribune of the people, unprincipled champion of principles, lordly democrat, — a man in whom reflection was turbulent, prudence itself bold, unflinching and reckless, the man was the meeting-place of two ages. He had the passions of the past, not its courtly restraint; the turbulence, genius, impetuosity of the future, not its steadying attachment to ideas. There is an honour of the aristocrat which has its root in manners and respects the sanctity of its own traditions; that is the honour of the Conservative. There is an honour of the democrat which has its root in ideas and respects the sanctity of its own principles; that is the honour of the Liberal. Mirabeau had neither. He was the pure egoist, the eternal Rakshasa. Not for the sake of justice and liberty did he love justice and liberty but for the sake of Mirabeau. Had his career been fortunate, the forms of the old regime wide enough to satisfy his ambitions and passions, the upheaval of 1789 might have found him on the other side. But because the heart and senses of Mirabeau were unsatisfied, the French Revolution triumphed. So it is that God prepares the man and the moment, using good and evil with a divine impartiality for His mighty ends. Without the man the moment is a lost opportunity; without the moment the man is a force inoperative. The meeting of the two changes the destinies of nations and the poise of the world is altered by what seems to the superficial an accident.

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There are times when a single personality gathers up the temperament of an epoch or a movement and by simply existing ensures its fulfilment. It would be difficult to lay down the precise services which made the existence of Danton necessary for the success of the Revolution. There are certain things he did, and no man else could have done, which compelled destiny; there are certain things he said which made France mad with resolution and courage. These words, these doings ring through the ages. So live, so immortal are they that they seem to defy cataclysm itself and insist on surviving eternal oblivion. They are full of the omnipotence and immortality of the human soul and its lordship over fate. One feels that they will recur again in aeons unborn and worlds uncreated. The power from which they sprang, expressed itself rarely in deeds and only at supreme moments. The energy of Danton lay dormant, indolent, scattering itself in stupendous oratory, satisfied with feelings and phrases. But each time it stirred, it convulsed events and sent a shock of primal elemental force rushing through the consciousness of the French nation. While he lived, moved, spoke, felt, acted, the energy he did not himself use, communicated itself to the millions; the thoughts he did not utter, seized on minds which took them for their own; the actions he might have done better himself, were done worse by others. Danton was contented. Magnificent and ostentatious, he was singularly void of personal ambition. He was satisfied to see the Revolution triumph by his strength, but in the deeds of others. His fall removed the strength of victorious Terror from the movement within France, its impulse to destroy and conquer. For a little while the impetus gathered carried it on, then it faltered and paused. Every great flood of action needs a human soul for its centre, an embodied point of the Universal Personality from which to surge out upon others. Danton was such a point, such a centre. His daily thoughts, feelings, impulses gave an equilibrium to that rushing fury, a fixity to that pregnant chaos. He was the character of the Revolution personified, — its heart, while Robespierre was only its hand. History which, being European, lays much stress on events, a little on speech, but has never realised the importance of souls, cannot appreciate men

like Danton. Only the eye of the seer can pick them out from the mass and trace to their source those immense vibrations.

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One may well speak of the genius of Mirabeau, the genius of Danton; it is superfluous to speak of the genius of Napoleon. But one cannot well speak of the genius of Robespierre. He was empty of genius; his intellect was acute and well-informed but uninspired; his personality fails to impress. What was it then that gave him his immense force and influence? It was the belief in the man, his faith. He believed in the Revolution, he believed in certain ideas, he believed in himself as their spokesman and executor; he came to believe in his mission to slay the enemies of the idea and make an end. And whatever he believed, he believed implicitly, unfalteringly, invincibly and pursued it with a rigid fidelity. Mirabeau, Danton, Napoleon were all capable of permanent discouragement, could recognise that they were beaten, the hour unsuitable, fate hostile. Robespierre was not. He might recoil, he might hide his head in fear, but it was only to leap again, to save himself for the next opportunity. He had a tremendous force of *sraddha*. It is only such men, thoroughly conscientious and well-principled, who can slay without pity, without qualms, without resting, without turning. The *Yatudhani* seized on him for her purpose. The conscientious lawyer who refused a judgeship rather than sacrifice his principle by condemning a criminal to death, became the most colossal political executioner of his or any age. As we have said, if Danton was the character of the French Revolution personified when it went forth to slay, Robespierre was its hand. But, naturally, he could not recognise that limitation; he aspired to think, to construct, to rule, functions for which he was unfit. When Danton demanded that the Terror should cease and Mercy take its place, Robespierre ought to have heard in his demand the voice of the Revolution calling on him to stay his sanguinary course. But he was full of his own blind faith and would not hear. Danton died because he resisted the hand of Kali, but his mighty disembodied spirit triumphed and imposed his last thought on the country. The

Terror ceased; Mercy took its place. Robespierre, however, has his place of honour in history; he was the man of conscience and principle among the four, the man who never turned from the path of what he understood to be virtue.

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Napoleon took up into himself the functions of the others. As Mirabeau initiated destruction, he initiated construction and organisation and in the same self-contradictory spirit; he was the Rakshasa, the most gigantic egoist in history, the despot of liberty, the imperial protector of equality, the unprincipled organiser of great principles. Like Danton, he shaped events for a time by his thoughts & character. While Danton lived, politics moved to a licentious democracy, war to a heroism of patriotic defence. From the time he passed, the spirit of Napoleon shaped events and politics moved to the rule first of the civil, then of the military dictator, war to the organisation of republican conquest. Like Robespierre he was the executive hand of destruction and unlike Robespierre the executive hand of construction. The fury of Kali became in him self-centred, capable, full of organised thought and activity, but nonetheless impetuous, colossal, violent, devastating.

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# Historical Impressions

## Napoleon

The name of Napoleon has been a battle-field for the prepossessions of all sorts of critics, and, according to their predilections, idiosyncrasies and political opinions, men have loved or hated, panegyrised or decried the Corsican. To blame Napoleon is like criticising Mont Blanc or throwing mud at Kinchinjunga. This phenomenon has to be understood and known, not blamed or praised. Admire we must, but as minds, not as moralists. It has not been sufficiently perceived by his panegyrists and critics that Bonaparte was not a man at all, he was a force. Only the nature of the force has to be considered. There are some men who are self-evidently superhuman, great spirits who are only using the human body. Europe calls them supermen, we call them *vibhutis*. They are manifestations of Nature, of divine power presided over by a spirit commissioned for the purpose, and that spirit is an emanation from the Almighty, who accepts human strength and weakness but is not bound by them. They are above morality and ordinarily without a conscience, acting according to their own nature. For they are not men developing upwards from the animal to the divine and struggling against their lower natures, but beings already fulfilled and satisfied with themselves. Even the holiest of them have a contempt for the ordinary law and custom and break them easily and without remorse, as Christ did on more than one occasion, drinking wine, breaking the Sabbath, consorting with publicans and harlots; as Buddha did when he abandoned his self-accepted duties as a husband, a citizen and a father; as Shankara did when he broke the holy law and trampled upon custom and *achar* to satisfy his dead mother. In our literature they are described as Gods or Siddhas or Titans or Giants. Valmeki depicts Ravana as a ten-headed giant, but it is easy to see that this was only the vision of him in the world of imaginations, the “astral plane”, and that in the



terms of humanity he was a vibhuti or superman and one of the same order of beings as Napoleon.

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The Rakshasa is the supreme and thoroughgoing individualist, who believes life to be meant for his own untrammelled self-fulfilment and self-assertion. A necessary element in humanity, he is particularly useful in revolutions. As a pure type in man he is ordinarily a thing of the past; he comes now mixed with other elements. But Napoleon was a Rakshasa of the pure type, colossal in his force and attainment. He came into the world with a tremendous appetite for power and possession and, like Ravana, he tried to swallow the whole earth in order to glut his supernatural hunger. Whatever came in his way he took as his own, ideas, men, women, fame, honours, armies, kingdoms; and he was not scrupulous as to his right of possession. His nature was his right; its need his justification. The attitude may be expressed in some such words as these, "Others may not have the right to do these things, but I am Napoleon".

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The Rakshasa is not an altruist. If by satisfying himself he can satisfy others, he is pleased, but he does not make that his motive. If he has to trample on others to satisfy himself, he does so without compunction. Is he not the strong man, the efficient ruler, the mighty one? The Rakshasa has kama, he has no prema. Napoleon knew not what love was; he had only the kindliness that goes with possession. He loved Josephine because she satisfied his nature, France because he possessed her, his mother because she was his and congenial, his soldiers because they were necessary to his glory. But the love did not go beyond his need of them. It was self-satisfaction and had no element in it of self-surrender. The Rakshasa slays all that opposes him and he is callous about the extent of the slaughter. But he is never cruel. Napoleon had no taint of Nero in him, but he flung away without a qualm whole armies as holocausts on the altar of his glory; he shot Hofer and murdered Enghien. What then is there

in the Rakshasa that makes him necessary? He is individuality, he is force, he is capacity; he is the second power of God, wrath, strength, grandeur, rushing impetuosity, overbearing courage, the avalanche, the thunderbolt; he is Balaram, he is Jehovah, he is Rudra. As such we may admire and study him.

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But the vibhuti, though he takes self-gratification and enjoyment on his way, never comes for self-gratification and enjoyment. He comes for work, to help man on his way, the world in its evolution. Napoleon was one of the mightiest of vibhutis, one of the most dominant. There are some of them who hold themselves back, suppress the force in their personality in order to put it wholly into their work. Of such were Shakespeare, Washington, Victor Emmanuel. There are others like Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Goethe, who are as obviously superhuman in their personality as in the work they accomplish. Napoleon was the greatest in practical capacity of all moderns. In capacity, though not in character, he resembles Bhishma of the Mahabharat. He had the same sovran, irresistible, world-possessing grasp of war, politics, government, legislation, society; the same masterly handling of masses and amazing glut for details. He had the iron brain that nothing fatigues, the faultless memory that loses nothing, the clear insight that puts everything in its place with spontaneous accuracy. It was as if a man were to carry Caucasus on his shoulders and with that burden race successfully an express engine, yet note and forecast every step and never falter. To prove that anything in a human body could be capable of such work, is by itself a service to our progress for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful to Napoleon.

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The work of Bonaparte was wholly admirable. It is true that he took freedom for a season from France, but France was not then fit for democratic freedom. She had to learn discipline for a while under the rule of the soldier of Revolution. He could not have done the work he did, hampered by an effervescent French

Parliament ebullient in victory, discouraged in defeat. He had to organise the French Revolution so far as earth could then bear it, and he had to do it in the short span of an ordinary lifetime. He had also to save it. The aggression of France upon Europe was necessary for self-defence, for Europe did not mean to tolerate the Revolution. She had to be taught that the Revolution meant not anarchy, but a reorganisation so much mightier than the old that a single country so reorganised could conquer united Europe. That task Napoleon did effectively. It has been said that his foreign policy failed, because he left France smaller than he found it. That is true. But it was not Napoleon's mission to aggrandise France geographically. He did not come for France, but for humanity, and even in his failure he served God and prepared the future. The balance of Europe had to be disturbed in order to prepare new combinations and his gigantic operations disturbed it fatally. He roused the spirit of Nationalism in Italy, in Germany, in Poland, while he established the tendency towards the formation of great Empires; and it is the harmonized fulfilment of Nationalism and Empire that is the future. He compelled Europe to accept the necessity of reorganisation political and social.

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The *punya* of overthrowing Napoleon was divided between England, Germany and Russia. He had to be overthrown, because, though he prepared the future and destroyed the past, he misused the present. To save the present from his violent hands was the work of his enemies, and this merit gave to these three countries a great immediate development and the possession of the nineteenth century. England and Germany went farthest because they acted most wholeheartedly and as nations, not as Governments. In Russia it was the Government that acted, but with the help of the people. On the other hand, the countries sympathetic to Napoleon, Italy, Ireland, Poland, or those which acted weakly or falsely, such as Spain and Austria, have declined, suffered, struggled and, even when partially successful, could not attain their fulfilment. But the *punya* is now exhausted.

The future with which the victorious nations made a temporary compromise, the future which Napoleon saved and protected, demands possession, and those who can reorganise themselves most swiftly and perfectly under its pressure, will inherit the twentieth century; those who deny it, will perish. The first offer is made to the nations in present possession; it is withheld for a time from the others. That is the reason why Socialism is most insistent now in England, Germany & Russia; but in all these countries it is faced by an obstinate and unprincipled opposition. The early decades of the twentieth century will select the chosen nations of the future.

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There remains the question of Nationalism and Empire; it is put to all these nations, but chiefly to England. It is put to her in Ireland, in Egypt, in India. She has the best opportunity of harmonising the conflicting claims of Nationalism and Empire. In fighting against Nationalism she is fighting against her own chance of a future, and her temporary victory over Indian Nationalism is the one thing her guardian spirits have most to fear. For the recoil will be as tremendous as the recoil that overthrew Napoleon. The delusion that the despotic possession of India is indispensable to her retention of Empire, may be her undoing. It is indispensable to her, if she meditates, like Napoleon, the conquest of Asia and of the world; it is not necessary to her imperial self-fulfilment, for even without India she would possess an Empire greater than the Roman. Her true position in India is that of a trustee and temporary guardian; her only wise and righteous policy the devolution of her trust upon her ward with a view to alliance, not ownership. The opportunity of which Napoleon dreamed, a great Indian Empire, has been conceded to her and not to Napoleon. But that opportunity is a two-edged weapon which, if misused, is likely to turn upon and slay the wielder.

## In the Society's Chambers

*Professor* — Let me assure you, my friends, that the method of inquiry is alone responsible for all the error in the world. Mankind is in a hurry to know and prefers to catch at half-truths rather than wait for the full truth to dawn on him. Now a half-truth is a few degrees more mischievous than absolute error. It is the devil himself in the disguise of an angel.

*The Practical Man* — But surely, Professor, half-truths are the preparation for whole truths. And mankind must have something to go by. We are not all College Professors who can wait comfortably in our studies for Truth to call on us at her leisure. I have got to get to my place of business and, if motorcars have not been invented, I must use bike or tramcar.

*Professor* — There you are, my friend, in possession of a metaphor and under the delusion that you have got an argument. Half-truths are the greatest enemies of whole truths. Mankind gets besotted with the half-truth and when the whole truth happens in, it cries, "Here's this queerlooking idiot and scoundrel who has not been properly introduced to me, wanting to turn out my half-truth whom I know and who has helped me for centuries. Out with the cuckoo! A horse-whip for the bounder!" And out goes Truth, lucky if she is only expelled, not burned, garotted, mobbed or censorshipped out of existence, and has to take her next chance five hundred years later.

*Scientist* — You are right, Professor. Everything should be proved, nothing admitted.

*Professor* — Excuse me, Scientist. Your tribe, once champions of progress, are now the stiffest and blindest opponents of new Truth going. Torquemada was a babe to you.

*Scientist* — Well, and what about the Mystic here, who wants to go back to Paracelsus and Santa Teresa?

*Mystic* — I should say rather, to keep unbroken the most im-

portant thread in the long and intricately woven cord of evolving knowledge.

*Professor* — My friends, I know nothing about mysticism and materialism. These are mere words to me. I know Truth only. If Truth is mystic, I cannot help it. If, on the other hand, Truth turn out to be a rank materialist, a follower of Huxley and Haeckel, who am I to insist on spiritualising her? Let us have Truth as she is and not insist on creating her in our own image.

*The Practical Man* — How is that to be done?

*Professor* — By inquiry, by dispassionate, disinterested, calm, judicious, leisurely inquiry. Let us consider everything, accept only when acceptance is thoroughly justified, reject only when we must, and for God's sake let us not rush violently and enthusiastically to premature conclusions!

*The Practical Man, with levity* — Why not establish a Society for the dispassionate discussion of everything discussable and the quiet questioning of everything questionable? It might be styled briefly S.D.D.D.Q.Q.Q. or, still better S.D<sup>3</sup>Q<sup>3</sup>, and, I believe, it would revolutionise knowledge.

*Professor* — I have always revered the Practical Man in spite of his gross and numerous limitations. Why not? Let us at least try.

*Scientist, doubtfully* — What would be the conditions of discussion?

*Professor* — Put it like this. We agree to consider no question closed, not even gravitation, nor the motion of the earth, nor the necessity and beneficence of the British Government.

*All, in chorus* — The Press Act, Professor, the Press Act! Section 124A! Section 121! We shall be transported, we shall get forfeited!

*Professor, reluctantly, but obviously alarmed by the outcry* — Well, well, we will reserve the question. There are plenty of others, there are plenty of others. To proceed. If the Mystic advances sound arguments to show that the devil habitually swallows the moon, even that we shall not lightly declare impossible. What do we know about the tastes of the devil, supposing he exists, or the eatability of the moon? I have never tasted it,

nor has the Scientist. The Mystic and the devil may have.

*Scientist, uneasily* — Confound it, Professor!

*Professor* — No, I insist. Absolute tolerance, absolute openness of mind are essential to the success of the experiment. Whoever interrupts, whoever refuses to discuss an argument, whoever contradicts or says, Absurd! whoever substitutes assertion for reasoning, whoever loses his temper or allows his voice to rise to a higher key, whoever tries to make out that he has conquered in debate because he has appealed to a polysyllable such as hallucination, coincidence, subconscious cerebration, whoever quotes an authority for his opinion, will be instantly called to order by the Chairman and, if he repeats the offence, condemned to silence for the evening.

*All are silent and gaze awe-stricken at the Professor.*

*The Practical Man* — Hang it, Professor! Where will be the fun? I quite looked forward to the Scientist throwing chemicals at the Mystic and immediately withering into something infra-human under the onslaught of the Mystic's *mohanam*, *stambhanam* and *maranam*. Don't interfere with human nature.

*Professor* — We will provide the fun, but let it be human, civilised fun. We must curb the excess of our original simian ancestors in our humour.

*Mystic* — You can't, Professor, and we shouldn't. It is a perpetual and valuable part of ananda, the joy of existence.

*Scientist* — It can't work. We are not gods or angels.

*Professor* — There you go making assumptions! How do you know we are not? Let us at least make the experiment. Obviously, with only the four of us, the circle will be incomplete. We must have other human specimens. A Jurist now, a Priest, a Historian, a Sanscritist, a Doctor, an Attorney, and a few others that may occur to me. I know where all these reasoning animals are to be found. Then, a live Extremist would be an acquisition. I know one. He is amiable, pleasing and warranted not to bite, though his views are fiery and his language, when excited, apt to be sulphurous.

*The Practical Man* — No use for him, if we are not to question the beneficence of the British Government.

*Professor* — He will complete us. We must be a representative society. Besides, Extremism, I understand, has its positive aspects.

*Scientist* — Will it be safe?

*Professor, coldly, haughtily & severely,* — We are not cowards. (*more mildly*) I can guarantee that, though he talks sometimes like a bomb, he never made one. It is agreed, gentlemen. (*rising enthusiastically*) Today creates an epoch in the history of mankind; Truth lays the foundation-stone of her final temple.

*Mystic* — Professor, Professor, for God's sake, let us not rush violently and enthusiastically to premature conclusions!



## At the Society's Chambers

*Professor* — Gentlemen, I believe we are here in full strength. It is gratifying to find so much enthusiasm still abroad for the dispassionate acquisition of knowledge. I trust it is not a short-lived fervour; I trust we shall not soon have to declare our society extinct from constitutional inability to form a quorum.

*Jurist* — I believe this is a society for the discussion of all things discussable and the discovery of all things discoverable. Am I right in my supposition?

*Professor* — Your definition is rather wide, but it may pass. What then?

*Jurist* — In that case I suggest that the first subject we should discuss is whether this society should come into existence at all and should not rather adjourn its birth sine die.

*A silence*

*Professor* — Gentlemen, I think we should not be damped. Even this should not damp us. I believe it is nothing worse than the Indian spirit of scepticism — not malaria, not inertia, not even spiritual cramp. Courage, let us not shirk even this dangerous inquiry.

*Jurist* — Let me explain. My suggestion is dictated not by the spirit of academical doubt, but by the more mundane love of safety. Have you reflected, Professor, that there are other dangers abroad besides the chance of automatic dissolution? Is it not conceivable that we may be dissolved as an association for unlawful objects or arrested as a gang of dacoits?

*Professor* — Good Heavens! My dear sir! And yet — I don't know. As a member of a society pledged to regard truth from all possible directions, I cannot rule it out as an impossibility. But if we have none but unobjectionable members —

*Jurist* — Pardon me, Professor. How do you know who is an

unobjectionable member or who is objectionable? As a Professor you are acquainted with hundreds of students. It is possible one of them might stray in here of an evening. He might be arrested. He might turn approver. And what would his statement be? Why, that Prof. So & So was leader of a gang of political dacoits, that the Society met at such a number in Harrison Road, that they were accustomed to arrange their nefarious enterprises there under cover of intellectual conversation and that you were the receiver of the booty. And then there would be the Andamans where you would probably get more physical exercise in one week than you have done in all your life, Professor. There are other joys, Professor, the whipping triangle, handcuffs, laphsy. Is it worth while?

*The Professor gazes in horrified silence at the Jurist, then with a flash of hope —* He might recant.

*Jurist* — That is only an off chance. I would not rely on it. You see he would be laying himself open to an unanswerable accusation of perjury, while, if he persisted in his story, he would be perfectly safe.

*Professor* — But surely some corroboration, some documentary evidence —

*Jurist* — Certainly; why not? He would point out your house; it would be proved that it was your house. He would identify these rooms, it would be proved that we all met here. Then, Professor, do you never use the word *kaj* in your letters? Do you scrupulously avoid any reference to *bibaha*?

*Professor* — It is quite possible I may use both.

*Jurist* — And yet you say, where is the documentary evidence? One such letter coinciding with your absence from Calcutta! The Andamans, Professor, the Andamans!

*Professor* — I will scrupulously avoid both in future.

*Jurist* — There are other words in the Bengali language. In any case, if you escaped any special charge, you would be sure to be rearrested on the general charge of conspiracy.

*Professor (exasperated)* — Proofs, sir, the proofs!

*Jurist* — Quite easy. We shall merely have to prove association. Have you no student who may be either mixed up or liable

to be suspected of being mixed up in a dacoity or a conspiracy?

*Professor* — Association for a criminal object, sir!

*Jurist* — That could be assumed from the closeness of your intimacy. The burden of proving your association innocent would then fall upon you. I challenge you to prove your association even with me innocent. All you can prove is that your other acquaintances did not know its criminal object.

*Professor* — I shall keep a diary of all my words and actions.

*Jurist* — It could easily be shown that it was kept with an eye to this contingency. Do not do it, Professor. You might put in things unknown to you which would be damning evidence against you in the hands of a skilful lawyer. If many names of suspects occurred in it, it would be itself the basis of his case and the keystone of his theory.

*The Professor collapses.*

*Jurist* — In any case you would have a year or more in *hajut*. Do you know what *hajut* is like, Professor? There would be *laphsy* there too; there would be the joys of solitary confinement; you would have to sit for hours on your haunches, to which you are not accustomed; there would be parades of various kinds; warders with boots to whom you are supposed, I believe, to *salaam*; daily physical researches on yourself in a nude condition. To the last rapture I do not object; but you, Professor, are constitutionally modest.

*A silence*

*Jurist* — Gentlemen, allow me again. I seem to have disconcerted and appalled this nascent society. It was far from my intention. The case I have put is an extreme and highly hypothetical one. My object is to put you on your mettle and induce you to adopt all reasonable precautions.

*The Practical Man* — We can be careful to exclude detectives.

*Jurist* — My dear sir! The very way to invite suspicion. The police would first learn the existence of a society. On inquiry they would find out that special care was taken to exclude detectives. We would have only ourselves to thank for the house-search and arrests that would follow.

*Professor, reviving* — I would recommend paying a member of the C.I.D. to attend our meetings.

*The Extremist, scornfully* — Why only one, Professor? Why not the whole damned department?

*Professor* — My dear Biren, pray take care of your words. They are highly irregular and seditious and may bring about your forfeiture under the Press Act. No, not all. There is such a thing as moderation. Besides, your proposal is as extravagant as your expressions. Do you realise that it would amount to subsidising one third of the literate population of India?

*Jurist* — Such an extraordinary procedure would attract suspicion. It might be thought you were a particularly adroit, ingenious and hardened conspirator using this apparent frankness to cover up your nefarious secret operations. What are the declared objects of the Society?

*Professor* — Self-improvement —

*Jurist* — A very dangerous term. Pray drop it.

*Professor* — The discovery of truth —

*Scientist* — I object. Truth is a highly explosive substance. I am not sure that the police would not be justified in carrying it away as an incriminating document along with the Gita and Seeley's Expansion of England.

*Professor* — And discussion and question on all questionable things, subjects or persons.

*Extremist, unpleasantly* — Take care! That is obviously an innuendo, reference, allusion or metaphor intended or calculated to bring the Government into contempt or hatred.

*Professor, innocently* — Good Lord, so it is! (*in despair*) We'll have to give it up.

*Jurist* — Why not add a second object, to present and offer addresses of loyalty and depute congratulatory deputations to high officials on every occasion possible or impossible? That, I think, would cure everything.

*He sits back triumphantly and invites admiration.*

*Applause.*

*Professor* — A very attractive proposal. Dear me, this is very attractive.

*Extremist, wrathfully* — There is such a thing as truth and self-respect.

*Professor, warmly* — Truth? Are we not loyal? Do you dare to say we are Anarchists?

*Extremist* — I decline membership —

*Professor* — Well, Biren, well! Perhaps you had better. But you can drop in and have a cup of tea whenever we meet. What do you say? I think I too should have made my mark as a political leader!

*He beams seraphically on the society, which breaks up with shouts of Rule, Britannia!*

## Things Seen in Symbols [1]

There are Four who are Beyond and they rule the mighty game of evolution. It is they who build the universe with their thoughts and imaginations. Vishnu or Virat put them in front each in turn, and they govern each a cycle. All the sons of immortality come forth from them and return to them, all the children of earth are their portions. One stands in front, the others incarnate to help him. They are God Himself in His fourfold manifestation. Once in each chaturyuga they come down together, — the chaturvyuha, Srikrishna, Balarama, Pradyumna, Aniruddha.

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Srikrishna contains all the others and puts them out from His being. He is Ishwara, Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu. Lordship is His manifestation, Might and Wisdom are His gunas. Balarama is the second Power. Force is His manifestation; strength and wrath are His attributes. Pradyumna is the third Power. Love is His manifestation; sweetness and delight are His attributes. Aniruddha is the fourth Power. Desire is His manifestation; bodily enjoyment and worldly reason are His attributes.

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Srikrishna is the Brahmin served by the Kshatriya. He has the divine knowledge and uses His might under the guidance of the Knowledge. Balarama is the Kshatriya. He allows Srikrishna in Him to guide His strength and wrath, but He does not guide them Himself, He enjoys them. He is Rudra. Pradyumna is the Vaishya. He is for dana, prema, karuna. He gives Himself to men and buys their love in exchange. He is the universal philanthropist. He is the sweet and throbbing heart in things. Aniruddha is the Sudra. He is the kamin, the bhogin, the scientist, the

user of material means, the democrat, the leveller.

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The Satya is full of Srikrishna; it is the golden Age when men are full of might and wisdom. The Treta is full of Balarama; the Chakravarti Raja is the incarnation of the Treta; it is full of great wars and mighty sacrifices. The Dwapara is full of Pradyumna; He prepares in the Dwapara the love which supports men through the Kali. Aniruddha, the Sudra, reigns in the Kali; He breaks the ancient moulds, He shatters to pieces the achar; He questions everything, destroys everything, levels everything, rebuilds everything. He is a Sudra and has the passion for work and service; He puts off lordship in order to become the divine Slave of humanity.

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For each of Them is not simple in Himself, but contains the other three and their attributes; only His own are usually foremost. Each is not a part but God Himself in His fullness. They are not different, but the same, Four who are One, One who is Four. That one is Srikrishna.

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## Things Seen in Symbols [2]

What is dhyana? Ordinarily, when a man is absorbed in thought and dead to all that is going on around him, he is supposed to be in dhyana. Or concentration of the whole thought on a single object to the exclusion of every other, is called dhyana. But neither of these ideas corresponds exactly with the whole truth; they represent only particular stages of the process of meditation. Dhyana is a wide term covering a number of processes which rise from ordinary attention to nirvikalpa samadhi.

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The distinguishing feature of dhyana is that it puts out a steady force of knowledge on the object of knowledge. When this process is successful, when there is a steady demand on the object to give up its secret, it is called by Patanjali sanyama. Even when it is only partially successful, it is still dhyana.

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Ordinary thought is not dhyana. Ordinary thought is simply the restlessness of the mind playing with associations, speculations, trains of reasoning. In order to have dhyana the restlessness of the mind must be utterly stilled, the intellect must become like a calm and waveless sea, not a movement, not a ripple on its surface.

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The principle is that all knowledge is in oneself, in the knower. The knower is in myself; he is also in the object of knowledge, say, a stone or a tree. By dhyana the veil of ignorance, the chaos of misunderstandings which interfere between the knower in me and the knower in the tree or the stone is removed; we enter into relation with each other; we are in Yoga.



All knowledge about the stone is in the stone itself; in dhyana it comes into my mind. When it comes into my mind, the knower in me says, "It is true, the knowledge is in me also and I see it there". Or if there is a mistake, he says, "There is a mistake, the mind is interfering; the knowledge is in me and I see it otherwise".

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The whole world is one. The knower in the stone and the knower in myself are one; I am He. It is God in me, God in the stone. The knowledge in me and the knowledge in the stone are one; I am That. It is God in me, God in the stone. The stone is an object of knowledge; I am also an object of knowledge. These two also are one, God as myself, God as the stone. God is the only object of knowledge, there is no other. God is the only knower, there is no other. God is the knowledge also. Jnata, jnanam, jneyam, they are one.

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The mind creates difference. When there is disturbance on the waters, there are many waves, and each wave cries, "I am I, I am I; you are you; we are different." When the sea sinks to rest, the waves as they go inward, no longer cry, "I am I", but "I am He." The still and waveless sea, that is a delightful and beautiful condition. The stormy, myriad crested Ocean, that also is a very beautiful and delightful condition. Only let the waves have the knowledge, let them say, "I am I for the sake of delight; you are you for the sake of delight. But also you are I, I am you. And both you and I are He." That is jnanam, that is Yoga.

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The still sea is a condition, and the thousand waves are a condition. He who is the sea, is more than disturbance, more than stillness. He contains All. He is All. Even the infinite sea is only one of His manifestations.

## The Real Difficulty

The real difficulty is always in ourselves, not in our surroundings. There are three things necessary in order to make men invincible, Will, Disinterestedness and Faith. We may have a will to emancipate ourselves, but sufficient faith may be lacking. We may have faith in our ultimate emancipation, but the will to use the necessary means may be wanting. And even if there are will and faith, we may use them with a violent attachment to the fruit of our work or with passions of hatred, blind excitement or hasty forcefulness which may produce evil reactions. For this reason it is necessary, in a work of such magnitude, to have resort to a higher Power than that of mind and body in order to overcome unprecedented obstacles. This is the need of sadhana.

God is within us, an Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient Power; we & He are of one nature and, if we get into touch with Him and put ourselves in His hands, He will pour into us His own force and we shall realise that we too have our share of godhead, our portion of omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. The path is long, but self-surrender makes it short; the way is difficult, but perfect trust makes it easy.

Will is omnipotent, but it must be divine will, selfless, tranquil, at ease about results. "If you had faith even as a grain of mustard-seed," said Jesus, "you would say to this mountain, Come, & it would come to you." What was meant by the word Faith, was really Will accompanied with perfect sraddha. Sraddha does not reason, it knows; for it commands sight and sees what God wills, and it knows that what is God's will, must happen. Sraddha, not blind but using sight spiritual, can become omniscient.

Will is also omnipresent. It can throw itself into all in whom it comes into contact and give them temporarily or permanently a portion of its power, its thought, its enthusiasms. The thought

of a solitary man can become, by exercise of selfless and undoubting Will, the thought of a nation. The will of a single hero can breathe courage into the hearts of a million cowards.

This is the sadhana that we have to accomplish. This is the condition of our emancipation. We have been using an imperfect will with imperfect faith and imperfect disinterestedness. Yet the task we have before us is not less difficult than to move a mountain.

The force that can do it, exists. But it is hidden in a secret chamber within us and of that chamber God holds the key. Let us find Him and claim it.

# Art

All Art is interpretation. Creation is a misnomer; nothing in this world is created, all is manifested. All exists previously in the mind of the Knower. Art may interpret that which is already manifest or was manifest at one time, or it may interpret what will be manifest hereafter. It may even be used as one of the agencies in the manifestation. A particular type of face and figure may be manifested in the work of a popular artist and in a single generation the existing type of face and figure in the country may change and mould itself to the new conception. These things are there in the type in the causal world with which our superconscious selves are perpetually in touch; they manifest in the psychical and become part of our thought. That thought we put out into the material world and there it takes shape and body, as movements, as institutions, as poetry, Art and Knowledge, as living men and women. Man creates his world because he is the psychic instrument through whom God manifests that which He had previously arranged in Himself. In this sense Art can create the past, the present and the future. It can remanifest that which was and has passed away, it can fix for us that which is, it can prophesy that which will be.

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Its normal sphere, however, is interpretation of a less pregnant and forceful kind. Here too, there are three things which it can interpret in the object it selects, the causal part or thing in itself; the psychical part or its passing imaginations, phases, emotions; or the physical part, the outward appearance, incident or movement as our eyes see them. Indian Art attaches itself to the two higher interpretations, European to the two lower. They meet in the middle term of Art, the imaginative and emotional; but each brings with it the habits of vision, the conventions,

the mastering movement and tendency of the soul downward to earth or upward to heaven, born of their main preoccupation, so that even here, though they meet on common ground, they remain diverse and unreconciled.

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In dealing with the form the question between them is Shall I reproduce what the eye sees or shall I reproduce what the soul sees? The lower type of European Art is content with reproducing what the eye sees. This it calls realism and fidelity to Nature — narrowing Nature to the limited confines of the materially sensible. The reproduction, of course, is not a real reproduction, but only an approximation within the limitations imposed by the canvas, the brush and the paintbox. It is really as close an imitation as our instruments will allow, absolute fidelity being rarely possible. This style of Art had perhaps its utility, but now that we have photographs and can put colour into the photographs, its separate field is in danger of being taken from it.

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A higher European Art takes imitation of the form as its basis, but its nobler objective is not the imitation of form, but the imitation of emotion. The artist tries to see and recover on canvas not only the body, but so much of the feeling as the body can for the moment express. This may often be a great deal. In certain moments of powerful feeling or critical action a great deal of our psychical selves may come out in the eyes, the face, the gesture, the pose. This the artist imitates. He not only shows us an object or an incident, but he fixes on the canvas a moment in the soul-life of the object. The habitual mood also stamps itself to a great extent on the face and certain traits of character betray themselves in expression and feature. These too the imitative artist transfers to the canvas. When not exaggerated or theatrical, this kind of art can be strong, effective and dramatic. But it has serious limitations. So much of the inner truth as the outward form interprets, this Art interprets. Its interpretation

is secondhand, its vision derived and unable to go beyond its authority.

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A still higher reach is attained by imaginative European Art. Imagination, according to the European idea, is creative, not interpretative. What is really meant is that the imaginative artist transfers something that belongs to himself into the object of his study, some fancy that has flashed across or some idea that has mastered his mind. Either he reads it into his subject by unconscious transference or he deliberately uses his subject as a mere excuse for putting his fancy or his idea into line and colour. The artist is interpreting himself, not his subject. This egoistic Art has often a very high value and some of the best European work has been done in this kind. More rarely his imaginative sympathy enables him to catch a glimpse of the thing itself hidden in the form. His imagination usually plays with it and prevents the vision from being true in all its parts, but he is able to do work of the highest attractiveness, vigour or artistic beauty.

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In all these kinds the European binds himself by the necessity of reproducing the actual outward form imposed by material Nature. He is a bondsman to form and such do not attain to that spiritual freedom which is the first condition of the sight spiritual. When he tries to interpret the thing in itself, he degenerates usually into allegory. Recently the Impressionist school in Europe have tried to break the fetters of the form; they have insisted that what one really sees in an object is not the rounded, solid material form but something rarer and different. In reality, they are groping their way towards an attempt at seeing and interpreting something hidden in the object, something the soul sees before the eye can catch it. Ignorant of the way, they seldom rise beyond a striking and fantastic imagination, but sometimes an inspired eye catches the true vision.

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The Indian begins at the other end. He sees the thing itself either by *sukshmadrishti*, the soul-sight, or by *dhyana*, a spiritual union with the object studied in which the truth it expresses dawns on the mind by the process of revelation. This he transfers to canvas by letting his inspired and informed Will guide the pencil and the brush instead of using his intellect or merely technical means to find the best way of expression. He uses technique with power, but does not rely on it chiefly. The body he paints is the one which will in every part of it express the thing itself, not the actual material body which largely conceals it. When he descends into the psychical part and seeks to express imaginations, emotions, or passing phases, he carries his method with him. Not content with expressing as much of the feeling as the actual body reveals, he sees the emotion in its fullness by *dhyana* or soul-sight and forces the body into a mould fit for its absolute expression. He sees the soul and paints it or he sees the heart or mind and paints it. He sees and can, if he will, paint the body merely. But usually he does not will it.





## Part Seven

### Epistles / Letters From Abroad

Sri Aurobindo wrote the first three of these fictional letters in Bengal in 1910. They were published in 1920–22 without his editorial supervision; they are reproduced here from his manuscripts. He wrote the last three letters in Pondicherry in 1910 or 1911 but never published them; they are reproduced here from his manuscripts.



# Epistles from Abroad

## I

Dearly beloved,

You, my alter ego, my second existence, now sitting comfortably at home and, doubtless, reading the romantic fictions of the *Empire* by the light of heavily-priced kerosine; I, who roam uncomfortably in foreign climes, sighing for the joys of the Press Act and the house-search; these faces, white and unfamiliar, that surround me; these miles of soulless brick and faultless macadam, the fitting body for a point-device and dapper civilisation which has lost sight of grandeur, beauty and nobility in life, — are we, I wonder, flitting visions of a nightmare that passes or real men and women made in God's image? Was life always so trivial, always so vulgar, always so loveless, pale and awkward as the Europeans have made it? This well-appointed comfort oppresses me; this perfection of machinery will not allow the soul to remember that it is not itself a machine.

Is this then the end of the long march of human civilisation, this spiritual suicide, this quiet petrification of the soul into matter? Was the successful business-man that grand culmination of manhood toward which evolution was striving? After all, if the scientific view is correct, why not? An evolution that started with the protoplasm and flowered in the ourang-outang and the chimpanzee, may well rest satisfied with having created hat, coat and trousers, the British Aristocrat, the American capitalist and the Parisian Apache. For these, I believe, are the chief triumphs of the European enlightenment to which we bow our heads. For these Augustus created Europe, Charlemagne refounded civilisation, Louis XIV regulated society, Napoleon systematised the French Revolution. For these Goethe thought, Shakespeare imagined and created, St. Francis loved, Christ was crucified. What a

bankruptcy! What a beggary of things that were rich and noble!

Europe boasts of her science and its marvels. But an Indian cannot content himself with asking like Voltaire, as the supreme question, "What have you invented?" His glance is at the soul; it is that into which he is accustomed to inquire. To the braggart intellect of Europe he is bound to reply, "I am not interested in what you know, I am interested in what you are. With all your discoveries and inventions, what have you become? Your enlightenment is great, — but what are these strange creatures that move about in the electric light you have installed and imagine that they are human?" Is it a great gain for the human intellect to have grown more acute and discerning, if the human soul dwindles?

But Science does not admit the existence of soul. The soul, it says, is only an organised republic of animalcules, and it is in the mould of that idea Europe has recast herself; — that is what the European nations are becoming, organised republics of animalcules, — very intelligent, very methodical, very wonderful talking and reasoning animalcules, but still animalcules. Not what the race set out to be, creatures made in the image of the Almighty, gods that having fallen from heaven remember and strive to recover their heritage. Man in Europe is descending steadily from the human level and approximating to the ant and the hornet. The process is not complete but it is progressing apace, and if nothing stops the debacle, we may hope to see its culmination in this twentieth century. After all our superstitions were better than this enlightenment, our social abuses less murderous to the hopes of the race than this social perfection.

It is a very pleasant inferno they have created in Europe, a hell not of torments but of pleasures, of lights and carriages, of balls and dances and suppers, of theatres and cafés and music halls, of libraries and clubs and Academies, of National Galleries and Exhibitions, of factories, shops, banks and Stock Exchanges. But it is hell all the same, not the heaven of which the saints and the poets dreamed, the new Jerusalem, the golden city. London and New York are the holy cities of the new religion, Paris its golden Paradise of Pleasure.

It is not with impunity that men decide to believe that they are animals and God does not exist. For what we believe, that we become. The animal lives by a routine arranged for him by Nature; his life is devoted to the satisfaction of his instincts bodily, vital and emotional, and he satisfies himself mechanically by a regular response to the working of those instincts. Nature has regularised everything for him and provided the machinery. Man in Europe arranges his own routine, invents his own machinery, and adds to the needs of which he is a slave, the intellectual. But there will soon be no other difference.

System, organisation, machinery have attained their perfection. Bondage has been carried to its highest expression, and from a passion for organising external liberty Europe is slaying her spiritual freedom. When the inner freedom is gone, the external liberty will follow it, and a social tyranny more terrible, inquisitorial and relentless than any that caste ever organised in India, will take its place. The process has already begun. The shell of external liberty remains, the core is already being eaten away. Because he is still free to gratify his senses and enjoy himself, the European thinks himself free. He does not know what teeth are gnawing into the heart of his liberty.

Still in his inmost self he has an uneasy consciousness of something terribly, vitally wrong, and therefore he is turning more and more to Socialism among the thinking or cultured, among the unthinking to Anarchism. The Socialist hopes, by accepting, swiftly fulfilling and thoroughly organising the inevitable tyranny of society, at least to recover leisure and create a breathing space in which to realise the dignity, beauty and repose of the god in man. The Anarchist sees in Government and Society the enemy of the race and gropes for the bomb and the revolver to recover individual liberty and destroy the tyranny of the majority. Both are guilty of the same fallacy, the mechanical fallacy. One hopes to liberate man by perfecting machinery, the other by destroying it.

And yet the true secret is ready to their hand in the formula of the great Revolution. Two ideas of that formula Europe has pursued with some eagerness, Liberty and Equality; but she has

totally rejected the third and most necessary, Brotherhood. In its place she has erected the idol of her heart, Machinery, and called it Association; for Association without Brotherhood is merely Machinery. Yet what can be more evident than that the French thinkers were perfectly guided in their selection of the three things necessary for an ideal associated happiness? It is only Love that can prevent the misuse of Liberty; it is only Brotherhood which can make Equality tolerable.

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## II

Friend and brother,

I am as yet among the unregenerate. Instead of my eccentric notions of life changing under the pressure of victorious European enlightenment, they seem to harden and fix their hold. Here I am in Paris, the centre of civilisation, and I am still the same darkskinned barbarian you knew. Neither the complexion of my face nor the complexion of my thoughts has improved. I still believe in God and Vedanta, in India and impossibilities. Man is still to my eyes divine and not an animal. I believe in the soul and am afflicted with the imagination that it has a past and a future, that it neither came ready made into the world out of the mother's womb nor will disintegrate at the end whether on the pyre or in the coffin. That our first stage is an embryo and our last worms or ashes, is a creed I hold to be still unproved and unprovable. I believe that nothing in this world is made, but everything grows; that body cannot create soul and that a mass of cells is not Buddha or Napoleon. And if you ask for my ground of belief, I shall still refuse to base it on the logical reason, which can only argue and cannot see, and I shall give the answer of the visionary, the victim of hallucinations, that I have seen my soul and talked face to face with my Creator.

There are excellent logicians in Paris. One of them spoke

the other day of the power of telepathy and, while admitting it to be a fact, argued that to develop the power would be to go back to the savage; it would be a denial of Science and civilisation. The civilised man sees with his eyes, talks with his tongue; to see with the soul, mind to talk with mind is a thing weird and barbarous. That is what the logical reason is. It can support the grossest absurdity under the sun and yet satisfy its user. The savage had the power, the civilised man has renounced it as an encumbrance or a superstition; to develop the power is to go back from civilisation to the savage. The argument is undeniable. Whether it is not worth while, in this respect, to go back to the savage, is a question my logical friend refuses to discuss. To entertain it would be an insult to civilisation. Another gentleman of equal clarity poohpoohed the idea of considering the existence of God and immortality on the ground that the very motion would be retrograde. "It would be going back," he cried, "it would be going back. We have got rid of God; we have finished with the superstition of immortality. Will you deny the progress of enlightenment? My friend, let these ghosts rest in their shadows." And nothing would induce him to give God a chance. Darwin and Huxley and Haeckel had settled the Creator's hash for Him; it was *res judicata*. It is wonderful how easily man tramples on one formula merely to bow reverently before another. Nature replaces God, Progress dethrones Immortality. Yet, in fact, these are merely different names for one thing in its varying aspects. Nature is God manifest in Matter; Progress is possible because the soul of man is immortal.

This talk wearies you. You would prefer perhaps that I should write of the municipality in Paris, the merits and defects of the sewer system, the latest plays at the theatres, a description of boulevard and café or the debates in the Chamber, or some hint as to whether I have made acquaintance with any of the French Academicians. "Plague take the fellow!" you will cry, "he is like the Englishman who marches about in the full panoply of Europe in the heats of a Calcutta summer; wherever he goes, he takes India with him." Pardon me, my friend; that is not wholly correct. I have forgotten for the time what a detective

looks like. I no longer look round at every fifty yards to see how many policemen in plain clothes are following me. Dacoits and approvers are growing as far away from my mind as Titus Oates or Tiberius. I no longer pant to know our excellent Baikuntha Babu's latest blank question or withdrawn resolution in Bengal's new Parliament or what Bengal's only Maharajadhiraj thinks about English coolies. I have left India behind; I have not brought it with me.

But in the sense you mean, I have brought India with me, that which is eternal in India. Danton, when pressed to escape from the coming doom to Switzerland, answered, "One does not carry one's country away with one on the sole of one's shoes." That is the materialist's answer, to whom the body is all. No, one cannot carry it on the shoe-soles, but one can carry it in one's heart and one can carry it in one's soul. When I listen to the nightingale singing on English riverbank or garden-reaches or see the Seine flowing through the modern gaiety of Paris, I can hear again the manifold noise of the birds on an Indian morning and see rather Ganges flowing grandiose and leonine to her Eastern seas. The body is bound to its surroundings, but the heart exceeds them, and I carry the love of India with me even to the coldest climes. The soul is yet more free. It will be well when every Indian, instead of taking a waxlike stamp from his foreign surroundings, is able to carry India with him wherever he goes. For that will mean that India is destined to conquer and place her stamp upon the whole world.

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### III

Dear Biren,

Your list of questions is rather a long one. I will answer you in the mass rather than in detail; and chiefly I will attack two fallacies with which your letter teems, if I may use such an



expression, and which lie at the root of your very disfavoured attitude. There are two Hinduisms; one which takes its stand on the kitchen and seeks its Paradise by cleaning the body; another which seeks God, not through the cooking pot and the social convention, but in the soul. The latter is also Hinduism and it is a good deal older and more enduring than the other; it is the Hinduism of Bhishma and Srikrishna, of Shankara and Chaitanya, the Hinduism which exceeds Hindusthan, was from of old and will be for ever, because it grows eternally through the aeons. Its watchword is not *kriya*, but *karma*; not *shastra*, but *jnanam*; not *achar*, but *bhakti*. Yet it accepts *kriya*, *shastra* and *achar*, not as ends to be followed for their own sake, but as means to perfect *karma*, *jnanam* and *bhakti*. *Kriya* in the dictionary means every practice which helps the gaining of higher knowledge such as the mastering of the breath, the repetition of the mantra, the habitual use of the Name, the daily meditation on the idea. By *shastra* it means the knowledge which regulates *karma*, which fixes the *kartavyam* and the *akartavyam*, that which should be done and that which should not, and it recognises two sources of that knowledge, — the eternal wisdom, as distinct from the temporary injunctions, in our ancient books and the book that is written by God in the human heart, the eternal and *apaurusheya* Veda. By *achar* it understands all moral discipline by which the heart is purified and made a fit vessel for divine love. There are certain *kriyas*, certain rules of *shastra*, certain details of *achar*, which are for all time and of perpetual application; there are others which are temporary, changing with the variation of *desh*, *kal* and *patra*, time, place and the needs of humanity. Among the temporary laws the cookingpot and the lustration had their place, but they are not for all, nor for ever. It was in a time of calamity, of contraction under external pressure that Hinduism fled from the inner temple and hid itself in the kitchen.

The higher and truer Hinduism is also of two kinds, sectarian and unsectarian, disruptive and synthetic, that which binds itself up in the aspect and that which seeks the All. The first is born of *rajasic* or *tamasic* attachment to an idea, an experience, an opinion or set of opinions, a temperament, an attitude, a

particular guru, a chosen Avatar. This attachment is intolerant, arrogant, proud of a little knowledge, scornful of knowledge that is not its own. It is always talking of the *kusanskars*, superstitions, of others and is blind to its own; or it says, "My guru is the only guru and all others are either charlatans or inferior," or, "My temperament is the right temperament and those who do not follow my path are fools or pedants or insincere"; or "My Avatar is the real God Himself and all the others are only lesser revelations"; or "My ishta devata is God, the others are only His partial manifestations." When the soul rises higher, it follows by preference its own ideas, experiences, opinions, temperament, guru, ishta, but it does not turn an ignorant and exclusive eye upon others. "There are many paths," it cries, "and all lead equally to God. All men, even the sinner and the atheist, are my brothers in sadhana and the Beloved is drawing them each in His own way to the One without a second." But when the full knowledge dawns, I embrace all experiences in myself, I know all ideas to be true, all opinions useful, all experiences and attitudes means and stages in the acquisition of universal experience and completeness, all gurus imperfect channels or incarnations of the one and only Teacher, all ishtas and Avatars to be God Himself.

That is what Ramakrishna taught by His life and sadhana and therefore is He the Avatar of the age, the One who prepares the future of humanity. But there is a danger of turning Him into the guru of a sect, the incarnate God of a dogmatic religion, to stultify His own life and teachings by making Him the object of a narrow attachment, an intolerant reverence, a sectarian worship. That must be avoided. It is the great curse which attends the organisation of religion. Let us have done with sects and Churches and worship God only.

The destruction of bondage, the realisation of freedom, the trampling upon our fetters, that is the first need of the future. It was to give mukti that Ramakrishna came, not to impose a new bondage. Therefore was Vivekananda His Apostle to the Gentiles, a man who in all things asserted freedom. The soul of Hinduism languishes in an unfit body. Break the mould that

the soul may live. Is it not the first teaching of Yoga to destroy the dehatmak buddhi, the blindness that identifies the soul with its temporary body? If the body were young, adaptable, fit, the liberated soul might use it, but it is decrepit, full of ill health and impurity. It must be changed, not by the spirit of Western iconoclasm which destroys the soul with the body, but by national Yoga.

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# Letters from Abroad

## IV

Dear Biren,

The idea that the Europeans have organised enjoyment just as the Hindus have organised asceticism, is a very common superstition which I am not bound to endorse merely because it is common. Say rather that the Europeans have systematised feverishness and the Hindus universalised inertia and mendicancy. The appearances of things are not the things themselves, nor is a shadow always the proof of a substance... I admit that the Europeans have tried hard to organise enjoyment. Power, pleasure, riches, amusement are their gods and the whirl of a splendid & active life their heaven. But have they succeeded? I think that nowhere is life less truly enjoyable than in brilliant and arrogant Europe. The naked African seems to me to be happier and more genuinely luxurious than the cultured son of Japhet.<sup>1</sup>

It is this very trying hard that spoils the endeavour. What a grotesque conception indeed is this of trying hard to be joyous! Delight, joyousness, ananda either are by nature or they do not exist; to be natural, to be in harmony with the truth of things is the very secret of bliss. The garden of Eden is man's natural abode and it is only because he wilfully chose to know evil that he was driven out of his paradise.

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<sup>1</sup> *Another version of this opening:*

It is not for the first time that it has been brought home to me how much more confusing are the resemblances between opposites than the subtle distinctions between close kindred. You have heard that the Europeans have organised enjoyment, you know that my religion is to enjoy God without bondage in the manifest world no less than in Himself and you wonder at my condemnation of their culture.

## V

Dear Biren,

I suspect that it is a malady of your intellect to demand figs from thistles and cry fie upon the thistle if it merely produces thorns. After all, would it not be a monotonous world that consisted only of roses and sweetmeats, virtue and success? Thorns have their necessity, grief has its mission, and without a part of sin, suffering and struggle heaven might not be so heavenly to the blest. I am not prepared even to deny a kind of beneficence to evil; I have sufficient faith in God's Love & Wisdom to believe that if evil [were] merely evil, it could not continue to exist.

I will tell you all the evil, — since we must use these inadequate terms, — that I think about Europe and then I will tell you what a great work I see it beating out with difficulty for man's ultimate good. That there should be much that is wrong and perverse, that there should even be an infinite corruption, in Europe and Asia at this moment, was, if you consider it, inevitable. It is the Age of Iron, not even thinly coated with gold, only splashed here and there with a counterfeit of the nobler metal. Kali at the lowest depth of one of his plumb descents, his eyes sealed, his ears deaf, his heart of bronze, his hunger insatiable, but his nerve relaxed and impotent, stumbles on through a self-created darkness with the marshlight and the corpselight for his guides, straining out of those blind orbs after an image of Power that he cannot seize. Time was when he dreamed of love and prated of humanity, but though he still mouths the words, he has forgotten the things. He groped too after wisdom; he has grasped only Science. By that Science he has multiplied comforts till comfort itself has grown uncomfortable; he has added machinery to machinery, convenience to convenience, till life is cumbered and hampered with appliances; and to this discomfortable luxury and encumbered efficiency he has given the name of civilisation. At present he hungers only after force and strength, but when he thinks he has laid his hands on them, it is Death instead that puts his sign on the seeker and impotence and sterility mock at

him under the mask of a material power.

For my part I see failure written large over all the splendid and ostentatious achievements of Europe. Her costliest experiments, her greatest expenditure of intellectual and moral force have led to the swiftest exhaustion of creative activity, the completest bankruptcy of moral elevation and of man's once infinite hope. When one considers how many and swift her bankruptcies have been, the imagination is appalled by the discouraging swiftness of this motor ride to ruin. The bankruptcy of the ideas of the French Revolution, the bankruptcy of Utilitarian Liberalism, the bankruptcy of national altruism, the bankruptcy of humanitarianism, the bankruptcy of religious faith, the bankruptcy of political sincerity, the bankruptcy of true commercial honesty, the bankruptcy of the personal sense of honour, how swiftly they have all followed on each other or raced with each other for precedence and kept at least admirable pace. Only her manysided science with its great critical and analytical power and all the contrivances that come of analysis, is still living and keeps her erect. There remains that last bankruptcy yet to come, and when that is once over, what will be left? Already I see a dry rot begun in this its most sapful and energetic part. The firm materialism which was its life and protection, is beginning also to go bankrupt, and one sees nothing but craze and fantasy ready to take its place.

No, it is not in the stress of an intolerant patriotism that I turn an eye of disparagement upon Europe. The immediate past of these Western peoples I can admire more than I admire the immediate past of our Indian nations. It is their present that shocks my aspirations for humanity. Europe is full of the noise and the apparel of life, of its luxurious trappings, of a myriad-footed material clang and tread, but of that which supports life she is growing more and more empty. When they had less information, her people had wiser and stronger souls. They had a literature, a creative intellectual force, a belief, a religion good or bad, a light that led onwards, a fixed path. Now they have only hungers, imaginations, sentiments & passions. The hungers are made to

look decent; they even disguise themselves & parade about as ideals and rights. The sentiments are deftly intellectualised, — some even care to moralise them superficially, but that is growing out of fashion. The imaginations are tricked out to look like reason and carefully placarded on the forehead, with the names of rationalism, science and enlightenment, though they are only a whirl of ephemeral theories when all is said and done. The passions are most decorously masked, well-furnished & lodged, sumptuously clothed. But a dress does not change truth and God is not deceived.

They criticise everything subtly rather than well, but can create nothing — except machines. They have organised society with astonishing success and found the very best way to spread comfort and kill their souls. Their system of government is a perpetual flux. Its past looks back to a yet corrupter aristocracy, its future sinks to anarchic dissolution, or at best rests in a tyrannical materialistic socialism which seeks to level all that is yet high to the grade of the artisan instead of making the artisan himself worthy of a throne. A thousand newspapers vulgarise knowledge, debase aesthetical appreciation, democratise success and make impossible all that was once unusual & noble. The man of letters has become a panderer to the intellectual appetites of a mob or stands aloof in the narrowness of a coterie. There is plenty of brilliance everywhere, but one searches in vain for a firm foundation, the power or the solidity of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The select seek paradox in order to distinguish themselves from the herd; a perpetual reiteration of some startling novelty can alone please the crowd. Each favourite is like an actor from whom the audience expect from day to day the usual passion or the usual

<sup>2</sup> *The following passage was written on a loose sheet found separately from the notebook in which Letters from Abroad was written. It is probable that Sri Aurobindo wrote this passage with the intention of working it in here:*

But in this brilliance there is no permanence, in this curiosity there is no depth. Cleverness has replaced wisdom and men are more concerned to be original in minutiae than to secure their hold upon large & permanent truths. New theories chase each other across a confused & distracted field resonant with the clash of hustling & disjected details and the mind is not allowed to rest calmly upon long investigation or confirm

farce. Paradox & novelty therefore thrive; but the select have an easily jaded appetite, the multitude are fickle and novelties have their hour. Therefore even the favourite palls. But these people have a great tamasic persistence of habit and a certain loyalty to established names; much that they read is from habit rather than enjoyment. Otherwise there would be no stability in this chaos of striking worthlessness and this meteor-dance of ephemeral brilliance. The very churches & chapels are now only the theatres of a habitual stage performance of portentous & unnecessary dullness. With the exception of a small minority full of a grotesque, superficial but genuine passion, nobody believes, nobody feels; opinion, convention, preference and habit are alive and call themselves religion, but the heart that loves God is not to be found. Only a few of the undeveloped are really religious, the castbacks and atavists of this European evolution.

For more than half a century the whole of Europe has not been able to produce a single poet of even secondary magnificence. One no longer looks for Shakespeare or Dante to return, but even Wordsworth or Racine have also become impossible. Hugo's flawed opulence, Whitman's formless plenty, Tennyson's sugared emptiness seem to have been the last poetic speech of modern Europe. If poetical genius appears, it is at once taken prisoner by the applauding coterie or the expectant multitude and, where it began, there it ends, enslaved in ignoble fetters, pirouetting perpetually for their pleasure round a single accomplishment. Of all literary forms the novel only has still some genius and even that is perishing of the modern curse of overproduction.

Learning and scholarship are unendingly active over the dead corpse of creative power as in Alexandria and with the

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& purify an emerging truth. Everybody is in a hurry to generalise, to build immense conclusions upon meagre indications. No man but thinks he can perform the miracle of constructing the whole animal out of a single stray bone. But the result is more often a trick of intellectual legerdemain than any miracle of constructive knowledge. We in India think it better to rest calmly in our uncertainty than to clutch at premature conclusions — but the West is progressive & will no longer suffer so austere an eclipse of its brilliancy. No such rein shall be put on the galloping Pegasus of its scholastic & scientific fancy.



later Romans before the great darkness. Eccentricity and the hunting after novelty & paradox play in it over an ostentatious precision and accuracy. Yesterday's opinion is today exploded & discarded, new fireworks of theory, generalisation and speculation take the place of the old, and to this pyrotechnic rushing in a circle they give the name of progress. The possibility of a calm insight & wisdom seems to have departed from this brilliant mob of pushing, overactive intellects. Force there is, but force doomed to a rapid dissolution, of which the signs are already not wanting.

The moral nerve is equally relaxed. Immorality which does not know how to enjoy, impotence and dullness of the capacity for enjoyment masquerading as virtue, decorum & prudery covering a cesspool, the coarseness, appetite and rapid satiety of the imperial Romans combining in various proportions or associating on various terms with the euprepeia & looseness of the Greeks. But the Pagan virility whether united to Roman coarseness or Greek brilliance is only to be seen in a few extraordinary individuals. Society is cast in the biune mould of monogamy & prostitution. You will find such a Parisian who keeps his wife and mistress & frequents his State-licenced harlots as well, shocked & pained at the idea of polygamous Indians enjoying the same rights as the virtuous sons of Europe. Some are even afraid that the resurgence of Asia may end in the lowering of Western morals. There can then be a descent from as well as to Avernus! In a word, the whole of Europe is now a magnified Alexandria, brilliant forms with a perishing soul, feverish activity in imitation of the forms of health with no capital but the energy of the sickbed. One has to concede however that it is not altogether sterile, for all Europe & America pullulate with ever multiplying machinery.

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## VI

Dear Biren,

There are moments in the career of peoples, empires, continents, orders of things when the forces of life pause between a past vitality and a rapidly advancing decay, atrophy or dissolution. You have often heard me say this of our still persistent and reluctant mediaeval system in India and you have not wondered, but you are surprised when I give the same description of this vaunting and dominant Europe. Why? Because it is vaunting and dominant? I think so. There are two hypnotisms that work with an almost miraculous power upon men's minds, the suggestion of the habitually repeated word and the suggestion of the long-established or robustly accomplished fact. Men are almost entirely led or stayed by blind hopes or blind hopelessnesses. They are ever ready to cry "As it was yesterday, as it is now, so it shall be for ever," or to sigh "This thing is, has been, promises to be; how can I ever overcome it? In the centuries to come perhaps, but for me my limits are set and a wall has been built around me." My friend, the thing that looks so huge, mighty and impressive from without, wears a very different appearance when you look into its secret places and sound its walls and foundations. There are certain edifices, characteristic of European modernity, which lift a tremendous height and showy mass to the sky, — therefore they are called vulgarly skyscrapers, for are they not truly *abhramliha*? — but some houses very showily built have an ugly habit of descending suddenly in ruin without any previous warning either to their inmates or to the envious huggers of the plain in the vicinity. Then they are said to have been jerry-built. Now, modern European civilisation is just such a jerry-built skyscraper.

You have not misapprehended my meaning, though you wonder at it. These hollow wormeaten outsides of Hinduism crumbling so sluggishly, so fatally to some sudden and astonishing dissolution, do not frighten me. Within them I find the soul of a

civilisation alive, though sleeping. I see upon it the consoling sentence of God, "Because thou hast believed in me, therefore thou shalt live and not perish." Also, I look through the garnished outsides, gaudy, not beautiful, pretentious, not great, boastful, not secure, of this vaunting, aggressive, dominant Europe and I have seen written on the heart of its civilisation a sentence of death and mounting already from the heart to the brain an image of annihilation.

O this Europe with its noise, its childish vanity, its barbarous material pomp and show, its puerile clashing of sabres and rattling of wheels, its foam and froth of a little knowledge, its mailed fist, its heart of lead, its tremulous, crying nerves, its sinews all unstrung with a luxury and debauch it is not great enough of soul to indulge itself in with the true ancient Titanism. One notes too its fear of the darkness of death, its clinging to life, its morbid terror of pain, its braggart tongue and coward action, its insincerity, dishonesty, unfaith, its romantic altruistic dreams so soon ended and changing into a selfish and cynical proclamation of interest, power and pleasure, — one sees its increasing brain, its perishing will. It is not in noble figures that she presents herself to my imagination, this sole enlightened continent, it is not fear or respect that they awaken in my mind, these civilised superior nations. I see a little girl wearing a new frock and showing herself off to Mamma and all the world, unable to conceal her pride and delight in the thought that never was a frock so new and nice or a little girl so pretty, — never was and never will be! I think of a very small boy to whom somebody has given a very big cane — one can see him brandishing it, executing now and then an exultant wardance, tormenting, tyrannising over and plundering of their little belongings all the smaller boys he can get within his cane's reach, not displeased if they show a little fight so that he can exhibit his heroic strength of arm by punishing them. And then he adorns himself with glittering Victoria crosses and calls on all his associates to admire his gallant and daredevil courage. Sometimes [it reminds me] of an old man, a man very early old, still strong in his decrepitude, garrulous, well-informed, luxurious, arrogant, intelligent, still

busy toddling actively from place to place, looking into this, meddling in that, laying down the law dogmatically on every point under the sun, and through it all the clutch already nearing the brain, the shaking of the palsy already foreshadowed in tremulous movement and uncertain nerve. Very true, Europe, your frock is the cleanest and newest, for the present, your stick the biggest, your wardance a very frightening spectacle — frightening even to yourselves — with Krupp and Mauser and machine gun what else should it be, you are indeed for a while the robust, enlightened oldster you seem. But afterwards? Well, afterwards there will be a newer frock, a bigger stick, a wardance much more terrible and a real Titan grasping at the earth for his own instead of the sham.

## Part Eight

### Reviews

Sri Aurobindo wrote the first of these book-reviews in 1909 for publication in the *Karmayogin*. He wrote the others between 1915 and 1920 for publication in the *Arya*, a philosophical journal of which he was the editor and principal writer.



## “Suprabhat”

THE PAPER *Suprabhat*, a Bengali monthly edited by Kumari Kumudini Mitra, daughter of Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitra, enters this month on its third year. The first issue of the new year is before us. We notice a great advance in the interest and variety of the articles, the calibre of the writers and the quality of the writing. From the literary point of view the chief ornament of the number is the brief poem *Duhkhabhisar*, by Sj. Rabindranath Tagore. It is one of those poems in which the peculiar inimitable quality of our greatest lyric poet comes out with supreme force, beauty and sweetness. Rabindra Babu has a legion of imitators and many have been very successful in catching up his less valuable mannerisms of style and verse, as is the manner of imitators all the world over. But the poignant sweetness, passion and spiritual depth and mystery of a poem like this, the haunting cadences subtle with a subtlety which is not of technique but of the soul, and the honeyladen felicity of the expression, these are the essential Rabindranath and cannot be imitated, because they are things of the spirit and one must have the same sweetness and depth of soul before one can hope to catch any of these desirable qualities. We emphasise this inimitableness because the legion of imitators we mention are doing harm to the progress of our poetry as well as to the reputation of their model and we would suggest to them to study this poem and realise the folly of their persistent attempt. One of the most remarkable peculiarities of Rabindra Babu's genius is the happiness and originality with which he has absorbed the whole spirit of Vaishnav poetry and turned it into something essentially the same and yet new and modern. He has given the old sweet spirit of emotional and passionate religion an expression of more delicate and complex richness voiceful of subtler and more penetratingly spiritual shades of feeling than

the deep-hearted but simple early age of Bengal could know. The old Vaishnav *bhāva* — there is no English word for it, — was easily seizable, broad and strong. The *bhāva* of these poems is not translatable in any other language than that the poet has used, — a striking proof is the unsatisfactory attempt of the poet himself, recorded in another article in this issue, to explain in prose his own poem, *Sonar Tari*. But while the intellect tries in vain to find other intellectual symbols for the poet's meaning, the poetry seizes on the heart and convinces the imagination. These poems are of the essence of poetry and refuse to be rendered in any prose equivalent. Poetry is created not from the intellect or the outer imagination but comes from a deeper source within to which men have no means of access except when the divine part within seizes on the brain and makes it a passive instrument for utterance the full meaning of which the brain is unable at the moment to grasp. This is the divine mania and enthusiasm which the subtle spiritual discernment of Plato discovered to be the real meaning of what we call inspiration. And of this unattainable force the best lyrics of Rabindranath are full to overflowing.

The article *Shantiniketan Rabindranath* by S. J. Jitendranath Banerji is another feature of great interest. The writer has a good descriptive gift and the passages which describe the Shantiniketan are admirable; but the chief interest naturally centres in the conversation with the poet which is recorded with great fullness. The private talk of a rich and gifted nature with a power of conversational expression is always suggestive and we await with interest the future issue of this article. We hope Jitendra Babu will give us a fuller view of the remarkable educational experiment which this original mind is developing in the quiet shades of Bolpur. The brief hints given of the moral training and the method of education followed point to a system far in advance of the National Council of Education which is still tyrannised over by a tradition and method not only European but unprogressively European. A brief instalment of S. J. Aurobindo Ghose's *Karakahini* is also given which describes the identification parades of the Bomb Case, gives some glimpses



of the approver Noren Gossain and deals with the personal character of some of the jail officials. *Nanak Charit* by Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitra, the first instalment of which is given in this issue, commands interest both by its subject and the name of its writer. The two chapters given are full of interesting details of Nanak's birth and childhood and promise an attractive biography of one of the greatest names in religious history. An article of minor importance is the continuation of Sj. Jadunath Chakrabarti's *Ekannabarti Paribar o Strishiksha*, which is of considerable merit. The author has seized on two of the great advantages of the joint family system, its ideal of a wider brotherhood and unity and its ample training in morale and capacity. *Dainik Bal* and the poem *Bodhan* seem to us to be failures, but there is no other feature of this number which is without merit or interest.

We have left to the last Dr. P. C. Ray's long article on "The Bengali Brain and its Misuse". It is a long indictment of past and present Bengal, covering sixteen pages of the magazine. Dr. P. C. Ray is a name which is already a pride to the nation to which he belongs and his deep scientific knowledge, original research and creativeness are one of the most conspicuous instances of that strong, acute and capable Bengali intellect which he admits to be inferior to none. Any article from his pen must be of great interest and cannot be without value. But it is one of the unfortunate results of the denationalising influence of our past education that a mind like Dr. Ray's should be without intellectual sympathy for the old national culture whose inherited tendencies his own character, life and achievements illustrate in so distinguished a manner. If it had not been for the past which Dr. P. C. Ray condemns, such noble types as the last fifty years of Bengal teems with, would not have been possible. As to the necessity of far-reaching changes in the future we do not greatly differ with the writer. The immediate past has been a period of contraction and the reservation of strength, the future will be a period of expansion and the liberation and expenditure of strength. The structure of the new age must necessarily differ from that of the old. But the spirit of the article is narrow and

intolerant. It is couched in that general spirit of self-depreciation and indiscriminate fault-finding which was a characteristic of our people when national hope and energy were at their nadir. There are all the stock denunciations with which we were familiar before the recent resurgence. Such writings void of the note of hope, encouragement and energy, will not help a nation to rise but rather depress it and push it back into the past. Moreover, Dr. Ray makes the same mistake which European writers made when they condemned the Middle Ages wholesale because they were a period of contraction and not of expansion. That mistake has now been recognised in Europe and justice has been done to that which was praiseworthy as well as to that which was bad in the "Dark Ages". We in India are recovering from a similar error and if there are those who go to the opposite extreme and see nothing good outside the mediaeval Hindu culture and forms, the same thing happened in Europe and for the same reason, as a reaction from that very intolerance and sweeping denunciation which are the spirit of Dr. Ray's article. It cannot last any more than it lasted in Europe. Some of the strictures we hold to be too much at secondhand; especially in his criticisms of religion the writer seems to us to be wandering outside the province in which he can speak with authority. After all one must enter into the spirit of an age and civilisation before one can profitably criticise it, otherwise we miss the meaning of history and falsify its values. Nevertheless the article is ably written and should be studied as a complete expression of the Europeanised standpoint in looking at Indian problems. As to the present, Dr. Ray lays too much stress on the survivals of the end of the nineteenth century when the national consciousness touched bottom and ignores the youthful strength and energy which is preparing the twentieth.

## “Hymns to the Goddess”<sup>1</sup>

**T**HIS IS one of a series of publications by Mr. Arthur Avalon consisting of texts and translations of the Tantras. The hymns collected and translated in this volume are, however, taken from other sources besides the Tantras. Many of them are from the considerable body of devotional hymns attributed by tradition to the philosopher Shankaracharya, a few from the Mahabharata and the Puranas. Most are well-known *stotras* addressed to the various forms and names of the female Energy, Mother of the worlds, whose worship is an important part of that many-sided and synthetic whole which we call Hinduism.

The work of translation has been admirably done. The one slight defect is the preservation untranslated of Sanskrit words other than names which might well have been rendered into English. The translation is at once faithful, simple and graceful in style and rhythm. No English version can reproduce the majesty of the Sanskrit rhythms and the colour and power of the original, but within the limits of the possible the work could hardly have been better executed.

The translation is accompanied by brief but numerous notes. Mr. Avalon has made a principle of submission to the authority of the Hindu commentators and learned men whom he has consulted or taken as his guides in the study of the Tantra. He writes, “It is necessary to study the Hindu commentators and to seek the oral aid of those who possess the traditional interpretation of the Shashtra. Without this and an understanding of what Hindu worship is and means, absurd mistakes are likely to be made. I have thus, in addition to such oral aid, availed myself of the Commentaries of Nilakantha on the Mahabharata, of Gopala

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Sanskrit by Arthur and Ellen Avalon (Luzac and Co., London).

Chakravarti and Nagoji Bhatta on Chandi, and of Nilakantha on the Devibhagavata. As regards the Tantra, the great Sadhana Shastra, nothing which is both of an understanding and accurate character can be achieved without a study of the original texts undertaken with the assistance of the Tantric gurus and pundits who are the authorised custodians of its traditions." This careful scrupulousness is undoubtedly the right attitude for the work which Mr. Avalon has set himself, — to present to the English-reading public the philosophy and worship of the Tantra and the way of the Shaktas as they have been traditionally practised and understood in mediaeval and modern India. The method followed assures a sound basis free from the vagaries of learned ignorance and unfettered ingenuity which render so much of the work of European scholarship on Indian subjects fantastic, unsound and ephemeral. It cannot, we think, be the final attitude; an independent scrutiny of the ancient scriptures and forms of philosophy and religion is needed through the whole range of Indian thought and devotion both to recover their more ancient and original forms and principles often concealed by later accretions and crystallisings and to separate from them whatever is of imperishable worth and utility for the spiritual future of mankind. But meanwhile, and especially when a great and difficult subject is being for the first time brought forward in an adequate manner to general notice, the conservative method is undoubtedly the most desirable.

Commentators, however, even the most learned, are subject to error, as Mr. Avalon has had to recognise in his translation of the verse which declares that all women without exception are forms of the Great Mother. The commentator would have us believe that the phrase *striyaḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu* means all women who possess the sixty-four arts and are devoted to their husbands, are modest, etc. The translator rightly rejects this conventional distortion of a great and profound philosophical truth; he translates "all women without exception throughout the world". We wonder whether the phrase does not admit of a different shade cutting deeper into the heart of things. The lines are,

*Vidyāḥ samastās tava devi bhedāḥ  
Striyāḥ samastāḥ sakalā jagatsu.*

Is there not a hint of a distinction between the simple *bhedāḥ* and *sakalāḥ*? "All sciences, O Goddess, are different parts of thee, all women entirely in the worlds." The sense would then be that wherever the feminine principle is found in the living personality, we have the entire presence of the world-supporting maternal soul of the Divinity. The Devi with all her aspects, *kalās*, is there in the Woman; in the Woman we have to see Durga, Annapurna, Tara, the Mahavidyas, and therefore it is said in the Tantra, in the line quoted by Mr. Avalon in his preface, "Wherever one sees the feet of Woman, one should give worship in one's soul even as to one's guru." Thus this thought of the Shakta side of Hinduism becomes an uncompromising declaration of the divinity of woman completing the Vedantic declaration of the concealed divinity in man which we are too apt to treat in practice as if it applied only in the masculine. We put away in silence, even when we do not actually deny it, the perfect equality in difference of the double manifestation.

There are other instances in which the translators seem to us not to have escaped the misleading wiles of the commentator. We may instance the passage in the Hymn to Mahadevi in which the Goddess is described as being "both black and grey". "Smoke-coloured" would be a closer rendering of the epithet *dhūmra*. We are told in the note that it means "that which is with smoke, the sacrificial rite, here the knowledge of the rites". This is a scholastic interpretation which we cannot accept. The different hues of the Goddess are always psychologically symbolic and Mr. Avalon has himself an excellent passage to that effect in his Introduction. But, although occasionally provoking dissent, the notes are throughout interesting and instructive and often throw a new light on the implications of the text.

Mr. Avalon in his publications insists upon the greatness of the Tantra and seeks to clear away by a dispassionate statement of the real facts the cloud of misconceptions which have obscured our view of this profound and powerful system. We shall

have occasion to deal with this aspect of his work when we come to speak of the Mahanirvana Tantra. In this volume he justifies against European prejudice the attribution of the feminine form and quality to God and against modern ignorance generally the image-worship which the Tantra in common with other Hindu systems makes part of the first stage in religious progress. On both points we are in general agreement with his standpoint, though we do not hold that religious evolution must necessarily follow the line laid down by the Tantra.

Human conceptions of the Divine divide themselves first into the worship of the formed and the aspiration towards the formless, secondly, into the adoration of the Qualified and the urge of the rarest spirits towards the Unqualified, the Absolute. For all these stages the Tantric worship and discipline provides. How can the Formless invest Himself with form, asks the religious rationalist. The universe is there to reply. Hinduism worships Narayana in the stone, the tree, the animal, the human being. That which the intellectual and spiritual pride or severity of other religions scorns, it makes its pride and turns into its own form of logical severity. Stocks and stones, the quadruped and the human being, all these are equals in God, our brothers in the Divine, forms that the Omnipresent has not disdained to assume. But beyond the material forms there are others that are ideal and symbolic, but not less, if anything more real, more full of divine power than any actual physical manifestation. These are the mental images in which we worship God. The Hindu believes that to whatever form he brings his devotion, the love of God is bound to assume and vivify it, and we cannot say that the belief is irrational. For if there is a Consciousness in the universe and transcending it which answers to the yearning of all these creatures and perhaps Itself yearns towards them with the love of the Father, the Mother, the Friend, the Lover, and a love surpassing all these, then it is idle to suppose that It would assume or create for its own pleasure and glory the forms of the universe, but would disdain as an offence to Its dignity or purity those which the love of the worshipper offers to It and which after all Itself has formed in his heart or his imagination.

To these mental forms mental worship may be offered, and this is the higher way; or we may give the material foundation, the *pratiṣṭhā*, of a statue or pictured image to form a physical nodus for a physical act of worship.

In the formless also we worship God, in His qualities, in His Love, Power, Bliss, Wisdom, in the great cosmic Principles by which He manifests Himself to the eye of knowledge. We worship Him as the Impersonality manifested in these things or the Personality containing them. And we rise at the apex of the pinnacle into that which is not only formless, *arūpa*, but *nirguṇa*, qualityless, the indefinable, *anirdeśyam*, of the Gita. In our human ignorance, with our mental passion for degrees and distinctions, for superiorities and exclusions, we thus grade these things and say that this is superior, that is for ignorant and inferior souls. Do we know? The Theist looks down with reprobation on the form-adoring man-worshipping idolater and polytheist; the Adwaitin looks down with a calm and tolerant indulgence on the ignorance of the quality-adoring personality-bemused Theist. But it seems to us that God scorns nothing, that the Soul of all things may take as much delight in the prayer of a little child or the offering of a flower or a leaf before a pictured image as in the philosopher’s leap from the summit of thought into the indefinable and unknowable and that he does best who can rise and widen into the shoreless realisation and yet keep the heart of the little child and the capacity of the seer of forms.

At any rate, this is an attitude towards which these Hymns to the Goddess bring us very near. They are full of the glories of her form, her visible body; full of the thinker’s perception of her in all the shapes of the universe; full of the power of her psychological aspects; pervaded too by a sense behind and often expressed of her final unity and transcendence. Mr. Avalon brings this out with great force and vividness in his Introduction. But it should be manifest even to a careless reader of the Hymns. Take the following passage:—

Reverence to Her who is eternal, Raudra,  
To Gauri and Dhatri, reverence and again reverence,

To Her who is moonlight and in the form of the moon,  
To Her who is supreme bliss, reverence for ever.

That is from the famous hymn in the Chandi-Mahatmya, deservedly one of the best known in sacred literature; but everywhere we find the same crowding of different aspects. In a hymn of which the eleventh verse is a sensuous description of the physical goddess, —

O Gauri! with all my heart  
I contemplate Thy form,  
Beauteous of face,  
With its weight of hanging hair,  
With full breasts and rounded slender waist,  
Holding in three hands a rosary, a pitcher and book  
And with thy fourth hand making the jnanamudra, —

(mark how the close passes naturally into the psychological symbolism of the form), the ninth is a remarkable piece of Yogic imagery, —

O Mother! like the sleeping King of serpents  
Residing in the centre of the first lotus,  
Thou didst create the universe.  
Thou dost ascend like a streak of lightning,  
And attainest the ethereal region; —

and the opening is the highest philosophy expressed with great poetic force and interspersed with passages of the richest poetic colour —

The cause and Mother of the world,  
She whose form is that of the Shabdabrahman,  
And whose substance is bliss.

Thou art the primordial One,  
Mother of countless creatures,  
Creatrix of the bodies of the Lotus-born, Vishnu and Shiva,  
Who creates, preserves and destroys the worlds. . . .



Although Thou art the primordial cause of the world,  
Yet art Thou ever youthful.  
Although Thou art the Daughter of the Mountain-King,  
Yet art Thou full of tenderness.  
Although Thou art the Mother of the Vedas,  
Yet they cannot describe Thee.  
Although men must meditate upon Thee,  
Yet cannot their mind comprehend Thee.

This hymn is quoted as culled from a Tantric compilation, the *Tantrasara*. Its opening is full of the supreme meaning of the great Devi symbol, its close is an entire self-abandonment to the adoration of the body of the Mother. This catholicity is typical of the whole Tantric system, which is in its aspiration one of the greatest attempts yet made to embrace the whole of God manifested and unmanifested in the adoration, self-discipline and knowledge of a single human soul.

## “South Indian Bronzes”<sup>1</sup>

THE DISCOVERY of Oriental Art by the aesthetic mind of Europe is one of the most significant intellectual phenomena of the times. It is one element of a general change which has been coming more and more rapidly over the mentality of the human race and promises to culminate in the century to which we belong. This change began with the discovery of Eastern thought and the revolt of Europe against the limitations of the Graeco-Roman and the Christian ideals which had for some centuries united in an uneasy combination to give a new form to her mentality and type of life. The change, whose real nature could not be distinguished so long as the field was occupied by the battle between Science and Religion, now more and more reveals itself as an attempt of humanity to recover its lost soul. Long overlaid by the life of the intellect and the vital desires, distorted and blinded by a devout religious obscurantism the soul in humanity seems at last to be resurgent and insurgent. The desire to live, think, act, create from a greater depth in oneself, to know the Unknown, to express with sincerity all that is expressible of the Infinite, this is the trend of humanity's future. A philosophy, a literature, an Art, a society which shall correspond to that which is deepest and highest in man and realise something more than the satisfaction of the senses, the desire of the vital parts and the expediences and efficiencies recognised by the intellect without excluding these necessary elements, these are the things humanity is turning to seek, though in the midst of a chaotic groping, uncertainty and confusion.

At such a juncture the value of Eastern Thought and Eastern Art to the world is altogether incalculable. For their greatness

<sup>1</sup> By O. C. Gangoly. Published by the Indian Society of Oriental Arts, Calcutta. Sold by Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta, and Luzac and Co., 46, Great Russell Street, London.

is that they have never yet fallen away from the ancient truth, the truth of the Soul; they have not gone out of the Father's house to live on the husks of the sense and the life and the body; they have always seen in the mind and body only instruments for the expression of that which is deeper and greater than its instruments. Even intellect and emotion had for them only a secondary value. Not to imitate Nature but to reveal that which she has hidden, to find significative forms which shall embody for us what her too obvious and familiar symbols conceal, has been the aim of the greatest Art, the Art of prehistoric antiquity and of those countries and ages whose culture has been faithful to the original truth of the Spirit. Greek culture, on the other hand, deviated on a path which led away from this truth to the obvious and external reality of the senses. The Greeks sought to use the forms of Nature as they saw and observed them, slightly idealised, a little uplifted, with a reproduction of her best achievement and not, like modern realism, of her deformities and failures; and though they at first used this form to express an ideal, it was bound in the end to turn to the simple service of the intellect and the senses. Mediaeval Art attempted to return to a deeper motive; but great as were its achievements, they dwelt in a certain dim obscurity, an unilluminated mystery which contrasts strongly with the light of deeper knowledge that informs the artistic work of the East. We have now throughout the world a search, an attempt on various lines to discover some principle of significant form in Art which shall escape from the obvious and external and combine delight with profundity, the power of a more searching knowledge with the depth of suggestion, emotion and ecstasy which are the very breath of aesthetic creation. The search has led to many extravagances and cannot be said to have been as yet successful, but it may be regarded as a sure sign and precursor of a new and greater age of human achievement.

The Oriental Art recognised in Europe has been principally that of China and Japan. It is only recently that the aesthetic mind of the West has begun to open to the greatness of Indian creation in this field or at least to those elements of it which are most characteristic and bear the stamp of the ancient spiritual

greatness. Indian Architecture has indeed been always admired, but chiefly in the productions of the Indo-Saracenic school which in spite of their extraordinary delicacy and beauty have not the old-world greatness and power of the best Hindu, Jain and Buddhist work. But Indian sculpture and painting have till recently been scouted as barbarous and inartistic, and for this reason, that they have, more than any other Oriental work, deliberately remained in the extreme of the ancient symbolic conception of the plastic Arts and therefore most entirely offended the rational and imitative eye which is Europe's inheritance from the Hellene. It is a curious sign of the gulf between the two conceptions that an European writer will almost always fix for praise precisely on those Indian sculptures which are farthest away from the Indian tradition, — as for instance the somewhat vulgar productions of the Gandhara or bastard Graeco-Indian school or certain statues which come nearest to a faithful imitation of natural forms but are void of inspiration and profound suggestion.

Recently, however, the efforts of Mr. Havell and the work of the new school of Indian artists have brought about or at least commenced something like a revolution in the aesthetic standpoint of Western critics. Competent minds have turned their attention to Indian work and assigned it a high place in the artistic creation of the East and even the average European writer has been partly compelled to understand that Indian statuary and Indian painting have canons of their own and cannot be judged either by a Hellenistic or a realistic standard. More salutary still, the mind of the educated Indian has received a useful shock and may perhaps now be lifted out of the hideous banality of unaesthetic taste into which it had fallen. Whatever benefits the laudable and well-meaning efforts of English educationists may have bestowed on this country, it is certain that, aided by the inrush of the vulgar, the mechanical and the commonplace from the commercial West, they had succeeded in entirely vulgarising the aesthetic mind and soul of the Indian people. Its innate and instinctive artistic taste has disappeared; the eye and the aesthetic sense have not been so much corrupted as killed. What more flagrant sign of this debacle could there be

than the fact that all educated India hailed the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma, an incompetent imitation of the worst European styles, as the glory of a new dawn and that hideous and glaring reproductions of them still adorning its dwellings? A rebirth of Indian taste supporting a new Indian Art which shall inspire itself with the old spirit while seeking for fresh forms is now, however, possible and it is certainly a great desideratum for the future. For nothing can be more helpful towards the discovery of that which we are now vaguely seeking, a new Art which shall no longer labour to imitate Nature but strive rather to find fresh significant forms for the expression of the Self.

It is necessary to this end that the wealth of their ancient Art should be brought before the eyes of the people, and it is gratifying to find that an increasing amount of pioneer work is being done in this respect, although still all too scanty. The book before us, Mr. O. C. Gangoly's *South Indian Bronzes*, must rank as one of the best of them all. Southern India, less ravaged than the North by the invader and the vandal and profiting by the historic displacement of the centre of Indian culture southward, teems with artistic treasures. Mr. Gangoly's book gives us, in an opulent collection of nearly a hundred fine plates preceded by five chapters of letterpress, one side of the artistic work of the South, — its bronzes, chiefly representing the gods and devotees of the Shaiva religion, — for the Shaiva religion has been as productive of sublime and suggestive work in the plastic arts as has been the Vaishnava all over India of great, profound and passionate poetry. This book is a sumptuous production and almost as perfect as any work of the kind can be in the present state of our knowledge.

There are certain minor defects which we feel bound to point out to the author. The work abounds with useful quotations from unprinted Sanskrit works on the rules and conventions of the sculptural Art, works attributed to Agastya and others; but their value is somewhat lessened by the chaotic system of transliteration which Mr. Gangoly has adopted. He is writing for all India and Europe as well; why then adopt the Bengali solecism which neglects the distinction between the *b* and the *ν* of

the Sanskrit alphabet or that still more ugly and irrational freak by which some in Bengal insist on substituting for the aspirate *bh* the English *v*? Even in these errors the writer is not consistent; he represents the Sanskrit *v* sometimes by *b* and sometimes by *v*, and *bh* indifferently by *v*, *vh* or *bh*. Such vagaries are disconcerting and offend against the sense of order and accuracy. It is always difficult to read Sanskrit in the Roman alphabet which is entirely unsuited to that language, but this kind of system or want of system turns the difficulty almost into an impossibility. We hope that in the important works which he promises us on Pallava Sculpture and South Indian Sculptures Mr. Gangoly will remedy this imperfection of detail.

The first chapter of the letterpress deals with the legendary origins of South Indian art. It is interesting and valuable, but there are some startlingly confident statements against which our critical sense protests. For instance, “it is *beyond doubt* that the two divisions of the country indicated by the Vindhya ranges were occupied by people essentially different in blood and temperament.” Surely the important theories which hold the whole Indian race to be Dravidian in blood or, without assigning either an “Aryan” or “non-Aryan” origin, believe it to be homogeneous — omitting some islander types on the southern coast and the Mongoloid races of the Himalaya, — cannot be so lightly dismissed. The question is full of doubt and obscurity. The one thing that seems fairly established is that there were at least two types of culture in ancient India, the “Aryan” occupying the Punjab and Northern and Central India, Afghanistan and perhaps Persia and distinguished in its cult by the symbols of the Sun, the Fire and the Soma sacrifice, and the un-Aryan occupying the East, South and West, the nature of which it is quite impossible to restore from the scattered hints which are all we possess.

Again we are astonished to observe that Mr. Gangoly seems to accept the traditional attribution of the so-called Agastya Shastras to the Vedic Rishi of that name. The quotations from these books are in classical Sanskrit of a fairly modern type, certainly later than the pre-Christian era though Mr. Gangoly

on quite insufficient grounds puts them before Buddha. It is impossible to believe that they are the work of the Rishi, husband of Lopamudra, who composed the great body of hymns in an archaic tongue that close the first Mandala of the Rig Veda. Nor can we accept the astonishing identification of the Puranic Prajapati, Kashyapa, progenitor of creatures, with the father of the Kanada who founded the Vaisheshika philosophy. It distresses us to see Indian inquirers with their great opportunities simply following in the path of certain European scholars, accepting and adding to their unstable fantasies, their huge superstructures founded on weak and scattered evidence and their imaginative "history" of our prehistoric ages. There is better and sounder work to be done and Indians can do it admirably as Mr. Gangoly himself has shown in this book; for the rest of the work, where he has not to indulge in these *obiter dicta*, is admirable and flawless. There is a sobriety and reserve, a solidity of statement and a sort of sparing exhaustiveness which make it quite the best work of the kind we have yet come across. The chapters on the Shilpashastra and the review of the distribution of Shaivite and other work in Southern India are extremely interesting and well-written and the last brief chapter of criticism is perfect both in what it says and what it refrains from saying.

Mr. Gangoly's collection of plates, 94 in number, illustrates Southern work in bronze in all its range. It opens with a fine Kalasamhara and a number of Dancing Shivas, the characteristic image of the Shaivite art, and contains a great variety of figures; there are among them some beautiful images of famous Shaivite bhaktas. A few examples of Vaishnava art are also given. In a collection so ample and so representative it is obvious that there must be a good deal of work which falls considerably below the best, but the general impression is that of a mass of powerful, striking and inspired creations. And throughout there is that dominant note which distinguishes Indian art from any other whether of the Occident or of the Orient. All characteristic Oriental art indeed seeks to go beyond the emotions and the senses; a Japanese landscape of snow and hill is as much an image of the soul as a Buddha or a flame-haired spirit of the

thunderbolt. Nature will not see herself there as in a mirror, but rather herself transformed into something wonderfully not herself which is yet her own deeper reality. But still there is a difference, and it seems to lie in this that other Oriental art, even though it goes beyond the external, usually remains in the cosmic, in the limits of Prakriti, but here there is a perpetual reaching beyond into something absolute, infinite, supernatural, the very ecstasy of the Divine. Even in work not of the best finish or most living inspiration there is this touch which gives it a greatness beyond its actual achievement; rarely indeed does the statuary fall into mere technique or descend entirely into the physical and external.

It is this tendency, as the author well explains, which causes and in a sense justifies the recoil and incomprehension of the average Occidental mind; for it comes to Art with a demand for the satisfaction of the senses, the human emotions, the imagination moving among familiar things. It does not ask for a god or for a symbol of the beyond, but for a figure admirably done with scrupulous fidelity to Nature and the suggestion of some vision, imagination, feeling or idea well within the normal range of human experience.<sup>2</sup> The Indian artist deliberately ignores all these demands. His technique is perfect enough; he uses sculptural line with a consummate mastery, often with an incomparable charm, grace and tenderness. The rhythm and movement of his figures have a life and power and perfection which conveys a deeper reality than the more intellectualised and less purely intuitive symmetries and groupings of the European styles. But these bodies are not, when we look close at them, bronze representations of human flesh and human life, but forms of divine life, embodiments of the gods. The human type is exceeded, and if sometimes one more subtly and psychically beautiful replaces it, at other times all mere physical beauty is contemptuously disregarded.

<sup>2</sup> This was the traditional standpoint, the view of Art dominant at the time of writing but, though it still survives, it is no longer dominant. Art and aesthetics in Europe have swung round to an opposite extreme.



What these artists strive always to express is the soul and those pure and absolute states of the mind and heart in which the soul manifests its essential being void of all that is petty, transient, disturbed and restless. In their human figures it is almost always devotion that is manifested; for this in the Shaiva and Vaishnava religions is the pure state of the soul turned towards God. The power of the artist is extraordinary. Not only the face, the eyes, the pose but the whole body and every curve and every detail aid in the effect and seem to be concentrated into the essence of absolute adoration, submission, ecstasy, love, tenderness which is the Indian idea of *bhakti*. These are not figures of devotees, but of the very personality of devotion. Yet while the Indian mind is seized and penetrated to the very roots of its being by this living and embodied ecstasy, it is quite possible that the Occidental, not trained in the same spiritual culture, would miss almost entirely the meaning of the image and might only see a man praying.

The reason becomes evident when we study the images of the gods. These deities are far removed indeed from the Greek and the Christian conceptions; they do not live in the world at all, but in themselves, in the infinite. The form is, as it were, a wave in which the whole ocean of being expresses itself. The significance varies; sometimes it is unfathomable thought, sometimes the self-restraint of infinite power, sometimes the self-contained oceanic surge of divine life and energy, sometimes the absolute immortal ecstasy. But always one has to look not at the form, but through and into it to see that which has seized and informed it. The appeal of this art is in fact to the human soul for communion with the divine Soul and not merely to the understanding, the imagination and the sensuous eye. It is a sacred and hieratic art, expressive of the profound thought of Indian philosophy and the deep passion of Indian worship. It seeks to render to the soul that can feel and the eye that can see the extreme values of the suprasensuous.

And yet there is a certain difference one notes which distinguishes most of these southern bronzes from the sublime and majestic stone sculptures of the earlier periods. It is the note of

lyrism in the form, the motive of life, grace, rhythm. To use the terms of Indian philosophy, most art expresses the play of Prakriti; Buddhistic art in its most characteristic creations expresses the absolute repose of the Purusha; Hindu art tends to combine the Purusha and Prakriti in one image. But in the earlier stone sculptures it is the sublime repose, tranquil power, majestic concentration of the Deity which the whole image principally represents even in poses expressive of violent movement; the movement is self-contained, subordinated to the repose. We find the same motive in some of these bronzes, notably in the wonderful majestically self-possessed thought and power of the Kalasamhara image of Shiva (Plate I);<sup>3</sup> but for the most part it is life and rhythm that predominate in the form even when there is no actual suggestion of movement. This is the motive of the Nataraja, the Dancing Shiva, which seems to us to strike the dominant note of this art; the self-absorbed concentration, the motionless peace and joy are within, outside is the whole mad bliss of the cosmic movement. But even other figures that stand or sit seem often to represent only pauses of the dance; often the thought and repose are concentrated in the head and face, the body is quick with potential movement. This art seems to us to reflect in bronze the lyrical outburst of the Shaivite and Vaishnava devotional literature while the older sculpture had the inspiration of the spiritual epos of the Buddha or else reflects in stone the sublimity of the Upanishads. The aim of a renascent Indian art must be to recover the essence of these great motives and to add the freedom and variety of the soul's self-expression in the coming age when man's search after the Infinite need no longer be restricted to given types or led along one or two great paths, but may at last be suffered to answer with a joyous flexibility the many-sided call of the secret Mystery behind Life to its children.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the plate in *South Indian Bronzes* — Ed



3. Kalasamhara Shiva



4. Sundaramurti, the Shaivite Saint

## “God, the Invisible King”

A REMARKABLE book with this title by the well-known writer and thinker, Mr. H. G. Wells, has recently appeared, of which only a few extracts are before us, but these are sufficient to reveal its character and thought. It is on the part of the writer, speaking not for himself personally alone but as scribe to the spirit of his generation, a definite renunciation of the gospel of an all-sufficient rationalism, a discovery of God, a profession of faith in spirituality as the one lever by which mankind can rise out of the darkness and confusion of its present state into a more perfect living. He professes his faith in the God within, the invisible King, who is the immortal part of us, in a coming kingdom of God upon earth which shall not only be a spiritual state in the individual, but the open brotherhood of a divine rule among men, and in self-identification with God, service of him, absolute surrender to him as the whole rule of life for the enlightened modern man. This is, indeed, a remarkable change of spirit and change of mental outlook and, if Mr. Wells' claim is just that he is writing as a scribe to the spirit of his generation, it means a revolution in Europe far more important than the Russian with all its idealism and its hopes for a new and beneficent change in politics and society. It means the union of Eastern spiritual knowledge and religious faith with Western pragmatic idealism and their fusion into the basis of a new culture and, we will not say a new universal religion, — for religion must vary with the variations of human nature, — but a new practical spirituality in which all mankind can become one.

There is much in Mr. Wells' statement of his new-born belief that is imperfect, limited and a little crude, much that is grasped with an over-hasty zeal, as was inevitable in the first light of an unripe awakening. Some of the old limitations of the rationalistic Western mind with its too external outlook upon things still cling

about his new spiritual discovery. He tells us that the kingdom of God on earth is "not a metaphor, not a mere spiritual state, not a dream, not an uncertain project, . . . it is the close and inevitable destiny of mankind." This classing of the inner spiritual state, the kingdom of God within us, with a metaphor, a dream, an uncertain project reveals the lingering taint of an excessive pragmatism. The spiritual state is the one thing indispensable; until the mass of mankind can awaken into it, the dream of a perfect society, an open brotherhood of God's rule, must end in failure and disappointment. The kingdom of God within is the sole possible foundation for the kingdom of God without; for it is the spirit by which man lives that conditions the outer forms of his life.

Misled by this external view of things Mr. Wells, evidently, still believes that a political and social action is sufficient to bring about the millennium. He has discovered that this action must be driven by a spiritual motive, pursued in the passion of a true religious fervour, consecrated to the indwelling God, effective only by an absolute self-surrender to the Divine. But he has a limited vision of his God and brings to it all the aggressiveness and something of the fanaticism of all such limited religious conceptions. "The new conceptions," he writes, "do not tolerate either kings or aristocracies or democracies. Its implicit command to all its adherents is to make plain the way to the world theocracy. Its rule of life is the discovery and service of the will of God which dwells in the hearts of men and the performance of that will" in the life of the believer, the individual, and of the nation of which he is a part. "I give myself to God not only because I am so and so, but because I am mankind. . . . I become a knight in God's service. . . . I become a responsible minister of my king. I take sides against injustice, disorder, and against all those temporal kings, emperors, princes, landlords and owners who set themselves against God's rule and worship. Kings, owners and all who claim rule and decision in the world's affairs, must either show themselves clearly the fellow-servants of the believer or become the object of his steadfast antagonism."

All this is very forcibly said, but it shows that the writer

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has not grasped the whole spiritual truth; he has not gone deep enough inward. As once he dreamed of a class of scientific and rational supermen establishing a perfect social rule upon earth, so now he thinks that by the action of his banded servants of the invisible King declaring political and social war upon godless Czars, Kaisers, rulers and capitalists the same end can be achieved. With them is God; in them God dwells, in the others, presumably, he does not dwell; those who have surrendered absolutely to him are the citizens of the kingdom and on them shall be peace; those who do not surrender or even fall short in their surrender, are interlopers, against them the sword. A very old kind of militant religionism in a very modern form. It ignores two ancient, two eternal spiritual truths; first, that God dwells in all and, secondly, that only by becoming conscious of the God within from within can humanity be saved. God dwells in all and not only in the believer who is conscious of him, — dwells disguised and veiled, and it is by helping others to awaken to the veiled Divine within them that we go the straight way to the founding of his kingdom on earth. True, an outward battle also has to be fought, but against forces, against institutions which stand in the way of the spreading of the light and the reign of brotherhood, not against men as unbelievers, — in a spirit of understanding, of knowledge, of firm will, but also of charity for ignorance and of love for the misled. God, says Mr. Wells, is boundless love, but this boundless love, it seems, is not infinite enough to embrace those who do not believe with you; it rejects them with a steadfast antagonism, it banishes them as "interlopers". God's work least of all should be pursued in a spirit of partisan and sectarian antagonism, but rather with a remembrance that the battle is only a way to peace and the peace must come by the inner submission of the opponent through his recognition of the Divine, through his awakening. It is not enough that the believer should perform God's will and fight for the performance of that will "in the acts and order of the state and nation of which he is a part." The nation also must be brought not only to believe, but to know, to see, to live in God, otherwise the national performance of God's will, even

if momentarily secured, will soon degenerate into a form. It is possible that what the old religions called "the rule of the saints" may be a preliminary step to the establishment of the full kingdom of God, but that rule can only become secure by the light and fire which is in them kindling itself in the hearts of all mankind.

These defects of outlook come from a defect in the conception of the Divine. It consists of "complete Agnosticism in the matter of God the Creator and entire faith in the matter of God the Redeemer". A distinction is made between the Veiled Being behind the universe and the living reality in our lives; the latter alone is the true God. He is a personal and intimate God. He is finite. He is a spirit, a single spirit and a single person. He has come, we know not whence, into the conflict of life. He has begun and will never end. And yet he is the immortal part and leader of mankind, our friend and brother and light of the world. And from these first principles is drawn a description of God as certain qualities, boundless love, boundless courage, boundless generosity, thought and steadfast will, and as having motives, characteristics, an aim. "This is the belief of the modern mind", read, the modern Western mind, "with regard to God."

We can see whence the crudities of this belief arise. The Western mind is still burdened with its scientific vision of the universe as a play of brute force, of life as a struggle, the world a material entity, and therefore of the Spirit of the world, if any there be, conceived agnostically or with a sort of materialistic Pantheism as standing for these things only, the Breath of a physical universe, a sort of mechanical, inconscient Soul of things. Out of this pure materiality mind and soul inexplicably evolve. God appears only in man and his aspiration, his longings for a higher order of things, for love, universal sympathy, immortality. This God and the mechanical inconscient Spirit of the world the Western mind finds it difficult — and no wonder — to bring under the same term. The simple harmonious truth that God is veiled in the material universe which is only the lowest term, the first appearance of the cosmic Reality, that he unveils himself partially and progressively in man and to man, and that man by



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growth into self-knowledge and God-knowledge can grow into the whole truth of God and existence, which is one truth, — this seems still to be hidden from these wise men of the West. His partial unveiling in man seems to them a birth of the once non-existent Divine, a coming of God into the world, one knows not whence; and because man appears to be finite, God whom they conceive of as the sum of human aspiration to good, truth, beauty, immortality, is also conceived of as finite. But how is that which has begun in Time secure against ending in Time? and how can a finite God be infinite love, courage, strength? Only that which was from ever, can be for ever, and only that which is infinite in being, can be infinite in force and quality. We have here an echo of the inconsequent Christian paradox of a soul born by the birth of the body, yet immortal to all eternity, combined with the metaphysical dogma of a God existent, not in being, but in becoming. There is an element of truth and value in this belief, but it brings disabling limitations into our inner realisation of God and the practice of a divine life to which it gives a foundation.

## “Rupam”<sup>1</sup>

THE APPEARANCE of this superb quarterly admirable in its artistic get-up and its fine reproductions of Indian sculpture and painting, admirable in the accomplished excellence of its matter, — the name of the editor, Mr. O. C. Gangoly, the one man most especially fitted by his knowledge and capacity for this work, is of itself a sufficient guarantee of excellence, — is a significant indication of the progress that is being made in the revival of the aesthetic mind of India. As-sailed and corrupted in a time of cultural decline and arrest of its creative and artistic faculty by an alien aesthesis and ideals antithetic to its own spirit, it is returning to a right view and understanding of its past greatness, and though much way has still to be made before there can be any universal recovery of the artistic eye and taste, the first steps have been taken with some rapidity and firmness and are all in the right direction. This new and fine effort of the Indian Society of Oriental Arts is likely to be of invaluable aid towards this reawakening; its magnificent illustrations are in themselves a revelation of the old beauty and greatness and, admirably selected and supported by illuminating articles, ought to be sufficient to open even the most blinded vision to the meaning and value of our ancient painting and sculpture.

The subjects of the four articles in this number are all of a considerable interest and touch points or raise and answer questions which have either a central importance or a vital though second-plane prominence in Indian art, and each article is a remarkably just, full, efficient and understanding interpretation of its subject. The frontispiece is a panel from a Pallava temple at

<sup>1</sup> An illustrated quarterly journal of Oriental Art, chiefly Indian, edited by O. C. Gangoly.



5. Princely Doorkeeper, Mahabalipuram



6. Poseidon of Artemision

Mahabalipuram intended to convey at once the essential character and appeal of Indian sculpture by an example which offers no difficulty of understanding or appreciation even to a non-Indian mind or to an uninstructed knowledge, and it is accompanied by a brief but clear and sufficient article. This example from one of the great styles and periods shows, as is justly said, and shows very perfectly, the Indian principle in the treatment of the human figure, the suppression of small particulars and trivial details in order to secure an extreme simplicity of form and contour, — the best condition for accomplishing the principal object of the Indian sculptor which was to fill the form with the utmost power of spiritual force and significance. The figure of this princely doorkeeper of the temple in its union of calm, grave, sweet and restful serenity with a latent and restrained heroic energy in its stillness, noted by the writer as the distinctive power of this creation, is indeed equal, as he suggests, in its dignity and repose to any Greek statue, but it carries in it a more profound and potent meaning; it is a perfect interpretation of the still and intense Godward feeling, seized in one deep mood, in one fixed moment of it, which was the soul of the great ages of Indian religion. There is here a perfection of form with a perfection of significance. This restraint in power, this contained fullness opening an amplitude of infinite suggestion, is not rare or exceptional, it is a frequent greatness in the art of India.

The second article on Garuda in Bengal and Java by Akshaya Kumar Maitreya, besides its interesting and discerning treatment of its subject, the inception and humanising of the Garuda figure and the artistic use of the mythus, touches an issue which has not yet, I think, received sufficient consideration, the place of the art of Gauda in the development of the spirit of Indian sculpture. The putting side by side of the two sculptures from Java and Varendra, on one side the heroic force, majesty, dignity and beauty of the ancient art in one of its finest developments, on the other the moved nobility, grace and loveliness and the fervour of spiritual emotion and tenderness of a time when the antique Aryan spirit was softening into the sweetness of the religions of bhakti, makes of itself an illuminating suggestion.

This sculpture is eloquent of that transition and the art of Gauda with its lyrical sweetness of emotion and, at its best, suggestive depths, begins the curve of the stream of spiritual feeling which came down through the Vaishnava art and poetry, found its most gracious and lucid embodiment in the poets of Bengal, has now taken, enriched by new elements, a large and living development in the lyrics of Tagore and the paintings of the Calcutta school and has yet a vital part to play in the spiritual future of India.

Another article contains a full and discriminating account, copiously illustrated by numerous figures, of the history of the Kirtimukha, a standing feature in Indian architecture, and the development of its use as a constant decorative element and in Java a prominent structural motive. The right understanding of these details is a necessary equipment for the complete comprehension of the art of India. The writer handles his subject with a consummate mastery and includes in a small compass all that is needed to give us a full idea about this "glory face". The one thing not included in his intention is its psychological significance, a question of great interest, for it is an evolution as the writer indicates from an element common to the ancient art of Asia and there were kindred things in Greece and mediaeval Europe. It is the result, I would suggest, of an imagination or an experience that has entered into the subtle worlds and found there a side of things dangerous and distorted and terrible that have yet to be compelled by the adventure of the self-conquering spirit into an element of divine harmony and significance.

The remaining article by Mr. E. Vredenburg on the continuity of pictorial tradition in the art of India treats a question of the most central importance and brings to it a fine aesthetic instinct even more necessary than historic and archaeological accuracy of information in such a discussion, for one may have the latter and yet miss the truth for lack of a more essential equipment of the art critic. Mr. Vredenburg enters a still much-needed protest against the constant tendency to attribute a foreign origin to whatever survives of Indian creation. The instances he gives are indeed evidences of an extraordinary perversity of judgment, such as the well-known refusal to leave the credit of the Tajmahal

to India, "the numerous attempts that have been made to ascribe the Ajanta paintings to the Greeks, Persians or Chinese", and last but not least colossally absurd, "the truly astounding statement that the Kangra paintings are of European inspiration and that they were painted for the English market"! Only yesterday while reading Mr. Jouveau-Dubreuil's able historical monograph I found myself brought up short by the sweepingly positive but hardly judicial and certainly not judicious statement that "the Deccan like the North was inspired by the Greek and Roman arts and the marbles of Amaravati can be compared to the sculptures of Gandhara". The plain fact is that whatever outside influences there may or may not have been in India as elsewhere, even the earliest work shows a characteristic Indian mentality and touch; and, as for Gandharan art, it has the air of an inefficient attempt of the Hellenistic mind to absorb this spirit rather than an effort of India to imitate Greece. And in any case the great characteristic work could no more have been the creation of a foreign mind or of its influence than the sculptures of Phidias can be attributed to an Assyrian, Egyptian or Chinese origin. A psychological insensibility to the spiritual significance of Indian work is probably at the root of these errors and, so long as that subsists, the most erudite knowledge will be no protection against gross misunderstandings.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Vredenburg is chiefly concerned in this article with filling up the gap between the Ajanta frescoes and the later art of India. He is able to do this up to the eleventh or twelfth century: for the beautiful coloured reproductions of exquisite Buddhist miniatures from an illuminated manuscript of that period which are the most attractive feature of this number, evidence a complete continuity of the Ajanta style. Most striking are the two enlargements which show at once and conclusively that these miniatures are in their whole spirit, method and every

<sup>2</sup> The attitude and regard of the cultured European mind on Indian and Eastern art has immensely changed since this was written and there has been a great progress towards sympathy and understanding and even developments due to an oriental influence. There is indeed some survival of old prejudices but this is no longer the characteristic standpoint of the aesthetic mind of Europe towards the creative achievement of India or of Asia.

characteristic reductions of the old style of mural painting. He appeals also to the typically Ajantesque character of the coloured panels of Man Singh's palace which date from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. It will be interesting to follow the farther development of this argument in the forthcoming number.

I could wish I had space for adequate comment on the many points of stimulating interest with which this number abounds, but I have, I think, indicated enough to show that every lover of Indian art and culture ought to possess "Rupam". He will find it one of the luxuries that are necessities.



## About Astrology<sup>1</sup>

THE SUBJECT of this book is one which stands nowadays put away under a sort of intellectual ban, placed on it some centuries ago by the scientific and rationalistic European mind and not yet lifted. Mr. N. P. Subramania Iyer has undertaken an astrological series which will deal with the various parts of astrology, and the present volume contains the text and translation of the *Kalaprakasika*, a treatise on the selection of the right times by astrological rule for undertaking any and every action of human life. The book is well printed and got up, the translation admirably done in a style free enough to avoid all awkwardness,—the author has a thorough control of the English tongue and an excellent style of his own,—but perfectly faithful to the matter of the text. But the most interesting part of the work for the ordinary reader is the introduction, in which he gives amidst other matter the psychological explanation of the influence of the planets and states for what they stand in relation to the Indian Vedantic philosophy of existence. I have not seen elsewhere any exposition of the subject equally original and illuminative.

Astrology is in the general mind associated with that class of subjects which goes under the name of the occult, and along with others of its class it has long been discredited by modern “enlightenment”, one does not quite know on what grounds or with what rational justification. It has its psychic and mystical side, but that is not its ordinary presentation; there it claims to be a science like any other with fixed processes and an exact and definite system of rules which ought to be perfectly capable of verification or of disproof by experiment and induction like

<sup>1</sup> *Kalaprakasika: the Standard Book on the Election System* by N. P. Subramania Iyer, Tanjore.

any other science. Its basis is astronomical and mathematical, its data perfectly open and positive and in no way hidden or occult, nor does it at all shrink back from the test or hide itself in secrecy and mystery. It does not indeed give ordinarily the why, but only the how of the causes and effects it professes to establish, but so it is with all other sciences; they do not give the reason of things, but only their processes. Yet astrology is supposed at some indefinite time in the march of human mind to have been exploded, — along with such things as witchcraft and demonology, not to speak of the existence of spirits and the immortality of the soul, — and there is a sort of idea that it has been disproved and therefore put aside as a superstition which no reasonable man can even look at except with a lofty disdain, much less stoop to investigate with an open mind its truth or falsity. Still the anathema of Science has not been able to destroy it; in Europe it has revived, even though its practice as a profession is punishable by the law, and in India it has always survived. It is not indeed the habit of educated Indians to profess explicitly their belief in it, they fight shy of that as a rule, but it is largely consulted by numbers of them, as also by many Europeans. This is an anomalous position which ought to be corrected. Either astrology is a true science and should be investigated, proved, improved where defective and generally rehabilitated in opinion, or else it is a pseudo-science and should be investigated and disproved so as to cut the ground away finally from all secret belief or open credulity.

As a matter of fact astrology has never been scientifically disproved, nor has any rational ground ever been advanced for treating it as a pseudo-science. It simply came to be assumed at a certain period and under certain intellectual influences that it was a childish superstition. Or if there were any grounds, then it was left aside because astrologers were charlatans, because many, perhaps most predictions went wrong, but most of all because it was thought that in the nature of things, in any rational theory of the universe the planets simply could not have any influence on our characters, lives and actions. None of these grounds are sufficient. If many astrologers are charlatans, so also

have there been many quacks in the field of medicine; at one time indeed not only did they pullulate, but the system of medicine itself seemed so defective that there were plenty of clear and enlightened minds who were inclined with Molière to denounce the whole thing as a gross pseudo-science, an elaborate and solemn system of ignorance, humbug and quackery. Supposing that view had prevailed, — it could not, merely because men are too vitally interested in healing their ailments and preserving their bodies and know no other way of doing it, — that would not have done away with the truth underlying the science.

That many predictions go wrong, proves nothing, essentially, against astrology any more than the constant failure of doctors to heal diseases proves anything essential against their science. The first reason of this failure may be that a great number of practising astrologers are either charlatans who seek to please their clients rather than predict by scientific rule, — of that kind there are perhaps many, — or else inefficient and ignorant men who practise only by rule of thumb, perfunctorily and with a main eye upon their fees. But if even capable astrologers fail often, that also only proves that either the science or their way of treating it is largely empirical or that some of its rules and theories may be errors. But every science has to pass through its empirical stage and some — as, again, the science of medicine, — have hardly emerged from it, and every science too burdens itself in its progress with false generalisations, incorrect theories and imperfect rules which have afterwards to be discarded or amended. As the main point in medicine is whether herbs and metals and other remedies have or have not certain effects on the body and whether their workings can be substantiated by experience in a sufficient number of cases to establish a regular relation of cause and effect, so it is in astrology with the fundamental question of planetary influences upon earth and its creatures.

The *a priori* argument from the rational theory of the universe cannot stand. There is nothing essentially irrational in the idea that in this solar system, so closely linked together, there may be mutual influences of all the planets upon each other or

that the beings of a particular planet are powerfully influenced or even dominated by influences from the others. The question remains, the *a priori* rationality being admitted or at least not summarily dismissed, first, whether it is so in fact and, secondly, how far those influences go and of what nature they are. Astrology affirms that they not only affect our bodies, but also our psychical being. If matter and mind were entirely independent entities having no influence or determining effect upon each other, then such a result could not be; but that is not the case. According to the materialistic view of the universe which claims to be the sole rationalistic view, mind is itself an effect of matter and all its states and movements are determined by matter. There is nothing then impossible, planetary influence being once admitted, in the action of material bodies producing psychical conditions on the earth and thereby determining our psychical states and movements. In a more truly rationalistic view mind and matter are always influencing and determining each other; here too, given a universal mind and matter so acting upon individual matter and mind, the movements of the planetary system may be one or even the first nodus of their activities, and the assertions of astrology become at least primarily credible.

Farther, astrology affirms that these influences determine the whole course of our lives and that the all-important element is time. That raises the major question of the influence of Time upon human beings and events; does Time determine the course of our lives and the states of our being and, if so, how far and in what way? Or to put the question more precisely, as it is raised by astrology, do or can the conditions reigning at a given critical time, in this case the moment of birth, determine our physical and psychological conditions and the whole course of our future lives, or determine them to any considerable extent? and are the relative movements and therefore the mutual positions of the sun and planets with regard to the earth and each other either the nodus or in some way the effective signs of these determinations? And, secondly, do the developing time conditions which come afterwards, by themselves or viewed in reference to the original conditions, determine from moment to moment, from time to

time the subsequent evolution of our primary physical and psychological conditions and the course of linked and successive circumstances which make up the history of our lives? and if so, again, are the relative movements and mutual positions of the sun and planets at any given time the nodus or the effective signs of this later determination also? can they therefore be taken for all practical purposes as determinants, or at any rate as sure signs by which the determinations of our life and being can be discovered? That is the question which astrology raises, and it is evidently a perfectly legitimate and rational question; nor can we on *a priori* grounds condemn and put away an affirmative answer, which is based upon past experience systematised into rules and theories, as a superstition or a childish folly. Granted that in things here there is a chain of cause and effect — or at least, if causality is disputed, of antecedent condition leading up to subsequent condition — and that if and so far as we know that chain, scientific prediction becomes in that proportion possible, — two propositions which, unless we deny determination altogether, it would be difficult to dispute, — there is no inherent improbability in the clue to happenings human and other on the planets being found in the motions of those planets. Astronomy is in a sense the primary physical science, for the first facts which give all the others their field are astronomical facts; it may well be that in the psycho-physical field the same rule holds and that there the first facts may be astrological.

The *a priori* objections disappearing, the next step is to ask ourselves whether there is a sufficient *prima facie* empirical case for enquiring into the actual truth of astrology. This at present depends upon the experience of isolated individuals, a very unsatisfactory basis. But if this experience could be collected, sifted and published, I believe it would be found that a formidable *prima facie* case exists in favour of astrology, much stronger than that which encouraged the Society for Psychical Research to carry on its work in another psycho-physical field to such important conclusions. I may state my own experience in the matter in the belief, justified by many instances, that it is only typical of the experience of hundreds of others. My first accidental contact

with an Indian astrologer was not encouraging. This gentleman was the most accomplished thought-reader I have ever seen; for he asked me to think my question without speaking it and not only successfully named the unspoken question I had fixed on, but three others which had crossed my mind, one of them only in the merest flash and without leaving any impression behind: this he pretended to do by mathematical calculation, an operation which I took leave to regard as humbug or professional parade. For when it came to his answers, I found that he was still doing thought-reading and not astrology; he simply echoed the hopes or thoughts in my mind and his predictions did not come within one hundred miles of the truth. Other practitioners I have found to belong, a few plainly to the class of mere flattering charlatans, but most to the inefficient who read by rule of thumb and have made no profound study of their science. On the other hand, with capable astrologers the results have been often of such a remarkable accuracy as to put quite aside any possibility of chance hit, mere coincidence, intelligent prevision or any of the current explanations. I may instance the father of a friend of mine, a deep student of the science but not a professional, who predicted accurately the exact year, month, day, hour and even minute of his own death. In my own case accuracy was hampered by the inability to fix the precise moment of my birth; still some of the results were extraordinary. Two may be mentioned, from one and the same astrologer, which related to my public career. One, given when I had not yet plunged into the political vortex and my then obscure personality was quite unknown to the astrologer, predicted as an inevitable certitude of the future a political struggle with powerful non-Indian adversaries during which for a time even my life would fall under the shadow of danger. The other, given at the time of my first prosecution in the *Bande Mataram* case, predicted three successive criminal trials in each of which the prosecution would fail. I may instance also two predictions by the book in which slokas from Sanskrit astrological writings indicating the results of certain conjunctions or planetary positions were shown to be applicable to my horoscope. One foretold specific chronic illnesses for the body

of which there was no sign at the time, but long afterwards they put in their unexpected appearance and persisted. Another indicated very precisely that one of my future activities would be to found a new spiritual philosophy and its discipline; at that time I had no knowledge of philosophy or Yoga and no turn or inclination in my mind which could make the realisation of this prediction at all probable. These are only the most precise examples out of a number. Supposing all well-authenticated evidence of the kind to be collected, I am convinced there would be an overwhelmingly strong *prima facie* case and even a body of sufficiently strong empirical proof to establish at least a nucleus of truth in astrology.

That would be the first step. For if astrology is a science and is to take its proper place, the first necessity is to dissipate by an appeal to the empirical mind of the general public as well as of the sceptical thinker the great mass of unenquiring prejudice which now exists against it. To publish the text and translation of the best authorities, as Mr. Iyer is now doing, with illuminating introductions is a preliminary need in this case so that we may know what we have to go upon. The second is to mass evidence of the empirical truth of the science, giving in each case the prediction in all its details, the more detailed the better, the astrological rules on which it was based and the event, each detail of the event being compared with the corresponding detail of the prediction. Only then would there be a clear field for the consideration of the scientific and philosophical doubts, questions and problems which would still arise; but this, though the most important aspect of the matter, I must leave for future handling.

An acceptance of the truth of astrology would not necessarily carry with it a complete determinism of Fate or mechanical law of Karma. In the Indian theory at least there is room for a determination by human will and endeavour, for Fate is mainly a determination by past action and a new will and action can cancel it; only a very strong Karma is imperative and irreducible. Even that may possibly be cancelled if one can enter into the freedom of the spiritual consciousness. One instance at any rate

came to my knowledge in which the life had corresponded exactly with the pre-indications of the horoscope so long as the subject remained in the world but, as soon as he left it for a spiritual life, there was no longer any correspondence.



## “Sanskrit Research”<sup>1</sup>

THE APPEARANCE of this Anglo-Sanskrit Quarterly “devoted to research work in all fields of Indian Antiquity” is a welcome sign of the recent development towards a wider culture, a more flexible and strenuous scholarship and a more original thinking which promises to lift the Indian mind out of the rut of secondhand provincialism and sterile repetition of commonplaces into which the vices of its school and university education had betrayed it and to equip it for the important contribution we may expect it to make to the world’s increasing stock of knowledge. There has been a considerable expansion in this country, both in English and the vernaculars, of that ordinary periodical literature which caters for the popular mind and supplies it with snippets of knowledge, facile information and ready but not always very valuable opinions on all sorts of subjects. But there has been hitherto little or nothing corresponding to those more serious publications common in every European country which appeal to a more limited audience but succeed in popularising within those limits a more serious and original thinking and a more thorough knowledge in each branch of human enquiry. Attempts have been made but, outside the field of religion and philosophy, they have usually foundered in their inception for want of adequate support; they have not found, as they would have found elsewhere, an interested circle of readers. Now, however, there ought to be a sufficient number of cultivated minds interested and competent in Sanskrit scholarship and the research into Indian antiquity to ensure an adequate support and an increasing usefulness for this new Quarterly.

<sup>1</sup> An Anglo-Sanskrit Quarterly, conducted by the Sanskrit Academy of India, Bangalore, and edited by Pundit Lingesha Mahābhāgawat.

We regret that this review comes out very belated as it had to be held over last month for want of space.

The second (October) number of the Quarterly is before me and its sound editing and the value and interest of its contents promise well for its future. There are especially two very solid articles, one by Mr. Tilak on "A Missing Verse in the Sankhya Karikas", and another by Professor R. D. Ranade of the Fergusson College headed "Greek and Sanskrit: a Comparative Study", but there is no article without its interest and value. I note that in this number all the contributors, with one exception, are either from Maharashtra or the Madras Presidency. It is to be hoped that the editor will be able to secure the cooperation of Sanskrit scholars in the north so that this Review may become an All-India organ of Indian research.

Mr. Tilak's article shows all the thoroughness and acuteness which that great scholar brings to his work great or small whether he is seeking for the original home of the Aryans in the cryptic mass of the Rig Veda or restoring with his rare powers of deduction a lost verse in the Karikas. The point he seeks to establish, though apparently a small one, has really a considerable importance. He points out that there is a consensus of authority for the existence of 70 verses in Ishwarakrishna's Sankhya-Karikas, but, if we exclude the last three which do not belong to the doctrinal part of the text, we have both in the Indian text and in the Chinese version only 69; at the same time he shows that both Gaudapada's Bhashya and the commentary in the Chinese version contain a passage developing a refutation of four possible subtler causes of the world, Ishwara, Purusha, Kala and Swabhava (God, the Soul, Time and Nature) rejected by the Sankhyas, a refutation which logically ought to be but is not found in the text itself. From the passage in the Bhashya he seeks to reestablish the sense and even the language of the missing verse. It seems to me that he has established both the fact of the missing verse and its substance. But the interesting point is the reason assigned by him for the loss of the verse; it was, he thinks, no accident, but a deliberate suppression made at a time when the Sankhya philosophy was being re-explained by thinkers like Vijnana-bhikshu in a Vedantic sense. If so, the point made sheds a very

interesting light on the historic course of philosophical thought in India.

The general line which that development followed arises more indirectly from an interesting and carefully reasoned article by Mr. Y. Subbarao on the question of the originality of Shankara's philosophy. Mr. Subbarao seeks to establish his point that it was no new system of thought which Shankara created, but only the re-statement perhaps in a more developed form of a very ancient school of Vedantic interpretation. Certainly, it cannot be supposed that Shankara invented a new philosophy out of his own brain; he believed himself to be establishing against attack the real sense of the Vedantic philosophy founded on the original texts of its canon and supported by the best tradition. Nor does any greater thinker really invent a system new-born from his own intellect; what he does is to take up the material available to him in the past history of thought, to choose, select, reject, to present new lights on old ideas, to develop latent suggestions, to bring into prominence what was before less prominent or not so trenchant and definite, to give a fresh, striking and illuminating sense to old terms, to combine what was before not at all or else ill-combined; in doing so he creates; his philosophy, though not new in its materials, is new in the whole effect it produces and the more powerful light that in certain directions it conveys to the thinking mind. The question is whether Shankara's system was not new in this sense and, though the previous material still subsisting is insufficient to decide the question, it must, I think, be answered provisionally in the affirmative. Adwaitavada undoubtedly existed before, but it was the form Shankara gave it which made it a clear, well-thought-out and powerfully trenchant philosophy and put his name at the head of Indian metaphysicians.

Mr. Subbarao admits that it is impossible to establish an exclusive Adwaitavada, much less the Mayavada, from the Veda, Upanishads, Brahmasutras or the Gita. It is impossible not because the great thinkers who gave us these writings thought confusedly or without a clear grasp of principles, but because theirs was an entirely different method. India began with a

synthetic and intuitive manner of thinking based not upon logical distinctions and verbal oppositions, but upon the facts of spiritual experience and vision. In such synthetic and intuitive philosophies truths are arranged according to the place of each in the actual fact of things, as different laws and generalisations are arranged in Science, each positive in its own field and each having its proper relation to the others. The perfection of this method is to be found in the Upanishads and the Gita; and that is the reason why all attempts to interpret these great works by the methods of logical debate and the rigorous exclusions dear to the analytic metaphysician always fail even in the strongest hands; they raise questions about the sense of these works which cannot be conclusively solved, but must necessarily lead to eternal debate, because the method is wrong and the original work itself never intended to cause or countenance such discussions. Only a synthetic method of interpretation can explain a synthetic and intuitive philosophy.

The analytical tendency began with the gradual divisions which ended in the establishment of the six philosophical schools. Each of them claims to be justified by the Veda and from its own point of view each is quite in the right, for the primary data of each are there in the sacred writings. It is where they press to exclusive conclusions and deny and refute each other that they can no longer truly claim Vedic authority. Even the Buddhists could, if they had chosen, have based themselves on the Veda, for there are passages which, if taken by themselves, seem to deny the Atman and attribute all to Karma or to assert the Non-Existent as the source of things. The perfect resort to the analytical method came later; it was employed with great effect though often rather naively by the Buddhists, but it was Shankara who applied rigorously the analytical method of the intellectual reason in all its trenchant clearness and force to metaphysics. Hence the greatness of his position in the history of Indian thought. From his time forward Indian metaphysics was bound to the wheels of the analytical and intellectual mind. Still, it is to be noted that while the philosophers thus split the catholicity of the ancient Truth into warring schools, the general Indian mind was

always overpoweringly attracted by the synthetical tendency. The Gita seems to be in part the expression of such a synthetic reaction, the Puranas show constantly the same tendency and even into the philosophical schools it made its entry.

Prof. Ranade’s article on Greek and Sanskrit carries us into another field, that of Comparative Philology. His object is in a brief scope to establish the identical origin of Greek and Sanskrit in that which is most essential in the growth of a language, its grammatical forms and syntactical peculiarities. He has had to allow himself only a very small space for so large and important a subject, but within these narrow limits he has done his work with great thoroughness and, subject to a few minor reservations, with a minute accuracy. It is to be regretted that by printing the Greek words in their proper character instead of in Roman type Mr. Ranade has made this interesting essay unintelligible to all but a very few Indian readers. He lays down the principle that the words of each language should be printed in its own type and that anyone who wishes to study Comparative Philology must take the trouble to familiarise himself with the original alphabets. This is a counsel of perfection which is not practicable in India, nor indeed on any large scale in Europe either. If for instance a scholar were dealing with the philology of the Aryan languages and had to cite largely verbal forms both from the European tongues and from Sanskrit and its Indian descendants he would be compelled on this principle to require at least nine different types from the Press to which he entrusted his work. No Press would be able to meet the demand and very few even of his learned readers but would be baffled by the variety. Mr. Ranade himself gives us German words and a German sentence, but not in the Gothic character which alphabetical purism would demand.

There are three or four statements in the article to which objection can be taken and, since in philology even the smallest details are of importance, the learned writer will not object to my pointing them out with some emphasis; in one case at least he has fallen into a serious error by correcting which he may add an interesting and not unimportant subsection to his

array of grammatical and syntactical identities between the two languages. I do not understand in the first place what is meant by the statement that “in Greek no difference is made between the dentals and the linguals and they are *fused* together.” If it is meant that the Greek language possessed both dental and lingual sounds but expressed them by the same characters, I do not think this can be correct. The distribution of dentals and linguals in the various languages is one of the most curious phenomena in the history of linguistic phonetics and deserves a closer inquiry than has been accorded to it. The Latin and Celtic languages reject the lingual and use only the dental; English on the other hand prefers the linguals, though it uses occasionally the dental *t*, *th* and *d*, all of which it represents by *th*, as in *with*, *thin*, *though*, — a desperately clumsy device thoroughly in keeping with the chaotic wildness of English orthography. Everyone in India knows the difficulty an Englishman finds in pronouncing the Indian dentals; he turns them resolutely into linguals. On the contrary a Frenchman who has not educated himself into the right English pronunciation, will turn the English lingual into a dental; he will say *feasth* instead of *feast*, *noth* instead of *not*, and pronounce *do* as if it were the English *though*. A similar peculiarity is one of the chief features of the brogue, the Irish mispronunciation of English speech; for the natural Irish tongue cannot manage the hard lingual sound in such words as *Peter* and *shoulder*, it mollifies them into true dentals. I have noticed the same peculiarity in the pronunciation of a Spanish actress playing in English on a London stage; otherwise perfect, it produced a strange impression by its invariable transformation of the harder English into the softer Latin sound. Now Greek must certainly have belonged to the Latin-Celtic group in this phonetic peculiarity; otherwise the difference would have been too striking to escape the sensitive ear of the ancient poets and scholars. It seems to me therefore that in the comparative scheme of the two alphabets the Sanskrit linguals should be marked as absent in the Greek and, not as Mr. Ranade represents them, correspondent equally with the dentals to the Greek *tau*, *theta*, and *delta*.

In the comparison of the declensions Mr. Ranade asserts that Greek feminine nouns in long *a* like *chōrā* correspond in their endings to Sanskrit nouns of the type of *bhāryā* and Greek nouns in long *e* like *tīmē* to Sanskrit nouns of the type of *dāsī*. Surely this is an error. The writer has fallen into it because he was looking only at the Attic dialect, but the Attic is only one variation of the Greek language and it is misleading to study it by itself. As a matter of fact, this *ā* and this *ē* both represent the same original sound which must have been the feminine termination in *ā*; only the Doric dialect prefers always the original *ā*, the Ionic modifies it into *ē*, and the Attic standing between the Doric and the Ionic belts makes a compromise. In the Attic when this feminine *ā* is preceded by a vowel it remains unmodified, as also usually when it is preceded by *r*, but if it is preceded by a consonant it becomes *ē*; thus *philiā*, *chōrā*, but *tīmē*, *kōmē*. Ionic will say *philiē* and not *philiā*; Doric *tīmā* and not *tīmē*. This is enough to negative Mr. Ranade’s identification of this Attic *ē* with the Sanskrit feminine *ī*. Certainly there are cases in which Sanskrit uses this *ī* termination where Attic has the *ē*, as in *caturthī* and *tetartē*; but this simply means that the Greek has rejected the Sanskrit deviation into the *ī* form and kept to the more regular *ā* which here too will appear in its pure form in the Doric.<sup>2</sup>

In the comparison of tenses Mr. Ranade makes the rather curious assertion that the Sanskrit Conditional does not occur in any other language except perhaps German; but surely if the German “*wurden getodet worden sein*” corresponds to the Sanskrit *abhaviṣyat*, the French conditionals e.g. *auraient été tués* and the English “would have been killed” ought equally to be considered as parallel syntactical constructions; they have the same sense and with a slight difference the same form as the German.

Finally, Mr. Ranade tells us that there are no such compounds in Greek as in Sanskrit and again that there are no *dvandva*, *karmadhāraya* and *bahuvrīhi* compounds in Greek,

<sup>2</sup> This phonetic variation is a general rule in the dialects and not confined to the feminine termination.

although there are verbs compounded with prepositions. I am at a loss to understand how so sound a scholar can have come to make a statement so contrary to all the facts. The power of the Greek language to make compounds is one of its most notable characteristics and its rich though never intemperate use is one of the great beauties of the Greek poetical style. When the Romans came into contact with Greek literature, their earlier poets tried to introduce this faculty into Latin and even Virgil describes the sea as *velivolum*, sail-flying, i.e. with sails flying over it like the wings of birds through the air, but the usage was too contrary to the Latin genius to succeed. Not only did the Greek compound prepositions with its verbs, but it compounded nouns and verbs together. Thus from *nau-archos*, ship-ruler, i.e. admiral, they made *nau-archein*, to be an admiral; nor did they hesitate before such forms as *paido-poein*, to beget children, *paido-tribein*, to train boys, *mnēsikakein*, to remember wrongs, *neotto-tropheisthai*, to be brought up like the young of a bird. In fact with the exception of nominal *dvandvas* the Greek illustrates all the main varieties of the Sanskrit compound. For it is capable of such compounds as *pseudo-martur*, a false witness, *pseudo-christos*, a false Christ, *chauno-politēs*, a silly citizen; as *andro-phonos*, man-killing, *paid-oletor*, a destroyer of one's children, *phusi-zoos*, life-producing, *koruth-aiolos*, helmet-glancing, *lao-kataratos*, cursed by the people, *thumo-leōn*, heart-lion, as *anabadēn* and *katabadēn* answering to the Sanskrit *avyayībhāva*; as *oxu-thumos*, sharp-passioned, *oxu-schoinos*, having sharp reeds, *polu-teknos*, having many children, *io-stephanos*, violet-crowned. The language indeed pullulates with compounds. It is true that they are usually composed of two members only, but compounds of three members are found, as *tris-kako-daimōn*, thrice-evil-fated and Aristophanes even perpetrates such forms as *glischr-antilog-exepitriptos* and *sphragid-onuch-argo-komētēs*.

I have dwelt on these points because they leap to the eye in the perfection otherwise complete of an admirable essay which, I hope, is only the first sketch of a more important treatise. But with the exception of the last they are minor points and do



not seriously detract from the completeness of the exposition. Especially new and interesting are the parallel between Greek and Vedic accents and the rearrangement of Greek conjugations according to the Sanskrit classification. The common origin of Greek and Sanskrit is apparent enough, but like other philologists Mr. Ranade is far too sure of the conclusion he draws from it. I believe him to be right in thinking that the Indian Aryans and the Greeks came from one stock, but when he says that this has been proved beyond dispute by the discoveries of the philologist he is going much too fast. Common origin of language or even common language does not prove common ethnic origin. The French and Spaniards are not Latins nor the Irish of Dublin and Munster Anglo-Saxons. From the possible causes of linguistic similarity which the writer has given he has omitted one, conquest and cultural pressure. According to the theory of the Italian ethnologist, Sergi, all the Mediterranean races of Northern Africa and Southern Europe belong to one “Mediterranean” stock ancient and highly civilised which was conquered by Aryan savages and this accounts for their “Aryan” languages. It is the same theory that now prevails in a different form with regard to the Aryan conquest of a highly civilised Dravidian India. Philology can bring no sufficient argument to contradict it.

Mr. Ranade deprecates the scorn of the linguistically ignorant for philology, but we must not forget that in Europe it is not the ignorant alone who feel this contempt, but the scientists, and that there is a certain justification for their contempt; this was admitted by so great a philological scholar as Renan when in the evening of his days he had to apologise for his favourite pursuits as “our petty conjectural sciences”. Philology is in fact not yet a science, but rather far too largely a structure of ingenuities and plausible conjectures. It set out with the hope of discovering the origin of language and the scientific laws of its development, but it has failed entirely; and it failed not because they are undiscoverable, — I believe the clue is there lying ready to our hands in the Sanskrit language, — but because it strayed off to the facile pursuit of obvious similarities and identities instead of delving patiently and scrupulously, as all true Science must do,

behind the outward appearances of things to get back at origins and embryonic indices. And on its scanty and uncertain data it began to build up enormous structures of theory such as the common origin of Aryan-speaking races, their original habitat, their common form of culture before separation, etc. Such facile play of an ingenious imagination is still the failing of the scholar and justifies to a certain extent the scorn of the patient, accurate and scrupulous physical scientist for the freaks and pretensions of the “philolog”.

Not altogether is it justified, for philology has made several interesting and useful discoveries, established a few minor generalisations and, above all, substituted a sounder though not yet entirely sound critical method for the fantastic licence of the old unscientific philology which, once it left the sure ground of grammar, was capable of anything and everything however absurd or impossible. But much has to be learned and a great deal more unlearned before we can measure ourselves with the physical scientist or deserve his approval. It is here that much is to be hoped from the Indian intellect which is more accustomed than the European to move with a penetrating subtlety and accuracy in the things of the mind. But to justify the hope it must first get rid on one side of its attachment to the methods of the Pundit and his subservience to traditional authority and on the other not give itself bound hand and foot to the method of the European scholar or imitate too freely that swiftly leaping ingenious mind of his which gives you in a trice a Scythian or a Persian Buddha, identifies conclusively Murghab and Maurya, Mayasura and Ahura Mazda and generally constructs with magical rapidity the wrong animal out of the wrong bone. We have to combine the laboriousness of the Pundit, the slow and patient conscientiousness of the physical scientist abhorrent of a too facile conclusion and the subtlety of the psychologist in order to deserve the same success in these other sciences and to lift them beyond the shifting field of conjecture.

*Sanskrit Research* gives us Sanskrit articles as well as English with the laudable object of bringing together with a view to mutual helpfulness the old and the new scholarship. Sanskrit

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ought still to have a future as a language of the learned and it will not be a good day for India when the ancient tongue ceases entirely to be written or spoken. But if it is to survive, it must get rid of the curse of the heavy pedantic style contracted by it in its decline with the lumbering impossible compounds and the overweight of hair-splitting erudition. The Sanskrit articles in this number are learned and laborious, but they suffer heavily from this defect of style. If the contact established by the *Sanskrit Research* can teach the new scholarship the patient thoroughness of the old and the old the flexibility and penetrating critical sense of the new, it will have done to both a great and much-needed service.

## “The Feast of Youth”<sup>1</sup>

THIS IS the first published book of a young poet whose name has recently and suddenly emerged under unusually favourable auspices. English poetry written by an Indian writer who uses the foreign medium as if it were his mother-tongue, with a spontaneous ease, power and beauty, the author a brother of the famous poetess Sarojini Naidu, one of a family which promises to be as remarkable as the Tagores by its possession of culture, talent and genius, challenging attention and sympathy by his combination of extreme youth and a high and early brilliance and already showing in his work, even though still immature, magnificent performance as well as a promise which makes it difficult to put any limits to the heights he may attain, — the book at once attracts interest and has come into immediate prominence amidst general appreciation and admiration. We have had already in the same field of achievement in Sarojini Naidu’s poetry qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unmatchable in its kind. The same qualities are not to be found in this book, but it shows other high gifts which, when brought to perfection, must find an equal pitch with a greater scope. Here perhaps are the beginnings of a supreme utterance of the Indian soul in the rhythms of the English tongue.

That is a combination which, it may be well hoped for the sake of India’s future, will not become too frequent a phenomenon. But at the present moment it serves both an artistic and a national purpose and seems to be part of the movement of destiny. In any case, whatever may be said of the made-in-India type of secondhand English verse in which men of great literary gift in southern India too often waste their talent, Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Poems, by Harindranath Chattopadhyay, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras.

Chattopadhyay’s production justifies itself by its beauty. This is not only genuine poetry, but the work of a young, though still unripe genius with an incalculable promise of greatness in it. As to the abundance here of all the essential materials, the instruments, the elementary powers of the poetical gift, there can be not a moment’s doubt or hesitation. Even the first few lines, though far from the best, are quite decisive. A rich and finely lavish command of language, a firm possession of his metrical instrument, an almost blinding gleam and glitter of the wealth of imagination and fancy, a stream of unfailingly poetic thought and image and a high though as yet uncertain pitch of expression, are the powers with which the young poet starts. There have been poets of a great final achievement who have begun with gifts of a less precious stuff and had by labour within themselves and a difficult alchemy to turn them into pure gold. Mr. Chattopadhyay is not of these; he is rather overburdened with the favours of the goddess, comes like some Vedic Marut with golden weapons, golden ornaments, car of gold, throwing in front of him continual lightnings of thought in the midst of a shining rain of fancies, and a greater government and a more careful and concentrated use rather than an enhancement of his powers is the one thing his poetry needs for its perfection.

The name of the volume, taken from its first poem, *The Feast of Youth*, is an appropriate description of its spirit, though one is inclined to call it rather a riot or revel than a simple feast. It is the singing of a young bacchanal of the Muse drunk with a bright and heady wine. In his first poem he promises to himself,

O! I shall draw the blue out of the skies  
And offer it like wine of paradise  
To drunken Youth,

and the rest is an ample fulfilment of the promise. For the thought and sentiment are an eager, fine and fiery drinking of the joy of life and being, not in the pagan or physically sensuous kind of enjoyment, but with a spiritual and singularly pure intoxication of the thought, imagination and higher sense. The spiritual joy of existence, of its primal colour and symbolic

subtleties, its essential sense, images, suggestions, a free and intense voluptuousness of light is the note. Occasionally there is the attempt to bring in an incidental tone of sorrow, but attacked by the glowing atmosphere of exultation, overcome and rendered unreal by the surrounding light and bliss, it fails to convince. Expression matches substance; there is here no holding back, no reticence, no idea of self-restraint, but rather a reckless ecstasy and outpouring. Suggestion chases suggestion, fancy runs after or starts away from fancy with no very exacting sequence; the exhilaration of self-utterance dominates. One is a little dazzled at first and has to accustom the eyes to the glitter, before one can turn to the heart of the meaning: excess, profusion, an unwearied lavishing of treasures creates the charm of the manner as well as its limitations, but this is often an excellent sign in a young poet, for it promises much richness in the hour of maturity; and here it is almost always, — not quite always, for there are lapses, — a fine, though not yet a sovereign excess, which continually attracts and stimulates the imagination, if it does not always quite take it captive.

There is here perhaps a side effect of one remarkable peculiarity of Mr. Chattopadhyay's poetical mentality. There is a background in it of Hindu Vedantic thought and feeling which comes out especially in "Fire", "Dusk", "Messages" and other poems, but will be found repeatedly elsewhere and runs through the whole as a sort of undercurrent; but the mould of the thought, the colour and tissue of the feeling betray a Moslem, a Persian, a Sufi influence. This source of inspiration appears in the title of some of the poems, and it has helped perhaps the tendency to lavishness. Sanskrit poetry, even when it clothes itself in the regal gold and purple of Kalidasa, or flows in the luscious warmth and colour of Jayadeva, keeps still a certain background of massive restraint, embanks itself in a certain firm solidity; the later poetry of the regional languages, though it has not that quality, is oftenest sparing at heart, does not give itself up to a curious opulence. But the Moslem mind has the tendency of mosaic and arabesque, loves the glow of many colours, the careful jewellery of image and phrase; its

poetry is apparelled like a daughter of the Badshahs.

Her girdles and her fillets gleam  
Like changing fires on sunset seas:  
Her raiment is like morning mist,  
Shot opal, gold and amethyst.

Mr. Chattopadhyay's spirit and manner are too expansive for the carefully compressed artistry of the Persian poets, but the influence of the passion for decorative colour is there. But though the kinship is visible even in the external expression, what is more striking, is a certain idiosyncrasy of the fancy, the turn given to the thought, the colour of the vision, which are very often of the Sufi type. Something of the union of the two cultures appeared in the temperament of Mrs. Naidu's poetry, but here it is more subtly visible as part of the intellectual strain. This is however only one shaping influence behind; except in one or two poems, where we get some echo of his sister's manner and movement, this young poet is astonishingly original; it is himself that he utters in every line.

The thought-substance, the governing inspiration of this poetry is such as might well spring from a fusion of the Vedantic and the Sufi mentality. It is the utterance of a mystical joy in God and Nature, sometimes of the direct God-union, — but this is not quite so successful — more characteristically of God through Nature. Yet this is not usually the physical Nature that we feel with the outward bodily sense; it is a mystic life of light and ecstasy behind her, hidden in sun and moon and star, morning and noon and dusk and night, sea and sky and earth. It is to bring this remoter splendid vision near to us that image is strained and crowded, symbol multiplied. We get this mystic sense and aspiration in the poem, "Fire", in an image of love, —

I am athirst for one glimpse of your beautiful face, O Love!  
Veiled in the mystical silence of stars and the purple of skies.

The closing lines of the "Hour of Rest" express it more barely, — I quote them only for their directness, though the expression stumbles and even lapses badly in the last two lines, —

There is a sweetness in the world  
That I have sometimes felt,  
And oft in fragrant petals curl'd  
His fragrance I have smelt . . .  
And in sad notes of birds, unfurl'd  
The kindness He hath dealt!

It is more beautifully and mystically brought out in another poem, "Worship", —

Like a rich song you chant your red-fire sunrise,  
Deep in my dreams, and forge your white-flame moon . . .  
You hide the crimson secret of your sunset,  
And the pure, golden message of your noon.

Your fashion cool-grey clouds within my body,  
And weave your rain into a diamond mesh.  
The Universal Beauty dances, dances  
A glimmering peacock in my flowering flesh!

Spring lives as a symbol of inner experience, universal spring, —

The Spring-hues deepen into human Bliss!  
The heart of God and man in scent are blended . . .  
The sky meets earth and heaven in one transparent kiss.

Simple, moving, melodious and direct is its utterance in "Messages", with one image at least which deepens into intimate revelation, —

In my slumber and my waking  
I can hear His sobbing flute . . .  
Thro' the springtime and the autumn  
Shaping every flower and fruit . . .  
And His gleaming laughter colours  
Orange hills and purple streams,  
He is throbbing in the crystal,  
Magic centre of my dreams. . . .  
Silver stars are visible twinkles  
Of His clear, transparent touch . . .



He is moving every moment  
To the world He loves so much!

In the sea

God churns thy waters into silvern foam  
And breathes His music into every shell.

Noon is the Master's "mystic dog with paws of fire" and "Behind the clouds some hidden Flutist plays His flute." These are some of the more overt and express phrasings of the predominant idea, exquisite in harmony, lovely and subtly penetrating in their thought. Elsewhere it is simply Nature and the bliss, light and wonder behind her that are expressed, the rest is concealed, yet suggested in the light. But there is always the same principle of a bright mystic vision and the transmutation of natural things into symbol values of the universal light, joy and beauty.

This poetry is an utterance of an ancient mystic experience with a new tone and burden of its own. Its very character brings in a certain limitation, it is empty of the touch of normal human life; our passion is absent, the warm blood of our emotion does not run through the veins of this Muse to flush her cheek with earthly colour. There is indeed a spiritual passion, a spiritual, not a physical sensuousness. Light and ecstasy there is, not the flame of earth's desire. Heaven takes up the symbols of the earth-life, but there is not the bringing of the Divine into the normal hues of our sight and our feeling which is the aim of Vaishnava poetry. Crystal is a favourite epithet of the poet, and there is here something crystalline, a rainbow prism of colours in the whiteness of shining stalactites. There is at first even some impression of a bright and fiery coldness of purity, as of a virgin rarity of the atmosphere of some high dawn, or as if that had happened which is imaged in "Dusk",

Ah God! my heart is turning crystalline  
Seeing Thee play at crystal stars above!

or as if the poet had indeed, as he writes elsewhere, "put out the lamp of his love and desire, for their light is not real", and

replaced them by the miraculous fire of this shining ideal. In the Sonnets, however, in some other poems and in the poet's later work there is the beginning of a greater warmth and a nearer sweetness.

The genius, power, newness of this poetry is evident. If certain reserves have to be made, it is because of a frequent immaturity in the touch which at times makes itself too sharply felt and is seldom altogether absent. I do not refer to the occasional lapses and carelessnesses of which I have noted one example, — for these are not very numerous, and the flagrant subjection of the expression to the necessity of the rhyme occurs only in that one passage, — but to the fact that the poet is still too much possessed by his gifts rather than their possessor, too easily carried away by the delight of brilliant expression and image to steep his word always in the deeper founts of his inspiration. The poetic expression is always brilliant, but never for long together quite sure, — lines of most perfect beauty too often alternate with others which are by no means so good. The image-maker's faculty is used with a radiant splendour and lavishness, but without discrimination; what begins as imaginative vision frequently thins away into a bright play of fancy, and there are lines which come dangerously near to prettiness and conceit. Especially there is not yet that sufficient incubation of the inspiration and the artistic sense which turns a poem into a perfectly satisfying artistic whole; even in the Sonnets, beautiful enough in themselves, there is an insufficient force of structure. The totality of effect in most of these poems is a diffusion, a streaming on from one idea and image to another, not a well-completed shapeliness. The rhythmic turn is always good, often beautiful and admirable, but the subtlest secrets of sound have not yet been firmly discovered, they are only as it were glimpsed and caught in passing.

These limitations however matter very little as they are natural in a first and early work and do not count in comparison with the riches disclosed. Moreover there is quite enough to show that they are likely to be rapidly outgrown. Young as he is, the poet has already almost all the secrets, and has only to use them more

daylight dies  
In silence on the bosom of the darkening skies . . .  
And with him, every note  
Is crushed to silent sorrow in the song-bird's throat, —

The Spring hath come and gone with all her coloured hours.  
The earth beneath her tread  
Laughed suddenly a peal of blue and green and red . . .  
And for her tender beauty wove a flowery bed . . .  
She gathered all her touch-born blossoms from bright  
  bowers . . .

Since the appearance of this book Mr. Chattopadhyay has given to the public one or two separate poems of a still greater beauty which show a very swift development of his powers; he is already overcoming, almost though not yet quite entirely, the touch of unripeness which was apparent in his earlier poems. Sureness of expression, a thought in full possession of itself and using in admirable concordance its imaginative aids and means, subtler turns of melody and harmony, especially an approach to firmer structural power are now strongly visible and promise the doubling of the ecstatic poet with an impeccable artist. There is also a greater warmth and nearness, a riper stress, a deeper musing. We may well hope to find in him a supreme singer of the vision of God in Nature and Life, and the meeting of the

divine and the human which must be at first the most vivifying and liberating part of India's message to a humanity that is now touched everywhere by a growing will for the spiritualising of the earth-existence.

## “Shama’a”

I WAS unable to greet duly the first appearance of this new magazine of art, literature and philosophy edited by Miss Mrinalini Chattopadhyay; I take the opportunity of the second number to repair the omission I had then unwillingly to make. The appearance of this quarterly is one of the signs as yet too few, but still carrying a sure promise, of a progressive reawakening of the higher thinking and aesthetic mentality in India after a temporary effacement in which the Eastern mind was attempting to assimilate in the wrong way elementary or second-rate occidental ideas. In that misguided endeavour it became on the intellectual and practical side ineffectively utilitarian and on the aesthetic content with the cheap, ugly and vulgar. The things of the West it assimilated were just the things the West had either left behind it or was already finishing and preparing to cast away. “Shama’a”, like “Rupam”, though less sumptuously apparelled, is distinguished by its admirable get-up and printing and is an evidence of the recovery of a conscience in the matter of form, a thing once universal in India but dead or dormant since the Western invasion. The plan of the review is designed to meet a very real need of the moment and the future: for its purpose is to bring together in its pages the mind of the Indian renaissance and the most recent developments of European culture. In India we as yet know next to nothing of what the most advanced minds of Europe are thinking and creating in the literary, artistic and philosophic field, — for that matter most of us, preoccupied with politics and domestic life, have a very inadequate information of what we ourselves are doing in these matters. It is to be hoped that this magazine will be an effective agent in curing these deficiencies. It has begun well: the editor, Miss Chattopadhyay, has the needed gift of attracting contributions of the right kind and there is in “Shama’a” as a

result of her skill a pervading and harmonising atmosphere of great distinction and fineness.

The frontispiece of this number is a portrait by a modern English artist, J. D. Fergusson, and an article on his work by Charles Marriot is the most interesting of the contributions. It sets out to discover on the basis of the real as opposed to the accidental differences between the Western and the Eastern methods of painting the inner meaning of their divergence. The attempt to create an illusion of reality to the eye, to copy Nature, which was so long a considerable part of the occidental theory is regarded as a passing phase for which the introduction of oil paint gave the occasion, an accidental and not at all an essential difference: European art at the beginning was free from it and is now rejecting this defect or this limitation. Nor are other details of method, such as the use of cast shadows as opposed to a reliance on outline, the real difference. None of these things involve necessarily an illusion of reality, and even where that inartistic fiction does not intervene, as in the Italian fresco and tempera painting and in oil painting that reduces shadow to a minimum and relies on outline, the fundamental difference between the East and the West remains constant and unalterable. The fundamental difference is that the Eastern artist paints in two and the European in three dimensions. Eastern painting suggests depth only by successive planes of distance; the Western artist uses perspective, and while the use of perspective to create an optical illusion is an error, its emphasis on depth as a mental conception extends the opportunities of expressing truth. It is in any case in the use of the third dimension that there comes in the true and essential difference.

The writer then attempts to link up this divergence with the concepts of the two continents with regard to life. He hazards the suggestion that the separate planes of a Chinese landscape correspond to "the doctrine of successive incarnations, of separate planes of existence, each the opportunity for its own virtues", and the occidental artist's "active exploration and exploitation of the ground between the planes of distance" corresponds to the West's view of this life as a continual discipline, the sole opportu-

nity for salvation, a battle to be won now and here, and of "material facts . . . not as evils in themselves and . . . opportunities for asceticism and renunciation, but as tests of the spirit, good or bad according as they are used rightly or wrongly", — an active exploration as opposed to a passive acceptance. I find it impossible to accept this ingenious idea: it strikes me as a little fanciful in itself, but in any case it is based on a misunderstanding of the Eastern mind. The usual Western error is made of confusing one strong tendency of Eastern philosophy for the whole of its thinking and a view of reincarnation is attributed to the East that is not its real view. The successive rebirths are not to the Eastern mind separate planes of existence, each independently the opportunity of its own virtues, but a closely connected sequence and the action of each life determines the frame and basic opportunities of the following birth. It is a rhythm of progression in which the present is not cut out from but one with the past and future. Life and action are here too and not only in the West tests of the spirit, good or bad according as they are used rightly or wrongly, and it is and must be always this present life that is of immediate and immense importance, though it is not and cannot in reason be final or irreparable: for salvation may be won now, but if there is failure, the soul has still its future chances. As a matter of historical fact the great periods of Eastern art were not periods of a passive acceptance of life. In India, the cradle of these philosophies, they coincided with an active exploration of the material universe through physical science and a strong insistence on life, on its government, on the exploration of its every detail, on the call of even its most sensuous and physical attractions. The literature and art of India are not at all a dream of renunciation and the passive acceptance of things, but actively concerned with life, though not as exteriorly as the art of the West or with the same terrestrial limitation of the view. It is there that we have to seek for the root of the divergence, not so much in the intellectual idea as in a much subtler spiritual difference.

The difference is that the Western artist, — the Western mind generally, — is led to insist on the physical as the first fact and the determinant, as it is indeed in vital truth and practice, and

he has got hold of that side of the truth and in relation to it sees all the rest. He not only stands firmly on the earth, but he has his head in the terrestrial atmosphere and looks up from it to higher planes. The Eastern has his foot on earth, but his head is in the psychical and spiritual realms and it is their atmosphere that affects his vision of the earth. He regards the material as the first fact only in appearance and not in reality: matter is to him real only as a mould and opportunity of spiritual being and the psychical region is an intermediary through which he can go back from the physical to the spiritual truth. This it is that conditions his whole artistic method and makes him succeed best in proportion as he brings the spiritual and psychical truth to illuminate and modify the material form. If he were to take to oil painting and the third dimension, I imagine that he would still before long break out of the physical limitations and try to make the use of the third a bridge to a fourth and psychical or to a fifth and spiritual dimension. That in fact seems to be very much what the latest Western art itself is trying to do. But it does not seem to me in some of its first efforts to have got very high beyond the earth attraction. The cubist and the futurist idea have the appearance of leaving the physical view only to wander astray among what one is tempted to call in theosophic language astral suggestions, a geometry or a movement vision of the world just above or behind ours. It is just so, one imagines, that a mind moving in those near supramaterial regions would distortedly half see physical persons and things. Mr. Fergusson's portrait is of another kind, but while perfectly though not terrestrially rational in its rhythm, seems to be inspired from a superior sphere of the same regions. It is a powerful work and there is a strong psychical truth of a kind, but the spirit, the suggestions, the forms are neither of heaven nor of earth. The impression given is the materialisation of a strong and vivid astral dream. The difference between this and the psychic manner of the East will at once appear to anyone who turns to the much less powerful but gracious and subtle Indian painting in the first number.

Another article of some interest on "Art and History" by John M. Thorburn gives us much writing in an attractive style





7. *Rose-Rhythm*, by J. D. Fergusson  
(as reproduced in *Shama'a*)



8. *Raga*, artist unknown  
(as reproduced in *Shama'a*)

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and some suggestive ideas, but there is a soft mistiness about both as yet too common in attempts at intuitive thinking and writing which makes it a little difficult to disentangle the ideas and get at their relation and sequence. The thought turns around rather than deals with national temperament and its shaping influence in art and there is a comparison in this respect between the French and the English temperament on one side and the German or the Russian on the other. But the attempt does not get deep. The line taken is that the distinguishing characteristic of the French and English mind are the critical faculty, humour, a sense for character and for the common as well as the uncommon, for detail as well as principle, a power of social adaptation or readaptation, the instinct in the English to carry on, in the French to change and reconstruct, and all these are connected together and are the fruit of Graeco-Roman civilisation. The writer thinks that the Graeco-Roman tradition and its true development in the modern world is the only saving ethical and political ideal, at least for Europe, — a salutary saving clause. At the same time he has found his highest artistic satisfaction in German music and rates the relative power of Russian literature and possibly the music above the recent artistic work of Europe, and he is perplexed by the coexistence of this superiority with Russia's social instability and with Germany's lack of literary humour and of the sense for character. And, though this reserve is not expressly made, Germany cannot be taxed with lack of the social constructive faculty, seeing that it was the German who in far back times developed the feudal system and has more recently perfected the modern industrial order. And yet Germany is distinctly outside the Graeco-Roman tradition. He discovers that Germany lacks the reflective critical faculty, that there is "something in the German artistic and philosophical temperament that is at variance with social good", "strangely hostile to the ethical and artistic ideal of Greece or the administrative and harmonising genius of Rome". Germany is entirely instinctive, at the mercy of her temperament, unable to liberate herself from it, instinctive in her music, her philosophy too an instinctive movement, reflection never able to get outside itself or even to

feel the need to do so. As for Russia, hers is the kind of art that is an expression of the division and breaches of human society rather than of its wholeness or its peace, an art born of Nature's error and not like the French and English of her truth. It seems however that the art born of Nature's error, of her suffering and ill health is more wonderful and alluring than the art born of her ordered ways. After all is said, the truth of Nature is only a partial and defective truth and her error only a partial error: there is no necessary harmony at least in the finite between what we value as goodness and what we value as beauty. And the solution of all the contradiction is to be sought in the experience of the "effort of the finite spirit to come to a fuller consciousness of itself or . . . of a universe that only uses that spirit as an instrument towards its own self-knowledge, self-perfection or self-interpretation". The conclusion is unexceptionable, but the line of thought leading to it stumbles needlessly in pursuit of a false clue.

The article is interesting chiefly as an indication of the perplexity of a certain type of European mind hesitating and held back in the grasp of the old that is dying and yet feeling the call of things that draw towards the future. The superstition of the perfect excellence of the Graeco-Roman tradition as rendered by England and France — more strictly the Latinised or semi-Latinised mind and the Renaissance tradition — survives: but as a matter of fact that tradition or what remains of it is a dead shell. The Time-Spirit has left it, retaining no doubt what it needs for its ulterior aims, and is passing on to far other things. In that evolution Germany and Russia among European nations have taken a leading place. Germany has failed to go the whole way, because to a strong but coarse and heavy vital force and a strict systematising scientific intellect she could not successfully bring in the saving power of intuition. Her music indeed was very great and revolutionised the artistic mind of Europe, not because it was instinctive, but because it was intuitive, — because it brought in a profound intuitive feeling and vision to uplift through the conquered difficulties of a complex harmony a large and powerful intelligence. Her philosophy was at first a very

great but too drily intellectual statement of truths that get their living meaning only in the intuitive experience, but afterwards in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as in Wagner it developed the intuitive vision and led to a deep change in European thinking. But the life of Germany remained still unaffected by her higher mind, well-organised, systematic but vitally and aesthetically crude, and she has failed to respond to the deepest forces of the future. The stream has turned aside to Russia, Russia deeply intuitive in her emotional and psychic being, moved through her sensibilities and aided by a sensitive fineness there a yet imperfect but rapidly evolving intuitivity of the intelligence. It is clear enough that the labour of the soul and mind of Russia has not arrived at victory and harmony, but her malady is the malady and suffering of a great gestation, and her social instability the condition of an effort towards the principle of a greater order than the self-satisfied imperfection of the Graeco-Roman tradition or of the modern social principle. The martyrdom of Russia might from this point of view be regarded as a vicarious sacrifice for the sin of obstinacy in imperfection, the sin of self-retardation of the entire race. It is at any rate by some large and harmonising view of this kind and not by any paradox of superior values of good and truth resulting in inferior values of beauty and negative values of no good and no truth flowering in superior values of beauty that we are likely best to understand both the effort of the finite spirit and the effort of the universe through it towards its own self-perception and self-interpretation.

The only other article of any length is a second instalment of Babu Bhagavan Das's "Krishna, a Study in the theory of Avatars", which contains much interesting matter and especially some very striking citations from that profound and beautiful work, the Bhagawat Purana: but the renderings given are rather modernising paraphrases than translations. There is a brief essay or rather the record of a reflection by Mr. Cousins on "Symbol and Metaphor in Art", quite the best thing in thought and style in the number: a translation by Mr. V. V. S. Aiyar of some verses of Tiruvalluvar done with grace and a fluid warmth and colour — perhaps too much fluidity and grace to

render rightly the terse and pregnant force that is supposed, and surely with justice, to be the essential quality of the poetic style of the Kurral: a dialogue in poetic prose, "The Vision", by Harindranath Chattopadhyay, in which we get imagination, beauty and colour of phrase and a moving sentiment, — but not yet, I think, all the originality and sureness of touch of the poet when he uses his own already mastered instrument, — and another prose poem by V. Chakkarai inspired by Rabindranath and executed with a sufficient grace. All these together make up an admirable number.

The closing portion of the magazine is devoted to notes and criticisms. Several closely printed pages are given to a critical review of Professor S. Radhakrishnan's work on the Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore by Mr. J. B. Raju. The criticism gives unhappily, in spite of its interest, an impression of ability very badly used, for it is throughout what a criticism of this kind should not be, censorious, hostile, bitterly incisive and sometimes almost brutal in the inimical tone of its phrases. A philosophic discussion should surely be conducted in a graver and more impersonal tone. In addition there is a criticism by dissection so discursively and incoherently minute that it is impossible to form a coherent idea of the thought the work animadverted upon actually does develop. I have not read the book in question, but Professor Radhakrishnan is well known as a perfectly competent philosophic critic and thinker and it is impossible to believe that anything he has written is, as this criticism constantly suggests, a mere mass of imbecile inconsequence. I gather that his offence is to have done exactly what he should have done, that is, to represent the thought of Tagore, — who is a poet and not a metaphysical dialectician but an intuitive seer, — as an intuitive whole: the dry-as-dust intellectual formalism of analysis demanded of him by his critic would have been in such a subject grotesquely out of place. A still greater offence is that he has endorsed the poet's exaltation of the claims of intuition as superior, at least in a certain field, to those of the intellect. Mr. Raju seems to think that this claim consecrates "a mistaken and obsolete psychology", the infatuation of "a

certain glamour, which in the popular imagination still hangs round the ancient words, mysticism and intuition." Mistaken, if you choose to think so; but obsolete? What then are we to make of Bergson's intuition, James' cosmic consciousness, Eucken's superconscient, the remarkable trend towards mysticism of recent scientists, mathematicians, thinkers, the still more remarkable speculations of contemporary Russian philosophers? These men at least are not irresponsible poets or incompetent dupes of the imagination, but psychologists of the first rank and the most original contemporary thinkers in the philosophic field. Mr. Raju's defence of the claims of the reason is well enough written, but it is founded on contentions that once were commonplaces but are now very disputable assertions. Indeed, if the most recent thought has any value, he is himself open to the retort of his own remark that he is the victim of a mistaken and obsolete psychology. Mr. Raju may be right, the modern psychologists and philosophers may be wrong, but the time has passed when the claims of intuition could be dismissed with this high, disdainful lightness. The subject, however, is too large to be touched at all within my present limits: I hope to return to it hereafter.

The review contains some poetry but, Mr. R. C. Bonnerji's gracious and cultured verses apart, all is of the aggressively modern type. There are a number of poems taken or quoted from the American journal *Poetry* that are one and all of the same stereotyped kind of free verse. Eleanor Hammond's "Transition" turns upon a pretty emotion and Evelyn Scott's "Fear" on an idea with fine possibilities, but as usual in this kind the style has no trace of any poetic turn or power but only a tamely excited and childlike direct primitive sincerity and the rhythm is more aggressively prosaic than any honest prose rhythm could manage to be. C. L.'s "All was His!" is good in thought and conscientious in style but the rhythm is hopelessly stumbling and lame: but then perhaps it is written on some new metrical principle, — one never knows in these days. The noteworthy poem of the number is Henry Ruffy's "London Nocturne", placed, I presume as a study in significant contrasts, opposite

Mukul Dey's drawing of Tagore. It is an admirable specimen of the now dominant vitalistic or "life" school of modern poetry. Personally, this school does not appeal to me. Its method seems to be to throw quite ordinary and obvious things violently at our eyes and their sense effects and suggestions at our midriffs and to underline the effects sometimes by an arresting baldness and poverty of presentation and sometimes on the contrary by a sensational exaggeration of image or phrase. Thus the poet tells us in one luminous line that

A policeman's clumsy tread goes slowly by,  
and in another makes us hear

Another policeman trying doors this way,  
a "car of Juggernaut"

Tuff-tuffing, clattering, clashing, chaos-crowned,  
a muddled clatter, voices confused, a shrieking whistle, solemn  
clock strokes "muttering ere they die", that

Fade like a halo or a dying sigh,  
another motor humming "a bee refrain", with its snorting,  
trumping, disdainful speed horn

Striking the silence like a flash of flame,  
a luckless harlot, a heavy horse hoof, the clank clank of a cab,  
silent wheels, jingling harness, and this succession of sounds  
leads up to the vision of a sly slinking white-face dawn, wan,  
thin and "sickly ill", a slight-formed sylph

Drawing her veil to show a death-pale form.

A feverishly acute impression of a London night is forced on the sense soul in me, but this poetry does not get beyond or give anything more: the poet's policemen and tuff-tuffing clattering crowned chaos of a motor car carry no meaning to me beyond the dreary fact of their existence and the suggestion of a sick melancholy of insomnia. But it seems to me that poetry ought to



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get beyond and should give something more. I do not deny the possibility of a kind of power in this style and am not blind to the aim at a strong identifying vision through something intuitive in the sense, a felt exactness of outward things, but an inartistic and often unpoetic method cannot be saved by a good intention. Still this is the kind of writing that holds the present in England and America and it demands its place in the purpose of the magazine. I hope however that we shall get often a relief in strains that go beyond the present to a greater poetic future, — let us say, like the exquisite rhythm and perfect form of beauty of Harindranath's poem in the first number.

All criticism of thought or personal preference apart, almost everything in this number is good in matter and interesting in its own kind. "Shama'a" already stands first among Indian magazines in the English tongue for sustained literary quality and distinction of tone and interest.



## Part Nine

### Bankim – Tilak – Dayananda

Sri Aurobindo wrote the pieces in this part at various times between 1907 and 1920; he published five of them in periodicals and one as the introduction to a book.



## Rishi Bankim Chandra

THERE are many who, lamenting the by-gone glories of this great and ancient nation, speak as if the Rishis of old, the inspired creators of thought and civilisation, were a miracle of our heroic age, not to be repeated among degenerate men and in our distressful present. This is an error and thrice an error. Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness may be overclouded but never, even for a moment, utterly cease. The hero, the Rishi, the saint, are the natural fruits of our Indian soil; and there has been no age in which they have not been born. Among the Rishis of the later age we have at last realised that we must include the name of the man who gave us the reviving mantra which is creating a new India, the mantra *Bande Mataram*.

The Rishi is different from the saint. His life may not have been distinguished by superior holiness nor his character by an ideal beauty. He is not great by what he was himself but by what he has expressed. A great and vivifying message had to be given to a nation or to humanity; and God has chosen this mouth on which to shape the words of the message. A momentous vision had to be revealed; and it is his eyes which the Almighty first unseals. The message which he has received, the vision which has been vouchsafed to him, he declares to the world with all the strength that is in him, and in one supreme moment of inspiration expresses it in words which have merely to be uttered to stir men's inmost natures, clarify their minds, seize their hearts and impel them to things which would have been impossible to them in their ordinary moments. Those words are the mantra which he was born to reveal and of that mantra he is the seer.

What is it for which we worship the name of Bankim today? what was his message to us or what the vision which he saw and has helped us to see? He was a great poet, a master of

beautiful language and a creator of fair and gracious dream-figures in the world of imagination; but it is not as a poet, stylist or novelist that Bengal does honour to him today. It is probable that the literary critic of the future will reckon *Kapalkundala*, *Bishabriksha* and *Krishnakanter Will* as his artistic masterpieces, and speak with qualified praise of *Devi Chaudhurani*, *Ananda Math*, *Krishnacharit* or *Dharmatattwa*. Yet it is the Bankim of these latter works and not the Bankim of the great creative masterpieces who will rank among the Makers of Modern India. The earlier Bankim was only a poet and stylist — the later Bankim was a seer and nation-builder.

But even as a poet and stylist Bankim did a work of supreme national importance, not for the whole of India, or only indirectly for the whole of India, but for Bengal which was destined to lead India and be in the vanguard of national development. No nation can grow without finding a fit and satisfying medium of expression for the new self into which it is developing — without a language which shall give permanent shape to its thoughts and feelings and carry every new impulse swiftly and triumphantly into the consciousness of all. It was Bankim's first great service to India that he gave the race which stood in its vanguard such a perfect and satisfying medium. He was blamed for corrupting the purity of the Bengali tongue; but the pure Bengali of the old poets could have expressed nothing but a conservative and unprogressing Bengal. The race was expanding and changing, and it needed a means of expression capable of change and expansion. He was blamed also for replacing the high literary Bengali of the Pundits by a mixed popular tongue which was neither the learned language nor good vernacular. But the Bengali of the Pundits would have crushed the growing richness, variety and versatility of the Bengali genius under its stiff inflexible ponderousness. We needed a tongue for other purposes than dignified treatises and erudite lucubrations. We needed a language which should combine the strength, dignity or soft beauty of Sanskrit with the verve and vigour of the vernacular, capable at one end of the utmost vernacular raciness and at the other of the most sonorous gravity. Bankim divined

our need and was inspired to meet it, — he gave us a means by which the soul of Bengal could express itself to itself.

As he had divined the linguistic need of his country's future, so he divined also its political need. He, first of our great publicists, understood the hollowness and inutility of the method of political agitation which prevailed in his time and exposed it with merciless satire in his *Lokarahasya* and *Kamalakanter Daptar*. But he was not satisfied merely with destructive criticism, — he had a positive vision of what was needed for the salvation of the country. He saw that the force from above must be met by a mightier reacting force from below, — the strength of repression by an insurgent national strength. He bade us leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine. The Mother of his vision held trenchant steel in her twice seventy million hands and not the bowl of the mendicant. It was the gospel of fearless strength and force which he preached under a veil and in images in *Ananda Math* and *Devi Chaudhurani*. And he had an inspired unerring vision of the moral strength which must be at the back of the outer force. He perceived that the first element of the moral strength must be *tyaga*, complete self-sacrifice for the country and complete self-devotion to the work of liberation. His workers and fighters for the motherland are political *byragees* who have no other thought than their duty to her and have put all else behind them as less dear and less precious and only to be resumed when their work for her is done. Whoever loves self or wife or child or goods more than his country is a poor and imperfect patriot; not by him shall the great work be accomplished. Again, he perceived that the second element of the moral strength needed must be self-discipline and organisation. This truth he expressed in the elaborate training of *Devi Chaudhurani* for her work, in the strict rules of the Association of the “Ananda Math” and in the pictures of perfect organisation which those books contain. Lastly, he perceived that the third element of moral strength must be the infusion of religious feeling into patriotic work. The religion of patriotism, — this is the master idea of Bankim's writings. It is already foreshadowed in *Devi Chaudhurani*. In *Dharmatattwa* the idea and

in *Krishnacharit* the picture of a perfect and many-sided Karma Yoga is sketched, the crown of which shall be work for one's country and one's kind. In *Ananda Math* this idea is the keynote of the whole book and receives its perfect lyrical expression in the great song which has become the national anthem of United India. This is the second great service of Bankim to his country that he pointed out to it the way of salvation and gave it the religion of patriotism. Of the new spirit which is leading the nation to resurgence and independence, he is the inspirer and political guru.

The third and supreme service of Bankim to his nation was that he gave us the vision of our Mother. The bare intellectual idea of the Motherland is not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition of the desirability of freedom is not an inspiring motive. There are few Indians at present, whether loyalist, moderate or nationalist in their political views, who do not recognise that the country has claims on them or that freedom in the abstract is a desirable thing. But most of us, when it is a question between the claims of the country and other claims, do not in practice prefer the service of the country; and while many may have the wish to see freedom accomplished, few have the will to accomplish it. There are other things which we hold dearer and which we fear to see imperilled either in the struggle for freedom or by its accomplishment. It is not till the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves a doomed nation is born. To some men it is given to have that vision and reveal it to others. It was thirty-two years ago that Bankim wrote his great song and few listened; but in a sudden moment of awakening from long delusions the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang *Bande Mataram*. The mantra had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the



religion of patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself. Once that vision has come to a people, there can be no rest, no peace, no farther slumber till the temple has been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifice offered. A great nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror.

## Bal Gangadhar Tilak

**N**EITHER Mr. Tilak nor his speeches really require any presentation or foreword. His speeches are, like the featureless Brahman, self-luminous. Straightforward, lucid, never turning aside from the point which they mean to hammer in or wrapping it up in ornamental verbiage, they read like a series of self-evident propositions. And Mr. Tilak himself, his career, his place in Indian politics are also a self-evident proposition, a hard fact baffling and dismaying in the last degree to those to whom his name has been anathema and his increasing pre-eminence figured as a portent of evil. The condition of things in India being given, the one possible aim for political effort resulting and the sole means and spirit by which it could be brought about, this man had to come and, once in the field, had to come to the front. He could not but stand in the end where he stands today, as one of the two or three leaders of the Indian people who are in their eyes the incarnations of the national endeavour and the God-given captains of the national aspiration. His life, his character, his work and endurance, his acceptance by the heart and the mind of the people are a stronger argument than all the reasonings in his speeches, powerful as these are, for Swaraj, Self-government, Home Rule, by whatever name we may call the sole possible present aim of our effort, the freedom of the life of India, its self-determination by the people of India. Arguments and speeches do not win liberty for a nation; but where there is a will in the nation to be free and a man to embody that will in every action of his life and to devote his days to its realisation in the face of every difficulty and every suffering, and where the will of the nation has once said, "This man and his life mean what I have in my heart and in my purpose," that is a sure signpost of the future which no one has any excuse for mistaking.

That indomitable will, that unwavering devotion have been the whole meaning of Mr. Tilak's life; they are the reason of his immense hold on the people. For he does not owe his pre-eminent position to any of the causes which have usually made for political leading in India, wealth and great social position, professional success, recognition by Government, a power of fervid oratory or of fluent and taking speech; for he had none of these things to help him. He owes it to himself alone and to the thing his life has meant and because he has meant it with his whole mind and his whole soul. He has kept back nothing for himself or for other aims, but has given all himself to his country.

Yet is Mr. Tilak a man of various and no ordinary gifts, and in several lines of life he might have achieved present distinction or a pre-eminent and enduring fame. Though he has never practised, he has a close knowledge of law and an acute legal mind which, had he cared in the least degree for wealth and worldly position, would have brought him to the front at the bar. He is a great Sanskrit scholar, a powerful writer and a strong, subtle and lucid thinker. He might have filled a large place in the field of contemporary Asiatic scholarship. Even as it is, his *Orion* and his *Arctic Home* have acquired at once a world-wide recognition and left as strong a mark as can at all be imprinted on the ever-shifting sands of oriental research. His work on the Gita, no mere commentary, but an original criticism and presentation of ethical truth, is a monumental work, the first prose writing of the front rank in weight and importance in the Marathi language, and likely to become a classic. This one book sufficiently proves that had he devoted his energies in this direction, he might easily have filled a large place in the history of Marathi literature and in the history of ethical thought, so subtle and comprehensive is its thinking, so great the perfection and satisfying force of its style. But it was psychologically impossible for Mr. Tilak to devote his energies in any great degree to another action than the one life-mission for which the Master of his works had chosen him. His powerful literary gift has been given up to a journalistic work, ephemeral as even the best journalistic work

must be, but consistently brilliant, vigorous, politically educative through decades, to an extent seldom matched and certainly never surpassed. His scholastic labour has been done almost by way of recreation. Nor can anything be more significant than the fact that the works which have brought him a fame other than that of the politician and patriot, were done in periods of compulsory cessation from his life-work, — planned and partly, if not wholly, executed during the imprisonments which could alone enforce leisure upon this unresting worker for his country. Even these by-products of his genius have some reference to the one passion of his life, the renewal, if not the surpassing of the past greatness of the nation by the greatness of its future. His Vedic researches seek to fix its prehistoric point of departure; the *Gita-rahasya* takes the scripture which is perhaps the strongest and most comprehensive production of Indian spirituality and justifies to that spirituality, by its own authoritative ancient message, the sense of the importance of life, of action, of human existence, of man's labour for mankind which is indispensable to the idealism of the modern spirit.

The landmarks of Mr. Tilak's life are landmarks also in the history of his province and his country. His first great step associated him in a pioneer work whose motive was to educate the people for a new life under the new conditions, — on the one side a purely educational movement of which the fruit was the Ferguson College, fitly founding the reawakening of the country by an effort of which co-operation in self-sacrifice was the moving spirit, on the other the initiation of the *Ke-sari* newspaper, which since then has figured increasingly as the characteristic and powerful expression of the political mind of Maharashtra. Mr. Tilak's career has counted three periods each of which had an imprisonment for its culminating point. His first imprisonment in the Kolhapur case belongs to this first stage of self-development and development of the Maratha country for new ideas and activities and for the national future.

The second period brought in a wider conception and a profounder effort. For now it was to reawaken not only the political mind, but the soul of the people by linking its future to

its past; it worked by a more strenuous and popular propaganda which reached its height in the organisation of the Shivaji and the Ganapati festivals. His separation from the social reform leader, Agarkar, had opened the way for the peculiar role which he has played as a trusted and accredited leader of conservative and religious India in the paths of democratic politics. It was this position which enabled him to effect the union of the new political spirit with the tradition and sentiment of the historic past and of both with the ineradicable religious temperament of the people, of which these festivals were the symbol. The Congress movement was for a long time purely occidental in its mind, character and methods, confined to the English-educated few, founded on the political rights and interests of the people read in the light of English history and European ideals, but with no roots either in the past of the country or in the inner spirit of the nation. Mr. Tilak was the first political leader to break through the routine of its somewhat academical methods, to bridge the gulf between the present and the past and to restore continuity to the political life of the nation. He developed a language and a spirit and he used methods which Indianised the movement and brought into it the masses. To his work of this period we owe that really living, strong and spontaneously organised movement in Maharashtra, which has shown its energy and sincerity in more than one crisis and struggle. This divination of the mind and spirit of his people and its needs and this power to seize on the right way to call it forth prove strikingly the political genius of Mr. Tilak; they made him the one man predestined to lead them in this trying and difficult period when all has to be discovered and all has to be reconstructed. What was done then by Mr. Tilak in Maharashtra, has been initiated for all India by the Swadeshi movement. To bring in the mass of the people, to found the greatness of the future on the greatness of the past, to infuse Indian politics with Indian religious fervour and spirituality are the indispensable conditions for a great and powerful political awakening in India. Others, writers, thinkers, spiritual leaders, had seen this truth. Mr. Tilak was the first to bring it into the actual field of practical politics. This second period of his labour

for his country culminated in a longer and harsher imprisonment which was, as it were, the second seal of the divine hand upon his work; for there can be no diviner seal than suffering for a cause.

A third period, that of the Swadeshi movement, brought Mr. Tilak forward prominently as an All-India leader; it gave him at last the wider field, the greater driving power, the larger leverage he needed to bring his life-work rapidly to a head, and not only in Maharashtra but throughout the country. The incidents of that period are too fresh in memory to need recalling. From the inception of the Boycott to the Surat catastrophe and his last and longest imprisonment, which was its sequel, the name and work of Mr. Tilak are a part of Indian history. These three imprisonments, each showing more clearly the moral stuff and quality of the man under the test and the revealing glare of suffering, have been the three seals of his career. The first found him one of a small knot of pioneer workers; it marked him out to be the strong and inflexible leader of a strong and sturdy people. The second found him already the inspiring power of a great reawakening of the Maratha spirit; it left him an uncrowned king in the Deccan and gave him that high reputation throughout India which was the foundation-stone of his present commanding influence. The last found him the leader of an All-India party, the foremost exponent and head of a thoroughgoing Nationalism; it sent him back to be one of the two or three foremost men of India adored and followed by the whole nation. He now stands in the last period of his lifelong toil for his country. It is one in which for the first time some ray of immediate hope, some prospect of near success shines upon a cause which at one time seemed destined to a long frustration and fulfilment only perhaps after a century of labour, struggle and suffering.

The qualities which have supported him and given him his hard-earned success, have been comparatively rare in Indian politics. The first is his entirely representative character as a born leader for the sub-nation to which he belongs. India is a unity full of diversities and its strength as well as its weakness is rooted in those diversities: the vigour of its national life can exist only

by the vigour of its regional life. Therefore in politics as in everything else a leader, to have a firm basis for his life-work, must build it upon a living work and influence in his own sub-race or province. No man was more fitted to do this than Mr. Tilak. He is the very type and incarnation of the Maratha character, the Maratha qualities, the Maratha spirit, but with the unified solidity in the character, the touch of genius in the qualities, the vital force in the spirit which make a great personality readily the representative man of his people. The Maratha race, as their soil and their history have made them, are a rugged, strong and sturdy people, democratic in their every fibre, keenly intelligent and practical to the very marrow, following in ideas, even in poetry, philosophy and religion the drive towards life and action, capable of great fervour, feeling and enthusiasm, like all Indian peoples, but not emotional idealists, having in their thought and speech always a turn for strength, sense, accuracy, lucidity and vigour, in learning and scholarship patient, industrious, careful, thorough and penetrating, in life simple, hardy and frugal, in their temperament courageous, pugnacious, full of spirit, yet with a tact in dealing with hard facts and circumventing obstacles, shrewd yet aggressive diplomatists, born politicians, born fighters. All this Mr. Tilak is with a singular and eminent completeness, and all on a large scale, adding to it all a lucid simplicity of genius, a secret intensity, an inner strength of will, a single-mindedness in aim of quite extraordinary force, which remind one of the brightness, sharpness and perfect temper of a fine sword hidden in a sober scabbard. As he emerged on the political field, his people saw more and more clearly in him their representative man, themselves in large, the genius of their type. They felt him to be of one spirit and make with the great men who had made their past history, almost believed him to be a reincarnation of one of them returned to carry out his old work in a new form and under new conditions. They beheld in him the spirit of Maharashtra once again embodied in a great individual. He occupies a position in his province which has no parallel in the rest of India.

On the wider national field also Mr. Tilak has rare qualities

which fit him for the hour and the work. He is in no sense what his enemies have called him, a demagogue: he has not the loose suppleness, the oratorical fervour, the facile appeal to the passions which demagoguery requires; his speeches are too much made up of hard and straight thinking, he is too much a man of serious and practical action. None more careless of mere effervescence, emotional applause, popular gush, public ovations. He tolerates them since popular enthusiasm will express itself in that way; but he has always been a little impatient of them as dissipative of serious strength and will and a waste of time and energy which might better have been solidified and devoted to effective work. But he is entirely a democratic politician, of a type not very common among our leaders, one who can both awaken the spirit of the mass and respond to their spirit, able to lead them, but also able to see where he must follow the lead of their predominant sense and will and feelings. He moves among his followers as one of them in a perfect equality, simple and familiar in his dealings with them by the very force of his temperament and character, open, plain and direct and, though capable of great reserve in his speech, yet, wherever necessary, admitting them into his plans and ideas as one taking counsel of them, taking their sense even while enforcing as much as possible his own view of policy and action with all the great strength of quiet will at his command. He has that closeness of spirit to the mass of men, that unpretentious openness of intercourse with them, that faculty of plain and direct speech which interprets their feelings and shows them how to think out what they feel, which are pre-eminently the democratic qualities. For this reason he has always been able to unite all classes of men behind him, to be the leader not only of the educated, but of the people, the merchant, the trader, the villager, the peasant. All Maharashtra understands him when he speaks or writes; all Maharashtra is ready to follow him when he acts. Into his wider field in the troubled Swadeshi times he carried the same qualities and the same power of democratic leadership.

It is equally a mistake to think of Mr. Tilak as by nature a revolutionary leader; that is not his character or his political



temperament. The Indian peoples generally, with the possible exception of emotional and idealistic Bengal, have nothing or very little of the revolutionary temper; they can be goaded to revolution, like any and every people on the face of the earth, but they have no natural disposition towards it. They are capable of large ideals and fervent enthusiasms, sensitive in feeling and liable to gusts of passionate revolt which are easily appeased by even an appearance of concession; but naturally they are conservative in temperament and deliberate in action. Mr. Tilak, though a strong-willed man and a fighter by nature, has this much of the ordinary Indian temperament, that with a large mind open to progressive ideas he unites a conservative temperament strongly in touch with the sense of his people. In a free India he would probably have figured as an advanced Liberal statesman eager for national progress and greatness, but as careful of every step as firm and decided in it and always seeking to carry the conservative instinct of the nation with him in every change. He is besides a born Parliamentarian, a leader for the assembly, though always in touch with the people outside as the constant source of the mandate and the final referee in differences. He loves a clear and fixed procedure which he can abide by and use, even while making the most of its details, — of which the theory and practice would be always at his finger-ends, — to secure a practical advantage in the struggle of parties. He always set a high value on the Congress for this reason; he saw in it a centralising body, an instrument and a first, though yet shapeless essay at a popular assembly. Many after Surat spoke of him as the deliberate breaker of the Congress, but to no one was the catastrophe so great a blow as to Mr. Tilak. He did not love the do-nothingness of that assembly, but he valued it both as a great national fact and for its unrealised possibilities and hoped to make of it a central organisation for practical work. To destroy an existing and useful institution was alien to his way of seeing and would not have entered into his ideas or his wishes.

Moreover, though he has ideals, he is not an idealist by character. Once the ideal fixed, all the rest is for him practical work, the facing of hard facts, though also the overcoming of

them when they stand in the way of the goal, the use of strong and effective means with the utmost care and prudence consistent with the primary need of as rapid an effectivity as will and earnest action can bring about. Though he can be obstinate and iron-willed when his mind is made up as to the necessity of a course of action or the indispensable recognition of a principle, he is always ready for a compromise which will allow of getting real work done, and will take willingly half a loaf rather than no bread, though always with a full intention of getting the whole loaf in good time. But he will not accept chaff or plaster in place of good bread. Nor does he like to go too far ahead of possibilities, and indeed has often shown in this respect a caution highly disconcerting to the more impatient of his followers. But neither would he mistake, like the born Moderate, the minimum effort and the minimum immediate aim for the utmost possibility of the moment. Such a man is no natural revolutionist, but a constitutionalist by temper, though always in such times necessarily the leader of an advanced party or section. A clear constitution he could use, amend and enlarge, would have suited him much better than to break existing institutions and get a clear field for innovations which is the natural delight of the revolutionary temperament.

This character of Mr. Tilak's mind explains his attitude in social reform. He is no dogmatic reactionary. The Maratha people are incapable of either the unreasoning or too reasoning rigid conservatism or of the fiery iconoclasm which can exist side by side, — they are often only two sides of the same temper of mind, — in other parts of India. It is attached to its social institutions like all peoples who live close to the soil, but it has always shown a readiness to adapt, loosen and accommodate them in practice to the pressure of actual needs. Mr. Tilak shares this general temperament and attitude of his people. But there have also been other reasons which a strong political sense has dictated; and first, the clear perception that the political movement could not afford to cut itself off from the great mass of the nation or split itself up into warring factions by a premature association of the social reform question with politics. The proper time for

that, a politician would naturally feel, is when the country has a free assembly of its own which can consult the needs or carry out the mandates of the people. Moreover, he has felt strongly that political emancipation was the one pressing need for the people of India and that all else not directly connected with it must take a second place; that has been the principle of his own life and he has held that it should be the principle of the national life at the present hour. Let us have first liberty and the organised control of the life of the nation, afterwards we can see how we should use it in social matters; meanwhile let us move on without noise and strife, only so far as actual need and advisability demand and the sense of the people is ready to advance. This attitude may be right or wrong; but, Mr. Tilak being what he is and the nation being what it is, he could take no other.

If, then, Mr. Tilak has throughout his life been an exponent of the idea of radical change in politics and during the Swadeshi agitation the head of a party which could be called extremist, it is due to that clear practical sense, essential in a leader of political action, which seizes at once on the main necessity and goes straight without hesitating or deviation to the indispensable means. There are always two classes of political mind: one is preoccupied with details for their own sake, revels in the petty points of the moment and puts away into the background the great principles and the great necessities, the other sees rather these first and always and details only in relation to them. The one type moves in a routine circle which may or may not have an issue; it cannot see the forest for the trees and it is only by an accident that it stumbles, if at all, on the way out. The other type takes a mountain-top view of the goal and all the directions and keeps that in its mental compass through all the deflections, retardations and tortuosities which the character of the intervening country may compel it to accept; but these it abridges as much as possible. The former class arrogate the name of statesman in their own day; it is to the latter that posterity concedes it and sees in them the true leaders of great movements. Mr. Tilak, like all men of pre-eminent political genius, belongs to this second and greater order of mind.

Moreover in India, owing to the divorce of political activity from the actual government and administration of the affairs of the country, an academical turn of thought is too common in our dealings with politics. But Mr. Tilak has never been an academical politician, a “student of politics” meddling with action; his turn has always been to see actualities and move forward in their light. It was impossible for him to view the facts and needs of current Indian politics of the nineteenth century in the pure serene or the dim religious light of the Witenagemot and the Magna Charta and the constitutional history of England during the past seven centuries, or to accept the academic sophism of a gradual preparation for liberty, or merely to discuss isolated or omnibus grievances and strive to enlighten the darkness of the official mind by luminous speeches and resolutions, as was the general practice of Congress politics till 1905. A national agitation in the country which would make the Congress movement a living and acting force was always his ideal, and what the Congress would not do, he, when still an isolated leader of a handful of enthusiasts in a corner of the country, set out to do in his own strength and for his own hand. He saw from the first that for a people circumstanced like ours there could be only one political question and one aim, not the gradual improvement of the present administration into something in the end fundamentally the opposite of itself, but the early substitution of Indian and national for English and bureaucratic control in the affairs of India. A subject nation does not prepare itself by gradual progress for liberty; it opens by liberty its way to rapid progress. The only progress that has to be made in the preparation for liberty, is progress in the awakening of the national spirit and in the creation of the will to be free and the will to adopt the necessary means and bear the necessary sacrifices for liberty. It is these clear perceptions that have regulated his political career.

Therefore the whole of the first part of his political life was devoted to a vigorous and living propaganda for the reawakening and solidifying of the national life of Maharashtra. Therefore, too, when the Swadeshi agitation gave the first opportunity of a large movement in the same sense throughout India, he

seized on it with avidity, while his past work in Maharashtra, his position as the leader of a small advanced section in the old Congress politics and his character, sacrifices and sufferings at once fixed the choice of the New Party on him as their predestined leader. The same master-idea made him seize on the four main points which the Bengal agitation had thrown into some beginning of practical form, Swaraj, Swadeshi, National Education and Boycott, and formulate them into a definite programme, which he succeeded in introducing among the resolutions of the Congress at the Calcutta session, — much to the detriment of the uniformity of sage and dignified impotence which had characterised the august, useful and calmly leisurely proceedings of that temperate national body. We all know the convulsion that followed the injection of this foreign matter; but we must see why Mr. Tilak insisted on administering annually so potent a remedy. The four resolutions were for him the first step towards shaking the Congress out of its torpid tortoise-like gait and turning it into a living and acting body.

Swaraj, complete and early self-government in whatever form, had the merit in his eyes of making definite and near to the national vision the one thing needful, the one aim that mattered, the one essential change that includes all the others. No nation can develop a living enthusiasm or accept great action and great sacrifices for a goal that is lost to its eye in the mist of far-off centuries; it must see it near and distinct before it, magnified by a present hope, looming largely and actualised as a living aim whose early realisation only depends on a great, sustained and sincere effort. National education meant for him the training of the young generation in the new national spirit to be the architects of liberty, if that was delayed, the citizens of a free India which had rediscovered itself, if the preliminary conditions were rapidly fulfilled. Swadeshi meant an actualising of the national self-consciousness and the national will and the readiness to sacrifice which would fix them in the daily mind and daily life of the people. In Boycott, which was only a popular name for passive resistance, he saw the means to give to the struggle between the two ideas in conflict, bureaucratic control

and national control, a vigorous shape and body and to the popular side a weapon and an effective form of action. Himself a man of organisation and action, he knew well that by action most, and not by thought and speech alone, can the will of a people be vivified, trained and made solid and enduring. To get a sustained authority from the Congress for a sustained effort in these four directions seemed to him of capital importance; this was the reason for his inflexible insistence on their unchanged inclusion when the programme seemed to him to be in danger.

Yet also, because he is a practical politician and a man of action, he has always, so long as the essentials were safe, been ready to admit any change in name or form or any modification of programme or action dictated by the necessities of the time. Thus during the movement of 1905–1910 the Swadeshi leader and the Swadeshi party insisted on agitation in India and discouraged reliance on agitation in England, because the awaking and fixing of a self-reliant national spirit and will in India was the one work for the hour and in England no party or body of opinion existed which would listen to the national claim, nor could exist, — as anybody with the least knowledge of English politics could have told, — until that claim had been unmistakably and insistently made and was clearly supported by the fixed will of the nation. The Home Rule leader and the Home Rule party of today, which is only the “New Party” reborn with a new name, form and following, insist on the contrary on vigorous and speedy agitation in England, because the claim and the will have both been partially, but not sufficiently recognised, and because a great and growing British party now exists which is ready to make the Indian ideal part of its own programme. So, too, they insisted then on Swaraj and rejected with contempt all petty botching with the administration, because so alone could the real issue be made a living thing to the nation; now they accept readily enough a fairly advanced but still half-and-half scheme, but always with the proviso that the popular principle receives substantial embodiment and the full ideal is included as an early goal and not put off to a far-distant future. The leader of men in war or politics will always distrust petty and episodic

gains which, while giving false hopes, are merely nominal and put off or even endanger the real issue, but will always seize on any advantage which brings decisive victory definitely nearer. It is only the pure idealist, — but let us remember that he too has his great and indispensable uses, — who insists always on either all or nothing. Not revolutionary methods or revolutionary idealism, but the clear sight and the direct propaganda and action of the patriotic political leader insisting on the one thing needful and the straight way to drive at it, have been the sense of Mr. Tilak's political career.

The speeches in this book belong both to the Swadeshi and the Home Rule periods, but mostly to the latter. They show Mr. Tilak's mind and policy and voice with great force that will and political thought now dominant in the country which he has so prominently helped to create. Mr. Tilak has none of the gifts of the orator which many lesser men have possessed, but his force of thought and personality make him in his own way a powerful speaker. He is at his best in his own Marathi tongue rather than in English; for there he finds always the apt and telling phrase, the striking application, the vigorous figure which go straight home to the popular mind. But there is essentially the same power in both. His words have the directness and force — no force can be greater — of a sincere and powerful mind always going immediately to the aim in view, the point before it, expressing it with a bare, concentrated economy of phrase and the insistence of the hammer full on the head of the nail which drives it in with a few blows. But the speeches have to be read with his life, his character, his life-long aims as their surrounding atmosphere. That is why I have dwelt on their main points; — not that all I have said is not well known, but the repetition of known facts has its use when they are important and highly significant.

Two facts of his life and character have to be insisted on as of special importance to the country because they give a great example of two things in which its political life was long deficient and is even now not sufficient. First, the inflexible will of the patriot and man of sincere heart and thorough action

which has been the very grain of his character: for aspirations, emotion, enthusiasm are nothing without this; will alone creates and prevails. And wish and will are not the same thing, but divided by a great gulf: the one, which is all most of us get to, is a puny, tepid and inefficient thing and, even when most enthusiastic, easily discouraged and turned from its object; the other can be a giant to accomplish and endure. Secondly, the readiness to sacrifice and face suffering, not needlessly or with a useless bravado, but with a firm courage when it comes, to bear it and to outlive, returning to work with one's scars as if nothing had happened. No prominent man in India has suffered more for his country; none has taken his sacrifices and sufferings more quietly and as a matter of course.

The first part of Mr. Tilak's life-work is accomplished. Two great opportunities have hastened its success, of which he has taken full advantage. The lavalike flood of the Swadeshi movement fertilised the soil and did for the country in six years the work of six ordinary decades; it fixed the goal of freedom in the mind of the people. The sudden irruption of Mrs. Besant into the field with her unequalled gift, — born of her untiring energy, her flaming enthusiasm, her magnificent and magnetic personality, her spiritual force, — for bringing an ideal into the stage of actuality with one rapid whirl and rush, has been the second factor. Indeed the presence of three such personalities as Mr. Tilak, Mrs. Besant and Mr. Gandhi at the head and in the heart of the present movement, should itself be a sure guarantee of success. The nation has accepted the near fulfilment of his great aim as its own political aim, the one object of its endeavour, its immediate ideal. The Government of India and the British nation have accepted complete self-government as their final goal in Indian administration; a powerful party in England, the party which seems to command the future, has pronounced for its more speedy and total accomplishment. A handful of dissentients there may be in the country who still see only petty gains in the present and the rest in the dim vista of the centuries, but with this insignificant exception, all the Indian provinces and communities have spoken with one voice. Mr. Tilak's principles



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of work have been accepted; the ideas which he had so much trouble to enforce have become the commonplaces and truisms of our political thought. The only question that remains is the rapidity of a now inevitable evolution. That is the hope for which Mr. Tilak still stands, a leader of all India. Only when it is accomplished, will his life-work be done; not till then can he rest while he lives, even though age grows on him and infirmities gather, — for his spirit will always remain fresh and vigorous, — any more than a river can rest before the power of its waters has found their goal and discharged them into the sea. But whether that end, — the end of a first stage of our new national life, the beginning of a greater India reborn for self-fulfilment and the service of humanity, — come tomorrow or after a little delay, its accomplishment is now safe, and Mr. Tilak's name stands already for history as a nation-builder, one of the half-dozen greatest political personalities, memorable figures, representative men of the nation in this most critical period of India's destinies, a name to be remembered gratefully so long as the country has pride in its past and hope for its future.

## A Great Mind, a Great Will

A GREAT mind, a great will, a great and pre-eminent leader of men has passed away from the field of his achievement and labour. To the mind of his country Lokamanya Tilak was much more, for he had become to it a considerable part of itself, the embodiment of its past effort, and the head of its present will and struggle for a free and greater life. His achievement and personality have put him amidst the first rank of historic and significant figures. He was one who built much rapidly out of little beginnings, a creator of great things out of an unworked material. The creations he left behind him were a new and strong and self-reliant national spirit, the reawakened political mind and life of a people, a will to freedom and action, a great national purpose. He brought to his work extraordinary qualities, a calm, silent, unflinching courage, an unwavering purpose, a flexible mind, a forward-casting vision of possibilities, an eye for the occasion, a sense of actuality, a fine capacity of democratic leadership, a diplomacy that never lost sight of its aim and pressed towards it even in the most pliant turns of its movement, and guiding all, a single-minded patriotism that cared for power and influence only as a means of service to the Motherland and a lever for the work of her liberation. He sacrificed much for her and suffered for her repeatedly and made no ostentation of his suffering and sacrifice. His life was a constant offering at her altar and his death has come in the midst of an unceasing service and labour.

The passing of this great personality creates a large and immediate void that will be felt acutely for a time, but it is the virtue of his own work that this vacancy must very soon be filled by new men and new forces. The spirit he created in the country is of that sincere, real and fruitful kind that cannot consent to cease or to fail, but must always throw up minds and

capacities that will embody its purpose. It will raise up others of his mould, if not of his stature, to meet its needs, its demands, its call for ability and courage. He himself has only passed behind the veil, for death, and not life, is the illusion. The strong spirit that dwelt within him ranges now freed from our human and physical limitations, and can still shed upon us, on those now at work, and those who are coming, a more subtle, ample and irresistible influence; and even if this were not so, an effective part of him is still with us. His will is left behind in many to make more powerful and free from hesitations the national will he did so much to create, the growing will, whose strength and single wholeness are the chief conditions of the success of the national effort. His courage is left behind in numbers to fuse itself into and uplift and fortify the courage of his people; his sacrifice and strength in suffering are left with us to enlarge themselves, more even than in his lifetime, and to heighten the fine and steeled temper our people need for the difficult share that still lies before their endeavour. These things are his legacy to his country, and it is in proportion as each man rises to the height of what they signify that his life will be justified and assured of its recompense.

Methods and policies may change but the spirit of what Lokamanya Tilak was and did remains and will continue to be needed, a constant power in others for the achievement of his own life's grand and single purpose. A great worker and creator is not to be judged only by the work he himself did, but also by the greater work he made possible. The achievement of the departed leader has brought the nation to a certain point. Its power to go forward from and beyond that point, to face new circumstances, to rise to the more strenuous and momentous demand of its future will be the greatest and surest sign of the soundness of his labour. That test is being applied to the national movement at the very moment of his departure.

The death of Lokamanya Tilak comes upon us at a time when the country is passing through most troubled and poignant hours. It occurs at a critical period, it coincides even with a crucial moment when questions are being put to the nation by

the Master of Destiny, on the answer to which depends the whole spirit, virtue and meaning of its future. In each event that confronts us there is a divine significance, and the passing away at such a time of such a man, on whose thought and decision thousands hung, should make more profoundly felt by the people, by every man in the nation, the great, the almost religious responsibility that lies upon him personally.

At this juncture it is not for me to prejudge the issue; each must meet it according to his light and conscience. This at least can be demanded of every man who would be worthy of India and of her great departed son that he shall put away from him in the decision of the things to be done in the future, all weakness of will, all defect of courage, all unwillingness for sacrifice. Let each strive to see with that selfless impersonality taught by one of our greatest scriptures which can alone enable us to identify ourselves both with the Divine Will and with the soul of our Mother. Two things India demands for her future, the freedom of soul, life and action needed for the work she has to do for mankind; and the understanding by her children of that work and of her own true spirit that the future India may be indeed India. The first seems still the main sense and need of the present moment, but the second is also involved in it — a yet greater issue. On the spirit of our decisions now and in the next few years depends the truth, vitality and greatness of our future national existence. It is the beginning of a great self-determination not only in the external but in the spiritual. These two thoughts should govern our action. Only so can the work done by Lokamanya Tilak find its true continuation and issue.

# Dayananda

## The Man and His Work

**A**MONG the great company of remarkable figures that will appear to the eye of posterity at the head of the Indian Renascence, one stands out by himself with peculiar and solitary distinctness, one unique in his type as he is unique in his work. It is as if one were to walk for a long time amid a range of hills rising to a greater or lesser altitude, but all with sweeping contours, green-clad, flattering the eye even in their most bold and striking elevation. But amidst them all, one hill stands apart, piled up in sheer strength, a mass of bare and puissant granite, with verdure on its summit, a solitary pine jutting out into the blue, a great cascade of pure, vigorous and fertilising water gushing out from its strength as a very fountain of life and health to the valley. Such is the impression created on my mind by Dayananda.

It was Kathiawar that gave birth to this puissant renovator and new-creator. And something of the very soul and temperament of that peculiar land entered into his spirit, something of Girnar and the rocks and hills, something of the voice and puissance of the sea that flings itself upon those coasts, something of that humanity which seems to be made of the virgin and unspoilt stuff of Nature, fair and robust in body, instinct with a fresh and primal vigour, crude in the crude, but in a developed nature capable of becoming a great force of genial creation.

When I seek to give an account to myself of my sentiment and put into precise form the impression I have received, I find myself starting from two great salient characteristics of this man's life and work which mark him off from his contemporaries and compeers. Other great Indians have helped to make India of today by a self-pouring into the psychological material

of the race, a spiritual infusion of themselves into the fluent and indeterminate mass which will one day settle into consistency and appear as a great formal birth of Nature. They have entered in as a sort of leaven, a power of unformed stir and ferment out of which forms must result. One remembers them as great souls and great influences who live on in the soul of India. They are in us and we would not be what we are without them. But of no precise form can we say that this was what the man meant, still less that this form was the very body of that spirit.

The example of Mahadev Govind Ranade presents itself to my mind as the very type of this peculiar action so necessary to a period of large and complex formation. If a foreigner were to ask us what this Mahratta economist, reformer, patriot precisely did that we give him so high a place in our memory, we should find it a little difficult to answer. We should have to point to those activities of a mass of men in which his soul and thought were present as a formless former of things, to the great figures of present-day Indian life who received the breath of his spirit. And in the end we should have to reply by a counter question, "What would Maharashtra of today have been without Mahadev Govind Ranade and what would India of today be without Maharashtra?" But even with those who were less amorphous and diffusive in their pressure on men and things, even with workers of a more distinct energy and action, I arrive fundamentally at the same impression. Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men, but the definite work he has left behind is quite incommensurate with our impression of his creative might and energy. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India and we say, "Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children." So it is with all. Not only are the men greater than their definite works, but their influence is so wide and formless that it has little relation to any formal work that they have left behind them.

Very different was the manner of working of Dayananda.

Here was one who did not infuse himself informally into the indeterminate soul of things, but stamped his figure indelibly as in bronze on men and things. Here was one whose formal works are the very children of his spiritual body, children fair and robust and full of vitality, the image of their creator. Here was one who knew definitely and clearly the work he was sent to do, chose his materials, determined his conditions with a sovereign clairvoyance of the spirit and executed his conception with the puissant mastery of the born worker. As I regard the figure of this formidable artisan in God's workshop, images crowd on me which are all of battle and work and conquest and triumphant labour. Here, I say to myself, was a very soldier of Light, a warrior in God's world, a sculptor of men and institutions, a bold and rugged victor of the difficulties which matter presents to spirit. And the whole sums itself up to me in a powerful impression of spiritual practicality. The combination of these two words, usually so divorced from each other in our conceptions, seems to me the very definition of Dayananda.

Even if we leave out of account the actual nature of the work he did, the mere fact that he did it in this spirit and to this effect would give him a unique place among our great founders. He brings back an old Aryan element into the national character. This element gives us the second of the differentiae I observe and it is the secret of the first. We others live in a stream of influences; we allow them to pour through us and mould us; there is something shaped and out of it a modicum of work results; the rest is spilt out again in a stream of influence. We are indeterminate in our lines, we accommodate ourselves to circumstance and environment. Even when we would fain be militant and intransigent, we are really fluid and opportunist. Dayananda seized on all that entered into him, held it in himself, masterfully shaped it there into the form that he saw to be right and threw it out again into the forms that he saw to be right. That which strikes us in him as militant and aggressive, was a part of his strength of self-definition.

He was not only plastic to the great hand of Nature, but asserted his own right and power to use Life and Nature as

plastic material. We can imagine his soul crying still to us with our insufficient spring of manhood and action, “Be not content, O Indian, only to be infinitely and grow vaguely, but see what God intends thee to be, determine in the light of His inspiration to what thou shalt grow. Seeing, hew that out of thyself, hew that out of Life. Be a thinker, but be also a doer; be a soul, but be also a man; be a servant of God, but be also a master of Nature!” For this was what he himself was; a man with God in his soul, vision in his eyes and power in his hands to hew out of life an image according to his vision. Hew is the right word. Granite himself, he smote out a shape of things with great blows as in granite.

In Dayananda’s life we see always the puissant jet of this spiritual practicality. A spontaneous power and decisiveness is stamped everywhere on his work. And to begin with, what a master-glance of practical intuition was this to go back trenchantly to the very root of Indian life and culture, to derive from the flower of its first birth the seed for a radical new birth! And what an act of grandiose intellectual courage to lay hold upon this scripture defaced by ignorant comment and oblivion of its spirit, degraded by misunderstanding to the level of an ancient document of barbarism, and to perceive in it its real worth as a scripture which conceals in itself the deep and energetic spirit of the forefathers who made this country and nation, — a scripture of divine knowledge, divine worship, divine action. I know not whether Dayananda’s powerful and original commentary will be widely accepted as the definite word on the Veda. I think myself some delicate work is still called for to bring out other aspects of this profound and astonishing Revelation. But this matters little. The essential is that he seized justly on the Veda as India’s Rock of Ages and had the daring conception to build on what his penetrating glance perceived in it a whole education of youth, a whole manhood and a whole nation-hood. Rammohan Roy, that other great soul and puissant worker who laid his hand on Bengal and shook her — to what mighty issues — out of her long, indolent sleep by her rivers and rice-fields — Rammohan Roy stopped short at the Upanishads. Dayananda



looked beyond and perceived that our true original seed was the Veda. He had the national instinct and he was able to make it luminous, — an intuition in place of an instinct. Therefore the works that derive from him, however they depart from received traditions, must needs be profoundly national.

To be national is not to stand still. Rather, to seize on a vital thing out of the past and throw it into the stream of modern life, is really the most powerful means of renovation and new-creation. Dayananda's work brings back such a principle and spirit of the past to vivify a modern mould. And observe that in the work as in the life it is the past caught in the first jet of its virgin vigour, pure from its sources, near to its root principle and therefore to something eternal and always renewable.

And in the work as in the man we find that faculty of spontaneous definite labour and vigorous formation which proceeds from an inner principle of perfect clearness, truth and sincerity. To be clear in one's own mind, entirely true and plain with one's self and with others, wholly honest with the conditions and materials of one's labour, is a rare gift in our crooked, complex and faltering humanity. It is the spirit of the Aryan worker and a sure secret of vigorous success. For always Nature recognises a clear, honest and recognisable knock at her doors and gives the result with an answering scrupulosity and diligence. And it is good that the spirit of the Master should leave its trace in his followers, that somewhere in India there should be a body of whom it can be said that when a work is seen to be necessary and right, the men will be forthcoming, the means forthcoming and that work will surely be done.

Truth seems a simple thing and is yet most difficult. Truth was the master-word of the Vedic teaching, truth in the soul, truth in vision, truth in the intention, truth in the act. Practical truth, *ārjava*, an inner candour and a strong sincerity, clearness and open honour in the word and deed, was the temperament of the old Aryan morals. It is the secret of a pure unspoilt energy, the sign that a man has not travelled far from Nature. It is the bar dexter of the son of Heaven, Divasputra. This was the stamp that Dayananda left behind him and it should be the mark and effigy

of himself by which the parentage of his work can be recognised. May his spirit act in India pure, unspoilt, unmodified and help to give us back that of which our life stands especially in need, pure energy, high clearness, the penetrating eye, the masterful hand, the noble and dominant sincerity.

## Dayananda and the Veda

**D**AYANANDA accepted the Veda as his rock of firm foundation, he took it for his guiding view of life, his rule of inner existence and his inspiration for external work, but he regarded it as even more, the word of eternal Truth on which man's knowledge of God and his relations with the Divine Being and with his fellows can be rightly and securely founded. This everlasting rock of the Veda, many assert, has no existence, there is nothing there but the commonest mud and sand; it is only a hymnal of primitive barbarians, only a rude worship of personified natural phenomena, or even less than that, a liturgy of ceremonial sacrifice, half religion, half magic, by which superstitious animal men of yore hoped to get themselves gold and food and cattle, slaughter pitilessly their enemies, protect themselves from disease, calamity and demoniac influences and enjoy the coarse pleasures of a material Paradise. To that we must add a third view, the orthodox, or at least that which arises from Sayana's commentary; this view admits, practically, the ignobler interpretation of the substance of Veda and yet — or is it therefore? — exalts this primitive farrago as a holy Scripture and a Book of Sacred Works.

Now this matter is no mere scholastic question, but has a living importance, not only for a just estimate of Dayananda's work but for our consciousness of our past and for the determination of the influences that shall mould our future. A nation grows into what it shall be by the force of that which it was in the past and is in the present, and in this growth there come periods of conscious and subconscious stock-taking when the national soul selects, modifies, rejects, keeps out of all that it had or is acquiring whatever it needs as substance and capital for its growth and action in the future: in such a period of stock-taking we are still and Dayananda was one of its great and

formative spirits. But among all the materials of our past the Veda is the most venerable and has been directly and indirectly the most potent. Even when its sense was no longer understood, even when its traditions were lost behind Pauranic forms, it was still held in honour, though without knowledge, as authoritative revelation and inspired Book of Knowledge, the source of all sanctions and standard of all truth.

But there has always been this double and incompatible tradition about the Veda that it is a book of ritual and mythology and that it is a book of divine knowledge. The Brahmanas seized on the one tradition, the Upanishads on the other. Later, the learned took the hymns for a book essentially of ritual and works, they went elsewhere for pure knowledge; but the instinct of the race bowed down before it with an obstinate inarticulate memory of a loftier tradition. And when in our age the Veda was brought out of its obscure security behind the purdah of a reverential neglect, the same phenomenon reappears. While Western scholarship extending the hints of Sayana seemed to have classed it for ever as a ritual liturgy to Nature-Gods, the genius of the race looking through the eyes of Dayananda pierced behind the error of many centuries and received again the intuition of a timeless revelation and a divine truth given to humanity. In any case, we have to make one choice or another. We can no longer securely enshrine the Veda wrapped up in the folds of an ignorant reverence or guarded by a pious self-deceit. Either the Veda is what Sayana says it is, and then we have to leave it behind for ever as the document of a mythology and ritual which have no longer any living truth or force for thinking minds, or it is what the European scholars say it is, and then we have to put it away among the relics of the past as an antique record of semi-barbarous worship; or else it is indeed Veda, a book of divine knowledge, and then it becomes of supreme importance to us to know and to hear its message.

It is objected to the sense Dayananda gave to the Veda that it is no true sense but an arbitrary fabrication of imaginative learning and ingenuity, to his method that it is fantastic and unacceptable to the critical reason, to his teaching of a revealed

Scripture that the very idea is a rejected superstition impossible for any enlightened mind to admit or to announce sincerely. I will not now examine the solidity of Dayananda's interpretation of Vedic texts, nor anticipate the verdict of the future on his commentary, nor discuss his theory of revelation. I shall only state the broad principles underlying his thought about the Veda as they present themselves to me. For in the action and thought of a great soul or a great personality the vital thing to my mind is not the form he gave to it, but in his action the helpful power he put forth and in his thought the helpful truth he has added or, it may be, restored to the yet all too scanty stock of our human acquisition and divine potentiality.

To start with the negation of his work by his critics, in whose mouth does it lie to accuse Dayananda's dealings with the Veda of a fantastic or arbitrary ingenuity? Not in the mouth of those who accept Sayana's traditional interpretation. For if ever there was a monument of arbitrarily erudite ingenuity, of great learning divorced, as great learning too often is, from sound judgment and sure taste and a faithful critical and comparative observation, from direct seeing and often even from plainest common sense or of a constant fitting of the text into the Procrustean bed of preconceived theory, it is surely this commentary, otherwise so imposing, so useful as first crude material, so erudite and laborious, left to us by the Acharya Sayana. Nor does the reproach lie in the mouth of those who take as final the recent labours of European scholarship. For if ever there was a toil of interpretation in which the loosest rein has been given to an ingenious speculation, in which doubtful indications have been snatched at as certain proofs, in which the boldest conclusions have been insisted upon with the scantiest justification, the most enormous difficulties ignored and preconceived prejudice maintained in face of the clear and often admitted suggestions of the text, it is surely this labour, so eminently respectable otherwise for its industry, good will and power of research, performed through a long century by European Vedic scholarship.

What is the main positive issue in this matter? An interpretation of Veda must stand or fall by its central conception

of the Vedic religion and the amount of support given to it by the intrinsic evidence of the Veda itself. Here Dayananda's view is quite clear, its foundation inexpugnable. The Vedic hymns are chanted to the One Deity under many names, names which are used and even designed to express His qualities and powers. Was this conception of Dayananda's an arbitrary conceit fetched out of his own too ingenious imagination? Not at all; it is the explicit statement of the Veda itself: "One existent, sages" — not the ignorant, mind you, but the seers, the men of knowledge, — "speak of in many ways, as Indra, as Yama, as Matariswan, as Agni." The Vedic Rishis ought surely to have known something about their own religion, more, let us hope, than Roth or Max Muller, and this is what they knew.

We are aware how modern scholars twist away from the evidence. This hymn, they say, was a late production, this loftier idea which it expresses with so clear a force rose up somehow in the later Aryan mind or was borrowed by those ignorant fire-worshippers, sun-worshippers, sky-worshippers from their cultured and philosophic Dravidian enemies. But throughout the Veda we have confirmatory hymns and expressions: Agni or Indra or another is expressly hymned as one with all the other gods. Agni contains all other divine powers within himself, the Maruts are described as all the gods, one deity is addressed by the names of others as well as his own, or, most commonly, he is given as Lord and King of the universe attributes only appropriate to the Supreme Deity. Ah, but that cannot mean, ought not to mean, must not mean, the worship of the One; let us invent a new word, call it henotheism and suppose that the Rishis did not really believe Indra or Agni to be the Supreme Deity but treated any god or every god as such for the nonce, perhaps that he might feel the more flattered and lend a more gracious ear for so hyperbolic a compliment! But why should not the foundation of Vedic thought be natural monotheism rather than this new-fangled monstrosity of henotheism? Well, because primitive barbarians could not possibly have risen to such high conceptions and, if you allow them to have so risen, you imperil our theory of the evolutionary stages of human

development and you destroy our whole idea about the sense of the Vedic hymns and their place in the history of mankind. Truth must hide herself, common sense disappear from the field so that a theory may flourish! I ask, in this point, and it is *the* fundamental point, who deals most straightforwardly with the text, Dayananda or the Western scholars?

But if this fundamental point of Dayananda's is granted, if the character given by the Vedic Rishis themselves to their gods is admitted, we are bound, whenever the hymns speak of Agni or another, to see behind that name present always to the thought of the Rishi the one Supreme Deity or else one of His powers with its attendant qualities or workings. Immediately the whole character of the Veda is fixed in the sense Dayananda gave to it; the merely ritual, mythological, polytheistic interpretation of Sayana collapses, the merely meteorological and naturalistic European interpretation collapses. We have instead a real Scripture, one of the world's sacred books and the divine word of a lofty and noble religion.

All the rest of Dayananda's theory arises logically out of this fundamental conception. If the names of the godheads express qualities of the one Godhead and it is these which the Rishis adored and towards which they directed their aspiration, then there must inevitably be in the Veda a large part of psychology of the Divine Nature, psychology of the relations of man with God and a constant indication of the law governing man's Godward conduct. Dayananda asserts the presence of such an ethical element, he finds in the Veda the law of life given by God to the human being. And if the Vedic godheads express the powers of a supreme Deity who is Creator, Ruler and Father of the universe, then there must inevitably be in the Veda a large part of cosmology, the law of creation and of cosmos. Dayananda asserts the presence of such a cosmic element, he finds in the Veda the secrets of creation and law of Nature by which the Omniscient governs the world.

Neither Western scholarship nor ritualistic learning has succeeded in eliminating the psychological and ethical value of the hymns, but they have both tended in different degrees to

minimise it. Western scholars minimise because they feel uneasy whenever ideas that are not primitive seem to insist on their presence in these primeval utterances; they do not hesitate openly to abandon in certain passages interpretations which they adopt in others and which are admittedly necessitated by their own philological and critical reasoning because, if admitted always, they would often involve deep and subtle psychological conceptions which *cannot* have occurred to primitive minds! Sayana minimises because his theory of Vedic discipline was not ethical righteousness with a moral and spiritual result but mechanical performance of ritual with a material reward. But, in spite of these efforts of suppression, the lofty ideas of the Veda still reveal themselves in strange contrast to its alleged burden of fantastic naturalism or dull ritualism. The Vedic godheads are constantly hymned as Masters of Wisdom, Power, Purity, purifiers, healers of grief and evil, destroyers of sin and falsehood, warriors for the truth; constantly the Rishis pray to them for healing and purification, to be made seers of knowledge, possessors of the truth, to be upheld in the divine law, to be assisted and armed with strength, manhood and energy. Dayananda has brought this idea of the divine right and truth into the Veda; the Veda is as much and more a book of divine Law as Hebrew Bible or Zoroastrian Avesta.

The cosmic element is not less conspicuous in the Veda; the Rishis speak always of the worlds, the firm laws that govern them, the divine workings in the cosmos. But Dayananda goes farther; he affirms that the truths of modern physical science are discoverable in the hymns. Here we have the sole point of fundamental principle about which there can be any justifiable misgivings. I confess my incompetence to advance any settled opinion in the matter. But this much needs to be said that his idea is increasingly supported by the recent trend of our knowledge about the ancient world. The ancient civilisations did possess secrets of science some of which modern knowledge has recovered, extended and made more rich and precise but others are even now not recovered. There is then nothing fantastic in Dayananda's idea that Veda contains truth of science as well as



truth of religion. I will even add my own conviction that Veda contains other truths of a science the modern world does not at all possess, and in that case Dayananda has rather understated than overstated the depth and range of the Vedic wisdom.

Objection has also been made to the philological and etymological method by which he arrived at his results, especially in his dealings with the names of the godheads. But this objection, I feel certain, is an error due to our introduction of modern ideas about language into our study of this ancient tongue. We moderns use words as counters without any memory or appreciation of their original sense; when we speak we think of the object spoken of, not at all of the expressive word which is to us a dead and brute thing, mere coin of verbal currency with no value of its own. In early language the word was on the contrary a living thing with essential powers of signification; its root meanings were remembered because they were still in use, its wealth of force was vividly present to the mind of the speaker. We say "wolf" and think only of the animal, any other sound would have served our purpose as well, given the convention of its usage; the ancients said "tearer" and had that significance present to them. We say "agni" and think of fire, the word is of no other use to us; to the ancients "agni" means other things besides and only because of one or more of its root meanings was applied to the physical object fire. Our words are carefully limited to one or two senses, theirs were capable of a great number and it was quite easy for them, if they so chose, to use a word like Agni, Varuna or Vayu as a sound-index of a great number of connected and complex ideas, a key-word. It cannot be doubted that the Vedic Rishis did take advantage of this greater potentiality of their language, — note their dealings with such words as *gau* and *candra*. The Nirukta bears evidence to this capacity and in the Brahmanas and Upanishads we find the memory of this free and symbolic use of words still subsisting.

Certainly, Dayananda had not the advantage that a comparative study of languages gives to the European scholar. There are defects in the ancient Nirukta which the new learning, though itself sadly defective, still helps us to fill in and in future we shall

have to use both sources of light for the elucidation of Veda. Still this only affects matters of detail and does not touch the fundamental principles of Dayananda's interpretation. Interpretation in detail is a work of intelligence and scholarship and in matters of intelligent opinion and scholarship men seem likely to differ to the end of the chapter, but in all the basic principles, in those great and fundamental decisions where the eye of intuition has to aid the workings of the intellect, Dayananda stands justified by the substance of Veda itself, by logic and reason and by our growing knowledge of the past of mankind. The Veda does hymn the one Deity of many names and powers; it does celebrate the divine Law and man's aspiration to fulfil it; it does purport to give us the law of the cosmos.

On the question of revelation I have left myself no space to write. Suffice it to say that here too Dayananda was perfectly logical and it is quite grotesque to charge him with insincerity because he held to and proclaimed the doctrine. There are always three fundamental entities which we have to admit and whose relations we have to know if we would understand existence at all, God, Nature and the Soul. If, as Dayananda held on strong enough grounds, the Veda reveals to us God, reveals to us the law of Nature, reveals to us the relations of the Soul to God and Nature, what is it but a revelation of divine Truth? And if, as Dayananda held, it reveals them to us with a perfect truth, flawlessly, he might well hold it for an infallible Scripture. The rest is a question of the method of revelation, of the divine dealings with our race, of man's psychology and possibilities. Modern thought, affirming Nature and Law but denying God, denied also the possibility of revelation; but so also has it denied many things which a more modern thought is very busy reaffirming. We cannot demand of a great mind that it shall make itself a slave to vulgarly received opinion or the transient dogmas of the hour; the very essence of its greatness is this, that it looks beyond, that it sees deeper.

In the matter of Vedic interpretation I am convinced that whatever may be the final complete interpretation, Dayananda will be honoured as the first discoverer of the right clues. Amidst

the chaos and obscurity of old ignorance and age-long misunderstanding his was the eye of direct vision that pierced to the truth and fastened on that which was essential. He has found the keys of the doors that time had closed and rent asunder the seals of the imprisoned fountains.

## The Men that Pass

**R**OMESH Chandra Dutt is dead. After a long life of the most manifold and untiring energy, famous, honoured, advanced in years, with a name known in England as well as in India, the man always successful, always favoured of Fortune, always striving to deserve her by skill and diligence, type of a race that passes, of a generation that to younger minds is fast losing the appearance of reality and possibility, has passed away at the height and summit of his career before his great capacities could justify themselves to the full in his new station, but also before the defects of his type could be thoroughly subjected to the severe ordeal of the times that have come upon us. The landmarks of the past fall one by one and none rise in their place. The few great survivors here and there become more and more dignified monuments of the last century and less and less creators of the living present. New ideals, new problems, new men, almost a new race wholly different in mind, character, temperament, feeling, rise swiftly and wait till they can open the gates of the future and occupy the field of action.

The official, the liberal Congress politician, the well-read literateur, the Oriental scholar, the journalist proficient in English and fluent of Western ideas, the professional man successful and sleek, these were the foremost men of the old generation, those who were in the eyes of all *śreṣṭha*, the best, in whose footsteps, therefore, all strove to follow and on whose pattern all formed themselves. An active, self-confident, voiceful generation making up by these qualities for the lack of height, depth and breadth in their culture and atoning for the unoriginal imitativeness to which they were doomed by the fidelity in detail and framework of the imitation! In all but one of these lines of activity Romesh Dutt had achieved a high distinction among the men of his own generation, and we doubt whether another man could be

pointed out among them so many-sided, so full of strength and hope and energy, so confident, so uniformly successful. Nature was liberal to him of her gifts, Fortune of her favours. A splendid physique, robust and massive, equipped him to bear the strain of an unceasing activity: a nature buoyant, sanguine, strong, as healthy as his frame, armed him against the shocks of life and commanded success by insisting upon it; an egoism natural to such a robust vitality seized on all things as its provender and enabled its possessor thoroughly to enjoy the good things of life which it successfully demanded; a great tact and *savoir faire* steered him clear of unnecessary friction and avoidable difficulties; an unrivalled quickness of grasp, absorption and assimilation, more facile than subtle or deep, helped him to make his own all that he heard or read; a rapid though not ingenious brain showed him how to use his material with the best effect and most practical utility; and a facile pen and speech which never paused for a thought or a word, could always be trusted to clothe what he wished to convey in a form respectable and effective and so well put as to conceal the absence of native literary faculty and intellectual distinction. These were Nature's presents to him at his birth. Fortune placed him in a wealthy, well-read and well-known family, gave him the best advantages of education the times could afford, sent him to England and opened the doors of the Civil Service, the pinnacle of the young Indian's aspiration in his days, and crowned him with the highest prizes that that highest of careers could yield to a man of his hue and blood. It is characteristic of his career that he should have died as Prime Minister of the Indian State which has been most successful in reproducing and improving upon the Anglo-Indian model of administration.

There were limits, as we have hinted, to the liberality of Nature. Of all the great Bengalis of his time Romesh Dutt was perhaps the least original. His administrative faculties were of the second order, not of the first; though he stood for a time foremost among the most active of Congress politicians and controversialists, he was neither a Ranade nor a Surendranath, had neither the gift of the organiser and political thinker nor

the gift of the orator; he had literary talent of an imitative kind but no literary genius; he wrote well on scholastic subjects and translated pleasantly and effectively, but was no great Sanskrit scholar: he cannot rank with Ranade or even with Gokhale as an economist, and yet his are the most politically effective contributions to economic literature in India that recent years have produced. It must be admitted that his activity and dexterity of work were far in excess of his literary ability or scholastic conscientiousness. It is doubtful, therefore, whether any of his voluminous works in many kinds will be remembered, with the possible though not very certain exception of his Bengali historical novels in which he touched his creative highwater mark. His translation of the Rigveda by its ease and crispness blinds the uninitiated reader to the fact that it may be a very pretty translation but it is not the Veda. His history of ancient Indian civilisation is a masterly compilation, void of original research, which is rapidly growing antiquated. In fact, the one art he possessed in the highest degree and in which alone it can be said that he did not only well but best, was the art of the journalist and pamphleteer. Originality and deep thought are not required of a journalist, nor delicacy, nor subtlety; his success would be limited rather than assisted by such qualities. To seize victoriously on the available materials, catch in them what will be interesting and effective and put it brightly and clearly, this is the *dharma* of the journalist, and, if we add the power of making the most of a case and enforcing a given view with irresistible energy, dexterity and apparent unanswerableness, we shall have added all that is necessary to turn the journalist into the pamphleteer. No man of our time has had these gifts to the same extent as Romesh Dutt. The best things he ever did were, in our view, his letters to Lord Curzon and his Economic History. The former fixed public opinion in India irretrievably and nobody cared even to consider Lord Curzon's answer. "That settles it" was the general feeling every ordinary reader contracted for good after reading this brilliant and telling indictment. Without the Economic History and its damning story of England's commercial and fiscal dealings with India we doubt whether the public mind would

have been ready for the Boycott. In this one instance it may be said of him that he not only wrote history but created it. But all his works, with the exception of the historical novels, were rather pieces of successful journalism than literature. Still, even where it was most defective, his work was always useful to the world. For instance, his *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, though they are poor and commonplace poetry and do unpardonable violence to the spirit of the original, yet familiarised the average reader in England with the stories of the epics and thus made the way easy for future interpreters of the East to the West. In brief, this may be said in unstinted praise of Romesh Dutt, that he was a gigantic worker and did an immense amount of pioneer spadework by which the future will benefit.

We have dwelt on this interesting and vigorous personality as one of the most typical of the men that pass, much more typical than greater or more original contemporaries. The work they did is over and the qualities with which they were equipped for that work will no longer sufficiently serve our purpose. An education at once more subtle and more massive, a greater originality, force and range of intellectual activity, an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the glut of a giant for work and action, mighty qualities of soul, a superhuman courage, self-abnegation and power to embrace and practise almost impossible ideals, these are the virtues and gifts India demands from the greatest among her sons in the future so that they may be sufficient to her work and her destinies. But such gifts as Romesh Dutt possessed are not to be despised. Especially did his untiring capacity for work and his joyous vitality and indestructible buoyancy make him a towering reproach to the indolent, listless, sneering and anaemic generation that intervened between him and the recent renaissance.





## Appendix One

### Baroda Speeches and Reports

Sri Aurobindo wrote the pieces in this part between 1901 and 1905, while serving in the Princely State of Baroda. The speeches were intended for delivery by Sayajirao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda. One of them later was published in a collection of the Maharaja's speeches.



Speeches Written for the  
Maharaja of Baroda

1901–1902



# Medical Department

## INTRODUCTORY

One of the peculiarities of administration in India is the extent to which the provision of medical aid for the people rests on the shoulders of the Government. In a healthy community the sphere of Government action outside certain recognised spheres tends always to contract; in one which is feeble or unsound it tends always to expand. Judged from this standpoint there are few if any countries which show such a miserable lack of robustness as India. Normally Government action is limited to the management of only such affairs as cannot be conducted by local or private enterprise either at all or with sufficient efficiency and organised power. Foreign affairs and the maintenance of national defence, legislation & the administration of justice and maintenance of order and the imposition and raising of the revenues necessary for public administration comprised under the old theory of politics the main sphere of Government. In our own times all matters of public or national concern are held to be a fit province for Government action; but chiefly in the way of assistance, general regulation or the maintenance of a certain standard of efficiency or public morality. Government for instance assists national trade and industry by a bureau of statistics and information, protects it by tariffs, regulates it by seeing fair-play in essential matters between employers and employed or by enactments regulating navigation. Similarly it may exercise a watch and light general control over all forms of local self-government. In one sphere especially State action is being everywhere more and more imperatively called for in all civilized nations; it has become an axiom of modern politics that the provision of universal education is the duty of the State. Yet

even here the necessity is rather a result of the circumstances of modern national life than a permanent principle. The action of certain nations driven by their comparative weakness to find a counteracting force to the superior individual energy of other nations in the universal education of the community by the State and the success [with] which they have used this lever to raise themselves to preeminence in commerce and politics has made it an essential condition of self-preservation to all civilized countries. Without universal education a nation nowadays is self-condemned to stagnation and decay. But it is conceivable that when all the great nations stand on an equal level in this respect, the grip of the State on education may again relax and the duty of Education will again gradually devolve on local and private effort, the State confining itself to its fundamental duty in all matters of public concern, assistance, general regulation and the maintenance of a high standard. Even now a large element of private and voluntary enterprise is a healthy element in the provision of education, as necessary for variety, life and progress as State control for generality and a high standard of efficiency.

There are at least two departments of medical activity in which the State may claim a predominating voice, Sanitation and Medical Education. But the peculiar circumstances of this country have enforced it to take up a third burden which in wealthier, better-educated or more advantageously circumstanced countries is undertaken by individual enterprise and private charity, the provision of medical assistance. The utmost that could usually be expected of the Government in this line, would be the establishment of State Hospitals in large towns where there existed a large and congested mass of poverty. But in India the State provides not only these but covers the land with skilled medical help and dispensaries, bringing assistance to the doors of the people gratis or at a nominal price. The reason of this state of things does not lie altogether in the poverty or helplessness of the people.

Previous to the British rule medicine was practised in India as in Europe by a class of skilled physicians using their knowledge as a means of independent livelihood. The princes and

nobles of the land might maintain a family Hakim or Vaidya, but there was no idea and probably no great necessity of providing State or charitable help in any systematic shape to the mass of the population. The fees of the local physicians were not beyond the means of an ordinary income, and the great mass of the people living healthy open air lives and observing rules of life which the experience of generations had established as suitable to the climate, enjoyed greater immunity than in these days from ordinary diseases and trusted with more justification to the vigour of their natural constitutions for recovery when attacked. The great epidemics which sanitation and prophylactic measures combat with so large a measure of success, were regarded, in India as in mediaeval Europe, as divine visitations borne with terror perhaps, but without any idea of organised resistance.

With the British rule came a marked change. There was in this country an ancient and indigenous system of medicine, which had shared the fate of the other Hindu arts and sciences both in the comparatively high degree of scientific knowledge and intelligent practice it had reached in astonishingly early times and in the premature blight which had subsequently come over it. In surgery, in pharmacy and in sanitation its knowledge was sound and masterly; it conducted successfully surgical operations which would have been far beyond contemporary science in Europe; it had amassed a pharmacopoeia from indigenous drugs, which, however imperfect, was possessed of considerable merit and efficacy; and its rules of sanitation were exhaustive, sound and in consonance with the scientific opinion of today. Its theory of the human body was, it is true, rather in agreement with ancient opinion than the more enlightened modern ideas, but its practical science was superior to its theory. Upon this promising science as upon almost everything else in India there fell a curse of stationariness and decay. Its practice became mechanical; its science fell into desuetude; the old authorities couched in the learned tongue came to be repeated by rote; its pharmacopoeia was administered without intelligence or original research and analysis and therefore with only a fitful

efficacy; surgical knowledge ceased to exist except in a rudimentary form, and sanitary rules once invested with a religious sanction came to be flagrantly violated in the daily practice of the people. Mahomedan medicine, a mediaeval science based on the Greek, did not tend to correct this state of things; it only added another imperfect system to the existing one. To a country thus circumstanced Western civilisation came with a medical science which, recovered from its old stagnation, was making immense strides, with a vastly superior pharmacy, an ever bolder & more subtle surgery and organised & living grasp of sanitation.

When the British Government finally established itself throughout the country, its enlightened and benevolent instincts left only one course open to it. The epidemics which yearly devastated filthy & insanitary towns and villages, must be in some measure combated. A population scattered through the country in innumerable small villages without any means of adequate medical assistance, must be familiarised with the more advanced science of the West. But there was no body of men in the country itself who could replace as an independent profession the old Vaidyas, Kavirajes and Hakims by the application of the new science, nor could the Government wait for the necessarily far-off time when such a class, in sufficiently large proportions, could be elaborated. The necessary consequence was the development of the Indian Medical Service, one of the most beneficent institutions of the British rule; and with this development came, as an obvious corollary, the establishment of Government dispensaries all over the country. One of the latest minor developments in this line, the action by which small quantities of quinine are sold at the Government Post Offices as a remedy for malarious fever, is a characteristic instance alike of the curiously paternal nature of the British rule and of the unique state of things prevailing in this country. Of this state of things great poverty is a necessary feature, otherwise Government assistance might be gradually replaced by the class of professional men with diplomas from the Indian Universities who are now to be met with in increasing numbers in every considerable town. But such men have small chance of success



in the rural districts among a population too poor to pay for efficient medical assistance. The great bulk of the population must for long depend upon the gratuitous assistance which the Government has placed at their doors.

In Baroda the old system prevailed almost until the year of my accession. At that time the only public provision of medical aid on modern lines was one hospital at Baroda under the Residency surgeon, two small military hospitals in Kathiawar and three dispensaries in various parts of the State. At the same time a number of Vaid and Hakims, about 25 in all, were maintained by the State for the benefit of the Troops, the prisoners in the jail and the State officials. These had their charges in a manner farmed out to them, for they were expected in lieu of a regular remuneration to provide drugs and other medical necessities from their own resources. One State Hakim drew the immense salary of Rs 6000 a month; the others, though not so fortunate, had certain advantages within their grasp. These physicians were attached to different Departments and in some cases the same man held charges in two, three or more departments, thus drawing a multifold salary and farming out each branch of his work to someone else at perhaps a third of the stipend attached to it. These easy & profitable posts descended in practice from father to son, and often had privileges attached to them of considerable pecuniary value. The medical expenditure on their salaries amounted to about £ 20,000 and the privileges to at least 10,000 more. In 1876–77 this system was swept away, the whole staff being pensioned off for an aggregate sum of Rs 545 per month and a regular Medical Department instituted. Dr Cody, a medical officer of the British service, was appointed Chief Medical Officer and 4 hospitals and 9 dispensaries were opened in Baroda, Nowsari, Sidhpur, Kadi, Pattan and other important places in the territory. These were added to in successive years and in 1880–81 there existed 11 hospitals, 23 Dispensaries and one Veterinary Hospital. A Vaccination Department had been organised under the supervision of the Residency Surgeon several years before and this under the new regime was greatly strengthened; 3 Inspectors, 31 vaccinators, 6

probationers & 34 peons formed the staff. The strength of the regular Department numbered beside the Chief Medical Officer, 10 Medical Officers, 46 Hospital Assistants and 34 medical pupils; the Veterinary Hospital was in the charge of a Surgeon and one veterinary pupil; a midwife was also maintained by the State for the city of Baroda. During the five years from 1875–1880 Rs 858,550-5-6 had been expended by the State on its medical Department.

The work done up to this date could only suffice for the most urgent and immediate needs of the principal towns of the Raj. The twenty years from 1880 to 1900 have accordingly been devoted not only to expansion on the lines already laid down, but to the inception of larger work in the sphere of Sanitation and the introduction of improved methods and organisation in the Department. Of the 35 institutions already existing, several have been discontinued owing to the cessation of the special need for which they were created; for instance the military dispensaries at Deesa and Manekwada came to a natural end with the cessation of the contingents there stationed. On the other hand 24 new institutions have been established, 20 dispensaries, 2 veterinary dispensaries, one Lunatic and one Leper Asylum; raising the total number to 54.<sup>1</sup> Most of the towns of the Raj which are at all considerable have therefore been provided with these facilities for medical assistance.

It has not been found necessary to increase the number of the Hospitals, the provision already made being sufficient for the present and liberal in proportion to the extent and needs of the territory. In the city of Baroda itself there are as many as three. The oldest, once known as the State Hospital, dates back to the times of the Maharaja Ganpatrao and was from its inception till 1881 under the supervision of the Residency Surgeon. So long as there was a lack of qualified medical talent in the country, such an arrangement was no doubt advisable and necessary, but by this time the conditions which necessitated it had ceased to operate, and after assuming powers I appointed

<sup>1</sup> *There is a question mark against this sentence in the manuscript. — Ed.*

Dr. R. H. Nanavati to be in charge of the Hospital; it has since been under the management of different State Medical officers. The housing and accommodation had ceased to be sufficient for what was intended to be the first Hospital in the State; accordingly in 1882–83 the old building was pulled down and a new one erected in its place, the Hospital being temporarily transferred elsewhere. The new building is a fine red brick building just outside the city, graceful in architecture and sufficient in accommodation. It is now called the Countess of Dufferin Hospital as a compliment to a lady whose name will always be remembered in India in association with high benevolence, active sympathy with suffering and an earnest desire to ameliorate the condition of Indian women. Another & smaller building was added to the Hospital in 1898–9 for the accommodation of women of respectable families and styled the Victoria Jubilee Ward and a final addition for the use of patients from the army, called the Sayajirao Military Ward, completed the building as it now stands. The hospital is well equipped with instruments and appliances; in 1893–94 Rs 5000 worth of instruments were ordered out from England and in 1900 after visiting the Paris Exhibition I sent many of the latest scientific appliances from Europe to be kept for use in this Hospital. Besides the Medical Officer in charge who daily visits the Hospital and the Hospital Assistants working under him, there is a House Surgeon in constant attendance upon the sick and, since 1899 a Lady Doctor with a nurse to assist her is in charge of the Victoria Jubilee Ward. A Lady Doctor was first appointed in 1893 at the Jumna Bai Hospital to attend to female outpatients; but the appointment has, I believe, benefited the public of the city more widely than the sphere of her purely official duties would indicate; as many families are glad to secure skilled female assistance for their ladies when it is available. There is a greater field in India than in other countries for the services of female physicians and nurses, but the supply is insignificant. The abundant provision of trained nurses is a great element in the comfort and efficiency of hospitals in Europe. The State has made some attempt to supply the need of nurses for women in sickness by

sending four female students to the Cama Hospital in Bombay to learn midwifery and nursing; two of these returned after passing their final examination in 1887–8 and were appointed to the State Hospital and the Jumnabai Hospital. The other two also were entertained in the State service in the next year. A regular midwife has also been maintained whose duty it is to attend cases of childbirth in the city.

Of the other hospitals in Baroda, the Jumnabai Hospital named after H. H. the Maharani Jumnabai is confined to out cases; it was originally a dispensary afterwards turned into a Hospital, by attaching a girls' school building in the vicinity as a ward. For in-cases the accommodation in the Dufferin Hospital is sufficient and the site healthier, accordingly since 1899 the admission of inpatients into the Jumnabai Hospital has been discontinued. The Sayajirao Military Hospital was, as its name implies, meant not for the use of the general public but for the Army, of which by far the larger part is stationed at the capital; originally built to accommodate 40 people, it was increased as necessity arose by two farther wards. In 1899 it was amalgamated with the State Hospital by the addition of the Sayaji Military Ward to that building and placed under the same supervision.

In spite of the superior development and scientific accuracy of Western medicine, a great portion of the people of this country still cling to their belief in the old systems, and it has been thought advisable to make a certain concession to their preferences. Two Hakims have been appointed by the State to treat cases at the Hospitals in which patients might express a greater confidence in the Mahomedan system of treatment and the State Balvaid was attached to the Countess of Dufferin Hospital in 1899–1900 for the benefit of those who preferred the Ayurvedic treatment.

The city of Baroda has therefore been amply supplied with medical facilities; nor have the districts been neglected. There are Hospitals in the chief town of each Division, the large division of Kadi having two to its share; besides this several of the district dispensaries are in all essential respects hospitals, admitting

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indoor patients as well as dispensing medical aid to out-patients and being placed under the supervision of an Assistant Civil Surgeon, notably Mehsana, Petlad, Dabhoi and Visnagar. There are also Assistant Civil Surgeons at Sidhpur, Anusuya and Dwarka. This large development of medical aid in the districts has taken place mainly since 1887. The regular strength of the Medical Establishment numbered in 1899 21 medical officers, 62 Hospital Assistants and 75 medical pupils, besides the Hakims, Balvaid, midwife and nurses already mentioned.

## The Revival of Industry in India

GENTLEMEN, — IF I hesitated to accept your invitation to preside at the opening of this Exhibition, the importance of the occasion must be my excuse. You called me to step into the breach, to face publicly the most tremendous question of our times and to give you my solution of a problem on which no two people agree, except that it is urgent.

But I do not think that we realise how urgent it is. Famine, increasing poverty, widespread disease, all these bring home to us the fact that there is some radical weakness in our system and that something must be done to remedy it. But there is another and a larger aspect of the matter and that is that this economic problem is our last ordeal as a people. It is our last chance. Fail there and what can the future bring us? We can only grow poorer and weaker, more dependent on foreign help; we must watch our industrial freedom fall into extinction and drag out a miserable existence as the hewers of wood and drawers of water to any foreign power which happens to be our master. Solve that problem and you have a great future before you, the future of a great people, worthy of your ancestors and of your old position among the nations.

Two years ago I stood looking at the wonders of that great Exhibition at Paris which summed up in so striking a manner the progress of a century in civilisation, industry and commerce. If I were asked what struck me most in that noble and artistic effort of a great nation, I should answer: the magnificent proportions and excellent management of the undertaking, so vast in conception and admirable in execution; the efficiency of the orderly and illuminating arrangement and careful accuracy of detail; and after that, the extraordinary ingenuity displayed in the educational section in methods and appliances; and not only the ingenuity but the thoroughness of these methods, especially

in the exhibits of Germany and America. But besides these two special exhibits, that which struck me most profoundly was the enormous difference between India and Europe to-day. Those vast halls crowded with shining steel work, the fruits of the combined industry and genius of a dozen nations; the amazing richness of texture and delicacy of design in the products of those machines; the vigorous life and aspiration which glowed in the Art, as well as the clear precision of the knowledge reflected in the Science; all this impressed me more than I can say.

But beyond all this triumph of Man over Nature and her powers, one fact struck me with a curious emphasis — the enormous gulf which separates the European and the native of India in their ideas of comfort. There rose up before me the interior of a typical Indian home, and as I contrasted it with the truly surprising inventions around me, all devoted to that one object, refinement, our much-boasted simplicity seemed bare and meagre beyond description. I contrasted those empty rooms — without even a chair or a table — with the luxury, the conveniences, which are the necessities of a European cottage. My mind went back to the bazaar in my own city of Baroda, the craftsmen working at their old isolated trades with the methods which have sufficed them for centuries without a change, the low irregular houses, the dreamy life drifting between them, and then contrasted it all with this keen and merciless tide which was sweeping and eddying around me, drawing its needs from a thousand machines like these and gathering its comforts from the four quarters of the globe. And with the contrast I had a vivid sense of the enormous gulf which we have to bridge over before India can be said to be on the same plane as the European nations.

And yet, I thought, there is a change coming over India. The appearance of our houses is being altered by the revolution which is being made in their furniture. It is slow, for there are many who deplore it and speak of it in tones of regret as a process of denationalisation and a fall from simplicity to a burdensome and costly luxury. But the change is rather in the direction in which the money is spent. Our fathers made up by opulence

of material for the poverty of convenience. The futility of such regrets is shown by the fact that most of these eulogists of the past show in their own houses, even if only in a slight degree, the effects of the tendency which they deplore. I do not mean that we should dispense with simplicity; but let it be a wise moderation in the midst of plenty, not the fatalistic acceptance of poverty as a virtue in itself. And there can be no doubt that this tendency, which is now in its initial stage, will grow in strength with the course of years, until with the necessary differences due to climate and other environments it brings us approximately near to the Western mode of living.

But this mode is a rich and costly mode; to maintain it requires easy circumstances and a large diffusion of wealth. A poor country cannot meet its demands. A country without flourishing manufactures must always be a poor country. The future, therefore, imperatively claims this from us, that we shall cease to be a purely agricultural country and vindicate for ourselves some place at least among commercial and manufacturing nations. Otherwise we shall only establish for ourselves the unhappiness of unsatisfied cravings and the benumbing effects of an ideal to which we can make no approach. The cravings must be there, they are inevitable and essential to progress. To attempt to discourage them for political reasons or from social or religious conservatism is unjust and unwise and must eventually prove futile. The true policy is to provide that the cravings shall find means of encouragement. In other words we have to encourage and assist the commercial development of the country and so put it on the only possible road to progress, opulence, and prosperity.

There is a theory which affects to regard the races inhabiting the tropical and subtropical regions of the earth as disinherited by some mysterious law of Nature from all hope of originality, enterprise and leadership. These things belong to the temperate regions; the tropics are to be for ever no more than the field for the energies of the superior races, to whom alone belong empire, civilisation, trade and manufacture. We are to be restricted to a humble subordination, a servile imitation, and to the production of raw materials for their markets. At first sight there seems to



be some justification for this theory in existing facts. Our trade is in European hands, our industries are for the most part not our own, our railways are built, owned and managed, by European energy and capital. The Government is European and it is from Europe that we imitate all that we call civilisation. Our immobile and disorganised society compares ill with the enlightened energy and cohesion of Europe; even at our best we seem to be only the hands that execute, not the head that originates.

Yet even if we accept this picture of ourselves without the necessary modifications, we need not accept this interpretation of inherent inferiority. For my part I demur to any such hasty generalisation: yet however much of it be true be sure that there is no law of Nature which can prevent you from changing it. To suppose that any nation can be shut out from the operation of the law of Evolution is utterly unscientific, and, in the light of history, absurd.

Granted that originality among us is low, that enterprise is deficient, and that leadership has passed out of our hands; is there in the first place no qualification to the entire truth of the assertion? And in the second, is this state of things due to immutable causes and therefore of old existence, or is it the result of recent and removable tendencies? It is true that such originality and power as we still possess has hitherto busied itself mostly in other paths than those of industry and the sciences which help industry. It has worked chiefly on the lines of Religion and Philosophy which have always been the characteristic bent of the national mind, continuing through Rammohan Ray, Dayanand Saraswati and Keshavchandra Sen, the long and unbroken line of great religious teachers from Gautama to Chaitanya and Kabir. It is true that teachings of fatalism and inactive detachment have depressed the vitality of the people. Yet there is no reason to believe that this depression and this limitation are not removable and are constitutional.

But it is not only in Religion that we were great. We had amongst us brave soldiers like Shivaji, Hyderali, Mahadji Scindia and Ranjitsingh. Can we not again claim to have had an important share in the establishment of that mighty structure — the

Indian Empire — erected indeed by the clear-sighted energy and practical genius of England, but on the foundations of Indian patience, Indian blood and Indian capital?

It is not an insignificant symptom that, considering how recent and meagre is scientific education in India, we should be able to show at least some names that are familiar to European scientists, not to speak of others enjoying a deserved reputation among ourselves. Small as these things may seem, they are yet enough to overthrow the theory of constitutional incapacity. And if we consider classes rather than individuals, can it be denied that the Parsis are an enterprising and industrially capable race? Or can it be doubted that the community which could produce a leader in industry and philanthropy like Mr Tata, will, as circumstances improve, take a leading place in the commercial world? Or can enterprise and commercial capacity be denied to classes like the Bhatias, Khojas and the merchants of Sindh? When we have individuals and classes like these in our midst we may well enquire why it is that we stand so poorly in industry and commerce, without fearing that the answer, however ungratifying to our feelings, will lead us to despair.

But if this theory of the inferiority of the tropical races be untrue; if we find that in the past we had great men whose influence is with us even to-day; we must look for some other cause for the difference, and ask what it is that India has not to-day but which she had in that older stage of her history and which Europe has at the present day. We have not far to seek. It is obvious that it is the clear and practical examination of Life and Nature which men call Science, and its application to the needs of Life which men call Industry, in which we are deficient and in which Europe excels. And if we question the past we learn that this is exactly what has not come down to us through the ages along with our Religion and Philosophy.

Our early history is scanty and, in many respects, uncertain, but no uncertainty, no scantiness can do away with the fact that this was once a great commercial people. We see a very wealthy nation with organised guilds of artisans, a flourishing inland commerce, a large export and import trade. We hear of busy

and flourishing ports through which the manufactures of India flowed out to Europe, to Arabia and Persia, and from which, in those early times, we sent out our delicate cotton textures, our chintz and muslin, our silk cloth and silk thread, a fine quality of steel; indigo, sugar, spices and drugs; diamonds, ivory and gold. In return we received brass, tin and lead, coral, glass, antimony; woollen cloth and wines from Italy, and also specie and bullion.

All through the Middle Ages, our manufactures and industries were at a very high level. Every traveller attests the existence of large and flourishing towns (a sure index of industrial prosperity), and praises the skill and ingenuity of our workmen. It was on the Eastern trade that Venice built her greatness, for then we were indeed the "Gorgeous East". Notice, that it is especially in the manufactures which required delicate work, originality of design, or instinctive taste that our products were famous; our carving, our inlaid work and our gossamer cloth.

Coming now to the earlier part of the last century, what do we find? The carrying trade had passed from the Arabs to the East India Company and with it, too, the control of nearly all our exports, especially those in indigo, iron and steel, and the newly imported industries in tobacco, tea and coffee. But there was still a large body of trade in Indian hands; even then our manufactures held their own and were far superior to those of Europe; even then there were thousands of skilled artisans; and we supplied our own wants and exported enormous quantities of goods to other countries. Where, then, has all this trade gone and what has caused our decline?

The most obvious answer is, as I have said, the difference between Europe and India in industrial methods and appliances. But this is not quite sufficient to explain it. A deeper examination of the facts at our disposal shows that the life had almost left Indian industry before Europe had brought her machines to any remarkable development, and long before those wonderful changes which the application of chemistry and electricity have more recently wrought in industry. Nor can we ascribe it to a superiority which England possessed in industrial and technical education, for at that time there was no such training and

England has never relied on it for commercial capacity. If we go a little deeper into the matter we find that there is a further reason which does not depend on the natural working of economic laws but which is political in its nature, the result of the acquisition of political power by the East India Company and the absorption of India into the growing British Empire.

As Mr Dutt shows in his able *Economic History of British India*, this political change had the gravest effect on our economic life. In the first place we had the economic policy of the East India Company which, so far as its export trade was concerned, accepted manufactures indeed, but paid an equal, if not greater, attention to raw materials. Even our internal trade was taken from us by the policy of the East India Company; there were heavy transit duties on all inland commerce and there were commercial Residents in every part of the Company's possessions, who managed to control the work of the local artisans, and so thoroughly that outside their factories all manufacture came to an end.

On this came the protective policy of the British Government, which, despite the powerful interests of the East India Company, crushed Indian manufactures by prohibitive duties. Then came the application of steam to manufacture. It is scarcely to be wondered at, if with all this against us at home and abroad, our manufactures declined and with the great advance in the improvement in machinery and the initiation of a Free Trade policy, this decline was hastened into ruin.

Moreover, a country not exporting manufactures is necessarily stagnant, and commercial progress and self-adaptability cease. Once the manufacturing superiority of India had been transferred to England, it was impossible for the weaker country to recover its position without some measure of protection. Not only was the struggle in itself unequal but the spectacle of a mighty commerce, overshadowing and dominating ours, flooding our markets and taking away our produce for its own factories, induced a profound dejection, hopelessness and inertia among our people. Unable to react against that dominating force we came to believe that the inability was constitutional and

inherent in ourselves; there is a tendency in fact to hypnotise ourselves into apathy by continual repetition of the formula that Indians, as a race, are lacking in enterprise, deficient in business faculties, barren in organising power. If, therefore, I have dwelt upon our old manufactures and commerce and the way in which they were crushed, it is not with the unprofitable object of airing an old grievance, but in order to point out that there is no reason for this discouraging view of ourselves. We were a trading and manufacturing country from ancient times down to the present century, and if our manufactures have fallen into decay, our commerce languished, it was under a burden which would have crushed the most flourishing industry of the most energetic people.

Our weakness lies in this that we have for many years lain prostrate under a fictitious sense of our own helplessness and made no adequate attempt to react against our circumstances. We have succumbed where we should have exhausted every possibility of resistance and remedy. We have allowed the home-keeping propensities and the out-of-date semi-religious prejudices, which have gathered round the institution of caste, to prevent us from choosing the line of activity most consonant with our abilities, or from seeking in other lands for fresh markets and the knowledge of new industries.

The restriction against foreign travel is one of the most serious obstacles in the way of commercial success and must be utterly swept away, if we are not to go on stagnating. It is a pity that communities like the Bhatias should be restrained by an out-worn prejudice from going abroad and furthering that task of development for which they are so admirably fitted. The endeavours hitherto made have been, with few exceptions, sporadic, half-hearted and prematurely abandoned; and the support given to them by the public has been scanty, wanting in confidence and in personal and active interest. It is this state of things which must cease before we can hope to revive our own manufactures, to establish firmly and extend those which exist, and to set on foot any new industries which our needs demand, and for which the conditions offer sufficient opportunity. Then

India may again be what she was in the past and what she is so admirably fitted by nature to be, a self-sufficing country; famous for artistic and useful industries. To raise her again to this should be the ideal of every patriotic citizen. But in order that the ideal may be realised we need, first: knowledge of our possibilities, of the means and facilities necessary to success, and of the lines on which activity would be best repaid; and secondly: belief in ourselves and in each other so that our knowledge may not fail for want of co-operation.

If we get these, if we realise the progress of Science and mechanical invention and resolutely part with old and antiquated methods of work, if we liberate ourselves from hampering customs and superstitions, none of which are an essential part of our religion; if, instead of being dazed in imagination by the progress of Europe, we learn to examine it intelligently, and meet it with our own progress, there will be no reason for us to despair; but if we fail in this we must not hope to occupy a place in the civilised and progressive world.

To speak with any fullness on this subject is not possible within the short limit of time at my disposal. I shall, therefore, pass lightly over a few salient points; for, the lines of activity open to us and calling for our energies are unlimited in their extent, variety and promise. This country is not poor in its resources, but may rather be said to be blessed by Nature in many respects; its mineral wealth is anything but contemptible; its soil produces valuable and useful products in great variety and abundance; the provision of water power is also unstinted. We have an excess of cheap labour and we have hereditary artisans who are quick in hand and eye, and who only need to be properly trained to make them the equals, if not the superiors, of their rivals. If there are certain serious disadvantages and defects in its mineral wealth such as the inferiority of its coal supplies, and in its vegetable products, such as the greater coarseness of its cotton and the difficulty of growing the finest silk, yet so great is the advance Science has made that we need not despair of meeting some of these difficulties at least in part. Nor is there any imperative necessity that we should always vie with other countries in

producing the very best. If we utilise to the best advantage what Nature has given us and advance in such manufactures as the country is fitted for, we shall have done no inconsiderable task. What is required is greater knowledge, a more earnest endeavour of the Government towards improvement and the provision of facilities, and more serious activity on the part of the people to take advantage of such facilities as already exist. We need improvement in agriculture, and facilities in industries; for in a country like India, which produces or can produce the bulk of its own raw material, the agricultural question cannot be separated from the industrial.

Improvement in agriculture is necessary to secure an increased quantity and improved quality of the produce of our fields. What Science can do for agriculture, the development of the beet-sugar industry and the improvement of cotton clearly show; and as sugar and cotton are two of the most important of our products and especially of our export trade, I wish to call your attention to what has been done by our rivals.

Beet-sugar cultivation has been gradually developed by careful selection of the best roots and the application of agricultural chemistry, until the percentage of saccharine has been doubled and trebled. Here is the remedy for Indian sugar. We must not be ashamed to borrow our rivals' tactics, but strive hard to get for example for our cane sugar the very best canes and take care to use nothing but the very best methods of cultivation and manufacture.

The same is true of cotton. It is certain that the competition which Indian cotton has to meet will be much intensified in the near future; and our only hope of meeting it successfully is to improve our indigenous varieties up to a point at which they can hold their own. I believe that we can do this, but it demands the most patient researches and above all that, when the best variety has been discovered, the cultivator will really grow it.

Science is our great hope, but there is one great obstacle to be overcome before Science can help us, and that is the ignorance and apathy which is the general condition of the agricultural classes at present.

The failure of the old arts and crafts, and especially that of arms, has thrown vast numbers back on the soil, and these classes are neither intelligent nor progressive. Many old professions are dying out and while those, who should have followed them, go back to the land, many of these professions are not such as to provide any hereditary capacity for agriculture. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, if our Indian cultivators, despite their traditional skill, are neither enterprising nor capable of undertaking improvements which demand considerable energy and foresight. Their methods, despite Dr Voelcker's high encomiums, are backward, their resources are very limited, and their implements, though they may be those best suited to their narrow means and small holdings, are old and economically wasteful. But their most serious drawback is their helplessness. There is a general complaint that the soil is deteriorating, but that they can do nothing to remedy it; and in times of scarcity and famine they seem incapable of doing anything to help themselves. This is a most serious question and one which demands all our attention.

In the first place this deterioration of the soil is a very real danger. Do you know that the average product per acre has in some parts of the country diminished by 50 per cent. since the middle of the seventeenth century, when the *Ain-i-Akbari* was compiled? Is it any wonder that the peasant grows poorer, or that his resources diminish?

Our remedies must fall under two heads: (1) the improvement of methods, implements and general conditions; and (2) education.

In the first place attempts to introduce new implements have nearly all failed. Iron flails and threshing machines have been tried at one time or another, but the ryot will have none of them. At the same time this does not mean that the old implements are the best that the wit of man can devise, or that we are to suppose that past failure is conclusive.

Another matter to which Government has given some attention has been cattle-breeding. The results so far have not been encouraging, though there are Government farms at Hissar and



at Bhatgaum in Khandesh, and another called the Amrit Mahal, maintained by the Mysore Government, from which are derived certain superior breeds of cattle to be found in the Madras Presidency.

Until we can get the co-operation of the people the results must be disappointing. Nevertheless, I think that there is a great deal of good work to be done on these lines and I am of opinion that besides improving the breed of cattle much might be done in the way of encouraging the ryots to breed other stock, such as horses, mules, etc. It is a thousand pities that our Indian breeds of horses should be dying out and that there seems to be no sensible effort made to keep them alive. Perhaps the chief reason that Government breeding farms have failed is that they are too elaborate for the people in their present condition. I believe that much might be done by reviving the old custom of keeping sacred bulls in every village and taking care that the bulls supplied were the best that could be procured. Much might be done if the cultivator could be persuaded to breed only from the best animals.

Instead of helping ourselves we always depend upon Government; here is an instance where people can, with advantage, help themselves. To it I would add the planting of trees, which are of economic value, around the cultivators' fields and the encouragement of the fibrous plants which are now articles of commerce. There is further the question of good drainage to relieve the bad effects of irrigation. A serious endeavour should be made to help the ryot to sow only the best seed and to pay some attention to the best rotation of crops.

In a country like India, where the introduction of improved implements is so limited in its possibilities, and where everything depends upon the timeliness and sufficiency of the annual rains, it is irrigation that must necessarily take the largest place in all plans of agricultural improvement. This importance of irrigation has been recognised by the successive rulers of this country from the times of the ancient Hindu kings. From the days of Asoka, and before him, the digging of wells and tanks had been the subject of royal edicts and one of the first religious duties of

princes, zemindars and wealthy philanthropists. The number of small tanks in ruins that one finds in the districts, the multitude of old wells that still exist round about Muslim capitals; above all, the immense system of artificial reservoirs in the Madras Presidency, bear testimony to the steady persistence of this old tradition of administrative benevolence. In the Southern Presidency there are over 6000 tanks mainly of native origin, the magnitude of which will be best remembered when it is understood that the embankments measure over 30,000 miles with 300,000 separate masonry works, and that these tanks irrigate over 34 lakhs of acres, an area almost equal to that irrigated by the entire system of the major and minor works of the Madras Presidency. These works were getting out of repair in the troublous times of the eighteenth century, when general disorder and mal-administration, the usual concomitants of any violent change in the form of Government, prevailed in our country. When they occupied the country the British, with their characteristic administrative energy, not only put them in order but in many cases improved and enlarged them. They have brought, or kept under irrigation, an area of little less than 20,000,000 acres at the cost of forty-two crores of rupees; and the work has been done with so much judgment and success that the works yield a profit of nearly 7 per cent. and the produce raised equals 98 per cent. of the total capital outlay. Not content with this they are now undertaking to prepare and gradually execute a scheme of protective works which, when complete, should do much to insure the country against famine. The work in irrigation will always be one of the most splendid and irreproachable chapters in the history of British Rule.

The proposed extension of irrigation works would also offer to the capitalists of the country a very eligible field for the investment of their surplus savings. If the people only co-operate they would find irrigation projects a very profitable channel for investment; and if they fail to take advantage of the favourable opportunity, one need not be surprised if European capital is extensively employed in their development as has been done in the case of railways in India. I trust the Government on its part

will also offer more than usual inducements to attract private Indian capital in these profitable undertakings.

Besides great irrigation works there is another way in which much might be done to protect the country against the effects of drought, that is, by encouraging the digging of wells. This is a method well adapted for States which have no facilities for works on a grand scale. In my own territories I have found that the advance of *taccavi*, for this purpose, was a measure which the cultivator could understand, and, under the guidance of experienced officers, one which worked well. At the same time large irrigation works have been commenced in various parts of the territory, and a survey is being made for the repair of old tanks and the utilisation of favourable spots for the storage of water.

But it must not be forgotten that irrigation will not end all our troubles. Indeed, unless it is accompanied by a considerable measure of intelligence and foresight, it brings others in its train, such as the debilitation of the soil. The remedy for this is, of course, the use of artificial manures which will restore to the soil some of the qualities that are removed from it by over-irrigation. Here we are at once faced by our usual want of foresight and ignorance of which I have already spoken. In face of the deterioration of the soil, which I have mentioned as a widespread evil, widely acknowledged, it is inconceivable to me that we should seek to encourage the export of cotton-seeds on which so much of the efficiency of the simple manure, which we use here, in Gujarat, depends. Yet the value of this export has risen in one year from five to twenty lakhs of rupees, and it is certain that at this rate the cattle will have to go without it, and that their manure will become practically valueless. An artificial manure is, therefore, a crying necessity.

Another point is the growth of deep-rooted grasses which can resist drought and so prevent the terrible mortality of cattle which was so painfully marked in the late famine. We must follow the example of Australia in this matter and find indigenous deep-rooted grasses which we can plant systematically on waste land, and then, when we are cursed with another season

of drought, we shall have something to meet it with.

Before we can hope that the ryot will try to employ measures which demand a high level of intelligence and scientific knowledge, we must awaken his curiosity and enlist his sympathy, which can only be done by a good system of general education. Without it our best endeavours are bound to fail. Government has established Agricultural Colleges and model farms in different parts of the country, but agriculture has been but little improved in consequence. Partly, I think, this is due to the vastness of the area and to the great variety of local conditions, for each district has its own difficulties to meet and overcome. But the main reason for the failure is, I believe, the indifference and apathy of the people themselves. Another reason is the fact that these measures have come from outside and not from the people. However imperfect our education may be it is equally lamentable that it has so far affected no more than 5 per cent. of the population of the country. Before any noticeable change can take place, there must be a general feeling among the people that improvement must be made and a desire to take advantage of the efforts of Government to help them. At present, they are more inclined to laugh at our attempts to aid them than to help us by their advice and by showing us where their real difficulties lie. Their criticism, as a rule, is more destructive than educative.

I have found it possible to do something to improve the more backward classes of cultivators by sending more intelligent ryots to show them better methods of cultivation; and the school for the Dhankas at Songadh has been more or less successful. These measures only serve to raise the internal level of the lower agriculture up to the highest of our present system, while the problem is to raise the general level. Perhaps something might be done by agricultural associations which studied local requirements and popularised such improvements as admitted of practical application. But I believe the only change which would do much would be to induce a more intelligent and enterprising class to engage in agriculture.

Over and above all this it is very important that our agriculturists should have cottage industries or some work on which

they can usefully engage themselves and the members of their family during the slack season of agriculture. Such would be for the men, wood-carving and the making of toys; and for the women, needle work and embroidery.

I do not think we should stop short at improving our raw materials; I believe we might do much in the way of working them up. The annual review of the Trade of India published by the Statistical Department of the Government of India teaches us some wholesome lessons, which it would be always useful to remember. They show the large number of objects for which we are at present dependent on foreign factories, but for which we have plenty of raw material at hand, and which, if we only avail ourselves of the latest scientific methods, we can ourselves manufacture. Our endeavour should be to reduce this dependence upon foreign industries, and, where the necessary facilities do not exist for such manufactures at home, we should so improve the quality of our raw material as to enable it to hold its own in the foreign market to which it is sent. The wheat, for instance, which we export at present is used for the manufacture of bread in Europe, but it is scarcely fit to be turned to the many other uses to which it can be put unless it is much improved in quality. The same remarks apply to many of the most ordinary articles of daily use, such as paper, oils, leather, etc. The instance of leather is peculiarly noteworthy. We export the hides and the materials for tanning them, but that is not all. There is a cheaper and more efficient process of cleaning the hides in use in Europe, and the hides are exported to Europe to be cleaned there. Is it impossible for India to tan her own hides, in her own factories, with her own tanning materials? Another point which seems inconceivable when the need for artificial manure is remembered, and that is, that we export bones in large quantities to be turned into bone-manure for the beet-fields of our rivals, and so for their sugar, which we so largely import.

Glass again is an article of which we import a large quantity every year, but which we might manufacture for ourselves. Last year we imported glass of the value of over ninety lakhs of rupees. In 1887 I made some enquiries into the matter and found

that there were raw materials in plenty for the manufacture not only of rough glass, but of glass of the finest quality. I was advised that it would not pay to establish a factory, but the reasons against success were not insuperable. I also made some enquiries into the possibility of manufacturing paper in Gujarat and discovered that there were abundant raw materials of an excellent quality to be obtained here, and that this too was quite feasible.

We have already some glass-blowing factories at Kapadwanj and in the Panjab; paper mills in Bombay, Poona and Bengal; leather tanneries in Madras, Cawnpore and Bombay. It would be interesting to study the quantity and quality of these home products and to compare them with the articles imported from abroad. We may thereby learn the difference and know how to remove their short-comings and extend their sale. Experience is the only path to knowledge, comparison perfects it. Knowledge is the dominant factor in the spirit of the age and the basis of all reform. I would suggest that, of the many manufactures which might be successful in India, it would be advisable to begin with those in which there is a steady local demand, such as soap, candles, glass, furniture, pen-nibs, carpets, etc., and afterwards extend the field of our operations so as to include other and more elaborate articles.

To enable us to take up these manufactures we need a system of industrial education, and for this we have to rely very largely on the assistance of Government. But we must remember that our position is not quite that of any European country in this respect, and that our best model would probably be Japan. Now, Japan, when she aimed at general, and particularly at industrial, progress, adopted three main lines on which her education was to run. These were, first to send a number of her young men abroad, and especially to Germany, for education; secondly to establish great colleges in Japan itself, the staff of which was at first composed of Europeans; and thirdly to employ the services of Europeans, in the initial stages of her manufactures, under whom her people were gradually trained in efficiency.

Now I should like first to call attention to the last of these,

because I think that here we have the solution of a difficulty which has been met with in the case of some industries which have recently been started. I have heard complaints that the quality of the goods turned out was not satisfactory, and from what I heard, it seemed to me that perhaps the failure was due to the incompetence of the directors, or to some culpable laxness in their management, or to our having commenced the enterprise on too impracticable or ambitious a scale, or to our having lost sight of some essential conditions of success at the outset. Some industries may require European skill and supervision to pilot them through their initial stages, and a hasty attempt to dispense with it may lead to disappointing results. But there is another aspect to this apparent incompetence; we have to learn trustworthiness, a capacity for obedience, the art of management, accuracy, punctuality, method and the sense of justice, and the only school which will teach us these is a position in which they are called out by use. To return to the first of the three points: it is obviously impossible to send any very large proportion of our Indian youths abroad, though I think more might be done in this direction. I would appeal to Government and to our philanthropists to see if they cannot help us.

That which will help us most is a largely extended system of technical and general education, such as that on which Germany has built her commercial greatness. It is of course impossible to imitate the German system exactly. But it is not impossible to provide ourselves with a system which will meet our requirements. Though private individuals may do something in the matter, a satisfactory solution of the whole question must depend upon the sympathy and generosity of the Government. I believe that Government could not give a greater boon than such an education, and I think I am voicing the feelings of the educated classes at large, when I say that we are confident that we have not long to wait to see our rulers grapple with this problem, with their usual energy and decision. Meanwhile we must start our factories as best we can, and do the best with our present circumstances. I do not overlook the fact that the odds against us are heavy and that our infant industries have to

struggle from the start in an open market with long-established competitors.

I am not afraid of being thought a heretic with regard to economics, if I say that I think we need Protection to enable our industries to reach their growth. The economic history of Germany and America shows that there is a stage in the growth of a nation when Protection is necessary. The laws of Political Economy are not inexorable and must bend to the exigencies of time and place. Theories and doctrines, however plausible, cannot take precedence of plain and practical truths. It is true that Free Trade enables a country to procure at cheaper rates those articles that can be manufactured more conveniently in foreign lands, but this cheapness is dearly bought by the loss of industrial status, and the reduction of a whole people to a helpless proletariat. National defence against alien industrial inroads is more important than the cheapness of a few articles.

Protection, therefore, if only for a short time, is what we need for our nascent manufactures; for some time must elapse before more perfect methods are naturalised in India and the standard of Indian workmanship attains the excellence of Europe. A high wall of tariffs has secured to American manufactures the home market as an undisputed field for their own development; and India, maimed, and helpless as she has been, may expect that relief from her beneficent Government. Government, like the climate and geographical conditions of a country, has a peculiar force of its own and must leave an indelible impress on the mould of the destinies of nations. It may as powerfully hamper, as promote, the moral and material development of the people entrusted to its care. If the Government were supported by a more informed and intelligent public opinion and if the people, awakened to a sense of national life, were allowed and induced to take a livelier interest in their own concerns and if they worked in unison, they would conduce to mutual strength. Government is a matter of common-sense and compromise, and its aim should be to secure the legitimate interests of the people governed.

But at the same time I would warn you against some false



methods of encouraging industry, such as the movement to use no cloth not produced in the country. The idea is quite unsound so far as any economic results go; and the true remedy for any old industry which needs support is to study the market, find out what is wanted and improve the finish of the work and the design until an increasing demand shows that the right direction has been found. This applies particularly to the artistic trades, such as wood-carving and metal-work for which the country has been so famous and which it would be a pity to allow to die altogether. Among other means of improvement, the education of women in decorative art would bring a fresh economic force into play; and as I ascertained by enquiries in London, made from a desire to find lucrative home industries for our women, and especially for widows, would prove extremely profitable, if the right steps were taken. Tapestry, for instance, is a great women's industry in Switzerland; lacework, cretonne and embroidered cushions could all very well be done by women. Needlework is even now done in Gujarat homes, and if the designs and colourings are improved it might be turned into an active industry, supplying our own wants, and possibly outside demands. Carpet-weaving also, which is now done in several of our jails, might be turned in the same way into a profitable home industry. The main thing is to study the market and not to pursue our own hobbies. It would be necessary to have agents in Europe, who would study European wants, consult professional men and get designs which could be executed in India. Something of the sort is, I believe, done in the School of Arts in Madras. My enquiries in Paris convinced me that in the hands of capable persons this method would be both practicable and profitable.

I would, however, direct your attention more to the establishment of the larger industries involving an extensive use of machinery, for it is upon this that our economic future and any increase of our wealth depends. Before we have a large demand at home for the arts we must produce the wealth to support them, and we shall never have that wealth until we have an economic system on a much broader basis than our present limited industry. With a little energy and the assistance of Government

we can broaden this basis, and then we may look forward to a new lease of life for Indian art and Indian literature and for those industries which depend on leisure and wealth.

I should like now to say a few words on the subject of the assistance which a Government can give in developing the resources of its territories. I have indicated a few ways in which I think Government can help economic development in the direction of education. To these I would add improvements in the means of communication and the establishment of banks and other co-operative institutions. It can also encourage merchants and manufacturers by advances of capital and by granting other facilities.

Native States in India, seriously handicapped as they are by their limited means and scope and the want of trained men, though they cannot emulate their great exemplar, the British Government, seem to limit themselves, as yet, too much to the routine of administration, and might do more for the material and commercial development of the country. Granted freedom of action, and with proper endeavour, I am inclined to think that many States in Central India, Rajputana and elsewhere would be able to get even more treasure out of the bowels of the earth than Mysore and Hyderabad at present obtain. But Government help has its limits.

My experience teaches me that it is very difficult for Government to provide industries for its people in the absence of a real business spirit amongst the people themselves. It is very difficult for so impersonal an entity as Government to get capable managers or to supervise its enterprises properly. I have tried various measures in my own State, but I am sorry to say that the results are disappointing. A sugar mill, a cotton mill and an ice factory were tried, but were not a success. A State fund for the advance of capital and other assistance to manufacturers also failed. I found that the managers were not sufficiently interested in the scheme and not impartial in the working of it. I am convinced, however, that the fault lay not with the industries themselves but in the fact that they were State enterprises.

I have also made an experiment in technical education.

I founded an institution called the Kala-Bhavan with departments in dyeing and weaving, carpentry and mechanical engineering, and with the object of diffusing technical education I had branches of it set up in various parts of the Raj. The response among the people was so faint that after a time the institution had to be contracted within narrower limits. Until the means of the people and the material wealth of the country expand, there can be but little demand for the work which such institutes turn out. So far, the Kala-Bhavan has done but little beyond providing skilled dyers for Bombay mills; and until the people co-operate more earnestly its utility will not be recognised. Once more it is the prevailing ignorance which hampers every movement to help the people. They are sunk in a fatalistic apathy and do not care to learn how to help themselves.

I have omitted to refer to the many endeavours made by other Indian States in the same direction, not because they are not worth mentioning. The wonderful Cauvery electric power scheme and the irrigation projects of the Mysore and Jaipur States, as well as the fine Technical School at Jaipur, are indisputably entitled to a high rank in the record of such laudable work. I have to pass them over for want of time and adequate information of all their details.

It is the general lack of education and intelligence which hampers us at every turn and has been our ruin. Once we can make education general we may hope for increased dexterity, an increased power of concentration, increased trustworthiness and quickness to discover new processes. We need these qualities in every class of Indian society. Education in England has diffused a spirit of self-reliance and a capacity for initiative; education in Germany aims at thorough knowledge, methodical application and exact learning; but education in India has hitherto aimed only at providing a certain amount of food for thought without ever touching the mental capacity or character.

I do not think that the plea that our industries are poor for want of capital is one that can be sustained. We have more capital than we imagine to develop our resources if we would only use it. But we lack the active foresight always seeking the

best investments. We prefer to hoard our savings in our women's ornaments, or to invest it in Government securities at low rates of interest, when we might be using it in ways which would be profitable to the country at large, as well as to ourselves, such as agricultural improvements, insurance of agricultural stock and the establishment of factories. And that is especially true of some Indian States which invest their surplus capital in Government securities, instead of using it in the development of the resources of their own territories.

This is not, however, our only fault. There is another fault which is nearly as fatal to any system of industry, and that is our lack of confidence in ourselves and in one another. Without self-confidence you can never do anything; you will never found an industry or build up a trade, for you have nothing to carry you through the first anxious years when the only dividend is hope, and the best assets are unfaltering courage and faith in oneself. And without confidence in one another you will never have a credit system, and without a credit system no modern commerce can exist. It is this want of co-operation, this mutual distrust which paralyses Indian industry, ruins the statesman, and discredits the individual even in his own household. I believe that this trait of our character, though in some cases arising from our obvious defects and instances of actual misconduct among ourselves, is mainly due to the fact that the nation has long been split up into incoherent units, but also to the ignorance and restricted vision which result from our own exclusiveness. We have denied ourselves the illuminating experience of foreign travel and are too prone to imagine that weaknesses are confined to India. Failures and defalcations are as common in Europe as among ourselves; and yet we allow ourselves to be too easily discouraged by such incidents. Hence arises the habit of censorious judgment, a disposition to put the worst construction on the conduct of our friends and relatives, without trying to find the truth, which destroys all trust and tolerance. Our view of the conduct of friends, of the policies of administrations, of the success and integrity of commercial undertakings, are all vitiated by a readiness to believe the worst. It is only when we learn to

suspend judgment and know the man and the motive before we criticise, that we shall be able to repose trust where trust is due. We must stiffen our character and educate ourselves up to a higher moral standard.

We despair too easily. Let us remember that we must expect failures at first; but that it is those who learn from failure that succeed. Moreover, as any one may learn from a survey of the present state of industry, there is evidence that some do succeed. We have not, of course, made the most of our opportunities, but it is worth while remembering that something has been done because it shows us what it is possible to do, and encourages us to do it. If any one wishes to know, in more detail, what has been done and what might be done, he could not do better than consult Mr Ranade's excellent book on the subject.

And now let me say a word about this Exhibition and its aims. I take it that an Exhibition is intended to draw together the scattered threads of industrial activity, so that the members of any trade may learn not only what is the latest development in their own trade, but also what other trades are doing, and what in the other trades is likely to help them. Then it is hoped that the spectacle of advance and improvement will arouse emulation and suggest new ideas and also draw industries together. But are the conditions in India such that we may hope for this? I fear not; I fear that the *ryot* will not yet come to learn from us and that there will be few craftsmen who will go away with new ideas and the memory of new processes. Nevertheless, we should not despair.

It should be remembered that a similar difficulty was experienced in England in connection with the Workmen's Institutes which sprang up all over the country in response to Dr George Birkbeck's suggestions. The object was to provide the mechanic with lectures on his own trade; but the attempt at first largely failed from the incapacity of the working man to learn anything from the lectures. Lectures and exhibitions bear fruit only when the people have received sufficient general education to make them mentally receptive and deft in adaptation and invention. When that goal is reached, such exhibitions may most usefully

be turned into local museums, and if possible a syllabus of instruction attached to the exhibits. On the other hand, there is yet another function which exhibitions perform and which is equally useful, and that is their influence as general education among the classes whose intelligence is already aroused, and who go away with a new sense of what there is to learn. Life is not yet all machinery which it takes an expert to understand, and there are many new ideas which the collection of the most recent efforts in Art and Science in one place can inspire, and especially is this true if there is the comparison of the old with the new.

But before any of these undertakings and enterprises, which I have mentioned, can succeed, India must be thoroughly awakened. Understand what this means. It means action. There is no reality in our social reform, our political progress, our industrial revival, because, as you know, there is scarcely one of us who dares to act even in his own household.

You complain of an over-centralised Government, of the evils of heavy custom charges, of inland excise duties on cotton, of the treatment given to your emigrants, and the want of a legitimate share by the people in their own Government. There may be much in your complaints, but until you realise that the ultimate remedy lies in your own hands and that you have to carry it out by yourselves, no external reform can help you.

That awakening, that realisation is your share of the work, you who know something of Western thought and Western methods, and who imitate much from the West. But to the bulk of the population it does not apply so simply. The masses of India are lost in a hopeless ignorance, and that is why they are so intensely conservative and lacking in confidence and initiative. We cling to old customs because we do not know that they are not essential to our religion, and we dare not adopt new ideas or establish new industries because we do not know how to set about it. But there is another side to this ignorance and that is that we let our old customs hamper us and blind us in the present, because we do not understand the past.

Remember two inevitable tendencies in history: one, that no system, however perfect, however glorious, however far-

reaching, can go on for 2000 years (or 200 for that matter) without enormous changes being made in it simply by time; the other, that the religious, the political and mental conditions of a nation are indissolubly connected and interwoven, so that you cannot alter a single feature in one of them without changing all three. Now apply these principles to the past.

From 500 A.D. we find a steady decline in the political and mental condition of the country down to the two centuries of darkness from which we emerged into the periods of the Rajputs and the Muslim conquest. Follow the fortunes of India down the next eight centuries and note the steady decline in Hindu power, both political and mental, till we come to the time when Europeans obtained a firm footing in India and conquered the country with very slender means, meeting and solving each problem as it arose. For 1400 years the record is one of steady decline in political and mental nationality. How then can religion have fared, and especially all those social institutions which depend on religion? Surely it is clear that just as our trade and our political power collapsed before the attacks made upon them because they were inefficient, the other features of our system cannot have escaped degradation and that in clinging to them blindly we are clinging to the very tendencies, the very forces that have dragged us down. The fact that we cling so tightly to them has ruined both them and us. Consider the effects of cumulative physical heredity on the capacity of any caste when the action, for which that caste and its institutions were designed, is taken out of its power.

Here then is the problem: to carry out a great change in this respect, to realise our ignorance and to make up our minds to face the question, how and what to change boldly and altogether. We have changed before when it has suited our convenience, adopting details from the Muslims when it fell in with our wishes, and many of us, even our conservatives, are European in their tastes at times. It is obvious that much of our religion and many of our social institutions of to-day have nothing in them except perhaps a faint shadow of their old vigour and glory on which our old greatness was founded.

India needs a great national movement in which each man will work for the nation and not for himself or for his caste, a movement carried out on common-sense lines. It does not mean that we are to adopt a brand-new system from Europe, but it does mean that we must borrow a little common-sense in our solutions of the problems of life.

We must resolutely see what we need, and if we find a plain and satisfactory solution adopt it whether we have traditional authority for it or not. Turn to the past and see what made India great, and if you find anything in our present customs which does not square with what you find there, make up your minds to get rid of it boldly, without thinking that it will ruin you to do so. Study the past till you know what knowledge you can get from it which you can use in the present and add to it what the West can teach us, especially in the application of Science to the needs of life.

You, Gentlemen, are the leaders of India, and if you fail, she fails. Let each of you make up his mind that he will live by what his reason tells him is right, no matter whether it be opposed or approved by any sage, custom or tradition. Think, and then act at once. Enough time has been wasted in waiting for time to solve our problems. Wait no longer but strike and strike home.

We have our “ancient régime” of custom and prejudice to overcome: let us meet them by a new Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; a Liberty of action, Equality of opportunity and the Fraternity of a great national ideal. Then you may hope to see India a nation again, with a national art and a national literature and a flourishing commerce, and then, but not till then, may you demand a national government.

I should like to pay a personal tribute to the organisers of this Exhibition, for the trouble and energy they have expended in making this collection of Indian arts and industry so fine and representative a collection; and to the local authorities and their able head, Mr Lely, the popular Commissioner, whose name will ever be a household word in Gujarat for his unfailing kindness in famine and plenty, who has taken so encouraging an interest in this Exhibition.



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Surely it is a good omen for the success of our industrial revival that this Exhibition takes place in Ahmedabad, a town long famous for its enterprise and energy, which already possesses factories and industrial connections of importance with the industrial world. If only we had a few more Ahmedabads, India would not have long to wait for a real revival of her commerce.

And last of all, I have to pray for the long life, happiness and prosperity of His Gracious Majesty the King-Emperor, whose accession we are about to celebrate in so splendid a manner and whose reign will, we trust, inaugurate a new period of strong and prosperous national life for India, which will make her the brightest jewel in that Imperial Diadem.



Report on Trade  
in the Baroda State

1902



## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS.

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1. Trade throughout the Raj is in a state of depression and decline. The great industries that once flourished, such as weaving, dyeing, sharafi &c. are entirely broken and though a number of small retail trades have sprung up, the balance is greatly on the side of decline. The main causes of this condition of things are

- I European competition and that of such towns as Ahmedabad, Poona &c.
- II The Introduction of machinery.
- III The abandonment of ancestral professions.
- IV The continual drain of money from the State effected by
  - (1) Immense purchases from Europe, Bombay &c,
  - (2) Employment of officials from outside the Raj,
  - (3) Preference of foreign to local contractors,

and other similar causes.

2. To combat these evils there are certain general measures which are essential, as without them Necessary measures. local industry must continue to be handicapped and consequently continue to decline.

3. Wherever such goods are produced locally as for their State custom for local combined excellence and cheapness work. may properly be used by the Government, these should be preferred in State purchases to all others. The transference of Government custom from good local manufactures where such exist is especially undesirable and ought to be avoided. Where better work begins to be

produced outside, the local artisans ought with proper encouragement from the Revenue authorities to be able to make up the deficiency. But such improvement is impossible if Government instantly withdraws its custom.

4. The State should make inquiries on a large scale for Improvement of local production.

(a) means of improving local production to the European standard;

(b) means of improving country hand-machines.

Weaving, for instance, was once a great and famous industry in every division of the Raj. A Committee should be appointed to find out in each place where the most excellent hand-woven cloths used to be made, the real causes of decline and to discover and apply measures by which they may compete successfully with European cloths. This would not be so difficult a matter as it appears at least with regard to several woven and dyed cloths. These are inferior to European in appearance and fineness but superior in strength and durability. It ought not to be impossible to supply the missing qualities. Much may be done by experiments under sub-head (b), and such are very necessary as European machinery is too costly to be introduced on the scale required. Similarly with regard to dyeing attempts should be made to discover pucca country dyes and improve such as are already in use.

5. Besides this the State should push forward the same object by Means of encouraging industrial expansion.

(a) help and inducements.

(b) patronage.

(c) spread of knowledge.

6. The help may come in the shape of tasalmat. This should especially be given where enterprising Tasalmat. traders have started work of an European quality and need help to bring the enterprise to perfection. But for the objects of the Government to succeed, it is necessary that tasalmat should not be given in the present haphazard fashion, but after careful inquiry and stringent tests and with due and constant supervision.

7. Help may also be given in the shape of machinery, which should be given at cost price to workers in articles which can be produced more cheaply here than abroad. These workers should receive grants on condition of using the machinery. There are instances in which deshi artisans have succeeded in reproducing English machinery, after one or two mistakes, at a much cheaper rate than the English.

8. Often only polish is required, or better implements, to bring country goods up to the proper Implements and patterns. standard. In these cases Government might give the workers specimens and patterns of English work as there are in many places artisans skilful enough to reproduce work they have once examined, and should help them in procuring the necessary tools.

9. Those who first manufacture locally from material which is at present exported raw should have Inducements. their work made easy for them in the matter of taxes &c., and clever artisans settling from outside should have building timber &c., cheap or gratis.

10. Inducement should be held out to

- (a) those who bring up country goods to the European Standard;
- (b) those who bring such improved commodities into the market.

This inducement should take the shape of grants (buck-sheesh, inams) or of a poshak given in durbar.

11. The State should patronize all country commodities thus improved to an European standard in preference to European commodities, as also new industries, that is to say, manufactures made from material now exported in a raw state.

Lists should be prepared from each khata of the articles in use there and over against each item, details should be entered as to whether, how far, and where they are prepared in the State, along with the price, quality and other necessary particulars. With these lists as a basis, there should be a stringent rule enforced on all departments that wherever country goods equal or even a little inferior to European can be had, European goods should be eschewed in their favour.

Artisans who can work up to the European level, besides receiving costly Inams, should be favoured with the State custom, half the price being advanced as tasalmat.

12. In order to spread knowledge the State should adopt the following methods.

Means of spreading  
knowledge.

- (a) A monthly technical magazine should be issued, containing among other things reliable accounts of the raw material of each mahal and the capabilities of that material.
- (b) A pamphlet in very simple Guzerati should be circulated containing every information useful to those who may think of establishing factories, *viz.* the necessary cost, the nature, use and procurability of the necessary machinery etc.

This will encourage the manufacture of raw material which is at present exported and brought back as manufacture to be sold at heavy prices. There are many who would undertake such enterprises if they only had the information described.



(c) Public lectures by competent people.

(d) Industrial exhibitions.

An exhibition of specimens of the best European work should be held in different places, having regard to the articles that are there produced, and the artisans should be allowed to take the specimens home with a view to reproduction.

In addition a triennial exhibition should be held in each great Kasba, a grant of Rs. 1500 to 3000 per division being sanctioned for the purpose, where the work of different localities, etc., may be collected.

13. The abandonment of ancestral trades is mainly due to the Instruction in ancestral attractions of service and the failure of trades. the old trades owing to the inferiority of the work. The only remedy is technical education. In the schools only two or three hours should be reserved to general education, the rest being devoted to technical. Each pupil should be instructed in his own craft, and after that instruction is complete, he may be directed to extend his attention to other trades. A rule should be enforced to the effect that work turned out by artisans so instructed should be utilized by the State departments in preference to any other. Pecuniary and other encouragement should be held out wherever necessary. This instruction should be made compulsory in the Kasbas as also in the case of Dheds and other low castes for whom education is specially provided by the Government.

14. With regard to contracts the following rules should be made and strictly enforced.

Contracts.

- I Izara tenures should as far as possible be held by permanent residents of the Raj.
- II Contracts should be similarly given to permanent residents if they can do the work well and cheaply; otherwise they should be given by preference to outsiders who have become resident in the Raj.
- III A committee of officials and respectable non-officials

(sowkars etc.) should be appointed to supervise contracts.

IV Annual patraks should be drawn up and circulated among thousands showing,

- (a) what articles are to be supplied from each Prant;
- (b) in what lines contractors are needed;
- (c) what knowledge and fitness they must possess;
- (d) where the required articles can be had cheap and good.

V Whatever goods can be had at convenient rates within the Raj should be procured there and not from outside.

VI Officers who do not observe these rules, and favour their own men should be degraded to a lower post.

15. The main hindrances to expansion of trade are

Obstacles to expansion.

- (a) the want of technical education;
- (b) burdensome and unequal duties;
- (c) difficulty of procuring capital;
- (d) insufficient means of communication.

16. Technical and agricultural education are both imperatively required; in many talukas it is impossible to make even a beginning without it and in none is it possible to make any great advance or to compete with even moderate success against foreign manufactures.

Necessity of technical & agricultural instruction.

17. A technical school should be established in each division and over and above this in each Kasba where a sufficient number of boys can attend. The Kasba schools should teach

Technical Instruction.

- (a) manufactures which are in great demand but have to be brought from outside;
- (b) trades in which the supply of workers falls below the demand.

Some boys from each division should be taught at the Kalabhavan at State expense and Kalabhavan students who start factories should be helped by Government loans. From each mahal some boys should be taught at Government expense at Baroda or the Victoria Technical Institute, the money being recovered by instalments from their monthly earnings.

18. Students should also be sent to foreign parts for technical instruction; but their line should be rigidly fixed from the beginning and they should first receive what book knowledge and practical knowledge is possible and then, if necessary, be sent to a foreign workshop to complete their instruction. It is equally useless to send raw and uninstructed youths and to send students to acquire theoretical knowledge merely. They should be sent only for work in which factories are likely to be opened and for knowledge about the discovery and working of metals.

19. Except in backward parts and among very ignorant people, the subjects of the Raj almost everywhere express their willingness to send their children to Europe or elsewhere for technical and agricultural instruction. Parents are often unwilling to send boys to the Kalabhavan because they have no clear idea what will be taught to them. The Revenue officials ought to be able easily to remove this difficulty.

20. The question of duties is a difficult one; complaints come from every Prant and from every mahal and from officials and non-officials alike. The Commission is only able to say that the whole question of duties should be overhauled and rearranged in a sense favourable to trade. Beyond this need of a general enquiry a few circumstances and suggestions may be touched upon.

21. The Commission makes the following recommendations.  
Necessary measures with  
regard to taxation.

- (a) Where opening industries are hampered or ruined by duties, the Revenue officers should be expected to report the fact.
- (b) Throughout the State anomalous cesses are levied, although the reasons originally alleged for levying them no longer exist or although there are very few houses left of the castes on which the cess was laid. These should be abolished.
- (c) Heavy duties should be imposed on the import of such goods as are already made within the Raj, and duties on the import of raw materials which are manufactured in the Raj and exported should be entirely removed.
- (d) Duties should not be levied twice on the same article *i.e.* on goods passing through Savli to Baroda once at Savli and again at Baroda.
- (e) Municipal taxes should only be levied on articles used in the town and not on goods which enter it only to be again exported. Where possible duties should be abolished and a light cess placed in their stead on the cultivators.
- (f) In many places there are duties in Gaekwari villages which in neighbouring foreign villages do not exist or only in a lighter form. It would be well if an understanding could be arrived at between this State and the British and other Governments. Until then such duties should be abolished or reduced to the level of the corresponding foreign duties.

22. The difficulty of procuring capital for industrial enterprise or agricultural improvement is reported from every taluka and it is a fact that to supply this want is the first desideratum without which nothing can be done. The only remedy is to establish Government banks in each mahal. Where possible, it should be a joint concern in which the capitalists of the mahal should be induced to take shares, the Government taking the rest. The existing banks should deal on a far larger scale. The Baroda

bank should keep deposits and lend money to any one at low rates (proper security being taken), the rate of interest given on the former being a little higher than that taken for the latter.

23. In every division and every mahal the means of communication are deplorably insufficient:  
Means of communication. a great number of railways, roads, bridges &c., will have to be constructed in order to open out the country; moreover no care is taken to keep the roads already constructed in repair; everywhere they are allowed to fall into bad condition. For this work of opening out the country District Boards should be set on foot with the Vahivatdar as chairman, and the Municipal, Forest and other officers and leading men as members. The Boards would borrow money at reasonable rates, the sanction of the works to be undertaken would rest with the Government and the debt could be paid off from the proceeds of tolls or cesses. A rough list of works required or suggested is included under each Division.

24. Some measures should be taken to encourage indigenous medicine. The following are suggested.  
Indigenous Medicine.

- (1) A list of herbs growing in Songhad Vyara should be prepared.
- (2) A skilful Hakim or Vaid should be kept in each hospital in the big towns with some patients always under his treatment and the results registered under the supervision of the Civil Surgeon.
- (3) In some small villages the whole medical work should be intrusted to such Hakims or Vaid.
- (4) Two or three matriculated students should be taught at State expense both Native and English Medicine and put in charge of hospitals or dispensaries or set to make researches into the powers of herbs and publish books on the subject.

25. A trade in the horn, bone, skin, hair and fat of animals might be established in every taluka. Trade in horn, bone, etc. At present a vast amount of these are allowed to go unused. In every division a place should be appointed for throwing dead cattle, and a contract should be given for taking out the hide and bone etc. Traders should be encouraged to open factories in which these articles will be immediately useful. The proceeds of the contract should be devoted, after burying the corpses, to the improvement of breed.

### *Agriculture.*

26. The main features of agricultural decline are,  
Causes of agricultural depression.

- (a) deterioration of the soil;
- (b) deterioration of cattle;
- (c) ignorance of the best methods;
- (d) difficulty of procuring capital.

27. The deterioration of the quality of the soil is very marked and arises from the vighoti assessment. The circumstances of the vighoti Disadvantages of the vighoti system. tenure have several very undesirable results.

In the first place they lead to continuous cultivation of the soil, the land never being left fallow, as assessment has to be paid whether the land is cultivated or not. The soil must obviously lose its productive power under such circumstances. It would be better for the State not to exact assessment from lands left fallow.

In the second place they lead to extensive cultivation, no provision being left for pasture.

Thirdly they lead to more land being undertaken by the cultivator than he can properly cultivate. Its full value is therefore not realized from the soil; less labour and less manuring results in a poorer out-turn over a larger area.

Fourthly they lead to the soil being taken up by Brahmins, Vaniyas and others ignorant of agriculture, the real agriculturists remaining as labourers without any interest in the soil.

A smaller area carefully cultivated by cultivators with an interest in the soil, sufficient land being left for pasture, would be far better than the present condition of large cultivated areas with a poor out-turn, deteriorating soil and deteriorating cattle.

27.<sup>1</sup> With regard to the deterioration of the soil a committee of expert and practical men should be appointed to inquire

Deterioration of soil.

- (a) what is the extent of the deterioration;
- (b) what are the elements of fertility which have been lost;
- (c) what are the materials (manure etc.) by which the lost elements can be recovered;
- (d) which of these are the cheapest and most plentiful;
- (e) as to divisions of soil what materials are required for each and in what amounts;
- (f) in what *tappas* to introduce them;
- (g) by what means to impart the knowledge of them to the kheduts;
- (h) in what way to make their use compulsory on the cultivators.

The committee should be empowered to make the necessary experiments and after a year's experience make a report.

28. The most obvious means of enriching the soil are irrigation and manuring. Wherever there are no talavs, wells, nehers or rivers, Government should sink one pucca well for every 100 bighas; the expenses could be recovered in nine or ten years, an addition being made to the assessment of the fields for that purpose. The same measure should be taken wherever asked for by poverty-stricken cultivators. The preservation of the wells should rest with the cultivators.

<sup>1</sup> This number is repeated in the original report. — Ed.

Abyssinian and Artesian wells should be constructed.

When cultivators dig wells and make the land bagayat they should be excused bagayat assessment for ten years as otherwise they will have to pay both assessment and the interest of Government money.

29. An universal complaint comes from every taluka against the working of the tagavi rules; it is Tagavi. stated that these are not carried out either liberally or expeditiously; that tagavi is given to new immigrants from outside who decamp with the money while the subjects of the Raj can with difficulty obtain it; that people are shy of taking tagavi because if they cannot pay punctually owing to a bad season or other accident, they are at once posted as defaulters and their credit ruined &c. The Commission can only recommend that a reliable inquiry should be made in the matter.

30. It appears that in several Talukas the people are not allowed to collect manure and in others Manuring. the material for manure is destroyed under official orders. This is a needless waste, as no harm is likely to result from the collection of manure in the open air of the villages. A place should be fixed on the village padar, as also a place for bestowing the village refuse which should be distributed to the people cheap for manuring. In Amreli the burning of cow-dung should be stopped and the people allowed to take fuel from the Gir. The cultivators should also be persuaded to use bone-manure against which they have some objection but which owing to the plentifulness of bone can be brought into use with great advantage. Finally a heavy duty should be fixed on the export of certain plants that are commonly useful for manure.

31. From every division and every Taluka there is reported deterioration in the quality of the cattle, diminution in their numbers and consequent increase in their cost. The following are some of the causes. Deterioration of cattle.



- 
- (a) Failure of pasture owing to the cultivation of uncultivated and auction of Kharaba land. Consequent to this result of the vighoti system, hardly any land is left for the cattle and what there is, is of the very poorest quality so that the cattle can get little nourishment from it. The cultivators are too poor to provide good and sufficient fodder. Some measure must immediately be taken for this; a proper share of the land in each village (one fourth would not be too liberal an allowance) should be left for pasture. Goats should not be allowed to graze in gochar.
  - (b) Want of good bulls and male buffaloes. The Government should keep cattle for breeding in each village on the responsibility of the Patel and the cultivators should take turns to provide fodder. In Kamrej it is the custom to allow bulls marked as belonging to the village to graze anywhere; under this system there would be no expense of keep to the Government. Where *bid* is kept for grazing good cattle should be kept for breeding purposes and sold cheap to the cultivators.
  - (c) Cowslaughter. A duty should be imposed on cattle taken to the slaughter houses or to foreign parts.
  - (d) The shingoti duty upon bullocks and other cattle in Amreli should be reduced.
  - (e) Neglect, driving of sick oxen, over-driving, over-loading, ignorant methods of pasturing, use of the same cattle for agricultural labour and for conveyance owing to the enforcement of veth. Rules should be issued to put a stop to all this.
  - (f) Cattle have to be imported. These are brought on credit involving risk, delay in payment and law suits, considerations which increase the cost. An arbitration court should be established for such cases.
  - (g) Buffaloes are not used for agriculture in many talukas and the males are allowed to die instead of being reared. Revenue officials should be directed to instruct the people in this matter and a yearly patrak should

be submitted showing the extent to which the use of buffaloes in agriculture increases.

32. The increasing scarcity and cost of cattle has resulted in an increasing dearness of ghee which calls imperatively for the establishment of farms for milk-giving cows in Songhad, the Gir and other such places.

33. Along with deterioration there is a great increase of cattle diseases; for this there is no sufficient provision. There should be veterinary surgeons for each Prant: several boys should be taught for two or three years how to treat cattle diseases and one such qualified student appointed in each Taluka. A light fee might be levied for this expense.

Otherwise the most effective remedy for each of the chief cattle diseases should be ascertained and distributed with a printed list to each village. To very poor cultivators or owners of cattle they should be given free. Ordinary diseases should be treated on the spot and gratis.

34. Agricultural instruction should be imparted by the following methods: —

- (a) Agricultural schools or classes teaching the children of cultivators free and other classes for a light fee. Scholarships should be given and some of the students employed.
- (b) Public lectures by competent persons.
- (c) Publication of Agricultural pamphlets, books or a magazine.
- (d) Skilled cultivators should be sent to Europe along with English-knowing students to learn. They should take implements with them to compare with the European. It is useless to send students alone.

Those who thus study the subject should be intrusted

with agricultural improvement and rewarded for any notable success.

(e) Agricultural Exhibitions.

(f) Model Farms.

35. If model farms have not had any notable success in the State it is because they have not been carried out under the right conditions. The following methods should be adopted.

(a) Cultivators knowing local and foreign methods should be appointed to teach.

(b) The method of comparative experiments should be adopted to show the cultivators

I the superiority of improved methods and manures;

II the effect of neheres and wells;

III the difference between well-fed cattle and cattle nurtured by themselves and between their milk, butter and ghee.

(c) The profit of cultivating by steam-ploughs should be shown to the zamindars and the use of European machinery to the students.

(d) The conditions under which coffee, tea, cinnamon, cloves etc., are grown should be taught to the cultivators.

(e) Model farms should be opened under varying climatic conditions.

(f) A model Farm should be opened with specimens of all the chief crops of the world.

(g) An annual or biennial agricultural exhibition of the crops thus produced should be held.

(h) The expenses of all such experiments should be published in so lucid a manner that all may understand.

36. Means of procuring capital easily and at easy rates, are, as has been said, the first condition of improvement. In the poorer talukas the oppression of the sowcars is very great, sometimes as in

Mahuva driving the people over the border. Other talukas are greatly indebted, the sowcars force the people to mortgage their fields and houses and these are put to auction at the first failure to pay. A rule should be made that the sowcars must receive their dues by instalments.

37. Complaints of lands being too heavily assessed come from different quarters. It cannot be said how far these are true, but it is certain that the limitation of the settlement to 15 years leaves the cultivators little power to make improvements. The collection of the assessment at an unfavourable time and its enforcement in bad years has been prejudicial to agriculture; in Mehsana especially these hardships have led a great number of people to abandon agriculture. Leniency should be shown in bad years, and collection should only be made when the crops are ready.

38. Agricultural expansion depends partly on the cultivation of uncultivated land and partly on the growth of new crops. Where the kheduts are unable owing to their poverty to bring uncultivated soil into a fit state for cultivation, the State should first get it turned and then let it out.

39. In pushing on the introduction of new crops the following considerations must be kept in view.

- (1) The crops which are cheapest in sowing, are most profitable.
- (2) Those crops should by preference be introduced which have to be bought dear from outside.
- (3) A new crop should not be introduced near a place where it is already largely grown.
- (4) No new crop should be so introduced as to drive out of production any crop which is already largely and profitably grown or the loss of which would have to be made up by purchases at a high price from outside.

To settle this point a good cultivator should be got to sow both old and new in his land. The loss and profit of both should be carefully compared and the results published among the cultivators. Those who are exceptionally successful in introducing new crops, should receive grants.

40. As in many places there is a want of vegetables, an attempt should be made to introduce the growth of potatoes in each division, the State selling the seed. The introduction of Italian potatoes and bhoy mug might be successfully carried out, but the experiment is too costly for any one except the Sarkar, unless special facilities in the nature of patents, &c. are given.

#### GENERAL.

41. A special officer should be appointed to watch over agricultural improvement, as the continual change of officers is a great obstacle to success.  
Special agricultural officer.

42. Subas, Naib Subas and Vahivatdars should be asked to send in with their collections an account of the state of the people, and also of any rules &c., which weigh heavily on trade and agriculture, together with the reasons.  
Revenue reports.

43. Copies of the Commission's Report should be printed and circulated broadcast throughout the talukas.  
Printing of the Commission's report.

*Note.*— The Commission has a suggestion that for articles over which Government has to spend thousands and lakhs of Rupees, it should start State factories; and as these must be conducted on business principles and not by official rules, a special Department should be created for them.  
A State Factories department.



Opinions  
Written as Acting Principal,  
Baroda College

1905





# Resolving a Problem of Seniority in the High School

College Office  
Baroda 3<sup>rd</sup>. May 05.

M<sup>r</sup> Nag was appointed in the Baroda High School by His Highness the Maharaja Sahib but being on leave has not yet joined his appointment. I believe that His Highness the Maharaja Sahib while reserving to himself the full right to make appointments on other weighty grounds, is always willing to give the utmost consideration to the claims of seniority of old and deserving servants. Moreover the position and prospects of M<sup>r</sup> Nag if he is to enter the Educational Service permanently need clearer definition.

In forwarding this application,<sup>1</sup> therefore, I take the opportunity to state fully my opinion on the matter.

The course suggested by the teachers to meet the difficulties of the case is of course quite impracticable. M<sup>r</sup> Nag is a graduate of the Cambridge University and has spent many years in Europe at great expense in order to acquire higher qualifications and a wider culture and experience, and to expect that he would be willing or ought to be asked to serve on Rs 65 in the last place of a Bombay graduate in this Department and with the prospects of a teacher of the second grade in the High School is to lose all sense of proportion. The precedent of M<sup>r</sup> Manishanker Bhat does not apply to such a case. M<sup>r</sup> Nag has accepted Rs 150 the lowest pay at present possible to a man of his qualifications with corresponding prospects and it is not possible to cut him down now from Rs 150 to Rs 65 with practically no prospects at all.

<sup>1</sup> *A printed representation by the graduate teachers in the second grade of the Baroda High School, requesting "that the claims of senior men may not be passed over while making appointments in the higher grade". — Ed.*

Even apart from this the expedient of turning part of the regular salary into personal pay is one which in my opinion ought not to be too freely used, as it tends to turn transference from one Department to another into an unmerited punishment.

On the other hand there are strong grounds for the rest of the representation; the work of the High School staff has been admirable and judged by examination results compares well with any other school in the Bombay Presidency, while the prospects are very poor and limited, and the introduction of a well paid outsider stops promotion far more effectually than can be the case in larger and more highly paid Departments.

Under these circumstances I suggest as the course which will as far as possible meet both sides of the question that M<sup>r</sup> Nag may be employed in the High School in a special grade like the Head Master and M<sup>r</sup> Dorabji Patel, and the rise in grade opened up by the appointment of M<sup>r</sup> Chunilal may be granted to M<sup>r</sup> Naravane although he will continue to work in the sixth standard. This would introduce the least disturbance in the chances of the High School staff and at the same time make it more convenient for His Highness to utilise M<sup>r</sup> Nag's services in any way in future either in this Department or elsewhere without any disturbance to the regular grades of the English Schools.

ARAVIND. A. GHOSE  
Ag. Principal  
Baroda College

# On a Proposed Examination for Teachers

College Office.  
Baroda, 9th August 1905.

To

The Minister of Education  
B A R O D A.

Sir,

With reference to your letter No. 2047 dated the 28th May 1905 I have the honour to forward herewith my opinion regarding the rules for the Secondary Teachers' Certificate Examinations which it is intended to be introduced in our Raj.

I have the honour to be  
Sir  
Your Most Obedient Servant  
A A G  
Ag. Principal, Baroda College.

## O P I N I O N.

I have gone very carefully through the scheme of the proposed examination for teachers and beg to give expression to the following opinions, which have been formed after very long and careful consideration.

2. I do not quite see the object of introducing this severe and stringent examination into our State. Our schools are working quite well enough on the whole for the purposes of education

as given in this country. I do not myself think very highly either of the principles or methods or results of that education but, being subject to the Bombay University, we have to take things as they are and cannot attempt anything ideal. Whatever defects still exist are inseparable from the low pay and qualifications required in the lower rank of teachers. In certain respects they may be modified by a mild test; but the sort of examination here proposed is such as might be prescribed in an European country where the science and art of education are really advanced. Here it is likely to degenerate into a formality harassing to the teachers but useless to the State. We simply have not got sufficient foothold from which to make a leap like this. Undoubtedly the teachers will cram up the subjects learning by rote as is the habit in this country and a percentage of them will pass, but there it will end; a few of the brighter and smarter young men may understand and make the attempt to apply the principles they learn, but that will be all. If the University with its new constitution succeeds in giving a better basis for culture, then after a few years we might see what can be done; or we may watch the results of our training College and gradually apply an adequate test.

3. If it is thought necessary to have a departmental examination now I should suggest the following alterations.

Rule 8. Whatever examination is held, should be formal and conducted by more than one person. This rule, making the promotion or dismissal of State servants depend on an informal oral examination by the Minister of Education, seems [to] me contrary to the principles which should govern these tests. The test under such circumstances might very easily be applied with great haste, injustice or partiality. The fact that the present Minister of Education is above suspicion in these respects does not guarantee the future. The opinion of a Committee of 3 members would alone ensure a reasonable security to the teachers. I would suggest that at least one of them should be a Professor of the College.

Rule 9. 50 per cent is too high a percentage in a test of this kind. 33 per cent, the University standard, should be adopted, especially if removal is to be the penalty of failure.

Rule 10. This rule is Draconically harsh. Removal ought on no account to be made the penalty of a Departmental Examination; the ordinary principle that the passing of the Examination will count in promotion is quite sufficient.

4. As to the subjects of the examination, I would make it a far slighter affair than this up-to-date American machine would be.

#### Junior Examination.

Part II. Instead of this elaborate affair, it will be enough to see whether the teacher can make the boys understand the lesson, explain a subject correctly and command their attention. That is as much as we can ask of our teachers at present. Only head (c) should be rather carefully attended to especially with regard to the English Language. Head (d) should be dropped altogether; discipline especially is a matter for the Head Master to testify; it is impossible for the examiners to test it, since the boys would be on their best behaviour on such an occasion,—unless they were like English boys and the teacher unpopular, when they would be on their worst.

#### Senior Examination.

Part I. Let (3) Psychology be dropped and if (2) must be kept, let it be as simple an affair as possible—a fair general knowledge of the main developments and their principles being alone required.

Part II. The same remarks apply as to the Junior Examination, in the case of graduates the same care about language is not necessary; it is the undergraduates who are occasionally deficient, at least in English.

I am not in favour of introducing the Honours Course just now. Let our Training College succeed first, and the general practical capacity of our teachers be set on a sure basis. We may go in for educational luxuries afterwards.

ARAVIND A. GHOSE  
Ag. Principal, Baroda College

# On a Head Assistant for the High School

## *Concise History*

The Baroda High School has for some time been increasing in numbers, until now it has reached the very large number of 750. It is high time therefore that in view of this immense increase, which renders the discipline of the School unmanageable by a single man, however active or able, some better arrangement should be made for the proper management of the School. A Head Master has to attend not only to the scholastic efficiency but to discipline and, so far as is possible under the conditions of Indian School life, to the life of the boys outside school-hours, especially to the physical education. The first object is fulfilled well enough under present circumstances, the second with but moderate success, the third hardly at all. The scholastic efficiency of the School is on the whole admirable and the present Head Master and his staff deserve every credit for it. There are certain inconveniences resulting from the large number of classes which have to be maintained but at present these can be met.

2 Mr G. M. Hasabnis wishes that an additional Teacher should be appointed, as he finds great difficulty in arranging for the classes when several teachers happen to be ill or on leave at one time. The undersigned acknowledges the difficulty but he is inclined to think it has been more acutely felt this year owing to exceptional circumstances and would like to wait for some time and see whether it is so or not, before making any proposal.

3 The discipline of the School is maintained as well as possible under the circumstances, but marked signs are not wanting that the task has become too much for any single man to cope with. The circumstances which have brought about this state of things are as follows: —

- (1) The very large increase in the number of students from 400 when M<sup>r</sup> Hasabnis took charge to 750 now.
- (2) The consequent increase in the number of classes for each standard; formerly no standard had more than two divisions; now each standard has five classes with three very large Matriculation Classes.
- (3) The increase of the Drawing, Writing, Gymnasium and second language classes.
- (4) The addition of new buildings for the accommodation of the increased number.
- (5) The office work has much increased.
- (6) The teaching work of certain classes takes up much of the Head Master's time and the area over which the classes are spread is large; merely going round for inspection, surprise visits and general supervision takes up a great deal of his time.
- (7) The work of new admissions every fortnight is heavy; then the various examinations are a great tax on the Head Master's energy.

4 To see to the proper efficiency and progress of the physical education is under the circumstances a task beyond his energies; yet this is a side of Education the importance of which is being more and more recognised. The High School has much way to make up in this respect.



5 The one fully effective remedy would be to increase the High School staff by the appointment of an Assistant Head Master. The views of the Ag. Principal This would relieve the Head Master of much of his teaching work and give him both leisure and efficient assistance in the two other matters. This would not be an excessive allowance for so large a school. In the Elphinstone High School which is smaller in size two Head Assistants are, I believe, allowed.

6 Having consideration however to the many calls on the State and the financial position, I am content to make a very modest proposal, viz. that one of the Matriculation Teachers' posts into one of a Head Assistant the maximum salary of which is Rs 125/- should be converted into a post of Head Assistant, salary rising from Rs 160/- to Rs 200/- in 8 years. The duties of the incumbent will be, in addition to his teaching work, to help the Head Master in maintaining the discipline of the School and give special attention to promoting the physical side etc. This appointment will not disturb matters in any way and will probably not really add to the expense of the School, as the slight excess will soon be made up by the increasing number of students. In any case the arrangement seems to the undersigned imperatively necessary.

7 Should the proposal be sanctioned, I propose for the post M<sup>r</sup> Dorabji M. Patel, Head Master Amreli High School (whose present salary is Rs 150/-) who adds recommended to the post conspicuous ability and intelligence to his long and meritorious service and is likely to carry weight with both teachers and students.

### *Points for decision*

- (1) Whether it is necessary to convert one of the Matriculation Class Teachers' posts, the maximum salary of which is Rs 125/- into Head Assistant's post — salary

Rs 160/- to Rs 200/- for the efficient management and discipline of the Baroda High School?

(2) If so, should M<sup>r</sup> D. M. Patel be appointed to that post?

*Opinion*

(1) Yes.      (2) Yes.

Baroda  
15<sup>th</sup> September 1905

ARAVIND A. GHOSE  
Ag. Principal  
Baroda College

*Opinion*

Forwarded with the recommendation that the proposal of the Principal of the College may be sanctioned. The reason why this Tippan is sent during the absence of K. B. Dalal on leave is because it is a matter which requires early sanction of the Huzur.

Baroda  
16<sup>th</sup> September 1905

ARAVIND A. GHOSE  
In charge Minister of Education  
Baroda State  
Baroda

## Appendix Two

### Premises of Astrology

Sri Aurobindo wrote these notes around 1910. They were not intended for publication.



## Chapter I

# Elements

Astrology depends on three things, the position of the planets in the heavens and with regard to each other, the condition of the planets at the natal hour or at the moment of enquiry, and the general character or tout ensemble of the horoscope. Any error or deficiency with regard to any of these three elements separately or with regard to their mutual relations will affect the work of the astrologer and vitiate its correctness or its completeness. To cast a horoscope completely is one of the most difficult operations known to Science. The astrologer is born, not made. It is as impossible to manufacture a perfect astrologer by education as to manufacture a poet. Hence the disrepute into which the profession of astrology too lightly and numerously followed has fallen in the Kaliyuga. In addition nine tenths of the true science are lost and the little that remains, is replete with errors. Astrologers make lucky hits or stumble on the truth, but it is only a rare genius here & there who can predict correctly and even he is never safe against error. For even when his intuition divines correctly, his authorities mislead him.

The position of the planets in the heavens is determined by the sign of the zodiac through which they are passing, their relation to the ascendant sign, their precise position in the sign reckoned by degrees and minutes; their relative position to each other by the distance of their signs from each other.

The condition of the planets is determined by the sign they are in according to which they are either elevated, fallen, ascending or descending, or possibly at home; by the direction of their motion at the time, forward or backward; by the quality of their motion, swift, slow or normal; by their mutual relations of friendship, enmity or neutrality, — conjunction, aspect, opposition or distance; by their nearness to the sun, setting or rising, divergent or convergent; by their location in a sign — friendly,

neutral or hostile, fixed or moving, male or female, fiery, watery, aery, earthy or ethereal; by their relations with gentle, fierce or inconstant planets.

The character of the horoscope is determined by the number of elevated, fallen, ascending, descending or entrenched, progressive or retrograde, rapid, sluggish or moderate, well housed or ill housed, setting, rising, convergent or divergent planets; by the number & nature of the planetary relations, conjunctions, aspects, oppositions, by the character of the ascendant, its lord and its tenants, combinations, distributions. All these circumstances have to be considered in order to determine whether the horoscope is great, mediocre or petty, favourable or malign, strong or weak. The results have to be judged according to the character. The same details in a great horoscope will mean something very different from what they would mean in one that is petty or malign or even merely strong. Moreover even if all the positions are the same, yet the infinitesimal shifting of a planet or a change in its character will often mean the difference between life and death, success or failure. This is the reason why twins sometimes have different destinies, one dying, another living, or pursue an identical course up to a certain point, then diverge. One hears astrologers say when the minute of birth is approximately stated, That is good enough. It is the speech of incompetence or ignorance. The first necessity is to determine the exact minute or second of birth. All the general results may be potentially true, yet owing to some accident depending on a few seconds' difference, none of them may have the occasion to come to pass. But if the exact details are obtainable, there is no chance of that comparatively rare, but nevertheless well-instanced fortuity.

## Chapter II

# The Signs

The signs of the Zodiac are twelve in number, beginning from the Ram, in which the Sun reaches its elevation, and arching back to it. They are, in order, the Ram, the Bull, the Twins, the Crab, the Lion, the Girl, the Balance, the Scorpion, the Archer or Bow, the Crocodile, the Jar and the Fish. The sixth sign is usually called the Virgin in Europe, but the word gives an idea of purity which is not the character of the sign and is therefore inappropriate. Each sign has a *devata*, a god or spiritual being in charge of it. He is not its master, but its protector and the protector of all who are born in the sign. Indra (Zeus, Odin) protects the Ram, Agni (Moloch, Thor) the Bull, the Aswins (Castor & Pollux) the Twins, Upendra (Baal) the Crab, Varuna (Poseidon) the Lion, Aditi, called also Savitri or Sita (Astarte, Aphrodite) the Girl, Yama (Hades) the Balance, Aryama (Ares) the Scorpion, Mitra or Bhava (Apollo Phoebus) the Archer, Saraswati called also Ganga (Nais) the Crocodile, Parjanya (Apis) the Jar, Nara (Nereus) the Fish. All these gods have their own character and tend to imprint it on their protégé. Or it would be truer to say, that men of particular characters tend to take birth under the protection of a congenial deity. Other gods stand behind the planets and the twelve houses & they also influence the temperament of the subject.

There are only two female signs, the Girl and the Crocodile; but the Twins, the Crab, the Balance, the Archer & the Fish are male with feminine tendencies. The rest are male.

There are three watery signs, the Crocodile, the Jar and the Fish; three fiery, the Bull, the Lion and the Scorpion; three earthy, the Twins, the Crab and the Girl; three aerial, the Ram, the Balance and the Archer. The only ethereal sign is the Ram, and it is ethereal only when either the Sun or Jupiter occupy it.

Each alternate sign beginning from the Ram is moving; each

alternate sign beginning from the Bull is fixed.

The names of the signs have nothing to do with their character in any of these kinds, but are determined by the spiritual “totem”, that is, the nervous type of the souls born in the signs. Those who are born in the Ram are brave, but mild and humane; in the Bull irascible, bold but not ferocious; in the Twins gentle, polite & worldly; in the Crab, timid or anxious to please, but formidable when angry, awkward but persevering and successful; in the Lion, royal, bold and splendid; in the Girl, amorous, charming and aesthetic; in the Balance just, mercantile, able; in the Scorpion, fierce, quarrelsome and impetuous; in the Archer, swift, brilliant and effective; in the Crocodile saturnine, brooding and dangerous; in the Jar thrifty, cautious and secretive; in the Fish restless, light and inconstant. It is not always the sign of birth, however, that is most powerful in fixing the temperament, it is sometimes the sign in which the sun or the moon or else the lord of the horoscope is situated; and none of these signs can be neglected. If they are all taken into consideration according to their respective force in the horoscope, a correct idea of the character may be formed; but even then the position and mutual relations of their lords must be taken into the account. This is the reason why men born under the same sign vary so much in character.

I must, however, guard against the idea that the signs and planets determine a man’s character or fate. They do not, they only indicate it, because the celestial & astral influences are the sensational or nervous force in Nature which become the instruments of our karma. That is why the European mystics gave the name of astral plane to the plane of sensational or nervous existence and astral fluid to the magnetic power or current of nervous, vital force in a man. It is this same vital force which pours upon us from all parts of the solar system and of this physical universe. But man is mightier than his sensations or vitality, or the sensational & vital forces of the universe. Our fate & our temperament have been built by our own wills and our own wills can alter them.



### Chapter III

## The Planets

The word planets as applied to the celestial instruments of our Fate in the modern astrology, is something of a misnomer. It is more accurate of the planets of the mental world than of the material solar system; for in the spherical system of the *sukshma jagat*, even the sun and the moon are planets, each circling in its own sphere round the central, fixed, but revolving earth. But a better term is the Indian word *graha*, those that have a hold on the earth. There are seven old planets, the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, and two others in process of creation, *Rahou* & *Ketou*. In addition there are two dead planets corresponding to *Uranus* & *Herschel* and two others not yet discovered. These are called *aprakashita graha*, unrevealed or unmanifest planets. The last four have no appreciable results except in certain physical and mental details. They may slightly affect the minute circumstances of an event, not its broad outlines. They may give certain kinks, in thought, character & physique, but do not seriously modify them. They are known but ignored by Indian astrology.

Different names are given to the planets by the Indian astronomers and for astrological purposes they are much more appropriate. Mars is *Mangal*, the auspicious, euphemistically so termed because of his great malignancy; Mercury is *Budha*, the clever, intellectual god, son of the Moon and *Tara* wife of *Brihaspati*; Jupiter is *Brihaspati*, Prime Minister of *Indra*, spiritual and political adviser of the Gods; Venus is *Sukra*, who occupies the same position to the Titans; Saturn is the malevolent *Shani*, child of the Sun. *Rahou* & *Ketou* are Titans of our mythology.

Each of these gods has his own character. *Surya* the Sun, is strong, splendid, bold, regal, warlike, victorious and energetic; *Chandra*, the Moon, is inconstant, amorous, charming, imaginative, poetical, artistic; *Mangal* is a politician, a soldier, crafty and

rusé, unscrupulous, unmerciful, tyrannical; Budha is speculative, scientific, skilful, mercantile, eloquent, clever at all intellectual pursuits; Brihaspati is religious, learned, a philosopher, a Yogi, master of occult sciences, wise, statesmanlike, fortunate, successful, invincible, noble in mind and disposition; Shukra is self-willed, lustful, a master of statecraft, a poet, thinker, philosopher; Shani is cruel, vindictive, gloomy, immoral, criminal, unruly, destructive. Rahou is violent, headstrong, frank, furious and rapacious. Ketou is secret, meditative, unsocial, a silent doer of strong and selfish actions. Each planet has a powerful influence on the man if it shares in the governance of the horoscope.

The Sun, Mangal, Saturn, Rahou & Ketou are fierce planets; Brihaspati & Shukra gentle and kindly; the Moon and Budha are one or the other according to circumstances and company, they are mildly severe and hostile or tepidly kindly. The others are stronger planets. Nevertheless the favour of the Moon or Budha, when they are wholly friendly, is a mighty influence.

The Sun is master of one sign, the Lion; the Moon master of one sign, the Crab; all the others except Rahou and Ketou are masters of two signs each, Mangal of the Ram and the Scorpion, Mercury of the Twins and the Girl, Brihaspati of the Archer & the Fish; Shukra of the Bull and the Balance; Shani of the Crocodile & the Jar. These are their homes and, when they are entrenched in them, they are exceedingly powerful and auspicious. Rahou & Ketou are still wanderers, homeless.

But they are still more powerful and auspicious when elevated. The Sun is elevated in the Ram, dejected in the Balance; the Moon elevated in the [ ], dejected in the [ ]; Mars elevated in the Jar, dejected in the Crab; Mercury elevated in the Balance, dejected in the Ram; Brihaspati elevated in the Crab, dejected in the Jar; Shukra elevated in the Twins, dejected in the Archer; Shani elevated in the Girl, dejected in the Fish; Rahou elevated in the Bull, dejected in the Scorpion; Ketou elevated in the Scorpion, dejected in the Bull. When dejected the planet is weak to help, but strongly maleficent. Moving from elevation to dejection, a planet is descendent, from dejection to elevation,

ascendant. A descendent planet tends towards weakness, an ascendant to strength, but it is better on the whole to have a planet just descendent than a planet only just ascendant. A good conjunction, helpful influence or favourable situation will go far to neutralise evil tendencies, and vice versa.

When setting in the rays of the sun or in opposition to the Sun, a planet tends to weakness, but not to maleficence. When it is convergent, coming from opposition to set, it grows in heat of force and is only eclipsed for the short period of its set, emerging full of energy. In its divergence it loses the energy. It never, however, forfeits by relation to the sun its other sources of strength.

Forward motion brings the fortune, devious motion delays, backward motion brings opposite results. According as the motion is swift, slow or normal, will be the pace of the good or evil fortune.

Beyond this the planets have certain mutual relations. A planet is in conjunction with another when in the same sign; in opposition when farthest away from it; in aspect when at a certain distance. Brihaspati when looking at a planet in the fifth or ninth house from it, starting from its own position, Mangal when looking at a planet in the fourth or eighth, Shani when looking at a planet in the third or tenth is said to have a full sight or aspect. All have otherwise full aspect when in opposition, three-quarters aspect on the third and tenth houses, half aspect on the fifth and ninth, quarter aspect on the fourth and eighth, no aspect, that is, absence of any relation, on the second, sixth and eleventh.

Each planet has natural friends, enemies or neutrals. The Sun is friends with all planets except Rahou & Ketou, who are enemies and Budha who is neutral. The Moon is friends with all planets except Rahou, Ketou & Brihaspati who are enemies. Mangal has as friends the Sun, Brihaspati, Rahou, Ketou and Shani, as enemies the Moon & Mercury, as a neutral Shukra. Budha has as friends the Sun, Moon, Brihaspati, Rahou, Ketou and Shukra, as enemies Mangal and Shani. Brihaspati has as friends the Sun, Mangal, Budha, Rahou & Ketou, as enemies the

Moon and Shukra, as a neutral Shani. Shukra has as friends the Sun, Moon, Budha, Shani, Rahou & Ketou, as enemy Brihaspati, as a neutral Mangal. Shani has as friends the Sun, Moon and Budha, as enemies Mangal, & Brihaspati, as neutrals Rahou, Ketou & Shukra. Rahou & Ketou have common enemies, the Sun & Moon, friends in each other, Brihaspati, Shukra and Shani, neutrals in Budha & Mangal.

These relations are fixed by the past of the devatas. But they have also occasional relations. A planet in conjunction with another or harbouring it in its house or harboured by it becomes its friend. There is no occasional neutrality; moreover it shares its host's or its partner's friendships and enmities, not its neutralities. It may have at the same time a natural friendship and an occasional enmity to another. In that case it does not become neutral, but is sometimes friendly, sometimes inimical. The natural is the stronger feeling.

There are finally certain gods who stand behind these planets. Behind the Sun & Moon is Vishnu, behind Mangal and Shani Rudra, behind Shukra, Rahou & Ketou is Kali, behind Budha Lakshmi, and behind Brihaspati Durga. Vishnu gives royalty & victory, Rudra force and fortune, Kali subversive genius & destructive energy, Lakshmi wealth & ease, Durga wisdom, protection and glory.

## Note on the Texts

EARLY CULTURAL WRITINGS consists of essays on literature, education and art, as well as dialogues, biographical and historical sketches, and other short prose pieces. Most were written between 1890 and 1910, a few between 1910 and 1920. A little more than half the pieces (comprising about three-fifths of the bulk) were published during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime; the rest of the pieces have been transcribed from his manuscripts.

The contents of the volume are arranged by topic in nine parts. Two appendixes, consisting mostly of material not written for publication, come at the end.

### PART ONE: THE HARMONY OF VIRTUE (CAMBRIDGE 1890–1892)

Sri Aurobindo wrote all these pieces while an undergraduate at King's College, Cambridge, between 1890 and 1892. He did not publish any of them during his lifetime.

**The Sole Motive of Man's Existence.** 1891. Editorial title. The piece obviously is incomplete. Sri Aurobindo left alternatives to several passages. These are reproduced in the Reference Volume.

**The Harmony of Virtue.** Dated "May 1892" towards the middle of the manuscript. The entire piece was probably written during 1892, Sri Aurobindo's second and last year at Cambridge. He was referring to *The Harmony of Virtue* when he wrote late in his life: "It is true that under his [Plato's] impress I rashly started writing at the age of 18 [*more likely* 19] an explanation of the cosmos on the foundation of the principle of Beauty and Harmony, but I never got beyond the first three or four chapters." The name of the principal character, "Keshav Ganesh Desai", recalls that of Keshav Ganesh Deshpande, one of Sri Aurobindo's friends at Cambridge and subsequently in India. Sri

Aurobindo left alternatives to several passages in Book One. These are reproduced in the Reference Volume.

**Beauty in the Real.** 1892. Written after *The Harmony of Virtue*, in narrative rather than dialogue form.

**Stray Thoughts.** 1892. Editorial title. These “thoughts” are jottings from the notebook that Sri Aurobindo used at Cambridge for writing *The Harmony of Virtue* and other pieces.

## PART TWO: ON LITERATURE (BARODA 1893–1906)

### Bankim Chandra Chatterji

This series of essays was published in seven instalments in as many issues of the *Indu Prakash*, a weekly Marathi–English newspaper of Bombay: 16 July 1894, 23 July 1894, 30 July 1894, 6 August 1894, 13 August 1894, 20 August 1894, 27 August 1894. The pieces were not signed: the phrase “By a Bengali” was printed above the texts and the word “Zero” at the end in place of a signature.

In 1950, when the series was rediscovered and shown to Sri Aurobindo, he wrote:

I have not intended to republish these articles as they were written when I had just recently come from England and they contain some very raw matter such as the remarks about Indian art which I no longer hold.

He added that it might be necessary for him “to revise and possibly to omit or alter some passages” before publication. He did not find time for this revision, and when the essays were published as a book in 1954, the *Indu Prakash* text was reproduced as it stood. The same text is reproduced here.

### On Poetry and Literature

Sri Aurobindo wrote these pieces on literary subjects between 1898 and 1906 (or somewhat later). He did not publish any of them during his lifetime.

**Poetry.** Circa 1898–1901. Editorial title. This piece was written in the

same notebook as the lecture on Augustan poetry (see the next note). **Characteristics of Augustan Poetry.** In the manuscript, “First Lecture” is written above the title. This piece and the following one were written by Sri Aurobindo while he was working as a professor of English literature at Baroda College between 1898 and 1901. The authors and periods covered by the two lectures were those assigned by the Bombay University for the “voluntary” section of the English B. A. examination in 1898 and 1899. Sri Aurobindo wrote additional passages for this lecture on blank pages of the manuscript. These passages have been printed as footnotes. A long passage that seems to expand ideas presented in the third paragraph of the lecture is published separately under the title “Poetry” (see above).

**Sketch of the Progress of Poetry from Thomson to Wordsworth.** See the note to the previous piece for dating information. Additional passages are treated as in that piece.

**Appendix: Test Questions.** Sri Aurobindo evidently wrote these questions to prepare his students for the university examination.

**Marginalia on Madhusudan Dutt’s *Virangana Kavya*.** Circa 1894–1900. Editorial title. These two pieces were written by Sri Aurobindo in his copy of the Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s *Virangana Kavya* (Calcutta: Vidyaratana Press, 1885). The first was written above the text of Epistle One, the second above the title of Epistle Two. The line of Sanskrit is from the Bhagavad Gita (2.16) and may be translated as follows: “that which is not, cannot come into existence; that which is, cannot go out of existence”.

**Originality in National Literatures.** Circa 1906–8. Editorial title. This piece, unlike the others in this section, may have been written by Sri Aurobindo after his departure from Baroda in March 1906.

### The Poetry of Kalidasa

Sri Aurobindo wrote the material published in this section between 1898 and 1903. All but one of the pieces were meant for inclusion in a planned book-length study, the contents of which he sketched out in “A Proposed Work on Kalidasa” (see below). He used four notebooks for writing the material that was to make up this book, apparently working on two or more pieces concurrently. On the first page of

one of the notebooks he wrote the title “The Poetry of Kalidasa”; the editors have used this as the title of the section. Sri Aurobindo brought only two of the pieces to a satisfactory conclusion. One of them, “The Age of Kalidasa”, was revised and published in *The Indian Review* (Madras) in 1902. The other, “The Seasons”, was revised and published in Sri Aurobindo’s own weekly review, the *Karmayogin*, in 1909. The other pieces were left in varying states of completeness in the manuscript notebooks. In reproducing them here, the editors have followed the order of “A Proposed Work”. Certain passages that could not be included in the final texts have been published in an appendix at the end of the section.

**A Proposed Work on Kalidasa.** Circa 1898–1903. Editorial title.

**The Malavas.** Circa 1900–1903. Title taken from Chapter II of “A Proposed Work”.

**The Age of Kalidasa.** Circa 1898–1902. See Chapter II of “A Proposed Work”. This piece was published in *The Indian Review* of Madras in July 1902, and reprinted as a booklet by Tagore & Co., Madras, around 1921. Sri Aurobindo revised the text and republished it along with *Kalidasa’s Seasons* in a booklet entitled *Kalidasa* in 1929.

**The Historical Method.** Circa 1900–1903. Manuscript title: “Kalidasa — the historical method”; corresponds to a phrase in Chapter II of “A Proposed Work”. Sri Aurobindo broke off work on this piece abruptly; he did not put a full stop after the last word written.

**The Seasons.** Circa 1900–1903. Manuscript title: “The Seasons”; corresponds to Chapter III of “A Proposed Work”. Sri Aurobindo published this essay in his weekly journal, the *Karmayogin*, in three instalments in July and August 1909. It was reprinted as a booklet entitled *Kalidasa’s Seasons* by Tagore & Co., Madras, around 1921. The text was revised by Sri Aurobindo and published along with “The Age of Kalidasa” in *Kalidasa* in 1929.

**Hindu Drama.** Circa 1901–3; manuscript revised, probably after 1910. Title taken from Chapter VI of “A Proposed Work”. There are two separately written drafts dealing with this subject among Sri Aurobindo’s manuscripts. The one printed first here seems to have been intended to be the opening of the piece. Sri Aurobindo broke off work on this draft abruptly.



**Vikramorvasie: The Play.** Circa 1900–1903. Editorial title, suggested by the title of Chapter VIII of “A Proposed Work”.

**Vikramorvasie: The Characters.** Circa 1898–99 (note the phrase “till late in the present century”). Editorial title, suggested by the title of Chapter IX of “A Proposed Work”: “The Characters”. Sri Aurobindo wrote separate passages (some of them incomplete) on the characters of the play without indicating exactly how he intended to put the passages together. The editors have followed manuscript evidence, the flow of the argument and common sense in assembling the present text. White spaces indicate that the passages above and below are not physically continuous in the manuscript.

**The Spirit of the Times.** Circa 1898–1901. Editorial title. It is possible that this piece was intended for use in “Hindu civilisation in the time of Kalidasa”, Chapters XVI–XVII of “A Proposed Work”. This essay was written by Sri Aurobindo on a sheet of letter paper headed “THE COLLEGE./BARODA.”. He served as professor of English of Baroda College between 1898 and 1901. The essay was one of many documents seized by the police when Sri Aurobindo was arrested in May 1908. It was not rediscovered and recognised as his until 1997.

**On Translating Kalidasa.** Circa 1903. Editorial title. This piece does not form part of “A Proposed Work”. It apparently was intended to accompany Sri Aurobindo’s translation of Kalidasa’s *Cloud Messenger* (*Meghadūta*), which has been lost. The bulk of the text consists of passages written in a single notebook. The editors have arranged these passages according to the flow of the argument. White spaces indicate that the passages above and below are not physically continuous in the manuscript. The passage published at the end containing examples from Shakespeare was written separately in another notebook. For the most part the editors have followed Sri Aurobindo’s idiosyncratic transliterations of Sanskrit words in this as in other pieces. When, however, Sri Aurobindo quotes entire lines or passages of Kalidasa’s poetry or comments on words from such lines, the editors have made use of the standard international system of transliteration.

**Appendix: Alternative and Unused Passages and Fragments.** Sri Aurobindo wrote the first of these passages in isolation around 1900. He wrote the others as parts of three of the chapters described above. The editors have not incorporated these passages in the final texts of

the chapters in question either because Sri Aurobindo himself excluded them from the revised version of the piece, or because he wrote another passage that covers the same ground and the editors have chosen to use that passage in the text.

### On the Mahabharata

Sri Aurobindo wrote these essays and notes on the Mahabharata around 1902. He did not publish any of them during his lifetime.

**Notes on the Mahabharata.** Circa 1902. Sri Aurobindo wrote this essay shortly after September 1901, when the “recent article” mentioned in the first paragraph, Velandai Gopala Aiyer’s “The Date of the Mahabharata War”, was published in *The Indian Review* of Madras. The text of Sri Aurobindo’s essay consists of: (1) an elaborate title page with “proposita”; (2) an introductory passage headed “Vyasa; some Characteristics”; (3) a longer passage mostly on the same subject beginning “Vyasa is the most masculine of writers”; (4) a long passage beginning “It was hinted in a recent article in the Indian Review”, dealing, among other things, with the political story of the Mahabharata; and (5) a short incomplete passage headed “Mahabharata”, concerned mainly with linguistic matters. Passages (1) to (4) were written in that order in one notebook; passage (5) was written independently in another notebook around the same time. (Note that in passage (5) Sri Aurobindo wrote that the date given by Aiyer in the *The Indian Review* was “known beyond reasonable doubt”, indicating that this passage, like passages (1) to (4), was written after September 1901.) It is clear from indications in the manuscript that (4) was intended to replace (2) as the opening of the essay. Most of (2) was to be incorporated in (4), which was to be followed by (3). The present text of the essay has been printed in accordance with these guidelines. Since some interesting paragraphs of (2) were not marked for inclusion in the recast essay, all of (2) has been reproduced after the main text (4 and 3). The independent piece (5) has been placed at the end, while the title page (1) remains at the beginning.

Sri Aurobindo never prepared this material for publication; this explains its unfinished appearance. There are signs that he looked at

it again around 1909, but he never gave it a thorough revision. In 1932 the manuscript was uncovered by his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta, who wrote to Sri Aurobindo of his intention to copy it out. Sri Aurobindo replied on 23 April 1932: "Is this essay still in existence; if so, you can rescue it and I will see what can be done with it." Nolini made a transcript, but Sri Aurobindo did not work on it then or later. **Notes on the Mahabharata [Detailed]**. Circa 1902. Around the time that Sri Aurobindo worked on the above essay he made a set of detailed but not altogether systematic notes on the first *adhyāya* and one verse of the second *adhyāya* of the Udyoga Parva, as well as some stray notes on the Adi Parva. He gave the notes on the Udyoga Parva the same title that he used for the above essay: "Notes on the Mahabharata". Some years later he wrote some isolated notes on the Drona Parva.

### PART THREE: ON EDUCATION (1899–1920)

Sri Aurobindo wrote these pieces during three different periods: 1899–1904, in Baroda; 1909–10, in Calcutta; circa 1916–20, in Pondicherry. All but two of the pieces were published shortly after they were written.

**Address at the Baroda College Social Gathering.** Editorial title. Sri Aurobindo delivered this talk to those attending the annual social gathering of Baroda College on 22 July 1899. At that time he was working as professor of English at Baroda College. The talk was published in *The Baroda College Miscellany*, vol. 5, no. 2 (September 1899) under the title *The Address Delivered by Professor Ghose at the College Social Gathering*, and reprinted in *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* by A. B. Purani (1958 and subsequently).

**Education.** This piece consists of two separate fragmentary passages written in notebooks used also for *Notes on the Mahabharata* (see above). The passages thus were probably written around 1902. Between 1901 and 1904 Sri Aurobindo worked in a secretarial capacity for the Maharaja of Baroda, and was sometimes asked to write speeches for him (see note to Appendix One, below). As the present piece is addressed to the Maharaja ("your Highness"), it cannot have

been intended for delivery *by* him. It may have been meant for delivery by an officer of the State or by Sri Aurobindo himself.

**The Brain of India.** This series of essays was published in the *Karmayogin* in four instalments between 9 October and 13 November 1909. It seems to have been, at least in part, a reply to “The Bengali Brain and its Misuse”, an essay by Dr. P. C. Ray that is mentioned by Sri Aurobindo in his review of *Suprabhat* (see page 567). The essays were republished as a booklet in 1921, 1923, 1944, 1948 and subsequently.

**A System of National Education: Some Preliminary Ideas.** This series of essays was published in the *Karmayogin* in eight instalments between 12 February and 2 April 1910. Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta for Chandernagore in the middle of February 1910, at which time he broke off his connection with the journal (see the note to Part Six for details). He evidently left the manuscript of *A System of National Education* behind, and eight chapters of the work were published in the *Karmayogin* by his associate Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble), whom he had asked to look after the journal in his absence. The eighth chapter was published in the journal’s last issue. Other chapters, if they were written, have been lost. The eight essays were published as a booklet in 1921 by Tagore & Co., Madras. This apparently was a pirated edition; in 1924 the “only authorised edition” was published by the Arya Publishing House, Calcutta. In this edition, Sri Aurobindo added the subtitle “Some Introductory Essays” as well as the publisher’s note that is reproduced here on page 381. The book was reprinted by the same publisher in 1944, 1948 and 1953, and by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1970. In 1948 the subtitle was changed to “Some Preliminary Ideas”.

**Message for National Education Week (1918).** Editorial title. Sri Aurobindo wrote this message at the request of Annie Besant, a leader of the Home Rule movement and the editor of *New India*, a newspaper of Madras. It was published in *New India* on 8 April 1918, under the heading: “MESSAGES FROM SONS OF THE MOTHERLAND TO THEIR BROTHERS”. Sri Aurobindo’s was the longest of nine messages contributed by India’s “leading patriots”.

**National Education.** Circa 1916–18. Editorial title. An isolated paragraph from a notebook used by Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry.

**A Preface on National Education.** These two essays were published in the *Arya*, a philosophical journal edited by Sri Aurobindo between

1914 and 1921, in its last two issues, November/December 1920 and January 1921. Other instalments evidently were planned, but were never written.

#### PART FOUR: ON ART (1909–1910)

Sri Aurobindo wrote these pieces in 1909 and 1910 and published all but one of them in his journal, the *Karmayogin*.

**The National Value of Art.** This series of essays was published in the *Karmayogin* in six instalments between 20 November and 25 December 1909. The essays were republished as a booklet in 1922, 1936 (revised), 1946 and subsequently.

**Two Pictures.** This essay was published in the *Karmayogin* on 17 July 1909.

**Indian Art and an Old Classic.** This essay was published in the *Karmayogin* on 2 October 1909.

**The Revival of Indian Art.** This essay was published in the *Karmayogin* on 16 October 1909.

**An Answer to a Critic.** Editorial title. This incomplete essay was written shortly after August 1910, when the article it refers to, “Comment and Criticism. The Indian Fine Arts Critics”, was published in *The Modern Review* of Calcutta (vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 207–13). The author of this article, identified by *The Modern Review* as “A student of Mr. Ravi Varma, the famous Indian Artist”, made disparaging remarks about such critics as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita.

#### PART FIVE: CONVERSATIONS OF THE DEAD (1910)

The first two of these dialogues were published in the *Karmayogin*, appearing in the last issues known to have been edited by Sri Aurobindo. (Two other dialogues published in later issues of the *Karmayogin* under the heading “Conversations of the Dead” were written by Sister Nivedita.) Drafts of the last three pieces form part of the Chander-nagore Manuscript (see the note to Part Six). There are also typed versions of all five dialogues.

**Dinshah, Perizade.** Published in the *Karmayogin* on 12 February 1910.

**Turiu, Uriu.** Published in the *Karmayogin* on 19 February 1910.

**Mazzini, Cavour, Garibaldi.** Chandernagore Manuscript, gathering I, pp. 5–6. The typed copy, which is subsequent to the manuscript, has been used as the text. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 7 November 1920, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue* (1972).

**Shivaji, Jaysingh.** Chandernagore Manuscript, II: 6–7. The typed copy, which is subsequent to the manuscript, has been used as the text. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 26 December 1920, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue* (1972).

**Littleton, Percival.** Chandernagore Manuscript, III: 6–7. The typed copy, which is subsequent to the manuscript, has been used as the text. A defective version of this piece (Sri Aurobindo once referred to it as “much mangled by mistakes”) was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 29 May 1923, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue* (1972).

#### PART SIX: THE CHANDERNAGORE MANUSCRIPT (1910)

The pieces that make up this section form the bulk of a 51-page handwritten manuscript originally consisting of three gatherings of foolscap paper numbered by Sri Aurobindo I: 1–16, II: 1–17 and III: 1–18. Each of the gatherings appears to be matter for one issue of a journal. Each begins with an essay entitled “Passing Thoughts” and contains an instalment of “Conversations of the Dead”, an instalment of “Epistles from Abroad”, one or more essays, including those entitled “Historical Impressions”, one or more other pieces, including those entitled “In/At the Society’s Chambers”, and a blank-verse poem. Several facts suggest that the journal these pieces were intended for was the *Karmayogin*. “Passing Thoughts” was the heading of the *Karmayogin*’s opening column of opinion in the issues of 12 and 19 February 1910. After being warned that he was about to be arrested for sedition, Sri Aurobindo departed from Calcutta for Chandernagore sometime towards the end of February 1910, and remained there incognito for about six weeks before voyaging to Pondicherry. Several sheets of the 51-page manuscript bear notations in another hand indicating that it was sent from somewhere to Calcutta and then returned. In addition,

all of Sri Aurobindo's signatures on the manuscript were cut out or obliterated, a necessary precaution if it was in transit at a time when Sri Aurobindo was wanted by the police. Finally, a number of pieces that had been copied out from the manuscript were published in *The Standard Bearer*, a journal brought out from Chandernagore, in the 1920s. On the basis of this evidence, it would be natural to assume that Sri Aurobindo wrote the manuscript while in Chandernagore in February and March 1910 with the intention of having the pieces published in the *Karmayogin*, that the manuscript was sent from Chandernagore to Calcutta but returned without being published, and that some pieces were copied out from it in Chandernagore at that time and later published in *The Standard Bearer*. Against all this, however, stands a statement made by Sri Aurobindo in 1944 that his "active connection with the two newspapers [the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma*] ceased" from the moment of his departure for Chandernagore (*On Himself* [1972], p. 57). Taken by itself, this statement would seem to rule out the possibility that Sri Aurobindo wrote the manuscript in Chandernagore for use in the *Karmayogin*. It is possible that he wrote the manuscript in Calcutta before his departure for Chandernagore, took it with him and sent it back from there to Calcutta. But it is also possible, and perhaps more likely, that he wrote the manuscript during his stay in Chandernagore and subsequently forgot about it, as he forgot about several other of his early writings.

To enable the reader to visualise the original structure of the 51-page Chandernagore Manuscript [CMS], the gathering and pages of the pieces are given.

**Passing Thoughts [1]:** Religion in Europe; Religion in India; The Real Minimum; The Maximum. 1910. CMS I: 1–2. A defective version of parts of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 13 March 1922 under the title "Hints and Clues".

**Passing Thoughts [2]:** The Object of Government; The European Jail; European Justice. 1910. CMS II: 1–2. Around 1912 Sri Aurobindo revised and enlarged "European Justice" under the title "The Balance of Justice". That piece is published in *Essays Divine and Human*, volume 12 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. A version of the 1910 text, badly edited and with the matter rearranged,

was published under the title “Academic Thoughts” in *The Standard Bearer* on 2 January 1921, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue* (1972).

**Passing Thoughts [3]: Achar; Vichar; Vivek; Jnanam.** 1910. CMS III: 1–2. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 26 September 1920, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**Hathayoga.** 1910. CMS II: 3–5. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 12 December 1920, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**Rajayoga.** 1910. CMS III: 3–5. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 19 December 1920, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**Historical Impressions: The French Revolution.** 1910. CMS I: 7–10. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 28 November and 5 December 1920, and subsequently in *The Hour of God and Other Writings* (1972).

**Historical Impressions: Napoleon.** 1910. CMS III: 8–11. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 21 December 1920, and subsequently in *The Hour of God and Other Writings*.

**In the Society’s Chambers.** 1910. CMS I: 13–14. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 24 July 1922, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**At the Society’s Chambers.** 1910. CMS II: 13–15. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 31 July 1922, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**Things Seen in Symbols [1].** 1910. CMS II: 16. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 28 November 1920, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**Things Seen in Symbols [2].** 1910. CMS III: 16. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 29 August 1920, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**The Real Difficulty.** 1910. CMS II: 8. A defective version of this piece was published in *The Standard Bearer* on 15 August 1920, and subsequently in *The Hour of God and Other Writings*.

**Art.** 1910. CMS III: 12–13. A defective version of this piece was pub-



lished in *The Standard Bearer* on 27 March 1921, and subsequently in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

PART SEVEN: EPISTLES/LETTERS FROM ABROAD (C. 1910–1912)

The first three of these fictional letters form part of the Chandernagore Manuscript (see Part Six). The other three, entitled “Letters” and not “Epistles”, were written in Pondicherry a year or so later. Sri Aurobindo numbered the first two of the Letters “IV” and “V”, in sequence to the three Epistles. The final number, VI, has been given by the editors.

**Epistles from Abroad I–III.** 1910. CMS I: 11–12, II: 11–12, III: 14–15. Defective versions of these three pieces were published in *The Standard Bearer* on 20 March 1922, 3 April 1922 and 10 October 1920. All three were subsequently published in *The Harmony of Virtue*.

**Letters from Abroad IV–VI.** Circa 1911. These three pieces were not published during Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime. In establishing the texts of Letter V and Letter VI, the editors have followed an early version of the pieces, but have inserted the author’s revised versions of certain passages in the appropriate places. A white space indicates that the passages above and below are not physically continuous in the manuscript. Another version of the opening of Letter IV and an additional passage of Letter V have been printed as footnotes.

PART EIGHT: REVIEWS (1909–1920)

Sri Aurobindo published the first of these reviews in the *Karmayogin* in 1909 and the others in the *Arya* between 1915 and 1920. The first five of the *Arya* reviews are printed here in the order in which they appeared when published in the book *Views and Reviews* in 1941. Sri Aurobindo revised these five to some extent before this publication.

“**Suprabhat**”. Published in the *Karmayogin* on 14 August 1909 under the title “Suprabhat: A Review”.

“**Hymns to the Goddess**”. Published in the *Arya* in May 1915 and in *Views and Reviews* since 1941. The following note in the *Arya* concerning the “series of publications” mentioned in the first sentence

was deleted from the first edition: “We propose to deal hereafter with the most important of these publications, the translation of the Mahanirvana Tantra.”

“**South Indian Bronzes**”. Published in the *Arya* in October 1915 and in *Views and Reviews* since 1941.

“**God, the Invisible King**”. Published in the *Arya* in July 1917 and in *Views and Reviews* since 1941.

“**Rupam**”. Published in the *Arya* in April 1920 and in *Views and Reviews* since 1941. The footnote on page 593 was added by Sri Aurobindo when an extract from this review was included in the compilation *Lights on Life-Problems (Second Series)*, published in 1951.

**About Astrology**. Published in the *Arya* in November 1917 and in *Views and Reviews* since 1941.

“**Sanskrit Research**”. Published in the *Arya* in March 1916.

“**The Feast of Youth**”. Published in the *Arya* in November 1918.

“**Shama’a**”. Published in the *Arya* in September 1920.

#### PART NINE: BANKIM — TILAK — DAYANANDA (1907–1920)

The articles making up this section, all of them biographical sketches or obituary notices, were published in various journals between 1907 and 1920. In 1940 five of them, “Rishi Bankim Chandra”, “Bal Gangadhar Tilak”, the two pieces on Dayananda, and “The Men that Pass”, were published in that order in a booklet entitled *Bankim — Tilak — Dayananda*, which was reprinted in 1947 and subsequently. (Also included in the booklet was Sri Aurobindo’s translation of Bankim Chandra’s hymn “Bande Mataram”.)

**Rishi Bankim Chandra**. First published in the *Bande Mataram* on 16 April 1907, this article was reproduced in a booklet entitled *Rishi Bankim Chandra* in 1923, and subsequently in *Bankim — Tilak — Dayananda*.

**Bal Gangadhar Tilak**. This article was first published as an introduction to *Bal Gangadhar Tilak: His Writings and Speeches* (Ganesh and Co.: Madras, 1918), and subsequently included in *Bankim — Tilak — Dayananda*.

**A Great Mind, a Great Will.** This obituary notice was written at the request of Bipin Chandra Pal, editor of the newspaper *The Independent*, in which it was published on 5 August 1920. (Tilak died on 1 August of that year.) The piece was not included in editions of *Bankim — Tilak — Dayananda* published during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, perhaps because the text was not available when the book was put together in 1940. The present text has been compared with the text published in *The Independent* as well as with a draft found among Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts.

**Dayananda: The Man and His Work.** This piece was first published in *The Vedic Magazine*, Lahore, in 1915. It or the next piece or both were subsequently included in at least five pamphlets between 1921 and 1939. Both articles were included in *Bankim — Tilak — Dayananda* in 1940 and subsequently.

**Dayananda and the Veda.** This article was first published in *The Vedic Magazine* in 1916. See the note to the previous item for reprints.

**The Men that Pass.** This obituary article on Romesh Chandra Dutt was published in the *Karmayogin* on 4 December 1909, and included in *Bankim — Tilak — Dayananda* in 1940 and subsequently. In the 1940 edition it was originally to be placed after the article on Bankim Chandra. Asked "why Romesh Dutt should come after Bankim", Sri Aurobindo replied, ironically, "I don't know. I don't know why he should be there at all." Later, when correcting the proofs, he indicated that the Dutt piece should come at the end of the book.

#### APPENDIX ONE: SPEECHES AND REPORTS (BARODA 1901–1905)

Sri Aurobindo wrote the documents reproduced in this section while working as an administrative officer and professor in the erstwhile Princely State of Baroda. Then known as Arvind or Aravind or Aurobind Ghose, Sri Aurobindo began work in the state in February 1893, just after his return from England, and continued until February 1906, when he left to join the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal. During the first part of this thirteen-year period he was employed as a trainee in various administrative departments. From 1897 to 1901 he worked as a professor of English and of French in the Baroda College. There

followed a period of three years, 1901–4, when he served in a secretarial capacity under Sayajirao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda. (In many of the documents the Maharaja is referred to as “the Gaekwar”.) Finally, in 1905 and 1906, he returned to the College as vice-principal and professor. The documents reproduced in this Appendix are a selection from those that still exist, which are themselves perhaps only a fraction of the written work he produced while employed in Baroda. A selection from the letters he wrote at this time is included in *On Himself*.

### Speeches Written for the Maharaja of Baroda (1901–1902)

Between 1901 and 1904, Sri Aurobindo was sometimes asked to write speeches for the Maharaja of Baroda. The first piece reproduced here is a draft from one of Sri Aurobindo’s notebooks for a speech that does not seem to have been delivered by the Maharaja. The second piece is a speech actually delivered by the Maharaja that is known to have been written by Sri Aurobindo.

**Medical Department.** Circa 1901. This piece, written by Sri Aurobindo in one of his own notebooks, clearly was intended to be a speech (or possibly a written report) presented by the Maharaja of Baroda. (“The year of my accession” [p. 689] refers to the year the Maharaja assumed the throne, 1881.) The Maharaja did give a speech entitled “Medicine and Health of the Community in India” on 29 March 1901, but this does not bear any resemblance to *Medical Department*. It is possible that Sri Aurobindo’s draft was rejected in favour of another’s.

**The Revival of Industry in India.** This speech was delivered by the Maharaja of Baroda on 15 December 1902, at the opening of the Industrial Exhibition held in Ahmedabad in conjunction with the 1902 session of the Indian National Congress. It certainly was written by Sri Aurobindo. He identified it as his composition in 1940, when one of his disciples commented: “a speech he [the Maharaja] made at the Industrial Exhibition was marvellous”. After ascertaining that it was the Ahmedabad exhibition that was meant, Sri Aurobindo drew a chorus of laughter by remarking, “That was the speech I prepared for him.” (Talk of 12 December 1940, published in Nirodbaran, *Talks*

with *Sri Aurobindo* [2001], vol. 2, p. 952.) The text is reproduced from *Speeches & Addresses of His Highness Sayaji Rao III, Maharaja of Baroda*. Volume One, 1877–1910 (Cambridge: Privately Printed at the University Press, 1927), pp. 83–117.

### Report on Trade in the Baroda State (1902)

Editorial title. These “General Suggestions” form the first part of a 72-page report on trade in the state of Baroda that was printed in 1902. Although unsigned, the report almost certainly was the work of Sri Aurobindo (see references below). He seems to have compiled the report from data contained in a four-volume manuscript report written in Gujarati or Marathi, the languages of the Baroda State. In summarising this material, he used his own language and enough of his own thought for the portion reproduced here to be considered his own work. The second part, dealing with “Local Suggestions” at three times the length of the first part, is not reproduced.

Three contemporary documents mention Sri Aurobindo (Arvind Ghose) as the author of what is called variously a “printed report”, an “English book in short” and “Mr. Ghose’s compilation”. All three apparently refer to the report reproduced here. The documents, all in the “Arvind Ghose collection” (AGC) of the Central Record Office, Baroda, are (1) letter Manubhai to Dewan 23 June 1902 (AGC file 5, pp. 141–42); (2) Huzur Mulki Department, General Branch File No. 214/F. N. 29 (AGC file 17, which also contains the copy of the report used as our text); (3) Huzur Mulki Department R. No. 111.

### Opinions Written as Acting Principal, Baroda College (1905)

**Resolving a Problem of Seniority in the High School.** 3 May 1905. This opinion was written by Sri Aurobindo as acting principal of Baroda College in response to a representation of certain teachers in the Baroda High School (which was administered by the College) setting forth their objections to a proposal to give a new, highly qualified teacher a post that would normally have gone to one of them.

**On a Proposed Examination for Teachers.** 9 August 1905. Sri Aurobindo wrote this opinion in regard to a proposal to introduce an

examination for secondary school teachers while he was acting as principal of Baroda College.

**On a Head Assistant for the High School.** 13 September 1905. Another opinion on the running of the High School written by Sri Aurobindo while acting as principal of the College. (At this moment he was also temporarily acting as Minister of Education.)

#### APPENDIX TWO: PREMISES OF ASTROLOGY (C. 1910)

These notes, found in a notebook used by Sri Aurobindo around 1910, seem to have been written more as an *aide memoire* than as an original contribution to the study of astrology. After the three complete chapters, Sri Aurobindo wrote the title of a fourth, “The Hours”, but did not continue. The title of the second chapter, “The Signs”, is editorial.

#### PRINTING HISTORY

A little more than half the pieces in the present volume were published in one form or another during Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime. The following pieces first appeared in periodicals or, in one case, a book: *Bankim Chandra Chatterji*, “The Age of Kalidasa”, “The Seasons”, “Address at the Baroda College Social Gathering”, *The Brain of India*, *A System of National Education*, *A Preface on National Education*, *The National Value of Art*, “Two Pictures”, “Indian Art and an Old Classic”, “The Revival of Indian Art”, “Dinshah, Perizade”, “Turiu, Uriu”, all the contents of the Chandernagore Manuscript, all the reviews making up Part Eight, and all the contents of Part Nine. See the above notes for details.

Several of these pieces were subsequently reprinted in the form of books during Sri Aurobindo’s lifetime. The two essays on Kalidasa were printed as two separate booklets by Tagore & Co., Madras, around 1921. In 1929, they were published together under the title *Kalidasa* by the Arya Sahitya Bhawan, Calcutta. Sri Aurobindo saw the proofs and made some revisions. The book was reprinted by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1950 and subsequently. In 1954 the Ashram brought out a posthumous collection of some of the unpublished writings on Kalidasa under the title *Kalidasa: Second Series. The Brain*

*of India* was published by the Prabartak Publishing House, Chander-nagore, in 1921 and 1923, by the Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, in 1944 and 1948, and by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1955 and subsequently. *A System of National Education* was published by Tagore & Co., Madras, in 1921, by the Arya Publishing House in 1924, 1944, 1948 and 1953, and by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1970. The *National Value of Art* was published by the Prabartak Publishing House in 1922, by the Arya Publishing House in 1936 and 1946, and by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1953 and subsequently. The second to sixth reviews in Part Eight were included in *Views and Reviews*, published by the Sri Aurobindo Library, Madras, in 1941. Sri Aurobindo saw the proofs of this book and made some revisions. It was reprinted in 1946 by the same publishers. Subsequent editions were published by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The contents of Part Nine were published under the title *Bankim — Tilak — Dayananda* by the Arya Publishing House in 1940 and 1947, and by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1955 and subsequently. Sri Aurobindo saw the proofs of the 1940 edition and made some revisions.

*Bankim Chandra Chatterji* was first published in book-form by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1954. Some of the material on the Mahabharata was first published in book-form in *Vyasa and Valmiki* by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1956 and 1964. In 1989 all the material on the Mahabharata, augmented and reorganised, was published in volume 13 of *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*. In 1991 and 1996 these texts were republished, in a slightly reorganised form, under the title *On the Mahabharata* by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

The speech “The Revival of Industry in India” was first published in *Speeches & Addresses of His Highness Sayaji Rao III, Maharaja of Baroda*, Volume One (Cambridge, 1927).

With a few exceptions, the material making up this volume was reproduced in 1971–73 in three volumes of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library: Volume 3, *The Harmony of Virtue: Early Cultural Writings*, Volume 17, *The Hour of God and Other Writings*, and Volume 27, *Supplement*. The exceptions, most of which appear here for the first time in a book, are: “The Sole Motive of Man’s Existence”, some of the “Stray Thoughts”, all the contents of the “On Poetry and Literature” section of Part Two, “The Spirit of the

Times”, the “Alternative and Unused Passages and Fragments” on Kalidasa, parts of *On the Mahabharata*, the first paragraph of “Education”, “Message for National Education Week (1918)”, “National Education”, “Epistles/Letters from Abroad” IV–VI, “An Answer to a Critic”, “Passing Thoughts [1]”, and the Baroda speeches and reports in Appendix One. Many of these pieces first appeared in print in the journal *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* (1977–94).