

The Advent Vol. 1

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**THE
ADVENT**

*A Quarterly
devoted to the exposition of
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*

Editor

R. VAIDYANATHASWAMY, D.SC.

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Prayer for 1944

O Lord, the world implores Thee to prevent it from falling back always into the same stupidities.

Grant that the mistakes recognised may never be renewed.

Grant, lastly, that its actions may be the exact and sincere expression of its proclaimed ideals.

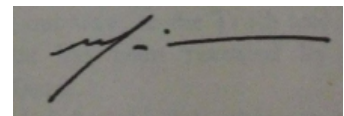
Sayings

“In the present condition of the world an absolute faithfulness to the Divine has become an indispensable need.

If you refuse to become a docile and surrendered servant of the Divine and the Master who manifests Him, it means that you will remain the slave of your egoism, your vanity, your presumptuous ambition and a toy in the hands of the Rakshasas who allure you with brilliant images in their attempt – not always unsuccessful – to possess you.

DOUBT IS NOT A SPORT TO INDULGE IN WITH IMPUNITY; IT IS A POISON WHICH DROP BY DROP CORRODES THE SOUL.

It is only egoism that is shocked to find egoism in others.”



The ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.
Sri Aurobindo.

OURSELVES – AN APOLOGY

The “Advent” proposes to place Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the future before aspiring humanity. The words of the Master himself are there, no doubt, available to all who seek to know, and one must remember that it is always better to go to the original source for light and guidance than run the risk of a wrong lead under a lesser luminary or a borrowed inspiration. Sri Aurobindo has dealt extensively with the matter he has chosen as his field of concern and has viewed and reviewed it from many sides and angles; it would almost look as if he was anxious to give no room for future commentators and note-makers to misinterpret or obfuscate his meaning and intention.

All this is perhaps true and we must always keep it well in view. And yet our attempt may not be quite superfluous. Our candle-light is not meant to replace the Sun, nor has it even the pretension to show the way to the Sun; it is more like a taper kindled from our heart of adoration and gratitude, an incense burning and offering itself, rendering back to the Source what it received from there.

Our purpose, then, will be served if we can touch kindred souls and rouse in them – or help or be an occasion to rouse in them – the aspiration which moves us. Our task will be to bear testimony, in our way, to the Truth and Life that has been revealed by the Master.

Sri Aurobindo’s vision enrings the entire domain of human preoccupations; it embraces and relumes³ all truths that secretly build and inspire man’s integral being – his mental and vital and even physical, his individual as well as collective formations. So one line of our interest will lie in the direction of scanning and understanding human movements – spiritual, intellectual, social, literary or scientific – in the light Sri Aurobindo has shed upon them. Naturally, it is the principles and forces behind

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external formulations that will principally, if not wholly, engage our attention; for it is the principles and forces that guide and control our actual life that have to be fundamentally changed—transmuted—if there is to be a fundamental change in the mode of our earthly living.

To be able to create a living interest in the Master's Revelation about these abiding truths that determine human destinies, to call together some people who look for the Saviour Grace but do not know where to find it, to turn a few hearts and minds to something that would allay all their questionings—well, that is ample achievement and we ask for no more.

THE GOLDEN AGE—THE AGE OF TRUTH

The first of August last was heralded by a good many prophets in India as a day of cataclysm (*pralaya*) and a day of New Creation. The prophecy, it appears, dates back to the Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana which stated quite plainly and intelligently—unlike the prophetic riddles of Nostradamus—the solid astrological grounds. Booklets and pamphlets were widely circulated warning men to prepare for the Doomsday, when the sheep will be separated from the goat, the godly from the sinful and these will be chastised and those rewarded. Some spoke of the apparition of *kalki* galloping on his white horse, reeking with blood, driving out the old world, dragging in the new. Simple-minded folk woke on the fateful morning and waited trembling... ..but the day wore on and passed quietly as the day before, as all the days.

In Europe, a similar hope and catastrophe were announced by Christian devouts to await the world in the year 1,000 A.D.—here in India today, it is to be noted, we are in the Vikram Era 2,000. Then too a kingdom of heaven upon earth was promised and the end of a world with its cup of sin full to the brim. As today, so in that year too nothing happened, the inexorable march of Nature continued as usual unperturbed.

Well, nothing more than the merest common sense is needed to tell the simple truth that man must⁴ change first inwardly before a real change can come in the outside world; the more radical a change we expect or demand in terrestrial circumstances, the more radical a change there should be in man's character and nature. If there is to be a catastrophe and revolution outside in life, there must occur beforehand a similar thing in his being and consciousness. An active volcano means a pre-existent seething fire in the bowels of the earth. Verily, verily the kingdom of heaven is within.

It is the complex of wish-fulfilment in man that makes him hungry for results which he is averse to prepare with pains and efforts. That is mere day dreaming. Not

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in that way do things happen in the world. The world will be cleared of demons if we individually clear ourselves of the demons that we harbour within us; human society can be a temple of truth, if each member rids himself of falsehood and builds himself with truth and nothing but truth. Earth can be made a perfect play of the Divine if and when the embodied souls embody the Divine. Not before.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Consistency, they say, is the bugbear of great minds. But, according to some philosophers, it is the soul and substance of Truth, which is defined as nothing more and nothing less than self-consistency. Whatever is self-consistent, whatever is free from self-contradiction is truth. That is the criterion par excellence of truth. Falsehood is that which bears in itself self-contradiction. Even the other day an eminent Indian leader stated that "Truth is the unseveral oneness of our word, thought and deed."* We have doubts about this definition and criterion. This may be, at the most, truthfulness, but not truth. A falsehood can be self-consistent throughout. We do not know if there is a shred of self-contradiction in Hitler's mental make-up: it appears to be a single seamless stream-lined consistency and yet its name is falsehood.

We consider truth to be nothing else than the soul in things, it is the Spirit, the divine element, the Divine Himself secreted in things. There is no other truth, no other criterion of truth. If one lives in his soul, finds the Divine—the real Divine—and is identified with it, then only can one be said to have possessed the truth.⁵ The anti-divine or the undivine may be quite self-consistent, but because it is not the Divine, because it has severed itself from the Divine, it has fallen from the truth and has become falsehood.

It can be asked, however, does not the Divine mean a wholly self-consistent reality, as he is the supreme harmony and identity? Anything less, anything divergent, must perforce carry within itself some kind of inconsistency. An Asura, a Titan, however consistently perverse, cannot altogether eliminate the element of falsehood. This is a metaphysical position which may be theoretically true: but, it must be remembered that the Divine is an infinite unity and holds in himself, although harmonising and unifying them all, multiple contradictorinesses; a single-track self-consistency—A is A and A is not-B—cannot be the logic of the Infinite Truth, it can very well be the logic of Falsehood.

RELIGION vs. ETHICS

* 'The Social Welfare', August 20, 1943.

Quite a heated controversy has been raging in the pages of the "New Statesman and Nation" of London among partisans of two schools upholding one or the other of these two creeds. The "Christian School" led by the Rector of Dartington pronounces most vehemently that ethics, mere ethics is truncated Christianity and without the life-breath of the religion, morality is sure to break up and fall to pieces. Devoid of the religious sense, ethics stands on a foundation of sand. What truly makes man moral is faith in God, what has made Europe admit moral values is Christianity, belief in the Revelation of Christ. The free-thinkers—socialists and modernists generally—aver that religion and morality are quite different things—religion may be immoral and morality irreligious. Morality, according to this school, is the result of man's growth in civilisation; it has developed as man has developed through his varied experiences and experiments in life and society. One may have no faith in religion, no belief in Christ, still one can be a perfectly ethical man. The religionists answer that the ethicist can say so only because he is banking upon the capital built up by religion in the past. It was religion that started civilising man, it is man's discovery of God that first laid the basis of a moral life, and this moral life progresses and is strengthened and organised as man progresses in his religious consciousness. At the present stage of man's evolution, in the world of today, you can lop off the⁶ religious element without immediately destroying its offshoot, *viz.*, morality, for it will survive and go on for some time through the momentum given to it, but its life would soon fizzle out, and unless religion comes back and re-moralises man, he will surely revert to the animal stage. Naturally the pure ethicists will not admit such a conclusion. They would stick to their view of an independent origin and functioning of the ethical sense in man.

We say that both religion and ethics are the expression of a certain status of being, of a certain level and mode of consciousness in man. Both have developed *pari passu* through the pressure of a developing consciousness. But both have limitations.

All values have their absolutes only in the truth of the Spirit, in the Divine Consciousness. The values of the mental order are relative and variable; they are of interest as intermediate terms of a growing consciousness. Religious tenets and ethical principles both belong to this lesser category.

SEX AND SPIRITUALITY

Our readers will come across the problem of sex and spirituality raised in one of our reviews in this issue. A few words seem necessary to make our position definite and clear in this matter. It is to be noted, however, that this is largely a modern problem, the problem, that is to say of how to mix or reconcile or harmonise the two elements in human nature. For, the ancient or traditional disciplines in spirituality

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never left a doubt on the point, they all eschewed and banned sex, declaring that it is the negation of spirituality – *brahmacharya*, continence or chastity, the very basis of spirituality, is nothing but the annulment and elimination of sex. The Vedantic disciplines, including the Buddhistic, were categorical on the subject and went so far as to deny, at least at the outset and in principle, the right of spiritual endeavour and achievement to women. And when women were, in fact, admitted into the spiritual domain, they were segregated from men; it was considered absolutely necessary for the spiritual welfare of both that they should not meet or see each other. The bias was so strong that spiritual women were looked upon as exceptional and uncommon beings; even so it was doubted whether they could reach the very highest status in spirituality. It was Tantricism and Vaishnavism that gave an honoured place to women and allowed meeting and association between men⁷ and women in the spiritual field.

In some esoteric Tantrik and Vaishnava disciplines a woman had to be chosen as an indispensable associate or companion – counterpart in sadhana, *uttarasadhika*. But the meaning and intention was never ambiguous: it was a way, a powerful and effective way, according to the practisers, of controlling and mastering the sex impulse and sex instinct. The Vedantic path, it was pointed out, avoided the problem: they cut the Gordian knot, as it were; for they ran away from life and its fundamental difficulties, took to the way of absolute withdrawal from the world into the Beyond. Their remedy for the ills of life was the suppression of life itself. The Tantrik, on the other hand, sought to experience the spiritual in Prakriti, in the dynamic movements of life: he faced life, was in it, although he was not of it. In view of this end it would not have served his purpose to cut away the sexual knot: he proposed to unravel it, make it straight and clean. His object was not to be mastered by the sex dynamism but to be master of it, to sublimate and transmute it into a purer energy at the service of spiritual experience and spiritual life. The sex impulse being the strongest force in human nature, when transmuted, can make for the strongest spiritual realisation and achievement. So the Sahajiya adept in his mystic symbolism says, “Then indeed you become the marvellous conjuror when you know how to make the frog dance in the very fangs of the viper.”

One can now easily understand the particular stress that was laid by certain sects upon extra-marital companionship (*parakīya*) in spiritual practice. The sexual force is peculiarly strong and violent in such a case and evidently the view was that the greater the force the greater the merit in conquering it. A greater force on a lower level of consciousness when conquered and transmuted yield a corresponding greater force on the higher level. It is true that the method is full of peril and ends very often in disaster; but it is a method that has been cultivated by some heroic souls. It is also true however that the same or even more absolute result – that is to say, the sublimation and

transmutation of sex energy – can be achieved by other means less dramatic but safer and surer.

The theory of a companion soul – an alter ego – necessary in the spiritual journey is only the imposition of a truth of the lower consciousness upon the higher consciousness, an illegitimate carrying over of a truth of the desire⁸-soul in social life into the domain of pure spiritual truths. But it is well-known among spiritual seekers that in heaven there is no marriage nor giving in marriage. Such a transference not only falsifies the spiritual truth but deludes the aspirant and leads him to perdition.

The Vaishnava conception, as has been pointed out by our reviewer, that there is only one Man, namely, Krishna, and that all human souls are feminine, is nearer the truth. It is not that there cannot be affinity among souls, among human beings living the spiritual life, but this is not an exclusive relation between two and the sex notion does not at all enter into it: the same affinity can exist between persons of the same sex. This affinity is entirely based upon unity in the Divine Will and Consciousness: it is free from the sense of sex, as it is free from the sense of age difference; so long as there is a shadow of such differentiation, the divine affinity cannot express itself or have its play.

It may be asked what then is the meaning in the creation of these two types of beings, thus sexually differentiated? Well, whatever may have been the use to which it was put on the lower levels, in the spiritual consciousness the truth that this differentiation represents is this that the two are dual modes of expression of the Divine Personality. The component elements that make up the two types are the same and the same divine inflatus moves both, only there is a difference in stress and rhythm: this difference is necessary for a richness, variety and colourful harmony in the execution of the Divine Plan.

To speak again to the world the eternal word under a new form adapted to its present mentality.

It will be the synthesis of all human knowledge.

Collectively, to establish an ideal society in a propitious spot for the flowering of the new race, the race of the Sons of God.

– *Words of the Mother.*

SRI⁹ AUROBINDO

ON THE WAR

[Sri Aurobindo has made known to the public his standpoint with regard to the present war. He is for unconditional and unreserved help—an all-out help to the Allies whose cause, according to him, is humanity's and also India's cause. The present extracts from a private letter written some time ago in answer to certain doubts and misgivings will further elucidate his position.]

What we say is not that the Allies have not done wrong things, but that they stand on the side of the evolutionary forces. I have not said that at random, but on what to me are clear grounds of fact. What you speak of is the dark side. All nations and governments have been that in their dealings with each other,—at least all who had the strength and got the chance. I hope you are not expecting me to believe that there are or have been virtuous governments and unselfish and sinless peoples? But there is the other side also. You are condemning the Allies on grounds that people in the past would have stared at, on the basis of modern ideals of international conduct; looked at like that all have black records. But who created these ideals or did most to create them (liberty, democracy, equality, international justice and the rest)? Well, America, France, England—the present Allied nations. They have all been imperialistic and still bear the burden of their past, but they have also deliberately spread these ideals and spread to the institutions which try to embody them. Whatever the relative worth of these things—they have been a stage, even if a still imperfect stage of the forward evolution. (What about the others? Hitler, for example, says it is a crime to educate the coloured peoples, they must be kept as serfs and labourers.) England has helped certain nations to be free without seeking any personal gain; she has also conceded independence to Egypt and Eire after a struggle, to Iraq without a struggle. She has been moving away steadily, if slowly, from imperialism towards co-operation; the British commonwealth of England and the Dominions is something unique and unprecedented, a beginning of new things in that direction: she¹⁰ is moving in idea towards a world-union of some kind in which aggression is to be made impossible; her new generation has no longer the old firm belief in mission and empire; she has offered India Dominion independence—or even sheer isolated independence, if she wants that,—after the war,

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with an agreed free constitution to be chosen by Indians themselves All that is what I call evolution in the right direction – however slow and imperfect and hesitating it may still be. As for America she has forsworn her past imperialistic policies in regard to Central and South America, she has conceded independence to Cuba and the Phillippines ... Is there a similar trend on the side of the Axis? One has to look at things on all sides, to see them steadily and whole. Once again, it is the forces working behind that I have to look at, I don't want to go blind among surface details. The future has to be safeguarded; only then can present troubles and contradictions have a chance to be solved and eliminated....

For us the question does not arise. We made it plain in a letter which has been made public that we did not consider the war as a fight between nations and governments (still less between good people and bad people) but between two forces, the Divine and Asuric. What we have to see is on which side men and nations put themselves; if they put themselves on the right side, they at once make themselves instruments of the Divine purpose in spite of all defects, errors, wrong movements and actions which are common to human nature and all human collectivities. The victory of one side (the Allies) would keep the path open for the evolutionary forces: the victory of the other side would drag back humanity, degrade it horribly and might lead even, at the worst, to its eventual failure as a race, as others in the fast evolution failed and perished. That is the whole question and all other considerations are either irrelevant or of a minor importance. The Allies at least have stood for human values, though they may often act against their own best ideals (human beings always do that); Hitler stands for diabolical values or for human values exaggerated in the wrong way until they become diabolical (*e.g.* the virtues of the *Herrenvolk*, the master race). That does not make the English or Americans nations of spotless angels nor the Germans a wicked and sinful race, but as an indicator it has a primary importance

The¹¹ Kurukshetra example is not to be taken as an exact parallel but rather as a traditional instance of the war between two world-forces in which the side favoured by the Divine triumphed, because the leaders made themselves his instruments. It is not to be envisaged as a battle between virtue and wickedness, the good and the evil men. After all, were even the Pandavas virtuous without defect, quite unselfish and without passions?.....

Were not the Pandavas fighting to establish their own claims and interests – just and right, no doubt, but still personal claim and self-interest? Theirs was a righteous battle, *dharmya yuddha*, but it was for right and justice, in their own case. And if imperialism, empire-building by armed force, is under all circumstances a wickedness,

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then the Pandavas are tinted with that brush, for they used their victory to establish their empire continued after them by Parikshit and Janamejaya. Could not modern humanism and pacifism make it a reproach against the Pandavas that these virtuous men (including Krishna) brought about a huge slaughter that they might become supreme rulers over all the numerous free and independent peoples of India? That would be the result of weighing old happenings in the scales of modern ideals. As a matter of fact such an empire was a step in the right direction then, just as a world-union of free peoples would be a step in the right direction now,—in both cases the right consequences of a terrific slaughter.....

We should remember that conquest and rule over subject peoples were not regarded as wrong either in ancient or mediaeval or quite recent times but as something great and glorious; men did not see any special wickedness in conquerors or conquering nations. Just government of subject peoples was envisaged but nothing more—exploitation was not excluded. The modern ideas on the subject, the right of all to liberty, both individuals and nations, the immorality of conquest and empire, or such compromises as the British idea of training subject races for democratic freedom, are new values, an evolutionary movement; this is a new Dharma which has only begun slowly and initially to influence practice,—an infant Dharma which would have been throttled for good if Hitler succeeded in his “Avataric” mission and established his new “religion” over all the earth. Subject-nations naturally accept the new Dharma and severely criticise the old imperialisms; it is to be hoped that¹² they will practise what they now preach when they themselves become strong and rich and powerful. But the best will be if a new world-order evolves, even if at first stumblingly or incompletely, which will make the old things impossible—a difficult task, but not absolutely impossible.

The Divine takes men as they are and uses men as His instruments even if they are not flawless in virtue, angelic, holy and pure. If they are of good will, if, to use the Biblical phrase, they are on the Lord’s side, that is enough for the work to be done. Even if I knew that the Allies would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities open to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate things could not be one hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open—to keep them open is what matters. Let us stick to the real, the central fact, the need to remove the peril of black servitude and revived barbarism threatening India and the world, and leave for a later time all side-issues and minor issues or hypothetical problems that would cloud the one all-important tragic issue before us.

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Without faith nothing decisive can be achieved either in this world or for possession of the world above, and it is only by laying hold of some sure basis and positive support that man can attain any measure of terrestrial or celestial success and satisfaction and happiness; the merely sceptical mind loses itself in the void. But still in the lower knowledge doubt and scepticism have their temporary uses; in the higher they are stumbling blocks: for there the whole secret is not the balancing of truth and error, but a constantly progressing realisation of revealed truth..... Whatever incompleteness there is in the knowledge attained, it must be got rid of, not by questioning in its roots what has been already realised, but by proceeding to further and more complete realisation through a deeper, higher and wider living in the Spirit. And what is not yet realised must be prepared for by faith, not by sceptical questioning, because this truth is one which the intellect cannot give and which is indeed often quite opposed to the ideas in which the reasoning and logical mind gets entangled: it is not a truth which has to be proved, but a truth which has to be lived inwardly, a greater reality into which we have to grow.

– *Essays on the Gita: First Series.*

A¹³ DIALOGUE – FAITH AND REASON

He: Discussion is essential and must not be excluded.

I: Viewed in the true light, it has not a great place, if any at all, in the sadhana. At best, it may help in removing the confusion in the mind: even for that I will truly depend upon my faith in the higher light.

He: Intellectual activity, discussion, study etc. by degrees make the blind faith luminous which finally ceases to be something mysterious and becomes explicable.

I: Faith, like Knowledge, Bliss etc., is not of this world, though may be found here also. It is a secret power in us, accessible to us, that puts our being in communication with the higher consciousness. What is sought by discussion and study and hardly ever attained is received in fact with the help of faith.

Faith recedes when mind and intellect are too active.

* * *

He: If I am drawn towards a particular ideal and sadhana, it is because its philosophy and rationale give a complete satisfaction to my mind and intellect.

I: It may be so in your case. But, in general, what happens is this that one is attached to a path, to a person, one hitches his wagon to a star, one does not know exactly why, simply because it gives him satisfaction—not merely to his mind and intellect but to his heart and soul, he cannot do otherwise. First attraction, then rationalisation.

Well, what made Vivekananda tie his face to the “whims of a crazy Brahmin”, as he used to say at times? Is it Ramakrishna’s philosophy or metaphysics?

He: Vivekananda was satisfied, because his questionings were laid at rest, all his problems solved by this single phrase, “I have seen God and I see Him much more concretely than I see your physical body.”

I: Exactly so; but that is not philosophy or intellectual reasoning. There were a lot of doubters and scoffers, so-called intellectualists, who would not or could not be convinced or converted by Ramakrishna. Their small petty doubtings and questionings remained rooted as ever; but a giant intellect made its submission or was stunned to submission, as it were, not through discussion and reasoning, but through admiration and adoration.

He: Then you think that the mind and the intellect are a heap of rubbish fit only to be thrown out into the dustbin? They are of no use at all?

I: They have a use, only when you have gone beyond them, when you have illumined them with a light that is not theirs.

— A

BONNE¹⁴ ANNEE...1944

Bonne annee, Mother sweet! another year
Has sprung up from the depth of the Unknown,
Thy puissant blessings fall on its life-sphere,
Its herald an approach of luminous Dawn.

Bonne annee, Mother great! let this year be
A bright prelude to thy total victory.

Bonne annee, bonne annee, let us all sing,
For the vast waste of dead years lies behind,
Mother of peace, Mother of love, oh bring
Thy heaven’s splendour into our desert-mind.

Mother, let us responding to thy call
Rise to thy height like a pure incense-flame;
In our heart's sleepless shrine let us instal
The burning Presence of thy magic Name.

From Time and its giant ravage make us free
That we may live in thy eternal light
Where all things throb with thy felicity
And a moon-edged glory is the soul of Night.

Thou art the rapturous vision we behold,
God's white redemption bearing this frail earth,
As if a radiant mass of heaven's gold
Towards the ecstasy of immortal Birth.

Bonne annee, Mother great! let this year be
A bright prelude to thy total victory.

— *Nirodbaran.*

THE¹⁵ NEW ADVENT

A wide expanse of liquid grey ... a shimmer
On the horizon of some amber clouds....
Between the dusk-enveloped twigs a glimmer
Of an eager planet wrestling with the shrouds

Woven by Nature on the looms of eve..
The supine sea-scape hums a monotone
Of apathy that would not even receive
The joy of phosphorescence as its own.

A sudden moon-rise, haloed with lambent gold....
A sudden sougning of the boughs...slow heaves
Of darkling waters to the manifold
Loveliness rained by dwindling light on leaves

And flowers and creepers pining for delight—
Then the answer rings out to the ancient cry
Of loneliness and Beauty quells the blight
Of shadows, sounding lunar conchs on high.

A sudden victory, yet how swift, complete
And wondrous! – it would seem an angel train
Sieged in a mood of magic, passing sweet:
A new Advent through night when daytides wane!

A moment mere, an adventitious gleam,
A fleeting glance aslant of the infant moon,
A whiff from the heights and lo, doom yields to dream!
A star's rebirth when olden rushlights swoon!

Would it not be even so with soul's sunrise
(On the crest of Life's clouds, pallid, commonplace)
Spurring our listlessness to the enterprise
Miraculous of a new-born consciousness

Of diamond glinting out from the heart of cinder,
Of sleep ensouling slumbers girt by gloom,
Of the bliss incredible in all-surrender
To the All who builds Love's pantheons on hate's tomb!

– *Dilip Kumar Roy.*

THY¹⁶ WILL BE DONE

Let but Thy will be done,
Mine lost in Thine,
Embodied Ever-Sun
Of Truth divine.

Let but Thy living Ray
Nectared, moon-cool,
Bring here God's golden day
O'er earth to rule.

Let the night transformed become
An altar vast,
Thy immortal sun-fire's home,
O Glory amassed!

Let gods of heavens high
And Titans great
Accept submissively

Thy will, their fate,

And help Thy wonder-plan
Becomingly
To make a god of man
And life death-free,

A field where harmonies
Divine would play,
And Love's profundities
Bloom bright as May.

Let falsehood's force forsake
Its night-mare game,
And all to Thy Truth-Law take
And brightly claim

Thy Love's down-pouring Grace,
And bathed therein
See Thy dawn's radiant face,
Thy rose divine;

And delivered thus from strife
And struggle dark,
Upon a Truth-born life
Enrapt embark

And reach the diamond haven
That lies at Thy feet,
Home of the ecstasies seven,
Union complete.

— *Punjatal.*

THE¹⁷ CREATIVE VISION OF SRI AUROBINDO

Sri Aurobindo has seen in his unique Yogic vision that humanity is proceeding towards a divine realisation on the earth through a progressive evolution. That realisation will come by the power of the divine Truth, and that Truth will itself determine the nature of its own manifestation. It is not possible to give an exact account of that realisation beforehand. Still whatever general ideas the human intelligence can form about it have been expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his books, especially in his

magnum opus. The Life Divine. And he is not content with giving a highly illuminating and inspiring philosophical account of the thing; he has ascertained by Yogic means what man will actually have to do in order to attain the goal and has been preparing the conditions under which the Truth can manifest. That is the real work in which Sri Aurobindo is at present engaged; it cannot be expected that until the ideal he has foreseen takes a concrete shape, people in general will be able to understand its significance or proceed eagerly to accept or welcome it. Still there are people all over the world today who are awakening to this ideal of future realisation and are feeling the inner call to undertake the requisite discipline and sadhana. This journal is started with the object of giving them some help in understanding the ideal and the path of Sri Aurobindo.

The ideal which the modern mind has understood very well is the rationalisation of life, "an ideal material organisation of civilisation and comfort, the use of reason and science and education for the generalisation of a utilitarian rationality which will make the individual a perfected social being in a perfected economic society." This rationalistic ideal, however, is not so modern as it is supposed to be. Rousseau and other rationalists of the eighteenth century in Europe brought about the French Revolution following this very ideal; but whatever might have been its other results, it certainly did not lead to the formation of an ideal order of society. The later attempt of the Marxists on the same lines has led no doubt to a new order of social organisation in Russia, but there has not been any fundamental change or improvement in the condition of men; in some important respects, as in the matter of individual freedom, there has been a definite deterioration; and Soviet Russia is already being compelled to give up one by one the fundamental tenets of Marxism, even its opposition to religion and spirituality. In ancient times, essentially the same rationalistic ideal was followed by the Greeks—the ideal of perfecting human life and human society with the help of the intellect. But ancient India could not accept this ideal as the highest for mankind. The ideal of India was very well expressed in the famous words of Maitreyi, "What shall I do with anything that will not lead me to Immortality?" Human nature is many-sided and very complex; man has a body, a vital, a mind and each of these has its own claims and needs. Only the barbarian can remain satisfied with the well-being of the¹⁸ body and the satisfaction of vital desires; man is chiefly a mental being and his mind erects the ideals of the True, the Good, the Beautiful—man's humanity really consists in the pursuit of these ideals for their own sake. But it is found that these mental ideals do not accord with the claims and demands of the body and the life of man; again the conflict between his body and his life also is considerable. That is really why human life is full of so many conflicts and contradictions; through the ages, all attempts of man

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to erect an ideal order of society have broken down again and again on account of these inherent conflicts in human nature. The desire for possession, domination, exploitation is inherent in the vital nature of man, and even the most satisfactory economic condition that any social scheme can bring about will not appease these hungers in man; even the very peace and security prevailing in the world will be found monotonous and boring and the vital nature will seek for new adventures leading to social conflicts and international wars. The intellectual reason of man has not the power to establish a harmony among these discordant elements and lead them to their true fulfilment; that can be done only by a spiritual consciousness which is greater and higher than the mind, *yo buddheh paratastu sah*.

“Mind and life themselves cannot grow into their fullness except by the opening up of the larger and greater consciousness to which mind only approaches. Such a larger and greater consciousness is the spiritual, for the spiritual consciousness is not only higher than the rest but more embracing. Universal as well as transcendent, it can take up mind and life into its light and give them the true and utmost realisation of all for which they are seeking; for it has a greater instrumentality of knowledge, a fountain of deeper power and will, an unlimited reach and intensity of love and joy and beauty. These are the things for which our mind, life and body are seeking, knowledge, power and joy, and to reject that by which all these arrive at their utmost plenitude is to shut them out from their own highest consummation.” (*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 586).

Intellectual knowledge and mental will are not all the instruments of our consciousness and energy; we have other powers which it is the aim of Nature in us to discover and actualise.

“All man’s age-long effort, his action, society, art, ethics, science, religion, all the manifold activities by which he expresses and increases his mental, vital, physical, spiritual existence, are episodes in the vast drama of this endeavour of nature and have behind their limited apparent aims no other true sense or foundation. For the individual to arrive at the divine universality and supreme infinity, live in it, possess it, to be, know, feel and express that alone in all his being, consciousness, energy, delight of being is what the ancient seers of the Veda meant by the knowledge; that was the immortality which they set before man as his divine culmination.” (*L.D.* Vol. II, p. 597).

The rationalists of modern Europe wanted to eliminate religion from life as being an obstacle to the progress of humanity. They erected a rationalistic religion of humanity, the service of man as man, the observance of moral and social¹⁹ rules conducive to the welfare of human life on the earth; they made it a substitute for traditional religion, and it must be admitted that this has done much good to mankind.

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But this very rationalistic attitude brought about a subjective chaos, and specially after the last devastating European war.

“all received values were over-thrown and all firm ground seemed to disappear from its social organisation, its conduct and its culture.”

That arch high-brow of Modernism, Aldous Huxley, brought forward a thesis in his writings that whatever a man does, good or bad, virtuous or sinful, can be defended by reason, and a philosophical system can be erected in its support. A practical illustration is found in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* which is a direct negation of all the ideals of humanism erected into a philosophical system. A society which rejects spiritual values cannot bring forth a better and higher order of human life simply by giving encouragement to Science and Art in the name of culture; in such a society Science will be used as a means of fulfilling the so-called natural and evolutionary laws such as “the survival of the fittest” and “the rule of the Herrenvolk,” and Art will be made to pamper to the lowest passions in man thus giving a new force and ascendance to his lower nature and that will really be an evolutionary retrogression.

“This consciousness stress on the material and economic life was in fact a civilised reversion to the first state of man, his early barbaric state and its preoccupation with life and matter, a spiritual retrogression with the resources of the mind of a developed humanity and a fully evolved Science at his disposal. As an element in the total complexity of human life this stress on a perfected economic and material existence has its place in the whole: as a sole or predominant stress it is for humanity itself, for the evolution itself full of danger.” (*L.D.* 1158).

Today the world has arrived at a great crisis. It has to be decided whether man with all his scientific knowledge and power would go back to the barbaric condition or would find and follow the true path of progress and development. If at this crucial hour humanity makes a wrong choice, the whole race may even be wiped out from the face of the earth as being an evolutionary failure, and Nature may start her experiment on some other planet in some other solar system of which recent scientific research is already giving us glimpses. Man has not yet attained the qualities of the head and heart which alone can give him the fitness and the capacity to make a proper use of the great power which has been put into his hands by Science for preparing the material conditions of a truly spiritual and divine life on the earth. Men are getting inspiration from within to accomplish something great and on a grand scale; but on account of spiritual ignorance, they are unable to ascertain what that great thing is, and blindly impelled by egoism they are rushing into world struggles to conquer and rule over the whole earth. Science has turned the human race into one unit. One country, one nation, one culture – that is really the goal towards which all the endeavour of Nature is tending; within that world union, there will be unimpeded freedom for the individual as well as the group to develop in their own way thus manifesting infinite variety

within a grand world symphony. But the²⁰ present mind, life and body of man are so weak, ignorant, small, narrow, unregenerate that with these assets he cannot grasp or accept this great ideal of unity in diversity and proceed to realise it in actual life. For this it is necessary to discover the soul, the self, the one divine Reality lying concealed in all human beings behind their outward body, life and mind, to regard these as instruments of the self-expression of that inner Reality and to shape and transform these instruments with its spiritual light and power. Then will man find in this mortal body a divine life, the immortal will be founded in the mortal as the Vedas say; in that truly higher order of life all the conflicts will be ultimately solved and all the desires and aspirations of man will find their utmost fulfilment.

“A search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cults of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solutions. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values and a transfer of life to a new foundation” (L.D. 1164)

Education and propaganda, it is supposed, would induce men to give up violence and learn to love each other. But experience shows that education can only give a knowledge of things, it cannot bring about any radical change in nature. Unity, equality, co-operation—all these things are needed for the well-being of society; so attempts are being made to suppress all competition and clash of egos by a rigorous social organisation. But under such a regime society will turn into a machine, and the individual will not find the needed freedom and scope for its own development, and that is not the way for the solution of the problems of life.

“The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality. The movement of the collectivity is a largely subconscious mass movement; it has to formulate and express itself through the individuals to become conscious: its general mass consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individuals, and it progresses in so far as it accepts their impress or develops what they develop. The individual does not owe his ultimate allegiance either to the State which is a machine or to the community which is a part of life and not the whole of life; his allegiance must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all; not to subordinate or lose himself in the mass, but to find and express that truth of being in himself and help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fullness of being must be his real object of existence.” (L.D. p. 1154).

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A religious movement alone, it is suggested, can save man from the mechanical oppression of a regimented society, at the same time strengthening the social and communal feelings which would ensure an equitable social order. If the religious sense is awakened in man, if man follows the right path following the dictates of religion, each one²¹ keeping to his own right course, *Swadharma*, there can be no conflict between men and men, nations and nations. But experience has amply shown that religion also is defeated by the ignorance and egoism inherent in human nature. The tendency to aggrandise oneself at the expense of others, which is still very strong in man, has exploited religion for its own purpose. Thus though religion may have helped some individuals here and there to grow spiritually, it has not been able to raise society to a higher level. The problem that confronts humanity today cannot be really solved by the usual type of religious, political, social or educational movement—all these human activities have to be taken up into a new integral vision and totally transformed. What is needed is an integral transformation by which divine light, peace, power, love, joy and beauty may be established in human life. In the words of Sri Aurobindo.

“A total spiritual direction given to the whole of life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself.”

But what hope is there in the world that we are witnessing today that such an integral spiritual uplift or transformation of human life would be possible in the near future? Even if that be not possible now, there is no other way; for it is idle to hope that human nature will continue essentially to be what it is now and yet a New Order can be ushered in simply by effecting some external changes and re-organisation in the outward modes of life. But the change of human nature that is needed is nothing so impossible or remote, for that which is to be developed is already there within our being—it has not to be acquired or brought from outside or from a distance. The difference between the sleeping state of man and his waking state is very great, but it does not take much time to go from one to the other. What is needed is to awaken to the soul that is within us and to remould our external life and nature with the light and power of that inner Divinity. Nature through her long evolutionary course has been preparing man for this consummation; all the crises that occurred in human history have advanced mankind some distance towards that goal. But the crisis that has now come upon us has no parallel in history, and the realisation that it promises to man also has no parallel. In order to actualise and make it true in life what is required is that a certain number of men and women should have a vision of this change, a realisation of its urgent need, an indomitable faith in its possibility and a firm resolution to fulfil all the conditions necessary for its effectuation. It is not that this tendency has not already appeared in the human race; there is a growing realisation all over the world that there

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is no deliverance for mankind without spirituality. And once this aspiration becomes fixed and strong in man, Nature's evolutionary effort will be easier and there will inevitably be a response from the Divine Power above.

The attempt to attain spiritual life by organising Asrams and monasteries have been made in the past; but that attempt has been for the individual salvation of world-shunning saints and sannyasis, the aim of that has been other-worldly, and not the bringing down of a new spiritual power on the earth by which this earthly life can be transformed and divinised. Attempt for social uplift has been made by organised religion²² and various kinds of idealisms; but the lower egoistic nature of man has again and again frustrated all such attempts at building up of a New Order of human life. No mental idealism or partial spiritual endeavour can overcome altogether the obstacles inherent in human nature. What is needed is the transcendence of this nature altogether, and finding a new mould of life in a supernature. There are no doubt many difficulties in the realisation of such an ideal, but if Nature has become ready for such an evolutionary ascent and the Divine Power descends on the earth for effecting such an uplift, all difficulties and obstacles will be overcome. The unique sadhana of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has created this sublime possibility.

The objection will be raised that the world has always been what it is now, that the laws of Nature are unsurmountable and that what man has become by Nature cannot be transcended, and he can never be a superman or god; Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad came, they brought the divine message to humanity, but man continues essentially to be the same as ever. The history of mankind no doubt gives some support to such a view; but if we take a deeper and wider view, we shall find that though some broad principles of Nature remain unchanged and are fundamental, the forms that evolve on the basis of these principles have constantly changed giving rise to ever new forms. Our earth has not always been what it is now; even this vast universe with all its stars and galaxies have not always been there. According to modern Science, that which was at the beginning of creation could not be called a universe or a world—that had no definite form; there were no luminous bodies like the suns and the stars. So there was no light; in that inconceivable, unimaginable darkness, minute particles of electricity were moving about apparently at random. The universe we now see with our earth stirring in a corner, teeming with living beings of which man is the highest, has been the result of a very long process of evolution and change in the course of which many apparently unexpected and abnormal things have happened—things quite out of the usual way of Nature. Giving an outline of evolution leading to the advent of man on the earth, Sir A.S. Eddington writes:

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“Looking back through the long past we picture the beginning of the world—a primeval chaos which time has fashioned into the universe that we know. Its vastness appals the mind; space boundless though not infinite, according to the strange doctrines of science. The world was without form and almost void. But at the earliest stage we can contemplate the void is sparsely broken by tiny electric particles, the germs of the things that are to be; positive and negative they wander aimlessly in solitude, rarely coming near enough to seek or shun one another. They range everywhere so that all space is filled and yet so empty that in comparison the most highly exhausted vacuum on earth is a jostling throng. In the beginning was vastness, solitude and the deepest night. Darkness was upon the face of the deep, for as yet there was no light.” (*Science and the Unseen World*)

It is interesting to compare these words of a foremost scientist of the present day with the words uttered by the Vedic Rishis many thousands of years ²³ago in the famous Hymn of Creation in the Rigveda (X, 129):

“In the beginning Darkness was hidden by darkness, all this was an ocean by inconscience when universal being was concealed by fragmentation.” (*L.D.* I—XXV). Dr Eddington proceeds,

“The years rolled by, million after million.”

This is not a strictly correct statement, as there were no years at that time measured by the revolutions of the earth round the Sun. The Vedic language is more accurate,

“Death was not nor immortality nor the knowledge of day and night.”

“Slight aggregations,” continues Dr Eddington, “occurring casually in one place and another drew to themselves more and more particles.” Mark the word “casually”; that indicates that here something took place out of the normal way. Thus gravitation slowly parted the primeval chaos and “island universes” were formed. Then these island universes began to rotate, and Science cannot explain how they acquired this rotation. There are so many gaps and missing links in the scientific account of the evolution of the universe. The island universes were subdivided by gravitation and gave birth to star clusters and then to stars.

“And with the stars came light, born of the fiercer turmoil which ensued when the electrical particles were drawn from their solitude into dense throngs.”

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This appearance of a universe of luminous stars out of the primeval darkness is according to modern science the first step in the universal evolution. Here, so far as Science can say, the work of creation and evolution might have ceased. "For many billions of years the stars may continue to shed their light and heat through the world, feeding on their own matter which disappears bit by bit into aetherial waves." But at one point of time something unusual, exceptional, we may say, miraculous happened and our solar system was produced.

"For what might be called the second day of creation we turn from the general rule to the exceptions. Amid so many myriads there will be a few which by some rare accident have a fate unlike the rest. In the vast expanse of the heavens the traffic is so thin that a star may reasonably count on travelling for the whole of its long life without serious risk of collision. The risk is negligible for any individual star; but ten thousand million stars in our system and more in the systems beyond afford a wide playground for chance. This rare accident must have happened to our Sun – an accident to the Sun, but to us the cause of our being here. A star journeying through space casually overtook the Sun, not indeed colliding with it, but approaching so close as to raise a great tidal wave. By this disturbance jets of matter spurted out of the Sun; being carried round by their angular momentum they did not fall back again but condensed into small globes – the planets." (*Science and the Unseen World.*)

Science thus regards the creation of the solar system as a matter of rare chance, but that is not an explanation, rather a statement of fact that it has so happened. If there were an intelligent creator who wanted to produce a place suitable for the habitation of living and intelligent beings like men in a²⁴ material world he would have by a slight interference without disturbing the fundamental laws of matter made the occurrence of such chances and rare incidents possible, and that is what has actually happened not only once but at every critical stage in the wonderful history of the universal manifestation. By the "accident" mentioned above something occurred outside the regular plan of Nature, namely the appearance of lumps of matter small enough and dense enough to be cool. So long as matter remains heaped in immense masses, as we find in the stars, the temperature cannot be less than ten million degrees. By permitting matter to be cool, Nature created a field for the production of strange effects. To the eye of a Scientist Nature appears as a great experimenter who has infinite material and infinite time before her; but that implies an intelligent consciousness behind her which takes delight in infinite variety of creation. There are 92 different kinds of matter in the universe, 92 chemical elements; but how out of uniform tiny electric particles such diversity arose Science cannot say. This finds a rational explanation only in the supposition that the whole universal movement is essentially and ultimately a play of consciousness, and our own limited mental consciousness shows how it delights in

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imagining and creating diversity in unity. This diversity of matter cannot manifest itself at high temperature and little consequence follows from it; but in the cool planets it asserts itself and produces the wonders studied in chemistry and physics. The second impulse of evolution creating cool planetary globes could have exhausted itself in the formation of inorganic rocks and ores and other materials, as it actually may have happened in other planets. But here again something abnormal and exceptional happened which made possible the appearance of the phenomenon of life. Each of the 92 elements embodies in its structural pattern one of the first 92 integers. Thus “the chemical characteristics of element No. 11(sodium) arise from the fact that it has the power at low temperatures of gathering round it eleven negative particles; those of No. 12 (magnesium) from its power of gathering 12 particles; and so on.” These 92 elements by themselves would have produced a material world of considerable but limited diversity. But the element carbon, embodying the number 6, because of the peculiarity of the number 6, opened up unlimited possibilities.

“The carbon atoms love to string themselves in long chains such as those which give toughness to a soap-film. Whilst other atoms organise themselves in twos and threes or it may be in tens carbon atoms organise themselves in hundreds and thousands. From this potentiality of carbon to form more and more elaborate structure a third impulse of evolution arises, the creation of life and living beings”.

If Nature in her arithmetic had overlooked the number 6, the conditions for the appearance of life would never have been produced and this can hardly be called an accident.

The account of evolution given by physical science cannot go further; but it is sufficient to confirm the view that the world has a plan behind it and its course is being directed by a conscious being and that that course, so far as our world is concerned, is evolutionary; that is, through a long and gradual process new²⁵ principles and forms are emerging, keeping intact the basic structure and the fundamental laws. Matter has been the basis on which Life and Mind have appeared; but Life represents a new principle different from Matter, and Mind represents a new principle different from both Matter and Life. Science cannot explain the appearance of these new principles, and the very fact that they are new principles explains why Science sees so many missing links in the evolutionary process of which it sees only the outer aspect. If Matter had been allowed to go on in its own way, life could never have appeared on the face of the earth. Even now we see nowhere living things arising from non-living matter. But the cosmic evolution could not stop there: matter was to be the basis of the manifestation of the infinite in the finite, of the Spirit-in embodied beings, of divine life on the earth. That is why through an evolutionary process which is essentially spiritual

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life, and consciousness first appearing in plants and animals have found their hitherto highest formulation in man. But the mind of man is not yet the spiritual consciousness, though it approaches it and gives the promise of its own transcendence. So there is nothing irrational or impossible in the view that this transcendence will be made in the further course of the same evolution, this time assisted by the conscious effort of man himself. And there is also nothing in Science or reason which can justify us in saying that that great crisis has not come now. On the other hand, spiritual vision shows that now has come the time for man to take the next higher step in his evolution. Neither Science nor Philosophy has been able to give a thoroughly satisfactory account of all the processes of Nature taken in their integrality. That can be revealed only to an integral spiritual vision and it is such a vision we find embodied in Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* which has not only created a new era in Philosophical thought but in the actualisation of the hidden possibilities of human life.

“Brahman, the ultimate Reality is infinite and eternal and he is “to our spiritual perception a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of being which is a supracosmic Reality, self-existent, but also the secret truth underlying the whole manifestation; for the fundamental truth of Being must necessarily be the fundamental truth of Becoming. All is a manifestation of That: for it dwells even in all that seem to be its opposites and its hidden compulsion on them to disclose it is the cause of evolution, on Inconscience to develop from itself its secret consciousness, on the apparent Non-Being to reveal in itself the occult spiritual existence, on the insensible neutrality of matter to develop a various delight of being which must grow, setting itself free from its minor terms, its contrary dualities of pain and pleasure, into the essential delight of existence, the spiritual Ananda.” (*L.D.* 558.)

Brahman is infinitely enjoying his own delight manifesting the infinite miracles hidden in his own being. One in being he has become many in becoming in order to taste through the many the delight of love, of embrace, of interchange. As the Upanishad says:

“He desired, ‘May I be many’, He concentrated in Tapas, by Tapas he created the world; creating, he entered into it; entering he became the existent and the beyond-existence, he became the expressed and the²⁶ unexpressed.” (*Taittiriya Upanishad* II. 6 – *L.D.* II-XXII).

Of the infinite variety of his self-manifestations, one is the gradual evolution of consciousness out of the inconscient. All-conscious, he has hidden himself from himself

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and descending into self-oblivion has taken the form of unconscious matter, in order to create a basis for the manifestation of his infinite divine consciousness in and through many finite material bodies. The organisation of matter step by step so that life and consciousness may appear in it is the meaning of the terrestrial evolution. At every critical stage of this evolution there has been some intervention from above of which Science, confined as it is only to the evidence of the physical senses, cannot give any account. When Life appeared in matter finding a suitable organisation there for its manifestation, an altogether new principle was created—that is why it appears to Science that some links are missing. In the same manner when mind evolved in living beings, it was also a new phenomenon, a new principle altogether. As a matter of fact, all these principles—and there are others higher and greater—are so many different formulations of the one consciousness. Mind, Life, Matter are phenomenally different from each other, but they are essentially one as they are all manifestations of a force which transcends all and is not limited by any of them. There are different planes in existence, each plane being dominated by one of the principles of creation. Above this material world of ours there is the vital plane and above the vital there is the mental plane, each with its characteristic creations; beyond these is the supramental plane. In this way there has been a graded creation of planes and worlds originating from Sachchidananda Brahman, and a constant action and interaction is going on between these different planes. Our material world is at the bottom and all the higher planes tend to manifest their characteristic powers and riches here under material conditions. Thus Life appeared in matter on the earth through a pressure on it from the Vital plane; afterwards, when the conditions were ready, mind appeared in earthly life through the influence of the Mental plane from above. Now there is coming on earthly life an insistent pressure from the supramental plane, and that will turn man into superman, somewhat in the same way as when animal turned into man. This culmination of man is an evolutionary necessity, a thing destined in the divine plan of creation, and it seems that the moment of that great transcendence has arrived and the tremendous crisis through which the world is passing today is really a part of this great evolutionary crisis. The divine power by which this transformation will be effected will conquer all obstacles and hostile forces and establish the Life Divine on the earth.

When the action of the supramental power begins on the earth, human life even within its own limits of ignorance will find a new harmony. With its full manifestation humanity will be raised to a new status of perfection and fulfilment.

“Much that is normal to human life would disappear. In the light of gnosis the many mental ideals, constructed principles and systems, conflicting ideals which man has created in all domains of his mind and life, could command no acceptance or reverence; only the truth, if any, which these specious images conceal, could²⁷ have a

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chance of entry as elements of a harmony founded on a much wider basis. It is evident that in a life governed by the gnostic consciousness war with its spirit of antagonism and enmity, its brutality, destruction and ignorant violence, political strife with its perpetual conflict, frequent oppression, dishonesties, turpitudes, selfish interests, its ignorance, ineptitude and muddle could have no ground for existence. The arts and the crafts would exist, not for any inferior mental or vital amusement, entertainment of leisure and relieving excitement or pleasure, but as expressions and means of the truth of the spirit and the beauty and delight of existence. Life and body would be no longer tyrannous masters demanding nine-tenths of existence for their satisfaction, but means and powers for the expression of the spirit. At the same time, since the matter and the body are accepted, the control and the right use of physical things would be a part of the realised life of the spirit in the manifestation in earth-nature." (*L.D.* pp. 1179-80).

"To the normal life-being an existence without the reactions of success and frustration, vital joy and grief, peril and passion, pleasure and pain, the vicissitudes and uncertainties of fate and struggle and battle and endeavour, a joy of novelty and surprise and creation projecting itself into the unknown, might seem to be void of variety and therefore void of vital savour. Any life surpassing these things tends to appear to it as something featureless and empty or cast in the figure of an immutable sameness; the human mind's picture of heaven is the incessant repetition of an eternal monotone. But this is a misconception; for an entry into the gnostic consciousness would be an entry into the infinite. It would be a self-creation bringing out the Infinite infinitely into form of being, and the interest of the Infinite is much greater and multitudinous as well as more imperishably delightful than the interest of the finite. The evolution in the Knowledge would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding themselves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance. The delight of the Spirit is ever new, the forms of beauty it takes innumerable, its godhead ever young and the taste of delight, *rasa*, of the Infinite eternal and inexhaustible. The gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest of the Ignorance; it would be a greater and happier constant miracle." (*The Life Divine*, pp. 1184-85).

Anilbaran Roy.

SRI²⁸ AUROBINDO'S "THOUGHT THE PARACLETE"

I. INTRODUCTION

A short poem of but twenty-two lines, *Thought the Paraclete* is nevertheless among the most characteristic of Sri Aurobindo's poetic utterances. Along with five other equally typical pieces, it appeared about two years ago; but the poems were

apparently composed many years earlier. They are now reprinted in the second volume of Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems and Plays* and appear in the section entitled "Transformation and Other Poems."

Thought the Paraclete is a sudden, swift jet of piercing, unconventional melody. One reads and re-reads it, astonished and awed into a rapture; one is puzzled by its currents of thought and play of imagery; one is dazzled and thrilled by its radiation of light and riot of colour; one is chastened at last into an ineffable quietude by its sheer art, its suggestion of both lightning motion and an unearthly peace. There is no doubt at all that the poem embodies a vast and potent revelation!

And yet *Thought the Paraclete* puzzles and intrigues the reader, for, while catching its general drift at once, he is none the less all but floored by its imagery and its colour symbolism. The poem is clearly the expression of an experienced ascent of Thought—Thought that, like a shooting star, spans a vast zone in a blinding fraction of time. But although we can intellectually strive to reproduce the experience in our own minds, it will be but a lifeless facade, a grandiose proxy bloated with mere mental stuff. The experience as such is unfortunately denied to most of us, and hence we pathetically blink in our bewilderment when the poet describes the thrills he has braved, the splendours he has glimpsed, the beatitudes he has been.

It is not suggested here—far from it!—that spiritual experiences should not constitute the subject-matter of poetry. A poet can coin his unique spiritual adventures into imperishable poetry even as he can deftly turn his emotional responses into an elegy or a song or an ode. But spiritual experiences being *per se* ineffable are for that very reason incommunicable through the medium of our everyday vocabulary. And yet spiritual experiences are dear to the heart of man, and he would gladly clutch at the intangible, and capture and retain it (if he could!) as part of himself. That is why we cherish in our heart's tabernacle revelations like Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven* and Sri Aurobindo's *Trance of Waiting* and *Thought the Paraclete*. We love them, we cherish them, we tap them from time to time to draw forth momentary solace, but—do we *understand* them in every particular, do we gauge the plenty in every crevice or sense the significance of every turn of thought and every shade of colour? Let us frankly admit that we do not and that, perhaps, we cannot; at any rate, it is very consoling to be told by Coleridge that poetry should only be generally, and not too perfectly, understood. Even so, let us take courage in both hands and draw closer to *Thought the Paraclete*; and let us venture to scrutinize it with reverent care.

II. FORM AND METRE

*Thought*²⁹ *the Paraclete* is one of several fruitful attempts on Sri Aurobindo's part to give classical quantitative metres agreeable to English habitations and forms. In his long, scholarly and illuminating essay on Quantitative Metre. Sri Aurobindo has generally indicated the broad lines along which the oft-attempted and oft-frustrated endeavour may indeed be carried to a successful conclusion; and most of his recent poems—quite apart from their thought content or spiritual impulsion—are offered as luminous exhibits that amply illustrate and to a very considerable extent justify his prosodical theories.

In *Thought the Paraclete* Sri Aurobindo attempts an interesting variation of the Latin phaleuciakes or hendecasyllabics of Catullus. The metrical scheme of the hendecasyllabic line is given by this notation:

-- | - ~ ~ | - ~ | - ~ | - ~ | ;

in other words, a spondee starts the line and is followed first by a dactyl and then by three trochees. Sidney, Coleridge, Tennyson and Swinburne are among the famous English poets who have attempted either half-heartedly or in a mood of frivolity, to write English hendecasyllabics. Sidney follows the orthodox scheme in lines like:

-- | - ~ ~ | - ~ | - ~ | - ~
Reason, tell me thy Mynde.yf here Reason?
-- | - ~ ~ | - ~ | - ~ | - ~
In this straunge vyo lence to make resistance.
- | - ~ ~ | - ~ | - ~ | - ~
Where sweete Graces e rect the stately Banner?

But Sidney is obviously ill at ease,—for instance, “reason” is a spondee at the beginning, but a trochee at the end!

Coleridge's *Catullan Hendecasyllabics*, on the other hand, refuse to scan in the orthodox (or, indeed, in any) fashion. He generally manages to retain the three trochees at the end, but the earlier half of the line is made up usually of two trisyllabic feet, though, once in a way, he does not scruple to begin with a foot even of four syllables:

- ~ ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | ~ ~ | - ~ | - ~
Shivering with ecstasy sank up on her bosom.

Tennyson is much more orthodox, but then his *Hendecasyllabics* are meant only to produce a comic effect, as in:

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-- | - ˘˘ | - ˘ | - ˘ | - ˘

Hard hard hard is it only not to tumble.

So fantastical is the dainty metre.

Wherefore slight me not wholly, nor believe me

Too Presumptuous, indolent reviewers.

Swinburne's *Hendecasyllabics*, on the other hand, follow merely a trochaic rhythm, with an invariable dactylic substitution for the second foot:

-- | - ˘˘ | - ˘ | - ˘ | - ˘

In the month of the long decline of roses

-- | - ˘˘ | - ˘ | - ˘ | - ˘

I, be holding the summer dead be fore me:

and the result is—and this is only too common in Swinburne—a more or less “ineffugable” monotony.

Sri Aurobindo's hendecasyllabics are, however, hendecasyllabics with a difference. He saw clearly that “classical metres cannot always with success be taken over just as they are into the English rhythm; often some modifications are needed to make them more malleable”.¹ He accordingly begins as a rule with a trochee; the spondee and the dactyl follow, and are themselves followed by two trochees; and—this is most significant—“the last syllable of the closing trochee is most often dropped altogether”.² The first two lines of³⁰ *Thought the Paraclete*, scanned according to this scheme, will read as follows:

- ˘ | -- | - ˘˘ | - ˘ | -

As some bright arch angel in vision flies

- ˘ | -- | - ˘˘ | - ˘ | -

Plunged in dream-caught spirit in mensi ties...

The modifications no doubt result in reducing the hendecasyllabic to a decasyllabic line,—but there are also counterbalancing advantages.

The pushing of the dactyl towards the centre gives the line an arching, almost a parabolic movement, immediately suggesting the “ascent” implied in the poem. The weight and volume of sound in the first three feet naturally resolve themselves into a

¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, II, p. 305.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 305.

crescendo, a graded ascending scale in tone and pitch. But “ascent” ever involves “descent” as well, and hence the latter half of the line is so contrived by Sri Aurobindo that it shapes itself into a diminuendo and thereby insinuates into our ear this crucial principle underlying his metaphysics.

The elimination of the last syllable of the closing trochee is also important from another point of view. *Thought the Paraclete* is both a structure of thought and a stream of sound; the former consists of spans of thought (or sentences). While the latter is made up of a large number of feet of sound. The shortest of the spans of thought is concentered into the last line of the poem; so too the shortest of the feet of sound is compressed into the clear and hard mould of the monosyllabic fifth foot. And yet the last foot signifies no weakness, no poverty of sound; it is a single, but long, syllable; even exceptions like “being” and “seeing” are but apparently so; the final close of each line thus repeatedly strikes a note of self-sufficiency and strength; it is, as it were, “throned in the luminous vast of illimitable self-vision.”¹

We have now only to write down the notation,

- ˘ | - - | - ˘ ˘ | - ˘ | -

read it from right to left and anon from left to right, and we can at once perceive that the metre is truly symbolic of the thought-content of the poem, that it visibly indicates the principle of evolution-involution or ascent-descent that is at the core of Sri Aurobindo’s metaphysics of the Life Divine. It is said that a single *anustubh* vivifies in itself the *karuna rasa* that *Valmiki Ramayana* so wonderfully evokes in its mighty sweeps and memorable incantations. We may similarly hazard the statement that each of Sri Aurobindo’s hendecasyllabics is also a phonetic galvanization of the idea of the ascent of consciousness towards the Supermind and of the descent of the Spirit that at last brings about this great transformation:

Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune.

A word may be added about the rhyme-scheme of *Thought the Paraclete*. The twenty-two lines are divided into eleven pairs of rhymes, and the arrangement is as follows:

aa: bcdcdbe: fgfg: hiiijh: kk:

it is as though a rising movement intersects again and again a falling movement, as if the two movements are involved in a prolonged and purposeful embrace. The curious may group the rhymes into four couplets and two quatrains, the remaining rhymes floating in between somewhat elusively; as a matter of fact, excepting for the initial

¹ *The Life Divine*, 1, p. 183. (References are to the First Edition.)

and³¹ concluding couplets, the rest of the rhymes agreeably play a sort of hide and seek, and the whole poem thus produces in the responsive ear the impression rather of a “winding bout of linked sweetness long drawn out.”

We have tried to show here that the form and metre of *Thought the Paraclete* merit and repay a careful study and analysis. As one slowly reads the poem,—as one familiarizes oneself with its half-exotic, but highly seductive and chastening, rhythms,—as one gazes enraptured at its rounded completeness, one realizes at length that Sri Aurobindo has somehow nobly succeeded in giving the hendecasyllabic an English soul and setting. He has succeeded, it would seem, where a Sidney, a Coleridge and a Swinburne had failed; and he has succeeded only because he has all along known, not only the possibilities, but also the peculiar limitations of an attempt to reproduce classical metres in English.

III. THE TITLE OF THE POEM

So much about the form and the metre: we shall now turn to the *title* of the poem—“Thought the Paraclete”! We know—do we really, or do we only think we know?—what “thought” is; we fondly believe sometimes that a certain thought is illuminating, that it germinated in the obscure depths of our consciousness on a particular occasion, even that it is “developing”, sprouting forth in many directions. But why does Sri Aurobindo call Thought the Paraclete? What exactly is a Paraclete? And why is Thought *the* Paraclete?

The word “Paraclete” occurs in the *New Testament*¹, where Christ refers to the Holy Ghost as the Paraclete. Mr C.H. Irwin explains the term thus:

“It includes the idea of *Comforter* and...*Advocate*. Each of these words must be taken in its fullest sense, so as to include instruction, guidance, strength, and holy elevation of desire and purpose. The word clearly implies the *personality* of the Holy Spirit.”²

The Jesuit mystic and poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, attempts in one of his sermons a more vivid explanation of the term:

“A paraclete is one who comforts, who cheers, who encourages, who persuades, who exhorts, who stirs up, who urges forward, who calls on; what the spur and word of command is to a horse, what clapping of hands is to a speaker, what a trumpet is to the

³¹ 30

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¹ *John*, XIV. 16, 26: XV, 26: XVI, 7.

² *The Universal Bible Commentary*, p. 433.

soldier, that a Paraclete is to the soul; *one who calls us on*, that is what it means, a Paraclete is one who calls us on to do good. One sight is before my mind, it is homely but it comes home: you have seen at cricket how, when one of the batsmen at the wicket has made a hit and wants to score a run, the other doubts, hangs back, or is ready to run in again, how eagerly the first will cry – Come on, come on! – a Paraclete is just that, something that cheers the spirit of man, with signals and with cries, all zealous that he should do something and full of assurance that if he will he can, calling him on, springing³² to meet him half way, crying to his ears or to his heart. This way to do God's will, this way to save your soul, come on, come on."¹

And Hopkins has also tried to show that, although Christ is certainly a Paraclete, only the Holy Ghost is *the* Paraclete.

However, the term "Paraclete" seems to have occasionally been used in other illuminating contexts also. Thus the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives two extracts, one of which refers to the "victorious hero" as the "true Paraclete," while the other credits Plato with using "in one place the term Paraclete, Intercessor, in speaking of the Reason." If Reason can be called the Paraclete, why, so too can Thought be, – Thought that ever strives to reach up to the meanings of things, ever bravely scales the spiral of Consciousness, ever attempts to achieve a total and intimate compenetration with ultimate Reality!

Thought, then, is a Paraclete, even *the* Paraclete. As Sri Aurobindo points out, Thought "is not the giver of knowledge but the "mediator" between the Inconscient and the Superconscient. It compels the world born from the Inconscient to reach for knowledge other than the instinctively vital or merely empirical; it calls for that superconscient knowledge and prepares the consciousness here to receive it. It raises itself into the higher realms, and even in disappearing into the supra-mental and Ananda levels is transformed into something that will bring down their powers into the silent Self which its cessation leaves behind it."² It is this conception of Thought that is embodied in the term "the Paraclete" and the poem itself may be aptly described as a radiant evocation of the successive stages by which the Paraclete, the celestial automobile, registers its progress and brings the clinging occupant to the long sought sanctuary of Bliss.

Thought, then, is our mediator, our intercessor; we summon it to our aid whenever we tread upon the multitudinous thorns of life; we repose no mean trust in Thought, for we know it can "gently lead us on"; it willingly takes out half-articulate

³² 31

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¹. *The Note-Books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. p. 287.

². In the course of a letter to a disciple.

messages to the world of the Superconscience and it also brings to us “airs from heaven” to comfort us or to sting us to further spurts of ascent—onward and onward—to the very gate of the enthroned seat of the Supermind, and even beyond to the ineffable Bliss of Brahman. Dare man gaze at the Sun and his supernal splendours and remain unblinded yet? Dare man leap across the shoreless chasm that divides the worlds of Inconscience and Superconscience, the mental world of division and pain and multiplicity and the other-world of harmony and Ananda and integral unity?

But—astonishing as it may appear—Man dares all and often stakes all because Thought the Paraclete is his guide and his intercessor. Thought is the angel the breath of whose nostrils softens even the heat of the journey, the strength of whose wings—“great glimmering wings of wind”—bridges the distance between the *here* and the *there*, indeed even brings the here and the there together and transforms them into an infinite here and an eternal now.

However,³³ the stages on the “journey” are to be visualized, not on a space-time basis in terms of a left-to-right or a bottom-to-top progression from one junction or aerodrome of achievement to another and a further and a better, but rather psychologically as movements in consciousness, as successive attempts at a dynamic comprehension of the One in the Many and the Many in the One, as progressive attempts to reduce more and more, and finally to eliminate altogether, the “immense hiatus as seems to exist between Supramental Truth-Consciousness and the Mind in the Ignorance.”¹ Man may be in appearance a thing of nought, a muling and a puling creature that is the jest of Nature, subject alas! to the giant evils of death, desire and incapacity; but man refuses to grovel in the groove of his limitations, refuses to gloat over these badges of his misery, but is resolved rather to exceed himself, to possess the Infinite and also to be possessed by the Infinite. He alone holds in the clasp of his hands the clue to the future, his own and the world’s!

But the possession of the Infinite is no easy business, “not a happy canter to the goal”²; indeed, “the possession of the Infinite cannot come except by an ascent to those supramental planes, nor the knowledge of it except by an inert submission of Mind to the descending messages of the Truth-Conscious Reality.”³ Thought the Paraclete—Thought our winged intercessor, our comrade, our friend, and the resourceful mediator in our dire distress,—Thought the Paraclete can alone facilitate our ascent “to those supramental planes”, it alone can prepare us to receive those “descending messages”; Thought the Paraclete is thus verily a Power and a Personality, and we have but to

³³ 32

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1. *The Life Divine*. I, p. 416.

2. Letter to Dilip.

3. *The Life Divine*. I, p. 248.

allow ourselves to be carried by him—in the *marjara* fashion—in utter self-surrender and faith,—and all will be well.

IV. THE PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

Sri Aurobindo wrote several years ago to one of his disciples that *Thought the Paraclete* “does not express any philosophical thought ... it is simply a perception of a certain movement, that’s all.” A poem like *Thought the Paraclete* is no doubt no mere foot-note to a philosophical treatise of the dimensions of *The Life Divine*; a poem exists, splendorously and triumphantly, in its own sovereign right,—or it is nothing. And *Thought the Paraclete* is truly poetry first and poetry all the time, poetry that just storms the toppling crags of Reality by direct frontal assault, or, to borrow Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch’s metaphor, leaps “from a centre *within* us to a point of the circumference, and seizes it by direct vision.” The reader, too, has boldly to leap likewise from a centre *within* him and seize the meaning of *Thought the Paraclete*; for such poetry has to be apprehended, not with the aid of an elaborate critical exegesis, but by direct vision alone.

While thus the true hearer, like the true creator, of poetry is the soul, the soul only, the soul alone, we cannot as yet abolish or wholly ignore the operations of middle terms and muddling instruments³⁴ like the intellect, the senses, and the imagination. The ear it cannot choose but hear the procession of beautiful sounds, the intellect it cannot choose but depiece the integral framework of the poem, and the imagination it cannot choose but visualize similar experiences in accordance with the laws of its own unique *svabhava* and *svadharmā*. These too have their own place—though a strictly subordinate place—in the phenomenon of poetic creation and appreciation. We need not therefore offer a lengthy apology for occasionally yielding, as we do here, to the temptation of talking about and about a poem, instead of leaving it to sink of its own accord deep into one’s veiled, stainless, limitless Self. *Thought the Paraclete* is certainly quintessential poetry: but the intellect *would* see in it the base, nay the justification, of a whole system of philosophy. Even so the poem but expresses with a radiant finality the inapprehensible truth that even disconcertingly evades the mere logician’s grasp. The poem gives us, not the philosophical justification for the soul’s ascent to the Godhead on the wings of thought, but rather brings out in one dazzling wave of rhythmic sound the beauty and the glory and the ecstasy of the fact of ascent and triumph and splendid transformation. However, even the votarist of pure poetry will not scorn an intimacy with the philosophical background of the poem, for not only is it illuminating in itself but it also makes easier the necessary final self-surrender to the poem.

³⁴ 33

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The philosophical spiral of reasoning that underlies *Thought the Paraclete* may be summarised in a few sentences. We may start with the axiom that the evolutionary transition from Mind in the Ignorance to Mind in the Knowledge (or, conversely, the involutory transition from Mind in the Knowledge to Mind in the Ignorance) is itself marked by various steps or resting places or “slow gradations” on the way. After all, it is a fairly “indeterminate” or “intermediate” zone that we are here considering; the dynamics of the sheer physical universe cannot and do not obtain here; only a few reassuring lamp-posts or light-houses glisten in the dim expanse beyond, and we are left to trace out the graph of our fascinating journey with the sole help of these luminous milestones on the way.

Sri Aurobindo mentions four of these discernible “slow gradations” – Higher mind, Illumined mind, Intuition (or Intuitive mind), and Overmind. Mind starts this particular evolutionary race, Supermind consummates it; and it is *Thought the Paraclete* that makes the consummation easy, natural, and even inevitable.

Further, according to Sri Aurobindo, ultimate Reality includes the two extreme ends of the evolutionary sweep, Matter and Spirit, – not only includes them, and all that lies between them but at the same time also transcends them, being always Itself, the One without a Second, the Absolute beyond all termini, the Truth beyond all truths; “we start, then, with the conception of an omnipresent Reality of which neither the Non-Being at one end nor the Universe at the other are negations that annul; they are rather different states of Reality, obverse and reverse affirmations.”¹ The movement of Involution, starting as a deliberate descent of³⁵ Consciousness from Sachchidananda, has reached its bottom, its very bottom, in Matter; the counter-movement of evolution, starting in its turn as an upsurge of Consciousness from Matter, where it is heavily and darkly veiled, has reached the sloping and slippery stage of Mind. One more forward leap is necessary and inevitable, – the leap from Mind to Supermind, touching the four signposts of Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, and Overmind on the way, – and then only would Man be able to fulfil the evolutionary purpose, to exceed himself by outgrowing the limitations of death, desire and incapacity, and partake once and for all in an earthly immortality.

V. THE FOUR MOVEMENTS

At long last we can now tackle the poem itself. The central idea of the poem, which is the transformation in the Self brought about as a result of the ascent of Consciousness to the supra-mental level, is suggested by the imagery and the music,

¹ *The Life Divine*, I, p. 49.

rather than closely argued out in terms of logical reason, We are expected to proceed from light to light, from one luminous revelation to another, and anon to the next, and so on till we arrive at and are lost in the rich and illimitable calm of the wonderful finale. To facilitate an analysis of the poem, however, let us divide (alas, we ever “murder to dissect”;) it into four separate movements or discernible sweeps of thought.

First Movement

The opening five lines constituting the first movement at once achieve an arresting exordium, and at the same time also suggest through a bold and apt simile the perceived ascent of Thought. “As some bright archangel in vision flies...”: the words cannot but suggest to the reader the Holy Ghost, *the* paraclete according to Christ; as the Holy Ghost, or the archangel Gabriel or some other bright archangel, plunges headlong into “dream-caught spirit immensities” to meet and redeem the pilgrimaging soul, so “flew my thought,” Man, the mental and vital being, has been stung to activity by the “pure touch of the spiritual force”¹; he has now outgrown sheer instinctive reaction to circumstances and he is no more dazzled by the brilliant systems and delectable castles constructed by empirical knowledge and the mere intelligence; he is now a wanderer in the realms of the invisible, he is indeed, for the time being, groping about himself being “self-lost in the vastness of God.” The reference to “green” and “orange” need not puzzle us, the contrast implied being quite natural, both materially and metaphorically, Andrew Marvell too juxtaposes the two colours to suggest a telling contrast:

“orange bright
Like golden lamps in a green night.”²

The transition from a purely vital consciousness to a mental one is as noticeable as the shift from “green” to “orange”; but Thought rises higher still in the scale, seeking other colours in the spectrum of its steep ascent.

Second Movement

The next ten lines constitute the second movement:

Sleepless³⁶ wide great glimmering wings of wind
Bore the gold-red seeking of feet that trod
Space and Time’s mute vanishing ends. The face
Lusted, pale-blue-lined of the hippogriff.
Eremitic, sole, daring the bourneless ways,

¹ *The Life Divine*, II.P.976

² Bermudas.

³⁶ 35

Over world-bare summits of timeless being
Gleamed; the deep twilights of the world-abyss
Failed below. Sun-realms of supernal seeing,
Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss
Drew its vague heart-yearning with voices sweet.

Thought has managed to grope its way to the stair of ascension and has reached the rung of the Higher Mind, "a mind no longer of mingled light and obscurity or half-light, but a large clarity of the spirit... a luminous thought-mind, a mind of spirit-born conceptual knowledge,"³⁷ Seeing the One behind the Many, the Higher Mind strives, at any rate conceptually, to get beyond the categories of space and time; and now its prime thirst is to achieve "a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view."² The term "wings of wind" suggests the living instrument of spiritual Consciousness; "gold-red" is, according to Sri Aurobindo, "the colour of the supramental in the physical", or, as he sings in *Flame-Wind*:

Gold in the mind and the life-flame's red
Make of the heavens a splendour, the earth a blaze...³

But conceptual knowledge, however comprehensive, is not enough; it lacks warmth and motion and even spiritual sustenance. Thought therefore cannot rest for ever on the rung of the Higher Mind but must forge further ahead; as it reaches the level of the Illumined Mind, unity is seen, not alone as a concept, but even as a living reality; but it is only an intermittent vision that Thought glimpses at this stage. Even then the experience gives a lustre to the face of the mystic seer, so that in him "the soul lives in vision and in a direct sense and experience."⁴ By now Thought the Paraclete has brought the thinker and the seer to the threshold of the Intuitive Mind; Thought is the winged hippogriff⁵, "pale-blue-lined"⁶; he is the all-seeing, all-daring hermit, truly the Pilgrim of Eternity; he is veritably the sole monarch of his visioned realms. As it touches the intuitive level, Thought acquires the four-fold potencies of truth-seeing, truth-hearing, truth-seizing and truth-correlation⁷ and "it brings its own greater radiant movement into the will, into the feelings and emotions, the life-impulses, the action of

³⁷ *The Life Divine*, II, PP. 985-6.

² *The Life Divine*, II, P. 987.

³ *Collected Poems and Plays*, II, P. 364.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, II, P. 996.

⁵ The hippogriff is a "fabulous griffin-like creature with body of horse." (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*). Milton refers to the "wing" of the hippogriff; and hence Thought may be compared to the hippogriff, since both are "winged".

⁶ According to Sri Aurobindo, "'pale-blue' is the colour of the higher ranges of mind up to Intuition", (Letter to disciple).

⁷ *The Life Divine*, II, P.1000.

sense and sensation, the very workings of the body consciousness.....A certain integration can thus take place.”⁸ Meanwhile there is an obscuration or ignorance of the seeming dichotomies and disharmonies of the world:

the deep twilights of the world-abysse
Failed below.

The³⁸ harmony from above would seem to have calmed the troubled waters below, so that it is clear that the descent of the higher consciousness has taken place concurrently with the ascent of the lower one.

The next movement in the ascent reaches up to the Overmind, and now “Thought, ‘for the most part, no longer seems to originate individually in the body or the person but manifests from above or comes in upon the cosmic mind-waves: all inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of the revelation is not in one’s separate self but in the universal knowledge; the feelings, emotions, sensations are similarly felt as waves from the same cosmic immensity breaking upon the subtle and the gross body and responded to in kind by the individual centre of the universality; for the body is only a small support or even less, a point of relation, for the action of a vast cosmic instrumentation.”¹ Thought has reached “sun-realms of supernal seeing”²; it is now a powerful organizer who conceives and executes many “crimson-white³ mooned oceans of pauseless bliss” and it is a “magician craftsman empowered to weave the multicoloured warp and woof of manifestation of a single entity in a complex universe.”⁴

And yet Thought at the overmental level is mightily restless and knows not the peace of utter fulfilment and self-knowledge; its “vague” – “vague” because it is still not in possession of the finality and self-luminosity of supra-mental knowledge – its “vague heart-yearning” no doubt sings songs of a multitudinous variety and also translates them into reality, but even such Thought is only “a power of the lower hemisphere; although its basis is a cosmic unity, its action is an action of division and interaction, an

⁸ *The Life Divine*, II, P. 1001.

³⁸ 36

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¹ *The Life Divine*, II, PP, 1002-3.

² cf. “Wisdom supernal looks down on me, Knowledge mind cannot measure; Light that no vision can render garments the silence with splendour.” (*Collected Poems and Plays*, II, p. 363.)

³ “Crimson-white” is the reflection of the Supramental Light.

⁴ *The Life Divine*, I, P. 431.

action taking its stand on the play of the multiplicity."⁵ Overmind cannot obviously be the final resting place of the questing soul of Man.

Third Movement

The third movement describes the final leap, the triumphant landing on the summit of the Supermind. Although the overmental consciousness "is the highest possible status-dynamis of the spirit in the spiritual-mind plane "⁶ thought refuses to rest on its oars, but

Hungering, large-souled to surprise the unconned
Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond,
Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
Climbing high far ethers eternal-sunned,
Thought the great-winged wanderer paraclete
Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune.

Or, as Sri Aurobindo writes elsewhere: "The soul would cross its original line of departure from the supreme knowledge: it would enter into the integrality of the supramental gnosis."⁷ A description of this final "canter to the goal" is truly beyond the resources of logical reasoning or verbal portraiture. Thought³⁹ the Paraclete would seem to have learned the last secret of all, the "flame-word rune"¹, and "slow-singing" this *mantra* of total emancipation and transfiguration, it disappears into the "last Beyond". The concluding lines of *The Bird of Fire* offer a striking parallel to the third movement in *Thought the Paraclete*.

One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers of mind and life, arrives at its
luminous term thy flight:
Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire thou frontest eyes in a
timeless Face.²

Fourth Movement

The last line, in and by itself, is the fourth and concluding movement of thought and spray of revelation:

⁵ *The Life Divine*, II, P. 1006.

⁶ *The Life Divine*, II, P. 1006.

⁷ *The Life Divine*, II, P. 1009.

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SRI AUROBINDO'S "THOUGHT THE PARACLETE"

¹ According to Sri Aurobindo, the "flame-word rune" is "the Word of the Higher Inspiration, Intuition, Revelation, which is the highest attainment of Thought." (Letter to a disciple.)

² *Collected Poems and Plays*, II, p. 280.

Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune.

The ascent has summoned the corresponding descent; the ego is dead, the self is bare of all the sheaths of the ignorance, it is for ever immune from death, desire, and incapacity, it is the ONE in very truth, it is the heir to Infinity, Eternity and Immortality.

VI. CONCLUSION

The four movements in *Thought the Paraclete* are but integral parts of a logical and poetical whole. The choice of words and images, the patterning of metre and rhyme, the associations of colour and sound, the careful organization of the four movements, the adequacy and beauty of the structural design, all make *Thought the Paraclete* a profound revelation and a perfect poem. After a minute study of *Thought the Paraclete*, one is inclined to exclaim with Appayya Dikshita:

("Hindi passage omitted here")
("Hindi passage omitted here")
("Hindi passage omitted here")
("Hindi passage omitted here")³

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar.

THE⁴⁰ DIVINE MOTHER

The conception of God as the Mother is a distinctive feature of Hinduism. In Christianity we have the notion of God as the Father, and Islam lays emphasis upon the nature of God as the Master, the Obeyed One (Allah), though Islam is also aware of the unique and indescribable character of the proper relation subsisting between man and God. The mystics, the world over, realise God as the companion, as the supreme Beloved, and finally, as the inmost Self or the Soul of soul. Hinduism is alive to the many-sided nature of the relationship under consideration. In His transcendental aspect or poise of being, God is above all relations and distinctions, above all names and forms and qualities; He is self-sufficient and eternally self-realised. But in His relationship to the world and man, God is at once Master or Sovereign, Father, Mother, Companion, Beloved and Bridegroom. Man enters into these different relations with the Divine at the different stages of his spiritual unfoldment. The deepest realisation is however attained when the individual self knows itself to be essentially identical with or inseparable from the supreme Godhead.

³ Commentary on Sri Venkatanatha's *Yadavabhyudaya*, Canto I, Verse 9.

The Spirit has at every poise of being two inseparable aspects, the aspect of immutable being and the aspect of mutable becoming, the static and the dynamic aspects. In the static aspect, God is self-absorbed or wrapped up in His eternal perfection, without any want to remove or any desire to fulfil. In the dynamic aspect, God moves out of his immutable being into ceaseless becoming and takes delight in the variable manifestation of the inexhaustible riches of His nature. It is this dynamic Divine who is represented as the Divine Mother and who is responsible for the functions of creation and destruction. While the Supreme in its aspect of immutable being is called Siva, in its aspect of mutable becoming we call it Sakti or the Mother. The ecstatic dance of the Mother Kali on the bosom of the quiescent Siva is the symbolic representation of the rhythmic movement of the cosmic drama against the background or on the basis of the eternally perfect Absolute.

In every system of philosophy, there is a feminine principle in some form or other. This feminine principle is no other than the principle of objectivity (*Idam*) which brings forth the cosmic manifold for the delight of the Spirit; it is the principle of creativity (*sakti*) which is inexhaustible in its production of diverse forms and qualities. In the Sankhya system we have this feminine principle in Prakriti which is an objective and creative principle but which is existentially separate from the Spirit. In Advaitism, Maya stands for the feminine principle, but Maya is logically indeterminate and incapable of being characterised as either existent or non-existent. In Western philosophy, we have the feminine principle in external Nature which is characterised by endless fecundity and dynamic objectivity. Reduced to philosophic terms, external Nature is, at bottom, Non-Being or Formless Matter; it is “passage of events” or “creative advance of Nature”; it is the space-time continuum which functions as the matrix of all empirical existence and the nurse of all becoming. But none of⁴¹ these principles can be exalted to the rank of Mother, because neither Prakriti, nor Maya, nor Matter nor Space-Time-Continuum is conceived as a spiritual or conscious principle. Sri Aurobindo holds, in consonance with the teaching of the original Upanishads and the Gita, and in consonance with Saivism, Saktism and Vaishnavism that the objective and creative factor is neither unconscious nor ontologically separate from the supreme Spirit; it is rather the dynamic aspect or the superconscious creative power of Sachchidānanda himself. Apparently unconscious external Nature (Aparā Prakriti) is only a lower form of expression of the higher nature (Parā Prakriti) of the Supreme. The higher nature of the Supreme is the self-realising power of infinite consciousness and infinite delight and is therefore most appropriately called the Divine Mother.

The dynamic factor or the creative principle is called Mother because she consciously brings forth the cosmic manifold in implicit obedience to the Will-to-self-manifestation on the part of the supreme Godhead. She mediates between the Above

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and the Below, between the Supreme and the world of manifestation; but she mediates between them not only in respect of descent but also in respect of ascent. It is through her creative and executive power that the world is brought forth into actualisation. And it is through her infinite grace that man can be re-born into the vastness of the Truth consciousness and that the whole of Nature can steadily move towards an integral liberation.

Almost in every system of spiritual discipline, the Grace of God is accounted indispensable for man to attain liberation, because liberation means passing over into an indescribable order of experience and a unique dimension of being. It is only natural that the unaided efforts of man should be considered inadequate for the purposes of lifting the veil of ignorance which has enveloped his whole life. But in Sri Aurobindo's *sādhana*, the Grace of the Divine Mother has a still deeper significance. The ideal which Sri Aurobindo sets before us is not simply the ideal of self-realisation; but the ideal of self-manifestation; it is not merely the ideal of individual emancipation but the lofty ideal of collective transformation, *i.e.*, the flowering of the Divine in collective humanity. What the integral Yoga aims at is not just a collective escape from the lower world of triplicity (Matter, Life and Mind) but a divine transformation of the lower world for a fuller divine manifestation within it; it aims at the evolution of Man into Superman. Now, three things are essentially necessary for this consummation to be achieved. First, the spiritual aspirant must transcend even the highest centre of his embodied existence (the centre which is called the *sahasrāra* in yogic parlance) and effect what Sri Aurobindo has called an "overhead ascension." He must perform the miracle of rising above himself so that he may obtain an integral realisation of the Supreme on the supra-mental level. Neither the integral realisation of Sachchidānanda nor the radical transformation of a man's entire being is possible without this rising above oneself or this overhead ascension. But this miracle can be performed only through the Grace of the Divine Mother and not by any amount of herculean efforts on the part of the *sādhaka*, A heroic *sādhaka* may rely upon⁴² his own *tapasyā* for realising Sachchidānanda on the plane of the intellect or the spiritualised mind; but integral or supramental realisation is simply impossible without Grace from above.

The second essential requirement of integral yoga is that the yogin should not only rise up to the supramental Gnosis but should also come down to the physical consciousness and establish the supramental Truth-consciousness as a permanent ingredient therein. The supermind should not only be realised but also made overtly operative in our terrestrial life. This presupposes dynamic self-identification with the Divine will, with the manifestation of which the Divine Mother is particularly concerned. For those who prefer static realisation of the Spirit, the Mother is only a means on the way. But the integral Yogin aims at offering himself as a plastic

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instrument in the hands of the Mother. The integral Yogin does not place liberation, *moksha* or *nirvāna* above everything else; having attained liberation or self-perfection, he puts it unhesitatingly at the disposal of the Mother so that Her purpose may be fulfilled in Life, or, in other words, in order that human living may blossom forth into Superhumanity. His *sādhana* is, in truth, from start to finish, the Mother's *sādhana* within him. If he wants self-liberation and self-perfection, that is only because the Mother requires his perfected nature as an instrument to work with.

The third essential requirement of integral yoga is that the downward gravitational pull of the lower nature should be completely neutralised and a thorough supramental transformation effected of every part of embodied existence. Not only the mental and the vital, but also the gross physical should be converted into channels of divine activity on earth, into vehicles of divine manifestation and into perfect images of divine purity and splendour. For this, the *sādhaka*'s self-opening and self-surrender should be unconditional, unreserved and integral. The Divine Mother should be allowed to work without let or hindrance in every part of being and flood the entire vehicle with the sovereign light and power of the supermind.

At the present crisis of human civilisation, all those who will unconditionally surrender to the Divine Mother will consciously and effectively assist in opening a unique chapter in the history of cosmic evolution. Sri Aurobindo looks upon the present war as the travail of a new creation, the creation of the conditions for the Superman to be born out of man. The hostile and anti-divine forces are seeking to obstruct the new light and the higher force of consciousness, but their defeat is an absolute certainty. Let all those who aspire after a higher life disabuse themselves of all personal bias and prepossession, turn to the new light that is seeking manifestation into the world, and offer themselves without reserve into the hands of the Divine Mother.

Haridas Chaudhuri.

QUESTIONS⁴³ AND ANSWERS

*“Questions and Answers” is a form as old perhaps
as human awakening to knowledge and even
today it has not outgrown its utility.*

[It is immaterial to ask who is the questioner, for even though the immediate person might be a certain individual, ultimately it is the unenlightened, eternal seeker in man, the ignorant human mind, that questions. And it is the

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illuminated Teacher that answers. Questions are conditioned by the questioner, his mentality and his need, and the answers are relative to him and his condition, *i.e.*, they cannot be absolute and final.] – *A.B. Purani.*

Q. Some maintain that strength (*bala*) is necessary for attaining to spiritual realisation. Others hold that Divine Grace alone can save man. Perhaps the Vaishnava cult is responsible for popularising the idea of Divine Grace.

A. It is not true. Even as early as the Upanishada we find:—

(“Hindi passage omitted here”): “This Self is not to be attained by the weak” and in Katha we have, (“Hindi passage omitted here”) (2, 23.)

“This understanding is not to be gained by reasoning, nor by Tapasya, nor by much learning. He whom this Self chooses, to him it reveals its own body.” So, here you have the affirmation of both: strength and grace. Besides all religions more or less accept the idea of Divine Grace.

Q. But does it not seem contradictory to affirm the need of Spiritual Strength and of Divine Grace?

A. In spiritual life such contradictions are bound to rise because the laws which govern that life are not subject to rigid human standards. It means that strength is one side of Adhikar or spiritual qualification; strength has a value for realisation But it is not all.

Q. From the point of view of spiritual strength does not grace seem to be an admission of weakness?

Besides it looks so unjust, too. It is a very comfortable doctrine for the idle. You have to sit quiet,—no Tapasya, no labour, no need for self-control—just to wait for the Divine Grace to come down and do the miracle!

A. It is not so. It has to be emphasised that spiritual life and experiences have a knack of reconciling what seems to the mind irreconcilable. Grace is not an admission of weakness because it does not contradict strength and weakness does not invite it necessarily. There is no injustice or partiality involved in grace which is only a fact of spiritual experience.

Q. Can one then say that Divine Grace works unconditionally?

A. Divine Grace is unconditional, but from the point of view of man there are conditions to be fulfilled in order that the Grace may be effective. If some one is all the

time pouring something unconditionally into a cup and if the man was continually spilling it out how can the cup be filled?

*Q.*⁴⁴ So, if the man is not receptive the Grace cannot act?

A. It can act to make him receptive.

Q. Would it then be correct to say that Tapasya and Grace are complimentary to each other?

A. That may do as a rule of the golden mean.

Q. It is said that the Grace of the Divine or of the Guru mean the same thing to the disciple.

A. Yes, because the Guru represents the Divine so it is said (“Hindi passage omitted here”)

Q. I have heard that the life of Girish Chandra Ghosh, the famous Bengali dramatist, underwent a great transformation by the grace of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

A. Such a change in the life of a man can take place even by the mere contact, or the spiritual influence of the Guru. In a sense, it can be said that even the acceptance of the disciple by the Guru is an act of grace. But I believe after Sri Ramakrishna’s death Girish Chandra used to lament that he had not benefited spiritually to the fullest extent by Sri Ramakrishna’s contact, guidance and grace.

Q. How can that be?

A. Girish Babu in his sober moments used to feel very keenly his own shortcomings that stood in the way of his spiritual advance. It is true Sri Ramakrishna used to shower his grace on him and tell him “Leave all your burden to me.” But after Sri Ramakrishna left the body Girish Babu used to say “He told me to leave all my burden to him but I was unable to leave it!”

Q. That raises the question whether a man may do no Tapasya and yet attain to spiritual realisation if he has a living faith in the saving Grace of his Guru.

A. Such faith is rare and difficult. But if it is there it can work.

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Q. What is the place of Tapasya then?

A. What do you mean by Tapasya? The popular idea is that it is mortification of the flesh, fasting, sitting on nails, standing on the head etc. Tapasya seems to require one to do things which generally one does not like to do.

Q. That seems to be the ordinary idea.

A. But it is not correct. Tapasya is not merely physical and it can include doing things which one likes or wants. Tapasya means gathering of force of consciousness on a particular point or for a particular purpose.

Q. Can all efforts to achieve something—even to satisfy desires—be called Tapasya?

A. The end to be achieved should be higher than mere gratification of desires because in that case though the Tapasya is there it is turned downwards or you can say it is negative. Such Tapasya tends to affirm one in the ignorance and so does not deserve the name of Tapasya. The Asuras used to perform such Tapasya to gratify their inordinate ambition or their ego.

But apart from spiritual aim even in ordinary achievements some kind of Tapasya seems necessary. In art, in scientific investigation if one wants to do outstanding work one requires to do some Tapasya, *i.e.*, to gather up all ⁴⁵the energies of his consciousness for the purpose.

Q. In certain cases very little spiritual effort gives remarkable results and in others there seems no effort at all. So the results are not proportional to the efforts, can it be said to be due to Grace?

A. It is not a question of quantitative correspondence between the effort and the result. In the action of Grace there are no calculations. Or if you will, only qualitative aspect has some value. Some central part of the aspirant wants the result sincerely and we may say that the Grace finds it possible to act at the moment.

From the point of view of the aspirant the important thing is that something in him should sincerely want the result.

Q. So, personal effort is a contributory factor in the operation of Grace?

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A. It depends upon where you are looking from. From the point of view of the aspirant he should continue his efforts ceaselessly with a firm faith that the Grace would not fail to come at the proper time.

But the Grace does not work or is not compelled to work because there is personal effort. Otherwise it would not be Grace.

Q. Does not all personal effort produce a feeling of strain and even of unpleasantness?

A. It may do so if the effort is vehement and egoistic. But all effort need not produce those reactions. If a man likes cricket or music he finds it not only easy but even pleasant to concentrate upon it.

Q. That is because one is interested.

A. Yes, hence, that in which one is interested does not generally produce a feeling of strain—unless of course one overworks. It may even give joy. You have the classical example of the Gopis—the milkmaids who had not to make an effort to remember Sri Krishna because they loved him. It is said in the Upanishads that God created the world by Tapas. It was not that He found it difficult or tiring to create the world but that the world was created out of His energies gathered up for the purpose.

Q. But I want to understand a little more clearly the working of the Divine Grace. Can it be affirmed that the man who is ordinarily regarded unworthy of spiritual realisation can or may come to it by an act of Divine Grace?

A. Certainly, he may. That is to say a man who according to human standards of wisdom, strength, morality is unfit (who is without learning, without apparent strength of will or character) can suddenly attain to a spiritual realisation.

Q. How can one attain to a great spiritual realisation without some fitness? It is difficult to understand!

A. There may be no outward merit or fitness, but there may be inward merit or fitness which is visible to the Lord, but not to men. In spite of the outer coverings something in the depth of the being may be ready—or may be getting ready—who knows?

Q. I was thinking of the Gopis. It is said that they heard the flute of Sri Krishna and were enchanted and the Divine Grace saved them. At least they⁴⁶ had the merit of hearing the flute;—that may be the qualification.

A. Or you may say some part in their being was ready to hear the flute even before the flute began!

Q. Then nobody can depend upon the Grace as it seems very uncertain in its working.

A. On the contrary, nobody need despair, however fruitless his efforts, as the Grace can intervene at any time and crown his efforts with success.

Q. Can one depend upon or count upon the Divine Grace?

A. One can count upon it in the sense of an assured expectancy full of faith in the Divine. But one cannot demand Grace as a matter of right or privilege. Then it would not be Grace.

If Grace brings undeserved or apparently undeserved fruits it should confirm one in the faith in its coming at its own proper time. In the meantime one should continue one's efforts patiently with the faith in the coming of the Grace.

Q. I have heard that when Grace comes all the difficulties of sadhana disappear in a minute as if by a miracle. Such was the case of Swami Vivekananda whose difficulties disappeared by Sri Ramakrishna's Grace.

A. If you mean that the Grace can remove some central obstacle or knot of difficulty and that the sadhana afterwards may become more sure and secure, it may be true. But one cannot say that *all* difficulties would disappear, as a rule, by the action of the Grace.

In Swami Vivekananda's case, for instance, the central difficulty of doubt was removed but a long sadhana was necessary and I believe the process continued to the very end.

Q. Even the removal of the central difficulty seems inexplicable.

A. If something in the being of the aspirant—some part of his being, makes a quick and decisive surrender to the Divine then the fundamental difficulty can be removed—there is nothing inexplicable in that.

Q. Perhaps Grace comes easily to those who are like the baby-cat, entirely dependent upon the Divine, because they seem to be constitutionally capable of such quick and decisive surrender. To those who are self-reliant perhaps the Grace does not come.

A. No. It comes also to the baby-monkey type, those who are more self-reliant. Such men also get the Grace – but it counts on their efforts. Only, in their case the decisive touch of Grace may take a long time to come.

Q. Then, can it be affirmed that the Grace works for all?

A. Yes, all can have the Divine Grace except those who wilfully turn it away, who cut themselves away from the path, or those who revolt against or betray the Divine. In all these cases man separates himself from his own inmost soul – his psychic being.

Q. If Grace is so general can we not say that it is the universal divine compassion acting impartially, and that there is nothing special about it. In other words the Grace of the Divine is universal and the human being has only got to receive it.

A. No, Grace that is spoken of here is not the universal divine compassion which is quite another thing. This Grace is a special phenomenon which acts directly or through the instrumentality of the Guru or holy men.

When⁴⁷ it is said all can have the Grace it means everybody has his chance, the potentiality of getting the Grace.

This Divine Grace does not work, is not compelled to work according to human ideas. It acts at times in disregard of normal standards and morals, as in the case of Jagai and Madhai, two highway-men or in that of Bilwamangala, the rake and St. Augustine, the profligate who were all changed by the touch of Grace. It may equally come to the virtuous. There is no mental rule or universal law about the action of Grace. And yet one can say that it does not seem to work without discrimination. Only that discrimination is *not* mental or human.

Q. From the way the Grace is explained I think it is the only path to the highest Truth.

A. That again is not true. There are a thousand paths to the Truth and Grace is one of them. We call it Grace because it seems to be the Spirit or the Infinite being that determines the action from above independently of mental causes *i.e.*, it decides its own movement.

Q. Can we say, for instance, that the Divine Grace is equivalent to the self choosing the hour and the manner to manifest itself; or that it is the sudden flowering of the inner being – the soul – into self-realisation and the self-knowledge?

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A. All the three,—the Divine Grace, the self making the choice of the time and the manner and the soul outflowering—mean about the same thing I believe.

One must rely on the Divine and yet do some enabling sadhana—the Divine gives the fruit not by the measure of the sadhana but by the measure of the soul and its aspiration.

* * * * *

If one is not prepared for labour and *tapasya*, control of the mind and vital, one cannot demand big spiritual gains—for the mind and vital will always find tricks and excuses for prolonging their own reign, imposing their likes and dislikes and staying off the day when they will have to become obedient instruments and open channels of the soul and spirit. Grace may sometimes bring undeserved or apparently undeserved fruits, but one cannot demand Grace as a right and privilege—for then it would not be Grace. One cannot claim that one has only to shout and the answer must come. Besides, I have always seen that there has been really a long unobserved preparation before the Grace intervenes and, even after it has intervened, one has still to put in a good deal of work to keep and develop what one has got—as it is in all other things—until there is the complete Siddhi. Then of course labour finishes and one is in assured possession. So *tapasya* of one kind or another is not avoidable.

—*Sri Aurobindo.*

INDIA⁴⁸ IS ONE

(REGIONAL AND RACIAL)

It is the creative individual more than the collectivity that produces what is called culture. The artist, the poet, the philosopher or even the scientist has each of them his own world where, away from everything around him, he lives absorbed in the pursuit of what to him is true, good or beautiful. It is true that the growth of social consciousness in man out of his primitive herd-instinct was essential to his progress as a civilised and communal being, but it is also true that there would have been no culture if man the individual had not developed that power of mind in him by which he becomes the creator of all those splendid things that make the fabric of his civilisation. The community was always there, evolving from clans and tribes into the race, then into nation, as determined by social and geographical conditions, but for its growth in

culture and refinement the community, whatever its external form, has always and very largely to depend on, and draw its sustenance from, the mental activity of its creative personalities. History testifies that even collective life, when smaller in form, is easily able to develop an individual character and thereby prove more fruitful than bigger ones. The city states of old Hellas and the small kingdoms of ancient India may be appropriate instances. What is indispensable to the enrichment of culture is complete freedom for the individual so that he may give full play to his inner faculties and create what turns out to be the expression of the soul of the nation to which he belongs.

Modern civilisation with all its defects has certainly many values that will count in the future evolution of humanity. It is the product of an age of individualism, as all civilisations in their origins more or less are. But its vastness and the increasing potencies of Nature released by it which are proving beyond the power of man to properly manipulate are responsible for many of the problems with which he is faced today. Unity is one such problem which has its roots deep in the complexity that characterises every aspect of modern life which is dominated by the scaffolding erected by organised bodies for the maintenance of order and discipline in them. And man finds himself forced into that artificial machinery which is called the State. But his problems, much less the problem of unity, cannot be solved by any power that the state can exercise. A mechanical unity enforced from without can be no permanent solution. Unity is a thing of the heart, and to be real and lasting it must come from within. Besides, there are many things that must be done before a satisfactory solution of the problem will be possible. The distress that envelopes the world today caused largely by mutual distrust does no doubt make unity the most insistent need of the hour. And forces against it notwithstanding, there are favourable ones too that are helping to clear⁴⁹ the way for man to come closer to others and to avail himself of the opportunities of mutual understanding that are increasing every day. Science has widened the horizon of human knowledge. It has annihilated distance, multiplied facilities of social and cultural intercourse and brought about uniform changes in the common life of humanity, with the result that an outlook of international fellowship envisaging the ultimate ideal of human unity is slowly emerging in the mind of man, and an effort on his part is also visible to give a practical shape to it. The prospects however are not very bright for this great ideal, particularly for its ultimate end, to become a reality in the near future, but when once Nature has held it before humanity, some day or other but sooner than later, it will be fulfilled in the life of the race.

An English writer feels inclined to believe that everything in the life of modern man is tending to the supreme truth that mankind is one. Spiritually it is so true, although at the present moment it may seem a little too optimistic. Nevertheless, indications are there that 'the mind of man is opening to an unprecedented largeness of

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vision of the essential oneness of life, of the wonder and mystery of the spirit in him and the universe'. It is this inward and intuitive understanding of the deeper meaning of things through which man will awaken into the truth of a higher consciousness in which alone can a real and permanent unity be founded. The evils that divide humanity everywhere, that stifled all possibilities of human mutuality will be starved to extinction only when man would realise his intrinsic unity in the realm of the spirit, the kingdom of God. A new harmony is therefore to be discovered on which to build the new order of the future.

It is not that unity is a recent ideal or that it never existed in any form. As a matter of fact Nature provides one of the most potent forces that bring it about. The lure of fertile land was the cause of the earliest corporate life of man. The first human unification was effected by *place* from which has developed the idea of a common homeland and therethrough, with the march of time, a common nationality. It is the bounties of nature that attracted groups of humanity to settle in river-valleys and organise collective existence by taking to agriculture, and gradually to other arts of life that laid the foundation of human civilisation. The idea was mooted in England a few years ago that land projection might be adopted as an effective method of inculcating love of country and of rousing the interest of young people in their own homeland. Indeed, an intimate acquaintance, which visual knowledge so impressively gives, with the topography including every detail of the flora and fauna of the land where we are born does surely inspire us to ardent feelings of affinity with it. There is joy in seeing before us projected on the screen the beauties of our land of birth, its mountains and plains, rivers and seas, forests and cities, its temples and monuments, its peoples, its animals and its vast variety of Nature's lavishnesses and all these against the background of its geographical unity. There is no doubt that "among all the circumstances that go to create that heritage which is to be the opportunity of a people, there is none so determining, so welding, so shaping in its influence, as the factor of the land to which our children shall be native. Spiritually man⁵⁰ is the son of God, but materially he is a nursling of Earth. Not without reason do we call ourselves children of the soil." A geographical unit becomes thus in course of time the centre of a nation unit. It is to a large extent true that a race too, especially in its origin, is the creation of a place which is nurtured by Nature into a geographical distinctness. In the chemistry of human intermingling which began with the migrations of the races, the original types were lost and new ethnic forms evolved out of the process of admixture which unceasingly is going on in the common life of humanity in more and more subtle ways through the dynamic of social intercourse. It is therefore the land more than the race origins which binds man to it and becomes his common object of adoration. The land where we are born is one of the supreme organic powers in the moulding of our destiny, the destiny of the nation. "Those who having a common region of birth, connect the work, the

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institution, the ideals, and the purposes of their lives with the region and with their fellows, and those who, doing this, undergo a common economic experience, form a nation, with the duties, the responsibilities, and faculties of a nation.”

The land is thus the basis on which the growth of a collectivity and also of its culture and institutions depends so much. If the many races that may happen to people it fail for any reason to realise their unity and solidarity, if even their religions and languages are unable to foster it among them—though religion in India, called the *Sanatana Dharma*, the universal religion, has throughout the ages been a synthetic factor in the community life of the people—the geographical projection of the country might help its diverse human elements to grow into a sense of their unity, founded in the most vivid fact of their being born in and mothered by a common homeland. The Land of India is endowed by Providence with such distinctive features that a plan like this might prove itself effective and produce the desired result. This ancient land has its own meaning and character, its own glory and grandeur, its own rights and liberties, its own interest and importance. Its unity is determined by its definite frontiers, the Himalayas in the north, the Hindukush in the north-west, the seas on the east and the west. And this unity has developed into an integrity that has stamped itself indelibly on the mind and heart of the people, whose love of the land of their birth, when projected in the right perspective, cannot fail to cement bonds of fellowship among them in spite of their external differences. It is a kind of love which is a sacrament, a worship, which no language can properly explain. It grows from within not merely as a patriotic impulse but as a religious predilection. And its sanctity is given its objective expression in the feelings of wonder and admiration that the people spontaneously cherish for the snow tops of the Himalayas, the rugged hills of the frontiers, the valley of Kashmir, the great rivers of India, the Downs of the Deccan, the limpid blue of the seas. In the beautiful words of Sri Aurobindo, “The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love.”

It⁵¹ is through this appreciation of the romance India outwardly is that we begin to feel within us a kind of inner relationship not only with her material embodiment but also with her soul; and as this feeling deepens the mere external fact vanishes, and there emerges before our mind’s eye, no less vividly, an idea, a dynamic concept of which the land becomes a symbol, an image, an object, as it were, of our love and veneration. Nothing indeed can more unfailingly develop in us an abiding sense of our fellowship

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with others, with all, belonging to a common land of birth than when we are blessed with this exalting experience. And does not this sense invariably prove real enough as a wholesome and strengthening lever in our collective life? In fact, it is the very bedrock of it. The physical loses itself in the ideal, and the ideal fulfils itself in the real, reconciling the apparent contradictions into a harmony, a oneness that is built out of the manyness of our country's human and physical appearance. It is a force, an energy inherent in its soil and pervading its space, that works this transforming miracle. India is that Force, that Spirit which makes its mystic appeal to the inmost being of her children. Sri Aurobindo once said that India has never been to him what is merely suggested by her outer vestures, attractive and gorgeous though they are. She is to him the Mother, the eternal and infinite Mother, the compassionate Mother of man. The truth of India is revealed to those who respond to this appeal and thereby know the secret, the supreme secret of her motherhood. To this vision of the Mother does the land of India call her children, whatever their caste, creed or race.

It is interesting to trace the evidences so far available as to how this ideology of the oneness of land, all the more defined by its incomparable greatness and magnificence, became a cohesive force in the evolution of India's culture, whose unity – the land playing its role in it also – is so unmistakably articulate in her art, literature, religion and in all her splendid institutions that came into being as a result of her millenniums of creative striving. The land-mass that is called India has always been regarded as one with the human mass that inhabits it, this fusion being effected in the consciousness of the people through its inherent spiritual outlook to which everything is a manifestation of the Spirit. If the Indian sees God in him, he sees him also in others and even in the phenomenal universe around him. No wonder therefore that the land in which he is born should acquire in his conception, an inward character, a profound significance, compelling his highest love and admiration. But the land-mass of India is not an isolated formation. It is a part, however sharply separated, of a vaster region with which, inspired by the self-same ideal, it has always in the past kept up intimate friendly relations. Besides being bound with her sister countries in Asia by a common love of mysticism and spiritual pursuits, India has had from very early times deep and extensive cultural intercourse with nearly all of them. The influence of the pre-Buddhist India on various parts of Asia and Europe apart, the Buddhist communities in pre-Christian Asia Minor and the Indian missionaries in China and Japan in the early days of their history represent two extremities of that vast tract of land which together with most of the south-west Asia and the Island of the Indian Archipelago⁵² does even today bear witness to the immensity of their indebtedness to India for much of what forms the texture of their religious and cultural life. Nevertheless, if India is a living embodiment of the Spirit. Asia is no less so: and India from that standpoint is an organic part of it. Though a soul by herself, she in her heart is one with Asia, her

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physical setting. And it is not for nothing that she is called the heart of the Orient. In the words of Okakura Kakuzo. "Asia is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment the broad expanse of love for the Infinite and Universal, which is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from the maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life."

India, this great country of ours, stands with the parent continent as her grand background. Provided with natural protection she has lived through the ages to fulfil the mission assigned to her by the Dispenser of her destiny. Vanished are the splendours that went by the names of Egypt, Babylon and Greece! The empires that flourished in Europe exist today only in the records of history. But from time immemorial India carries on not in isolation, as the charge is unjustly made against her, but in love and friendship with her neighbours, and with everyone who comes to her, be he a foreigner or even an enemy. Yet she has a personality all her own, an individuality, that marks her out as something that has no equal in the annals of the earth. The geological movement leading to the creation of land in which early human civilisation began in India was the retreat westward of the extensive Eur-Asiatic Ocean called the *Tethys* giving rise to the plains of northern India through a process of formation which must have taken ages. The fertility of this region is due to many factors among which may be mentioned the life-giving waters of a river-system that was formed by the linear depressions which remained after the large-scale geological movement was over. The deposits washed down from the northern highlands added no less to the richness of the soil. On these plains, along the banks of the Indus right down eastward along the banks of the Ganges streams of humanity flowed in unison with the waters, as it were, and spread out into the interiors till the scene was complete with the drama of the early human migration in India. The geographical unity of India is indisputable, in spite of the bewildering variety of her physical features; and equally so is the integral entity of the one body of her vast humanity. The uniqueness of her culture is ascribed by some writers to this unity as well as to her natural separation from the rest of the world. It is the conviction of the Hindus that there is an inner meaning behind her physical formation as also a spiritual purpose of her existence as a conscious manifestation of the supreme Shakti. The vision, not once but many times in her history, has come to the fathers of the race that India is verily the Mother who has stood through the ages entrusted with the task of 'preserving the Knowledge that preserves the world till⁵³ Krishna comes back to repossess the Kingdom that is his.' To the Hindus the mother and motherland are greater than heaven itself. Whatever it is, it

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is clear enough that this vast country, almost a continent, is one in the fundamental principle of its peculiar singularity, built up by the movements racial, social and cultural that have been taking place in India from times pre-historic.

It is not even two decades when the view was held that the story of human culture in India began with the Indo-Aryans. But the excavations in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa have not only pushed back the date by more than a millennium but revealed evidences of a civilisation superior to many then existing in the world. It is of course the valley of the Indus which was the scene of this great event proving the remarkable antiquity of Indian culture and the glorious role India played in the history of human civilisation. The inhabitants who peopled those prosperous cities represent four different ethnic types. It seems racial intermingling began in India even in those days when peoples of various stocks, whether original settlers or emigrants from outside, shared a common land as their home and built a civilisation that was then and is even now a marvel of human creation. The gates of India from west to east were always open; the routes by the sea were so easy; and the inland rivers were navigable. All these offered inroads for human emigration into India from days unknown to history. The physical types that constitute the present population of India are evolved from the three principal ethnic types through the continuous process of racial intermingling. The foreign elements absorbed by her are broadly distinguished as Greek, Iranian, Mongolian, Scythian, Hun, Semitic and some even of what constitute the modern European. All these elements India has assimilated to her being and along with her own children given them the stamp of a common nationality. Was it not the force of land that effected this miracle of human unification? And are not always associated with India the beauty that she is, her inexhaustible resources, and a culture that in the past was her greatest contribution to the happiness and progress of mankind? "This admixture of races", says C.E.M. Joad, "has had important effects on India's past history and present outlook. The first of these is a sense of fundamental unity far more vivid and persistent than can be accounted for by the circumstance of propinquity in the same geographical area. Europeans live together in a geographical area whose size is not very different from that of India. But as the wars which have disgraced European history in the past and the quarrels and rivalries that enfeeble the League of Nations in the present only too clearly show, the inhabitants of Europe are very far from being imbued with the sense of unity which distinguishes the inhabitants of India. We cannot, in short, speak of a "European" with the same appropriateness as we can speak "an Indian", who, in spite of differences of colour, caste and creed, looks upon all other Indians as his fellow-countrymen and upon India as his home."

Sisirkumar Mitra.

THE⁵⁴ INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

1. THE INTEGRAL YOGIN

A dynamic message rose from the battle-field of Kurukshetra, fifty centuries ago: "Be a Yogi: live in Yoga with the Divine: act in the Divine Consciousness." That was the message of Sri Krishna to the progressive humanity, through the medium of the heroic Arjuna. Through the thick maze of headlong Time, the word YOGA was struggling for a perfect expression. Its voice was almost drowned by the hell-cries of the battling vital movements. Here and there some ascetics added attributes to it according to individual predilections, and sought through Yoga to still or kill the mind in featureless trance. Books were written on Yogas; but Yoga was still a mystery or monopoly or a thing dreaded by family men. Humanity was still groping through the blind alleys of ignorance without knowing the saving virtue of Yoga.

A soothing harmony of hope and bliss sweeps through the groans of the war-torn world;

"Live in Yoga with the Divine, a Life Divine!"

This is the message of Sri Aurobindo, the modern Superman, the Yogin of an integral vision of existence. If the word Yoga is popular today, the credit is due to Sri Aurobindo; for it was he who saved the word for humanity as a *mantra* of the living harmony of LIFE. It was he who explained to us the integral sense of Yoga as a means of gaining God in the Spirit without losing the reality of actual life in the world. The word and its full virtue was actually re-discovered by him. It was he who came like an Oedipus to solve the riddle of Existence.

He was the prophet of Indian Nationalism. Singular among all the prophets of nationalism. Sri Aurobindo sought victory through God-Force which is the bed-rock of Indian civilisation. Even amidst the political tornado of those days, his inspired genius distinctly spoke out:

"The new movement is essentially a spiritual movement. Its key-note is the essential unity of God and Man. The divinity of man is its highest gospel. To evolve God out of man is its highest aim. It seeks to bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."

God's voice. His help, His Power, His Will in humanity and His Manifestation through the human instrumentality—this is what he sought even during the Bandemataram days. He felt that Yoga alone can give that God-Force, the Divine Energy indispensable for the collective existence of man in the freedom of the inner Spirit. He was a born Yogi, and his early life was a progressive evolution of the Siddha in him. Long before his name came to the limelight of public recognition, Sri Aurobindo began to practise Yoga. Initially he got some hints from the Gita, the Upanishads and one or two reliable Yogins. All the hints he got, he made his own and

followed the *Inner Guru* who kindled the latent Fire ablaze and steeped him in serene meditation. Day by day he felt the Divine touch and lived in His Consciousness. He made an utter surrender of His ego-personality to the Cosmic Lord of existence and followed His voice and lead. He put his whole conscious being into contact with the Divine through peaceful⁵⁵ inner communion. His devotion was not of the emotional sing-and dance type of the previous Bhaktas. It was the Shānta-Bhāva, the sublime peace-attitude, of the Vedic Seers:

“Even as I am appointed by Thee, O Lord seated in my heart, so I act,” This was the key to his inner sādhana. Such was his faith and surrender. Perfectly equal to all, in all happenings, never yearning for any individual gift, always calling fervently for the Divine Will to be done in him, Sri Aurobindo made his life a rhythm of dynamic activity in yoga with the Divine. Whatever he thought, wrote, spoke or did was a natural outflowing of his God-Consciousness. He was not governed by the judgements of men but he always obeyed the unseen Power which moved him from within. He lived from *within* out. The purity of his life and the divinity of his voice drew the highest respect and adoration from the heart of his countrymen. When the entire man was submitted to the immaculate sovereignty of the Divine Will, when the inner instrument was clean and pure as a ready channel of Grace, when the heart was soaked in Divine love and the head steeped in meditation, when the nature was in constant communion with the Supreme, then He revealed His omnipresence and possessed the chosen instrument. The great aspiration of Sri Aurobindo to see the Divine within and without was fulfilled one day, during his one year’s meditation in the Alipore jail:

“His strength entered into me, and I was able to do the sadhana of the Gita, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit. He made me realise the central truth of the Hindu Religion. His strength entered into me. It was Vasudeva that surrounded me. I felt the arm of Sri Krishna around me.”

(Uttarpara Speech)

“Rare is that great soul who has realised the omnipresence of the Divine” says the Gita and Sri Aurobindo came out of Alipore with such a realization. He poured out his inspired message through the columns of the *Dharma* and the *Karmayogin* showing the country how to live and act in the Gita-spirit. After two months of concentrated tapasya at Chandernagore, the Divine Will safely brought him to Pondicherry, the chosen centre of his spiritual work. After four years of silence, we heard his voice again. The *Arya* revealed to us the Superman in Sri Aurobindo. It is the Gospel of Integral Yoga replete with the Spirit’s highest promises and eloquent with divine optimism. *The Essays on The Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the *Life Divine* are the

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three works of deep spiritual vision that can be called the Gospel of Sri Aurobindo, the Integral Yogin. The Atya stopped in 1921.

Sri Aurobindo retired into inner silence and solitude, to explore still further into the higher planes of Truth-Conscious-Bliss and to bring down even like Bhagiratha, the Supramental Force that alone can transform and divinise human life. Life is divinised and integralised through the Yoga of living in conscious surrender to the Divine.

“The Integral Yoga is that which having found the Transcendent, can turn upon the universe and possess it.”

Let us make a study of the Integral Yoga and its varied effects on all the aspects of human life.

Shuddhananda Bharati.

REVIEWS⁵⁶

Rabindra-Kāvye-trayī - parikalpanā (Bengali). By Sj. Sarasilal Sarkar. To be had of Viswabharati Granthalaya, 2, College Square, Calcutta, Re. 1.

Already a crop of literature has grown up in Bengali on Rabindranath and more are coming. Bengal, in all departments of her life, owes a deep debt of gratitude to Rabindranath and most of this literature is more in way of homage than serious criticism. There is a remarkable tendency to regard Rabindranath as a seer, a prophet, as Gurudev. He never made such a claim, himself; again and again he has said, “I am not a Sadhaka, I am a poet”, and we can take him at his word. Rabindranath as a poet has great visions, even spiritual visions, but to be a prophet, a spiritual guide of humanity, one must give a clear message, a conception about the goal of existence and of human life and a practical path of realisation. So far as his poetry is concerned, we find no such conception, or clear guidance. As a man he might have had a philosophy; in his later age he tried to systemise it and the result was his lectures on the Religion of Man. But all this is a construction of his mind; his poetry, on the other hand, came from a deeper part of his being and spoke altogether in another voice. The book under review has tried to sound the depths from which the poems of Rabindranath have arisen, and so far it is on the right track as poetical criticism; but the method that it follows, that of psycho-analysis, cannot, in our opinion, lead to anything really deep and penetrating. It is something like an attempt to read the mysteries of the heavenly bodies with the help of a toy telescope. The science of psycho-analysis, if it be a science at all, is still in a very crude stage; Indian Yogic Psychology went far beyond it. “The new psychology,” says Sri Aurobindo, “looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their a-b-c-d of the

subconscious and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t cat, t-r-e-e tree) is the very heart of the real knowledge." (*Bases of Yoga*, p. 227.)

Mr Sarkar, following his psycho-analytical method, observes that the great peculiarity of Rabindranath's poems is the expression of the infinite through the finite and that for this purpose he has used a symbolism which has its origin deep in his subconscious. But such symbolism is the characteristic of all poetry, and indeed of all art, and there is nothing in it peculiar to Rabindranath. Reviewing a book. 'The Heritage of Symbolism' by C.M. Bowra, Mr Edward Sackville West observes: "In one sense all art must be symbolic, for if it does not suggest the universal through the particular it simply bears witness to so much undigested experience." The peculiarity in Rabindranath's poems which Mr Sarkar observes and on which he has based his whole thesis is that in many of them there is a regular sequence of rhythm (*tāl*), music (*gān*) and movement (*gati*). To illustrate this he has cited numerous passages from the poems of Rabindranath.

Light dances, O friend,
light dances near my soul.
Light sings, O friend,
light sings in the lyre of my heart,
The sky is awakening,
the wind rushes.

Here, in the first line dancing implies rhythm, in the second line there is reference to music, in the third to motion. Another instance,

Behind⁵⁷ him rain is dropping,
And there is the rumbling sound of thunder,

Through the openings in the clouds the rays of the rising sun fall on his face.

But the true aim of poetry, as of all true art is the "interpretation of hidden truths with the help of images." It is through the delights of the senses that the poet expresses himself, and in all poetry we shall have abundant reference to music as also to other sensuous perceptions; and if we search in other poets, we shall certainly find many passages in which there is this sequence of rhythm, music and movement which Mr Sarkar regards as peculiar to Rabindranath. Here we can cite some instances taken at random:

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Like winds or waters were her ways:
They heed not immemorial cries:
They move to their high destinies.

A.E.

There is rhythm in every line of poetry, and if we find a line which refers to some sort of sound followed by another indicating some movement Mr Sarkar's requirements are fulfilled. Here is another instance:

O grey wild sea,
Thou hast a message, thunderer, for me.
Their huge wide backs
Thy monstrous billows raise.

—Sri Aurobindo.

So that most of Tagore's poems may come within his scheme, Mr Sarkar has indefinitely widened the significance of his terms. Thus blooming of flowers is music to him, and also the falling of leaves. So a bunch of flowers may represent rhythm, tears may represent movement. Even with all this freedom of interpretation, if anywhere in Tagore's poems the sequence cannot be discovered, the explanation is to be found in psycho-analysis which says that in the subconscious things change from one form into another. Our only comment is that with this formula, all the poetry in the world can be brought under Mr Sarkar's triple conception.

Even if it be a fact that the sequence of *tāl*, *gān* and *gati*, as conceived by Mr Sarkar, is more frequent in Rabindranath than in other poets, it would be only an idiosyncrasy without any deep significance. But psycho-analysis has revealed to Mr Sarkar such a significance. He refers to the super-ego of Rabindranath which acts in his subconscious and composes his poetry; as a matter of fact every poet feels that there is something other than and higher than his ordinary self which creates his poetry; but that something is higher and not lower than our ordinary consciousness, and the subconscious of the psychoanalysts is a nether region in us which has not even so much light as our ordinary consciousness has; that can never be the true creator of any genuine poetry or art. According to psycho-analysis, the super-ego is nothing but our reverence for our parents in our childhood formed into a higher self in us in our subconscious. And here Mr Sarkar has unearthed all the mystery of Rabindranath's poetry. In his childhood, he heard from his venerable father the Upanishadic mantra, *sāntam, sīvam, advaitam*. This sank deep into his nature and has manifested in all his poetry in the triple conception, *tāl*, *gān* and *gati*. Mr Sarkar has taken some pains to explain how *sāntam* represents *tāl*, *sīvam* represents *gān* and *advaitam* represents *gati*. *Sāntam* is the immutable who by its immobility regulates all the movements in the universe, so it is keeping the rhythm, the *tāl*; the songs of the poet bring assurance to

the timid hearts of men, so they are *sivam*; and all motion leads ultimately to infinity, to *Advaitam*.

The book is instructive as an illustration how psycho-analysis can help us in unravelling the mysteries of poetic creation. The style of Mr Sarkar is delightful and the get up of the book is excellent.

A.B.

*Sex*⁵⁸ and *Spirituality* by Pro. P. Narasimbam, M.A. M.E.S. (Retd.) (published by B. Kutumba Rao, Bapatla) 1943. Aug.

It was D.H. Lawrence's studies in psycho-analysis of the Freudian type that made him write a series of novels on what should be the true type of relation between the two sexes. The call of the blood', which is but another way of stating 'the call of the unconscious libido', is according to him a call for fulfilment, and no true marriage can be which does not take into account this primitive call. This is the general thesis in his '*Sons and lovers*' and "*Lady Chatterley's Lover*". Aldous Huxley develops this same idea rather cynically in his '*Point Counter Point*'. But this flesh or sex business, whatever vogue it had, died down and the glamour of the Freudian psychology passed away. The metaphysical theory of the Call of the Partner has not been sketched by any one so far despite the vast array of t ntric literature, and it is to the credit of Prof. P. Narasimham to have written a brief essay on the metaphysical basis of the male-female relationship. He points out that whatever might have been the nature of the Absolute as a dark Possibility or a Grand Neuter, the moment creation or evolution started, it bifurcated into Father-Mother duality whose inseparableness has been accepted in the figures of Ardhan ri wara, Sri-Niv sa (Vishnu), Brahm  with Sarasvati. Indeed this really reveals that the male-female combination cannot be a taboo; to taboo it, as the sany sins do, is false and wrong, and the true manner would be to sublimate the concept of relationship between the male and female and not seek abolition of it by reducing men and women to the level of neuters. The acosmic view is a mistake that we may have to rectify. As the macrocosm so the microcosm. The individual soul is a diunity, a two-in-one even like god. It is male and female not in its own nature; but according to the learned professor, it too splits into two, and one of them is the male-part and the other female-part. Their union will result in the fulfilment of the *lil * or creation. Our realization of Brahman will entail as a first step the discovery of our 'other'; and united together the Divine may be realized. Man must discover his  akti, the female half of himself which he has somehow lost. It is not the kundalini- akti of the Yoga, but the actual *dampati*, who is his companion and strength on his spiritual journey "The fully evolved *muktha* is male-female or rather the (male) *purusha* principle who has united within himself his own *prakrithi-sakthi* and thus has become a whole" (p. 13). This he considers to be 'the *fulfilled* spiritual manhood, the original

abstract dual nature now become established as a 'single fact' (ibid). He quotes the views of Plato¹, the Myth of Adam and Eve, and the actual practice of the Tantra-sādhana in one of its variants which makes the actual *prathishtha* of the śakti in a kumāri etc., as ways and means of achieving the unity that is now unfulfilled. The saving feature however is Prof. Narasimbam finds the extra-marital adventure for the partner is not the truth of the path he propounds.

Now this view is clearly an attempt to resolve the deadlock in spiritual life and an attempt so far as it goes to remove the obliquity to which the sexual differentiations have fallen. Admittedly the first phase of our attractions to our fellows is via sex; these become companionable and the attraction of sex is but the superficial but nonetheless fundamental surface-manifestation of the unity-influence; this does give us some sense of completeness not merely for the creative activity of the race nor merely even as an instrument of the creator. It is indeed an important question whether the tantra-sādhanas which inculcate the śakti and śiva union, in the organism of the individual, really⁵⁹ do not show that the individual is a microcosmic field of the Divine diunity, rather than that the individual jiva itself is split up into two, one half of the jiva as male seeking out its female other, like D.H. Lawrence's lovers seeking out under the Italian skies their females or *vice versa*. On the other hand the sexual creativity is a creativity under the conditions of darkness or ignorance; and the male and female congregate or unity as such has not the importance that is given to them. Granting that the female-male unity is on a par with the unity typified by the supreme Siva as ardhanaṛi, as the unity of male-female, it may be asked whether the creation of progeny is the fundamental activity and to become the *parent* is the supreme destiny (vide p. 11 "One who is not *consciously* able to be the parent, both as *father and mother* cannot be a Mukta in the true sense of the term'). On the contrary the mukta is a conduit, a channel, an instrument, a śakti of the Sachchidānanda, and cannot be considered to be a parent both as father and mother. Nor is it clear again that it is imperative for the individual soul to be considered to be a half of some other jiva, and their union is the beginning of the parenthood. The jivas become capable of true creativity and splendid ecstasies in their union with Brahman or Divine and not in their transactions however intimate with other souls, male or female. Some thinkers hold that so far as the female is considered, it is her business to link herself up with her mated male, and the *sādhana* of union is achieved through the male with the Divine. This explanation may be quite a happy solution of the problem of social *pātivratya*, but not of the spiritual sādhana of divine knowledge. The father and mother typify the archetypal nature of Knowledge and

¹ Plato's view on the Divinity of the soul is that there is a rational part and an irrational part: the view that the male is half a person is not clear.

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REVIEWS

Sex and Spirituality

Power; together and alone they are *daya*; they creativity is of freedom and they do not limit each other. This is the exquisite meaning of *dāmpatya* as distinguished from mere *pati-patnī-bhāva*. The relationship between the individual souls and God is stated to be the realization, rather than the attainment of similar form of the Brahman as in His eternal diunity. If this were the case, then, the individual soul will be actually so, on the principle 'as in the macrocosm so in the microcosm'. Further the entire argument of Prof. Narasimham rests on an *a priori* deduction from the myth or symbolic forms of the Gods of Hinduism in their later revival. This theory further if stressed may lead to hermaphroditism in the soul itself. This latter is more plausible as a theory, for the individual soul is an *amśa* of the Divine, dependent on the Divine, and lives and grows and exists for the Divine so to speak as an emanation of His and in so far as it creates in its infinite freedom under the sovereign freedom of the Divine it might well be considered to be a mother. But even the best of theologies could not make the individuals create or emanate other souls, or make other souls, emanate of themselves. The whole theory rests on the slender thread of mythology which might rest on the principle of diunity of Siva-Sakti, which is true in its own domain, whose pale reflections, if at all, may be repeated in the individual relationships between the male and female, in *Grihasthadharma*. It is true that without this theory of individual or microcosmic pairing towards unity as the first step in the spiritual ascent there can yet subsist the relationship of male-female without the *libido* thrown in. The sublimation of sex happens not when the pairing takes place in order to create progeny, or to fulfil or rather complete their fragmentariness, but when the individual personality, male or female, meets its partner in the terrestrial scheme from the point of the Supermind which is universal, creative, bliss, truth, power, and it is this supermind in its dark functioning in the Ignorance or lower Nature pairs off or separates the purushaic and the prakritaic factors inherent in its own supreme sentience and works out the evolution of its own supreme multiplicity in terms of diverse centres or personalities. The rebirth theory does not say that⁶⁰ the female will be female in all her journey till she meets her partner, or that the male has been male from the beginning of the split of its integral individuality. On the contrary, each individual in his evolution is being prepared to complete the understanding of the very nature of the processes of creativity and passive recieption and understanding by a thorough contact with these planes established by the Divine Supermind itself, till in its most luminous moment it offers itself or surrenders its entire being to the Supermind in all its Motherhood and Fatherhood, Creativity and Power, Intelligence and luminous lights, so that the individual verily becomes a vehicle of the Divine force and power, and as a field of the Divine, a woman rather than a male. This is the view normally taken up by the mystics whether of the Bhāgavata Alvār type or the Christian school of St. Thomas Aquinas, not to speak of the women mystics. The primal male is God and all the souls are only females. Further

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according to Sri Aurobindo, sex and sleep are the two fundamental instincts which are difficult to overcome, but which must be overcome in the Spiritual ascent; the reason is not far to seek, the one is a negation of the Consciousness eternally aware, and the other is a negation of the total surrender that has to be made for the ascent of the soul and the descent of the Divine; and further the energy of sex is transmutable into the spiritual energy of light (*ojas sakti*). I shall briefly refer to certain other objections against this first-look theory. The individual soul is indivisible. To think of part-whole relationship is contrary to the integral unity of the individual soul. The male-female are not the portions of the soul in Vedanta whatever be the validity of such a relation in Judaism. Nor can it be held that the irrational is the female and the rational the male, for there is a superrational which is the truth of being. The existence of several personalities in each individual embodied being such as the material or physical, vital, mental etc., is capable of being accepted without this type of split into male-female. Each of these is capable of autonomy within limits so far as they go without entailing actual dissociation in the individual as such. This thesis was put forward on psycho-analytical lines by Aldous Huxley in his very informative Essay on *Pascal*. It is also accepted by Sri Aurobindo, though these are ultimately integrated in the Supermind alone for no true integration of these several personalities which have come into being in Ignorance can be synthesised by the Unconscious or the conscious but only by the Supermind. Thus it follows that no ontological unity or spiritual unity can be affirmed and no real happiness can issue through a mating of these complexes called personalities, supposing we find them disintegrating or 'emanating' from the unity. The relation between the Supreme Divine and the Shakti is not something that leaves the other halved or made into a half-personality. Sakti is the manifest intelligence, the dynamic supermind of the Divine Transcendent; unmanifest she yet is of Him in Him. The emanational theory is applicable only to the Divine whose personalities are all divine, full and integral gods or divinities, who are all purna, infinites, not needing any other to complete their fullness or wholeness. Nor is the thesis that man is of the image of the Divine His maker tenable or on all fours. Firstly the supreme Being is the One, the Unity of the many and the many are not each one of them the One in the many and so on *ad infinitum*. The split-theory or the parallel with the structure of the Neutron will not avail. On this analogy it may well be that all neutrons do not have only one electron but many excepting the hydrogen atom, the monogamist amongst the neutrons. Thus the story of Prof. P. Narasimham will mean that there is not only one sakti or sexually polar opposite but many such.

This being so, the theory put forth by Prof. P. Narasimham appears to have more than the normal amount of objections, though to be sure he has presented the thesis very attractively. It⁶¹ is a dangerous theory too, notwithstanding certain amount of

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support he might have from the writings of Marie Corelli, and the novels '*Master of the 3rd Degree*' and '*Dweller in Two planets*.' The thesis reveals that his analogies, the logic, the mystic experience and even the image theory reveal serious lacunæ in the presentation of this solution for the problem of Sex and Spirituality.

K.C.V.

THE PHCENIX

Our illustration on the cover represents the mythological bird Phœnix. This is what the New Standard Dictionary says about it:—

A sacred bird like an eagle, with red and golden plumage, which came out of Arabia every 500 years to Heliopolis, where it burned itself on the altar and rose again from its ashes young and beautiful; hence and emblem of immortality and of the resurrection.

The myth has several forms of which the above is a popular one. The Phœnix period, or the time of re-appearance of the Phœnix, is variously given from 250 to 7000 years. The prototype of the Phœnix is probably the bennu, or symbol of the rising sun, of which the hieroglyph is a heron.

THE BIRD OF FIRE

O marvel bird with the burning wings of light and the
unbarred lids that look beyond all space,

One strange leap of thy mystic stress breaking the barriers
of mind and life, arrives at its luminous term thy flight;

Invading the secret clasp of the Silence and crimson Fire
thou frontest eyes in a timeless Face.

— *Sri Aurobindo*.

LATEST⁶² PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Books

1. The Pathamandir Annual—1943 August. Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir, 15. College Square, Calcutta. Price, Rs. 5-0-0

2. The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo – Part II. By Nolini Kanta Gupta. Price, Rs. 1-4-0
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Price. Rs. 4-8-0
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Price. Rs. 2-4-0

BENGALI

Books:

1. Vartika, No. 7. November 1943 – A Quarterly, 15, College Square, Calcutta.
2. Conversations with the Mother – 2 parts, Translation by Charuchandra Dutt, Arya Publishing House.
Price, As. 8

TELUGU

Book:

1. Sri Auravinda Jeevithamu (Biography of Sri Aurobindo) Published by Mr T. Kodandarama Rao, Pleader. Anantapur.
Price, Rs. 2-0-0

TAMIL

Book:

1. National Value of Art. Translator: Sjt. P. Kodanda Raman. Published by Bharatmata Prachuralayam.

Journal:

1. Aurobindo Malar, Birthday Souvenir, 1943. Published by Bharat Sakti Nilayam. Pondicherry.

KANNADA

Books:

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2. Purna Yoga (Translation of the Yogic Sadhan) Translator—'Madhurachenna'.
Published by Aravinda Granthamala, Halasangi. Price, Re. 1-0-0

Journals:

1. "Amrita" February 1941 & March, 1941. Edited by 'Madhurachenna'. Available
at the Asram, Pondicherry. Price, each Re. 0-3-0
2. "Jeevan" (Sri Aurobindo Number) Quarterly. October, 1943. Jeevana Karyalaya,
Dharwar.

MARATHI

Book:

1. Yogi Aravinda Ghosh. (Biography of Sri Aurobindo) by P.B. Kulkarni (Baroj
Lane, Bombay 2.) Published by K.M. Tamhankar, Manager, Sahakari Granthakar,
"Pravinya" Office, Bombay 4. Price, Rs. 1-8-4

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THE ADVENT

April 1944

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The ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.
Sri Aurobindo.

MATER DOLOROSA

Suffering, Distress and Death today hold the earth in thrall. And yet can there be any other issue in temporal life? That seems to be the ineluctable fate for mankind. Ages ago it was declared, the wages of sin is death.

Doubters ask, however, if sinners alone suffered, one would not perhaps mind; but along with sinners why should innocents, nay even the virtuous, pass under the axe? What sins indeed babes commit? Are the sins of the fathers truly visited upon coming generations? A queer arrangement, to say the least, if there is a wise and just and benevolent God! Yes, how many honest people, people who strive to live piously, honestly and honourably, according to the law of righteousness, fail to escape! All equally undergo the same heavy punishment. Is it not then nearer the truth to say that a most mechanical Nature, a mere gamble of chance—a statistical equation, as mathematicians say, moves the destiny of creatures and things in the universe, that there is nowhere a heart or consciousness in the whole business?

Some believers in God or in the Spirit admit that it is so. The world is the creation of another being, a not-God, a not-Spirit—whether Maya or Arhiman or the Great Evil. One has simply to forget the world, abandon earthly existence altogether as a night-mare. Peace, felicity one can possess and enjoy—but not here in this vale of tears, *anityam asukham lokam imam*, but elsewhere beyond.

Is that the whole truth? We, for ourselves, do not subscribe to this⁶⁴ view. Truth is a very complex entity, the universe a mingled strain. It is not a matter of merely sinners and innocents that we have to deal with. The problem is deeper and more fundamental. The whole question is,—where, in which world, on which level of consciousness do we stand, and, what is more crucial, how much of that consciousness

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is dynamic and effective in normal life. If we are in the ordinary consciousness and live wholly with that consciousness, it is inevitable that, being in the midst of Nature's current, we should be buffeted along, the good and the evil, as we conceive them to be, befalling us indiscriminately. Or, again, if we happen to live in part or even mainly in an inner or higher consciousness, more or less in a mood of withdrawal from the current of life, allowing the life movements to happen as they list, then too we remain, in fact, creatures and playthings of Nature and we must not wonder if, externally, suffering becomes the badge of our tribe.

And yet the solution need not be a total rejection and transcendence of Nature. For what is ignored in this view is Nature's dual reality. In one form, the inferior (*apara*), Nature means the Law of Ignorance—of pain and misery and death; but in another form, the superior (*para*), Nature's is the Law of Knowledge, that is to say, of happiness, immunity and immortality, not elsewhere in another world and in a transcendent consciousness, but here below on the physical earth in a physical body.

The whole question then is this—how far has this Higher Nature been a reality with us, to what extent do we live and move and have our being in it. It is when the normal life, our body, our life and our mentality have all adopted and absorbed the substance of the Higher Prakriti and become it, when all the modes of Inferior Prakriti have been discarded and annihilated, or rather, have been purified and made to grow into the modes of the Higher Prakriti, that our terrestrial life can become a thing of absolute beauty and perfect perfection.

If, on the contrary, any part of us belongs to the Inferior Nature, even if the larger part dwells in some higher status of Nature, even then we are not immune to the attacks that come from the Inferior Nature. Those whom we usually call pious or virtuous or honest have still a good part of them imbedded in the Lower Nature, in various degrees they are yet her vassals; they owe allegiance to the three gunas, be it even to sattwa—sattwa is also a movement⁶⁵ in Inferior Nature; they are not above, they are not free. Has not Sri Krishna said:

Traigunyavishaya Veda
nistraigunyo bhavarjuna?

The only thing we must remember is that freedom from the gunas does not necessarily mean an absolute cessation of the play of Prakriti. Being in the gunas we must know how to purify and change them, transmute them into their higher and divine potentials.

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This is a counsel of perfection, one would say. But there is no other way out. If humanity is to be saved, if it is at all to progress, it can be only in this direction. Buddha's was no less a counsel of perfection. He saw the misery of man, the three great maladies inherent in life and his supreme compassion led him to the discovery of a remedy, a radical remedy,—indeed it could remove the malady altogether, for it removed the patient also. What we propose is, in this sense, something less drastic. Ours is not a path of escape, although that too needs heroism, but of battle and conquest and lordship.

It is not to say that other remedies—less radical but more normal to human nature—cannot be undertaken in the meanwhile. The higher truths do not rule out the lower. These too have their place and utility in Nature's integral economy. An organisation based on science and ethicism can be of help as a palliative and measure of relief; it may be even immediately necessary under the circumstances, but however imperative at the moment it does not go to the root of the matter.

FEDERATED HUMANITY

The last great war, out of its bloody welter, threw up a *mantra* for the human consciousness to contemplate and seize and realise: it was *self-determination*. The present world-war has likewise cast up a *mantra* that is complementary. The problem of the unification of the whole human race has engaged the attention of seers and sages, idealists and men of action, since time immemorial; but only recently its demand has become categorically imperative for a solution in the field of practical politics. Viewed from another angle, one can say that it is also a problem Nature has set before herself, has been dealing with through the ages, elaborating and leading to a final issue.

The original unit of the human aggregate is the family; it is like the original cell which lies at the back⁶⁶ of the entire system that is called the human body or, for that matter, any organic body. A living and stable nucleus is needed round which a crystallisation and growth can occur. The family furnished such a nucleus in the early epochs of humanity. But with the growth of human life there came a time when, for a better and more efficient organization in collective life, larger units were needed. The original unit had to be enlarged in order to meet the demands of a wider and more complex growth. Also it is to be noted that the living body is not merely a conglomeration of cells, all more or less equal and autonomous—something like a democratic or an anarchic organisation; but it consists of a grouping of such cells in spheres or regions or systems according to differing functions. And as we rise in the scale of evolution the grouping becomes more and more complex, well-defined and hierarchical. Human collectivity also shows a similar development in organization.

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The original, the primitive unit—the family—was first taken up into a larger unit, the clan; the clan, in its turn, gave place to the tribe and finally the tribe merged into the nation. A similar widening of the unit can also be noticed in man's habitat, in his geographical environment. The primitive man was confined to the village; the village gradually grew into the township and the city state. Then came the regional unit and last of all we arrived at the country.

Until the last great war it seemed that the nation (and country) was the largest living unit that human collectivity could admit without the risk of a break-up. Now it was at this momentous epoch that the first concept or shape of a larger federation—typified in the League of Nations—stirred into life and began to demand its *lebensraum*. It could not however come to fruition and stability, because the age of isolated nationhood had not yet passed and the principle of self-determination yet needed its absolute justification.

The present war puts the problem in the most acute way. Shall it be still a nation or shall it be a “commonwealth” that must henceforth be the dynamic unit? Today it is evident, it is a fact established by the sheer force of circumstances that isolated, self-sufficient nations are a thing of the past, even like the tribes of the Hebrews or the clans of the Hittites. A super-nation, that is to say, a commonwealth of nations is the larger unit that Nature is in travail to bring forth and establish. That is the inner meaning of⁶⁷ the mighty convulsions shaking and tearing humanity today. The empire of the past—an empire of the Roman type and pattern—was indeed in its own way an attempt in the direction of a closely unified larger humanity; but it was a crude and abortive attempt, as Nature's first attempts mostly are. For the term that was omitted in that greater synthesis was self-determination. Centralisation is certainly the secret of a large organic unity, but not over-centralisation; for this means the submission and sacrifice of all other parts of an organism to the undue demands and interests of only one organ which is considered as the centre, the *metropolis*. Such a system dries up in the end the vitality of the organism: the centre sucking in all nourishment from the outlying members suffers from oedema and the whole eventually decays and disintegrates. That is the lesson the Roman Empire teaches us.

The autocratic empire is dead and gone: we need not fear its shadow or ghostly regeneration. But the ideal which inspired it in secret and justified its advent and reign is a truth that has still its day. The drive of Nature, of the inner consciousness of humanity was always to find a greater and larger unit for the collective life of mankind. That unit today has to be a federation of free peoples and nations. In the place of nations, several such commonwealths must now form the broad systems of the body politic of human collectivity. That must give the pattern of its texture, the outline of its

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configuration—the shape of things to come. Such a unit is no longer a hypothetical proposition, a nebula, a matter of dream and imagination. It has become a practical necessity; first of all, because of the virtual impossibility of any single nation, big or small, standing all by itself alone—military and political and economic exigencies demand inescapable collaboration with others, and secondly, because of the still stricter geographical compulsion—the speed and ease of communication has made the globe so small and all its parts so interdependent that none can possibly afford to be exclusive and self-centred.

The organisation of this greater and larger unit is the order of the day. It does not seem possible at this stage to go straight to the whole of humanity at large and make of it one single indivisible entity, obliterating all barriers of race and nation, An intermediate step is still necessary even if that remains the final end. Nationhood has been a helper in that direction; it is now a bar. And yet an indiscriminate internationalism cannot⁶⁸ meet the situation today, it overshoots the mark. The march of events and circumstances prescribe that nations should combine to form groups or, as they say in French, societies of nations. The combination, however, must be freely determined, as voluntary partnership in a common labour and organisation for common profit and achievement. This problem has to be solved first, then only can the question of nationalism or other allied knots be unravelled. Nature the Sphinx has set the problem before us and we have to answer it here and now, if humanity is to be saved and welded together into a harmonious whole for a divine purpose.

VANSITTARTISM

Germany is considered now, and naturally with great reason, as the arch criminal among nations. Such megalomania, such lust for wanton cruelty, such wild sadism, such abnormal velleities no people, it is said, have ever evinced anywhere on the face of the earth: the manner and the extent of it all are appalling. Hitler is not the malady; removal of the Fuehrer will not cure Germany. The man is only a sign and a symbol. The whole nation is corrupt to the core: it has been inoculated with a virus that cannot be eradicated. The peculiar German character that confronts and bewilders us now, is not a thing of today or even of yesterday; it has been there since Tacitus remarked it. Even Germans themselves know it very well; the best among them have always repudiated their mother country. Certainly there were peoples and nations that acted at times most barbarously and inhumanly. The classical example of the Spanish Terror in America is there. But all pales into insignificance when compared to the German achievement and ideal in this respect. For here is a people violent and cruel, not simply because it is their character to be so and they delight in being so, but because it forms the bedrock of their philosophy of life, their weltanschauung.

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This is the very core of the matter. Germany stands for a philosophy of life, for a definite mode of human values. That philosophy was slowly developed, elaborated by the German mind, in various degrees and in various ways through various thinkers and theorists and moralists and statesmen, sometimes consciously, sometimes⁶⁹ unconsciously. The conception of the State as propounded even by her great philosophers as something self-existent, sacrosanct and almost divine—august and grim, one has to add—is profoundly significant of the type of the subconscious dynamic in the nation: it strangely reminds one of the state organised by the bee, the ant or the termite. Hitler has only precipitated the idea, given it a concrete, physical and dynamic form. That philosophy in its outlook has been culturally anti-Latin, religiously anti-Christian. Germany cherishes always in her heart the memory of the day when her hero Arminius routed the Roman legions of Varus. Germany stands for a mode of human consciousness that is not in line with the major current of its evolutionary growth: she harks back to something primeval, infra-rational, infra-human.

Such is the position taken up by Sir Vansittart who has given his name to the new ideology of anti-Germanism. Vansittartism (at least in its extreme variety) has very little hope for the mending of Germany, it practically asks for its ending.

A son of the soil, an eminent erstwhile collaborator of Hitler, who has paid for his apostasy, offered a compromise solution. He says, Germany, as a matter of fact, is not one but two: there is the Eastern Germany (the Northern and the Eastern portion) and there is the Western Germany (the South and the West) and the two are distinct and different—even antagonistic—in temperament and character and outlook. The Western Germany is the true Germany, the Germany of light and culture, the Germany that produced the great musicians, poets and idealists, Goethe and Heine and Wagner and Beethoven. The other Germany represents the dark shadow. It is Prussia and Prussianised Germany. This Germany originally belonged to the bleak wild savage barbarous East Europe and was never thoroughly reclaimed and its union with the Western half was more political than psychological. So this ex-lieutenant of Hitler proposed to divide and separate the two altogether and form two countries or nations and thus eliminate the evil influence of Prussianism and Junkerism.

The more democratic and liberal elements among the Allies do not also consider that Germany as a whole is smitten with an original sin and is beyond redemption. They say Germany too has men and groups of men who are totally against Hitler and Hitlerism;⁷⁰ they may have fallen on evil days, but yet they can be made the nucleus of

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a new and regenerated Germany. Furthermore they say if Germany has come to be what she is, considerable portion of the responsibility must be shared by the unprogressive and old-world elements among the Allies themselves who helped or pitied or feared the dark Germany.

Hence it is suggested that for the post-war reconstruction of Germany what is required is the re-education of its people. For, only a psychological change can bring about a durable and radical change. But certain proposals towards this end raise considerable misgivings, since they mean iron regimentation under foreign control. Even if such a thing were possible and feasible, it is doubtful if the purpose could be best served in this way. Measures have to be taken, no doubt, to uproot Prussianism and Junkerism and prevent their revival, no false mercy or sympathy should be extended to the enemies of God and man. But this is only a negative step, and cannot be sufficient by itself. A more positive and more important work lies ahead. The re-education of Germany must come from within, if it is to be permanent and effective. What others can do is to help her in this new orientation. As we have said there are the progressive elements in Germany too, although submerged for the moment. The task of reconstruction will precisely consist in calling up and organising and marshalling these forces that are for the Light. The Allied organisation, it may be noted, itself has grown up in this way. When one remembers how Britain stood alone at one time against the all-sweeping victorious march of the Titan, how slowly and gradually America was persuaded to join hands, at first in a lukewarm way, finally with all its heart and soul and might and main, how a new France is being built up out of a mass of ruins, we can hope that the same process will be adopted in the work that lies ahead even after victory, with regard to Italy and with regard to Germany. In the second case the task is difficult but it has got to be done.

A⁷¹ LETTER TO A DISCIPLE

To find the Divine is indeed the first reason for seeking the spiritual Truth and the spiritual life; it is the one thing indispensable and all the rest is nothing without it. The Divine once found, to manifest Him,—that is, first of all to transform one's own limited consciousness into the Divine Consciousness, to live in the infinite Peace, Light, Love, Strength, Bliss, to become that in one's essential nature and, as a consequence, to be its vessel, channel, instrument in one's active nature. To bring into activity the principle of oneness on the material plane or to work for humanity is a mental mistranslation of the Truth—these things cannot be the first or true object of spiritual seeking. We must find the Self, the Divine, then only can we know what is the work the Self or the Divine demands from us. Until then our life and action can only be a help or

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means towards finding the Divine and it ought not to have any other purpose. As we grow in the inner consciousness, or as the spiritual Truth of the Divine grows in us, our life and action must indeed more and more flow from that, be one with that. But to decide beforehand by our limited mental conceptions what they must be is to hamper the growth of the spiritual Truth within. As that grows we shall feel the Divine Light and Truth, the Divine Power and Force, the Divine Purity and Peace working within us, dealing with our actions as well as our consciousness, making use of them to reshape us into the Divine Image, removing the dross, substituting the pure gold of the Spirit. Only when the Divine Presence is there in us always and the consciousness transformed, can we have the right to say that we are ready to manifest the Divine on the material plane. To hold up a mental ideal or principle and impose that on the inner working brings the danger of limiting ourselves to a mental realisation or of impeding or even falsifying by a half-way formation the true growth into the full communion and union with the Divine and the free and intimate outflowing of His will in our life. This is a mistake of orientation to which the mind of to-day is especially prone. It is far better to approach the Divine for the Peace or Light or Bliss that the realisation of Him gives than to bring in these⁷² minor things which can divert us from the one thing needful. The divinisation of the material life also as well as the inner life is part of what we see as the Divine Plan, but it can only be fulfilled by an outflowing of the inner realisation, something that grows from within outwards, not by the working out of a mental principle.

* * *

You have asked what is the discipline to be followed in order to convert the mental seeking into a living spiritual experience. The first necessity is the practice of concentration of your consciousness within yourself. The ordinary human mind has an activity on the surface which veils the real self. But there is another, a hidden consciousness within behind the surface one in which we can become aware of the real self and of a larger deeper truth of nature, can realise the self and liberate and transform the nature. To quiet the surface mind and begin to live within is the object of this concentration. Of this true consciousness other than the superficial there are two main centres, one in the heart (not the physical heart, but the cardiac centre in the middle of the chest), one in the head. The concentration in the heart opens within and by following this inward opening and going deep one becomes aware of the soul or psychic being, the divine element in the individual. This being unveiled begins to come forward, to govern the nature, to turn it and all its movements towards the Truth, towards the Divine, and to call down into it all that is above. It brings the consciousness of the Presence, the dedication of the being to the Highest and invites the descent into our nature of a greater Force and Consciousness which is waiting above us.

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To concentrate in the heart centre with the offering of oneself to the Divine and the aspiration for this inward opening and for the Presence in the heart is the first way and, if it can be done, the natural beginning; for its result once obtained makes the spiritual path far more easy and safe than if one begins the other way.

That other way is the concentration in the head, in the mental centre. This, if it brings about the silence of the surface mind, opens up an inner, larger, deeper mind within which is more capable of receiving spiritual experience and spiritual knowledge. But once concentrated here one must open the silent mental consciousness upward to all that is above mind. After a time one feels the consciousness rising upward and in the end it rises beyond ⁷³the lid which has so long kept it tied in the body and finds a centre above the head where it is liberated into the Infinite. There it begins to come into contact with the universal Self, the Divine Peace, Light, Power, Knowledge, Bliss, to enter into that and become that, to feel the descent of these things into the nature. To concentrate in the head with the aspiration for quietude in the mind and the realisation of the Self and Divine above is the second way of concentration. It is important, however, to remember that the concentration of the consciousness in the head is only a preparation for its rising to the centre above; otherwise one may get shut up in one's own mind and its experiences or at best attain only to a reflection of the Truth above instead of rising into the spiritual transcendence to live there. For some the mental concentration is easier, for some the concentration in the heart centre; some are capable of doing both alternately—but to begin with the heart centre, if one can do it, is the more desirable.

The other side of discipline is with regard to the activities of the nature, of the mind, of the life-self or vital, of the physical being. Here the principle is to accord the nature with the inner realisation so that one may not be divided into two discordant parts. There are here several disciplines or processes possible. One is to offer all the activities to the Divine and call for the inner guidance and the taking up of one's nature by a Higher Power. If there is the inward soul-opening, if the psychic being comes forward, then there is no great difficulty—there comes with it a psychic discrimination, a constant intimation, finally a governance which discloses and quietly and patiently removes all imperfections, brings the right mental and vital movements and reshapes the physical consciousness also. Another method is to stand back detached from the movements of the mind, life, physical being, to regard their activities as only a habitual formation of general Nature in the individual imposed on us by past workings, not as any part of our real being; in proportion as one succeeds in this, becomes detached, sees mind and its activities as not oneself, life and its activities as not oneself, one becomes aware of an inner Being within us—inner mental, inner vital, inner physical—silent, calm, unbound, unattached which reflects the true Self above and can be its direct

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representative; from this inner silent Being proceeds a rejection of⁷⁴ all that is to be rejected, an acceptance only of what can be kept and transformed, an inmost will to perfection or a call to the Divine Power to do at each step what is necessary for the change of the Nature. It can also open mind, life and body to the inmost psychic entity and its guiding influence and guidance. In most cases these two methods emerge and work together and finally fuse into one. But one can begin with either, the one that one feels most natural and easy to follow.

Finally, in all difficulties where personal effort is hampered the help of the Teacher can intervene and bring about what is needed for the realisation or for the immediate step that is necessary.

— *Sri Aurobindo*

At a certain stage in the Yoga when the mind is sufficiently quieted and no longer supports itself at every step on the sufficiency of its mental certitudes, when the vital has been steadied and subdued and is no longer constantly insistent on its own rash will, demand and desire, when the physical has been sufficiently altered not to bury altogether the inner flame under the mass of its outwardness, obscurity or inertia, an inmost being hidden within and felt only in its rare influences is able to come forward and illumine the rest and take up the lead of the sadhana. Its character is one-pointed orientation towards the Divine or the Highest, one-pointed and yet plastic in action and movement; it does not create a rigidity of direction like the one-pointed intellect or a bigotry of the regnant idea or impulse like the one-pointed vital force; it is at every moment and with a supple sureness that it points the way to the Truth, automatically distinguishes the right step from the false, extricates the Divine or Godward movement from the clinging mixture of the undivine.

— (*From Sri Aurobindo's "The Yoga of Divine Works"*).

QUATRAINS

DEDICATED⁷⁵ TO THE MOTHER

I

I was searching for my fortune's rising star,
But in the heavens could not find its trace:
And how to find it? On a level par
It was smiling sweetly on the Mother's face.

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A LETTER TO A DISCIPLE

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II

A lotus creeper wonderful Thou art,
Mother Divine, born in life's lucky pool:
Thy face, eyes, hands, feet are all like Thy heart,
Enchanting lotus-blooms all-beautiful.

III

What was love like we knew not, Mother, till
We found it in They person facing us:
Oh, how it's all tenderness and blissful smile
And all about it is miraculous!

IV

Heaven desired earth's long-lost comradeship,
It called her from above but earth too slow
Responded not; so it came down to keep
Its promise and settled on the Mother's brow.

V

Too far, too high, Sweet Mother, Thy abode
Of Bliss eternal for weak man's desire.
We need pine no longer now, O Grace of God,
Since Thou Thyself art here, O Bliss entire!

VI

Dost⁷⁶ Thou precede the call or follow it? –
Sweet Mother, it confounds my thinking part;
For ere Thy name addressing lips doth quit,
The movement of Thy Presence stirs my heart.

VII

The more I take Thy name the more in me

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Awakes the dormant spark of love divine,
And out from choking smoke adoringly
Lifts up its flame of worship to Thy shrine.

VIII

Each time, Sweet Mother, that Thy holy name
Emerges from my heart and leaves for Thee,
A nameless something comes in bright as flame
And settles in my soul delightingly.

IX

I was a dead thing moving like a ghost
In a dark world where reigned Death's tyranny,
Till Love was born as Thou, Beloved most,
Whose Name brought me resurrection's ecstasy.

X

There is no music sweeter than the one
Which echoes in my being when I repeat
The rune-word of Thy Name in a love-steeped tone,
And in unison with which heart starts to beat.

— Punjalal

THE⁷⁷ NEW YEAR INITIATION

"O Lord, the world implores Thee to prevent it from falling back always into the same stupidities.

"Grant that the mistakes recognised may never be renewed.

"Grant, lastly, that its actions may be the exact and sincere expression of its proclaimed ideals."

This is the New Year Prayer the Mother has formulated for our sake. This is the turn She would have us give to our sadhana for the year. What is the special import of this new orientation? It is, one may say, to direct our efforts towards an objective expression, towards an application to life on the material plane.

One starts on the path of sadhana with an almost entire unconsciousness – it is so in all evolutionary process. A goal is there, vague and indistinct, far off. Within him also the sadhaka feels an equally indefinite and undefinable urge, he seems to move without any fixed aim or purpose, with an urge simply to move and move on. This is what he feels as a yearning, as an aspiration – *charaivete*, as the Upanishad says. Then step by step as he progresses, his consciousness grows luminous, the aim also begins to take a clear and definite shape. The mind is able slowly to understand and grasp what it wants, the heart's yearning and attraction also begin to be transparent, quiet but deep. But this cannot be called a change of nature, let alone transformation. Then only will our nature consent really to change when we become, when even our sense-organs become subject to our inner consciousness, when our actions and activities are inspired, guided and formed by the power and influence of this inner light.

In the beginning, the sadhak finds himself a divided personality – in his heart there is the awakening of aspiration, the divine touch, but with all its outward impulses, the physical consciousness remains subject to the control of old fixed habits, under the sway of the lower nature. Ordinarily, man is an unconscious sinner, that is to say, he has no sense of what sins he commits. But he becomes a conscious sinner when he reaches the level of which we are speaking. The conflicts, fears, agonies, compunctions in this stage have perhaps been nowhere more evident than in the life of the Christian seeker. In this state we know what to do but cannot do it – the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. We want to do the right thing, we try to do it again and again, yet we fail every time. It is not that we fail only in respect of the movements of our heart and mind, in practice also we commit the same stupidities time and again. These stupidities – and their name is legion – are lust, anger, greed, ignorance, vanity, envy, distrust, disobedience, revolt; repentance, constant repentance and earnest supplication for the divine grace – that is the remedy, says the devout Christian.

But⁷⁸ we, for ourselves, do not give any such supreme place to repentance. For, after all, it is a lower impulse, a vital impulse as we call it: it does not allow the memory of the sin to be forgotten; rather by dwelling upon it constantly, it keeps it alive, makes the impression of the sin all the more lurid. And not unoften does it lead to luxuriating in sinfulness. Behind the sense of repentance is this consciousness, this idea that man is, by nature, corrupt, his sin is original. That is why the Christian seeker has accepted sorrow and suffering, abasement and mortification as the indispensable conditions of his sadhana. This calls to our mind a witty remark of Anatole France, that prince of humorists, that one could not be a lover of Christ unless one sinned – the more one sinned, the more could one grow in righteousness; the more the sin, the more the repentance, in other words, the more the divine grace.

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We have said that this is not our path. The divine grace is a fact—without that nothing is possible. From one point of view, the divine grace is unconditioned. But it does not follow that the precedent of Jagai-Madhai is the invariable law of spiritual life. The law is rather this that the field must be ready, the being and the consciousness must get into a certain mould, attain certain order and disposition so that the descent of the Divine Grace, its manifestation and play may be possible. For, just as the divine grace is true, so is it equally true that the individual is essentially one with the Divine, sin and ignorance are his external sloughs, identity with the Divine is his natural right. We, therefore, lay equal stress on this hidden aspect of man, on the freedom of his will, on his personal effort which is the determining factor of his destiny. For in the field of ignorance or half-knowledge, in the nether hemisphere of his consciousness, it is this power that directly builds up that ordered state of the being with whose support the divine grace can fulfil itself and give a material shape to the integral fulfilment.

Hence the Mother gives the direction that though external lapses may be natural to our external nature, now that our inner consciousness has awakened, the vision and the earnestness to see and recognise our mistakes have developed—assuming that this much of development has taken place in us—we must awake to the situation and be on the alert, we must bring such control to bear upon our vital impulses, upon our nervous centres as will prevent, for good and all, errors and stupidities from upsurging again and invading our physical self and our field of action. When we have reached this stage, we have acquired the capacity to ascend to another level of consciousness. It is then that we can lay the foundations of a new order in the world—it is then that along with the purification, the achievement too will begin to take on a material form.

(2)

The scope of this New Year Prayer does not limit itself only to our individual sadhana—it embraces also the collective consciousness which is specially the field of its application. It is the muffled voice of entire humanity in its secret aspiration that is given expression here. It is by the power of this mantra, protected by this invulnerable armour,—if we choose to accept it as such,—that the collective life of man will attain its fulfilment. We have repeatedly⁷⁹ stated that the outstanding feature of the modern world is that it has become a Kurukshetra of Gods and Titans. It is no doubt an eternal truth of creation, this conflict between the divine and the anti-divine, and it has been going on in the heart of humanity since its advent upon earth. In the inner life of the world this is a fact of the utmost importance, its most significant principle and mystery. Still it must be said that never in the annals of the physical world has this truth taken

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such momentous proportions as in the grim present. It is pregnant with all good and evil that may make or mar human destiny in the near future. Whether man will transcend his half-animal state and rise to the full height of his manhood, nay even to the godhead in him, or descend back to the level of his gross brute nature—this is the problem of problems which is being dealt with and solved in the course of the mighty holocaust of the present world war.

In her last year's message the Mother gave a clear warning that we must have no more hesitation, that we must renounce one side, free ourselves from all its influence and embrace the other side without hesitation, without reservation. At the decisive moment in the life of the world and of mankind, one must definitely, irrevocably choose one's loyalty. It will not do to say, like the overwise and the overliberal, that both sides are equal—equally right or equally wrong—and that we can afford to be outside or above the prejudices or interests of either. There is no room today for a neutral. He who pretends to be a neutral is an enemy to the cause of truth. Whoever is not with us is against us.

We who have taken the side that is for Light and Evolution and the great Future, must be thoroughly alive to the heavy responsibility that lies on us. The choice of the path is not by itself sufficient. Next to that, we have to see, at every step, and make sure that we are really walking straight along the true path, that we do not fall and slip down, that we do not stray unawares into a wrong track or a blind alley.

So far as the World War is concerned, all nations and peoples and groups on our side who have felt and proclaimed that they stand for equality, fraternity and freedom, the priests and prophets of a new future, of a happier humanity, all such warriors are also facing a solemn ordeal. For them also the time has come to be on their guard and be watchful. They must see that they give exact expression in their actions to what they have thought, felt and proclaimed. They have to prove by every means, by thought, word and deed, that their whole being is really one, whole and indivisible, in ideal and in intention.

Today at the beginning of the new year we have to bear in mind what aim, what purpose inspired us to enter into this tremendous "terrible work", what force, what strength has been leading us to victory. They who consider themselves as collaborators in the progressive evolution of nature must constantly realise the truth that if victory has come within the range of possibility, it has done so in just proportion to their sincerity, by the magic grace of the Mahashakti, the grace which the aspiration of their inner consciousness has called down. And what is now but possible will grow into the actual if we keep moving along the path we have so far followed. Otherwise, if we falter, fail and break faith, if we relapse into the old accustomed track, if under pressure

of⁸⁰ past habits, under the temptation of immediate, selfish gain, under the sway of narrow, parochial egoism, we suppress or maim the wider consciousness of our inner being or deny it in one way or another, then surely we shall wheel back and fall into the clutches of those very hostile powers which it has been our determined effort to overthrow. Even if we gain on outward victory it will be a disastrous, moral and spiritual defeat. That will mean a tragic reversal – to be compelled to begin again from the very beginning. Nature will not be baulked of her aim. Another travail she will have to undergo and that will be far more agonising and terrible.

But we do not expect such a catastrophe. We have hope and confidence that the secret urge of nature, the force of the Mahashakti will save man, individually and collectively, from ignorance and foolishness, vouchsafe to him genuine good sense and the true inspiration.

– *Translated from the Bengali of Nolinikanta Gupta.*

All forms of life that cannot bear the change must disappear, all that can bear it will survive and enter into the Kingdom of Spirit. A Divine Force is at work and will choose at each moment what has to be done or has not to be done, what has to be momentarily or permanently taken up, momentarily or permanently abandoned. For provided we do not substitute for it our desire or our ego, and to that end the soul must be always awake, always on guard, alive to the divine guidance, resistant to the undivine misleading from within or without us, that force is sufficient and alone competent and she will lead us to the fulfilment along ways and by means too large, too inward, too complex for the mind to follow, much less to dictate. It is an arduous and difficult and dangerous way, but there is none other.

Two rules there are that will diminish the difficulty and obviate the danger. One must reject all that comes from the ego, from vital desire, from the mere mind and its presumptuous reasoning, incompetence, all that ministers to these agents of the Ignorance. One must learn to hear and follow the voice of the inmost soul, the direction of the Guru, the command of the Master, the working of the Divine Mother. Whoever clings to the desires and weaknesses of the flesh, the cravings and passions of the vital in its turbulent ignorance, the dictates of his personal mind unsilenced and unilluminated by a greater knowledge, cannot find the true inner law and is heaping obstacles in the way of the divine fulfilment. Whoever is able to detect and renounce those obscuring agencies and to discern and follow the true Guide within and without, will discover the spiritual law and reach the goal of the Yoga.

– From Sri Aurobindo's "The Yoga of Divine Works."

THE ⁸¹STATUS OF MAN

The keynote of our ancient culture was the high status it gave to man. The great sayings of our ancient Rishis, "(Hindi passage omitted here)" indicate their fundamental belief that man in his essence is Divine. The Gita also, by repeating such expressions as "(Hindi passage omitted here)" etc. points out that the true nature of man is Divine. The Gita, moreover, is a Yogasastra, and *yoga* means in the Gita union with God. At the end of every chapter of the Gita there occur the words "(Hindi passage omitted here)" etc., which are a constant reminder to us that the Gita is essentially a Yogasastra, that is, a science which has for its object the union of man with God. But union with God means also detachment from material objects and selfish ends, and therefore the word 'yoga' acquires the secondary meaning of absolute disinterestedness, complete freedom from the sway of desires and passions. On this is based the Gita's moral philosophy, the keynote of which is expressed in the advice of Lord Krishna to Arjuna: "(Hindi passage omitted here)" (III. 19). Disinterested actions, however, are not only ethically the highest, but in the practical sphere also they are the most effective. "(Hindi passage omitted here)" In this way the Gita develops its ethical philosophy, at the root of which is the idea of the essential Divinity of man.

Thus we see that the essence of the teaching of our ancient sages is that man is Divine. The greatest fact about man is that he is more than man. Nothing short of complete attainment of Divinity can satisfy him. If he fixes his goal at a lower height, he stultifies himself, he cripples his nature, he proves false to himself. This idea of the essential Divinity of man is our greatest contribution to world culture.

In the West also we have this appreciation of the Divine status of man, but it is somewhat obscured by other tendencies. In Greek philosophy, for example, there were two main currents of thought which flowed side by side. One was transcendentalism which fixed its eye upon God and refused to accept the world at its face value. The other was humanism which looked at the world from the standpoint of man, the creed of which was the celebrated dictum of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things." On a superficial view, humanism might seem to give man a higher status than transcendentalism, for it places man in the centre of the universe, whereas transcendentalism, with its gaze directed towards the far-away, seems to show contempt for man and his petty affairs. But the reverse is the truth. It is transcendentalism that discovers in man the potentialities that lie hidden in him. It is transcendentalism that reveals to him his higher destiny. Humanism, on the other hand, cannot look far beyond the present condition of man. It seeks more or less to perpetuate his present institutions, such as the family, the State, etc. It cannot

contemplate a radical change in the nature of man which may make these institutions an anachronism. This is exactly what is to be expected. If you look at man purely from the human point⁸² of view, you miss those features which link him with what is Divine. The details of his present position loom so large as to obscure the view of his potentialities that are yet to be unfolded. Paradoxical as it may sound, humanism cannot do justice to humanity. Greek philosophy is generally supposed to have given us as its chief gift humanism. But if it had merely done this, it would not have been the civilizing force that it has been and that it is even to-day. Its greatness lies in another direction. It is in the glimpse that it has given us of the higher world, it is in the picture that it has drawn of the philosopher, the man who, still remaining man, is "a spectator of all time and all existence" and has a vision of the idea of the good, that it has established its title to immortality. The humanism of Comte and Mill was a poor imitation of Greek philosophy, for it copied only the superficial aspects of that philosophy and lacked those essential features of it which made it one of the greatest spiritualising influences of the world. It has shared therefore the fate of all poor imitations; it rests in the dustheap of forgotten theories.

Coming to modern times, we find the philosophy of Kant giving man a unique status in the realm of his moral life. He is autonomous, he is self-legislative. His own law of Reason is the only law which is unconditionally binding upon him. He respects his humanity by rendering implicit obedience to it. Any other conduct, any conduct which subjects him to the rule of anything other than Reason, makes him unworthy of being called man.

This view no doubt gives man a unique status. But the question is: Does it confer Divinity upon him? Most assuredly not. His own Reason is his standard, his own law alone is binding upon him. In spite of his vaunted freedom, he is really a prisoner in his own house, a home *detenu*, to use a term with which, alas, we are only too familiar to-day. He cannot escape his own enchanted circle. He is, as it were, eternally condemned to pursue his own shadow. To talk of his Divinity, therefore, is out of the question.

Kant has failed therefore to give man a Divine status, although he has undoubtedly given him a status which he has clearly differentiated from that of objects in the physical universe. His philosophy is an apt illustration of the truth that it is necessary to free oneself even from freedom. If freedom means realization of one's difference from the physical universe, then there is a higher realization where even this freedom is to be sacrificed for the sake of solidarity with the whole universe. This truth, in fact, is what the Gita illustrates in the eleventh chapter. What is the necessity of showing Arjuna the Lord's Visva-rupa? It is to remove all lingering traces of

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subjectivism or egoism from his mind. The instruction that Arjuna had already received in the previous chapters was sufficient to give him an idea of his own fundamental difference from the world of physical objects, that is to say, to teach him, in the language of Kant, that he was a free cause. But that instruction is not enough. It is necessary to give him an ocular demonstration of the fact that his true self is the Cosmic Self, and that unless he realizes that, he does not know what he really is. Not merely should he realize his difference from the physical objects, but he should also realize his oneness with the whole universe, including the physical.

Without⁸³ this realization of the Cosmic Self, man cannot understand his Divinity. It is here that the Kantian philosophy fails. Its mistake lies in isolating man from the rest of the universe. As Nikolai Hartmann has very clearly shown, the chief error of Kant lies in thinking that the *a priori* is subjective and not objective. Kant probably felt that what was the subject's very own, namely the *a priori*, he could not possibly share with the rest of the universe. But the opposite is the truth. The '*a priori*' is objective and not subjective. What man cannot share with the rest of creation is not truth but a product of his egoistic fancy. His moral law, if it is merely *his* law, is not a law at all, that is to say, not a universal principle.

Escape from the Kantian error is only possible if it is clearly recognized that man can only attain Divinity by getting rid of this subjectivity which erects a barrier between him and the universe. But it is equally important to bear in mind that man's individuality is to be maintained. Otherwise we may gain objectivity but may lose man. This is in fact what has actually happened in all pantheistic systems, such as, for example, that of Spinoza or Schelling, where the all-embracing Logos leaves no room for the individuality of man. The Hegelian conception of self-realization as the goal of man is free from this defect, provided, however, that the Self which Hegel puts forward as the fulfilment of the process of self-realization can really in any intelligible sense be looked upon as man's self. But of this we are not quite sure. It is very doubtful whether the Hegelian Absolute can really be regarded as the complete fulfilment of man's self, for it does not possess any of the distinguishing features of the latter. The same difficulty occurs in a more aggravated form in connection with the Absolute of Bradley, for this Absolute is explicitly declared to be not a Self, for a Self can never be anything, according to him, but an appearance.

Therefore neither the Kantian nor the Hegelian nor the Bradleyan system gives man the possibility of attaining a Divine status. When we come to the philosophy of Bergson, we find that he gives man the power of apprehending truth through intuition. He believes that the intuitive power of man has no limit, and although he does not explicitly say so, there is a tacit recognition in his philosophy of different grades of

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intuition. There is, for example, at one end the mystic's intuition of God which represents the highest intuition of reality, and there is at the other end the ordinary intuition of our daily life, which enables us no doubt to enter into the hearts of things but divides the world into an infinite number of particular things. Between these two extremes there are innumerable grades.

The question, however, for us is: Does this view give man the power of attaining Divinity? At the highest point no doubt, in the mystic's ecstasy, it gives man a peep into the nature of the Divine. But the mystic cannot remain long at this peak of consciousness, and for the rest of his life he gropes, like others, more or less in darkness. There is nothing in Bergson's philosophy to show that man is progressively rising from a lower to a higher status. In fact, from the Bergsonian point of view, the words 'lower' and 'higher' have no meaning, for evolution has no end, no goal or destination. It is only in relation to a definite goal or end that one thing can be⁸⁴ said to be higher or lower than another. Where there is no goal to be reached but only an eternal movement, all such distinctions as higher and lower, better and worse lose all their meaning.

In Nikolai Hartmann's philosophy of values, man occupies a unique position which clearly differentiates him from the rest of creation. For he is not only the seer and appreciator of values, but in one sphere he is also the agency through which values realize themselves. This sphere is the sphere of moral life. Here man is the sole medium through which values can get a chance of being realized. But for him they would have had no chance of projecting themselves into the world of existents. But for him they would have been like lampless pilgrims wandering from land to land without getting any footing anywhere. He can withhold values for any length of time from manifesting themselves in the universe. He can stop thus the progress of the world at his own sweet will.

But does this show that he is Divine? Man, by the possession of this power of making or marring the progress of the world, undoubtedly shows that he is very powerful, but does not establish his claim to Divinity. If mere possession of power could confer Divinity, then the Asuras would attain Divinity sooner than the Devas, for they are often more powerful. Unless power is joined to goodness, it has no spiritual quality. Hartmann, however, unlike Socrates, does not believe in the essential goodness of man. For him it is quite possible for man to be deliberately wicked.

Far be it from me to underrate the importance of the status which Hartmann has given to man. It is no doubt a great thing that man is not regarded as a mere plaything of natural forces, but on the contrary, is credited with the power of making or marring

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the world. But I think it is possible to exaggerate its importance. When Hartmann says, (*Ethics*, Vol. I, p. 243), "The cosmic insignificance of man is not the last word; besides the ontological there is still an axiological determination of the world, and in this, man plays an integrating role. In this his insignificance is overborne—without a reintroduction of anthropocentric megalomania. Man, a vanishing quantity in the universe, is still in his own way stronger than it: he is the vehicle of a higher principle, he is the creator of a reality which possesses significance and value, he transmits to the real world a higher worth. Nature is bound down to its own laws; man alone carries in himself a higher law, whereby he—or more correctly the law through him—creates in the world, or from Non-Being brings forth into Being that which was prefigured in its ideality," we may agree with him, provided we remember that the creation he speaks of, the bringing forth of Being out of Non-Being, is only a transfer from the domain of the ideal to that of the actual. But when he further says, "We may name this rehabilitation of man the miracle of the ethical phenomenon; it is the sublime in him, that which verily lifts him above his own mere existence in the world," we feel reluctantly compelled to observe that he is carried too far by his enthusiasm for the role of man as creator. For, as we have already explained this rôle as expounded by Hartmann cannot give man any sublimity, although it gives him enormous power.

It is of course the first step towards Divinity. Unless man can maintain himself⁸⁵ in the midst of physical forces, there is no possibility of any spiritual life, not to speak of Divine life, for him. But it is no more than the first step. Kant, however, could not advance beyond this, and so, too, Hartmann. The only point where Hartmann's philosophy is superior to Kant's is in his recognition of the objectivity of the moral law, that is to say, in his realization that the only way in which a man can be moral is to get out of his private world and plant himself in the objective sphere.

If man were to stop here, he would make a very poor show. His fate would of course be better than that of the animal kingdom, but it would not be a millionth part of what he is capable of becoming. It is curious that with all their vaunted theories about the Divinity of man, the modern Western philosophers have not been able to give man a higher status than this.

The cause of their failure is their defective theories of evolution. Either evolution is conceived by them as purely mechanical, and then there can of course be no talk of any Divinity of man or when it is viewed as spiritual, the essence of spirituality is conceived as consisting in a complete severance from the physical. It is for this reason that the spiritual view of the West leaves man hanging in mid-air. He is cut off from the physical world and at the same time he is separated from the Divine. He receives no doubt the Victoria Cross of a free cause (Kant) or of a creator (Hartmann), but this cross

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is really a cross of humiliation and a perpetual reminder to him that thus far he can go and no further.

What is the solution? Well, the solution lies to use the words of Nietzsche in an “Umwertung aller Werte” in the theory of evolution, that is to say, in a radical change in the conception of evolution. Evolution does not mean any sundering of the lower principles from the higher, but a transformation of the lower into the higher. Man need not be cut off from the material and the vital world; it is doing him no honour to so cut him off. He does not rise to his status as man by severing his connection with the physical and the vital, but by transforming them in the light of the principle that is working in him. So too, the higher movements of evolution do not by-pass man but carry him with them, so that the Divine is nothing but a Transformed Man, a Perfected Man.

Unless this essential feature of evolution, that is to say, descent of the higher into the lower principles and integration of the former with the latter, is understood, man cannot be given the status that is his due. The Kantian and the Hartmannian conception of spiritual evolution would leave man stranded on an island, cut off alike from the lower regions of matter and life and the higher regions of the Spirit. The Hegelian conception no doubt preserves man’s continuity with the Spirit, but it is like the river continuing in the ocean, where continuity is maintained at the sacrifice of all individuality. These conceptions of evolution do justice neither to man nor to the Spirit. Not to man, for man is forever shut out from all possibility of rising to the higher realms of the Spirit. Nor also to the Spirit, because the Spirit would not be able to maintain contact with all the different levels, but would have to drop one by one all the lower levels in its onward march to the higher.

Man⁸⁶ is what he shall be. His truth lies in front of him, not behind him. It is in what he is to become, it is in his destiny, that his true status lies. His destiny is to become more than man, to become a Divine Man or a Gnostic Being, as Sri Aurobindo puts it. The function of religion is to keep burning within man the consciousness of his higher destiny. True religion, therefore, can never tie man down to any particular level of evolution or any particular type of consciousness. It can therefore neither be, as I have explained in a recent article,* a religion of humanity or a religion of man or a religion of mysticism. We may, of course, if we like, call it a religion of man, provided we understand clearly that by man we mean not man as he is, but man as he *shall be*, as he is destined to be, that is to say, the Superman.

— S.K. Maitra.

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THE STATUS OF MAN

* Vide my article Sri Aurobindo and the Religion of the Future in ‘Sri Aurobindo Patha Mandir’ Annual for 1943.

...Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God? For if evolution is the progressive manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realisation of that which she secretly is. We cannot, then, bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the Rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond. If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth.

(From Sri Aurobindo's "The Life Divine.")

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY AND WHO IS A PHILOSOPHER?

Philosophy⁸⁷, we to-day agree, is concerned with the fullest, deepest and widest interpretation of experience. It refuses to work under the limitations, which science voluntarily imposes upon herself. Now our ordinary experience presents to us many things in mutual action and reaction. Psychologically considered and stated a human individual at the adult stage sets as over against his self a not-self. His self consists of a number of instincts and habits organised into a few sentiments, which constitute a relatively unified whole. Similarly the not-self consists of a vast number of discrete objects which constitute *somehow* a single world. Thus the average waking experience of Homosapiens involves a plurality of presentations, which also possess a sort of unity. This unity, however, is a matter of progressive development. Even on the practical plane of life experience starts presenting difficulties, which compel solution through intellectual constructions. At the level of thought, however, the problem of resolving conflicts and contradictions presented by the developing experience becomes the whole problem of human understanding. Thus it is correct to say, as Sri Aurobindo observes, that "all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony," since whatever the kind of philosophical construction that a thinker be concerned with, he is, indeed, always anxious to present a self-consistent view of reality. He must, therefore, harmonise in his view all the apparently conflicting elements of experience. Thus the

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problem for philosophy, one might say, always is to discover the true *ONE* in place of the scrappy sort of *one* apparently given in experience. This true *one* must be a *one*, which will duly explain the *many* of actual experience. How to do it is the real task of each philosophical system.

Just as the history of philosophy, after long and varied attempts at constructing *weltans-chauungen*, to-day counts it as a general point gained that philosophy is an interpretation of experience, so is it a point equally well-established and after much ado that with regard to no general aspect of experience can really the position be taken that it is merely an illusion. The real responsibility of philosophy is to explain and not explain away. What is given in experience does not need to be granted existence by the philosopher. By the right of its presence in experience it exists. The question which the philosopher is really called upon to decide is that of its special role and relation in the total scheme of reality. That either the one is an illusion or the many is so is happily out of court for philosophy to-day.

Philosophy with the Greeks meant love and search for wisdom. Wisdom or truth of life and existence was the only condition of the philosopher's personality. Aristotle is amongst the Greeks already modern and a complete exception. Or it would be truer to say that modern knowledge lives, moves and has its being within the steel-frame provided ⁸⁸by Aristotle. The modern philosopher, of course, continues the ancient search for truth, but he is today equally insistent that the method adopted must be that of intellectual construction. The philosopher is, therefore, to-day a distinguished intellectual, who from given facts of experience and scientific conclusions is able to develop a consistent view of whole reality. In the scientific age the philosopher has really become a greater scientist and that is all. He has become a universal systematiser and reconciler. The history of philosophy knows of many brands of philosophers but the present philosopher is the most specialised of them all and will pass down as the child of scientific intellectualism.

Yet, surely, a philosopher qua philosopher can only admit of one conditioning and limitation, that of reality itself. His supreme interest and passion is the love and search for reality. The method of knowing or experiencing it cannot be a dictating pre-condition.

However, one further condition he has to recognise, namely whatever his view or vision of reality he must express it orally or in writing in terms as best understandable to the intellect as possible. The reason is obvious. When the philosopher states his view of reality, he does so for the general man, whose instrument of knowledge is intellect. Thus reality and next a rational expression of it are the only

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two conditions, which a philosopher can permit to qualify his search and seeking. A method in itself fine and precise may yet be ill-adapted to reality and will, therefore, naturally disappoint the philosopher, as it will give either a false reality or no reality, unless the philosopher himself is more in love with the method than reality itself. Kant strikes me as the classical example of this tragedy. He developed a fine instrument of knowledge, but while he thought it was of knowledge as such, it was, in fact, of scientific knowledge and the result is well-known; antinomies and agnosticism. As to method, therefore, the philosopher must remain free and allow reality to suggest its own method or methods.

Even contemporary psychology tends to militate against this modern ideal of a philosopher. Dispassionateness or impartiality in judgment is a cardinal principle of scientific observation and thinking. Philosophy rightly accepts the same. But the question is how is this quality to be acquired? Psychology tells us that the logical faculty tends to develop as a relatively separate function from about the stage of adolescence and through a special cultivation it can be exercised independently. Such intellect has evidently produced objective results in science. But in science external conditions and cooperative observation serve to eliminate whatever subjectivity may still be persisting in a scientist's work. Where wider hypotheses are concerned, as in modern physics, external checks are obviously of no avail. In philosophy the same is the case. Individual philosophers can easily follow their partialities and predilections. Personality and temperament have, therefore, become recognised determinants of philosophical thinking. But it appears to me that western philosophers in admitting personality and temperament in this connection have surrendered their claims of dispassionate knowledge too soon.

The question is, whether there is any method of freeing the human mind from the play of personal prejudices and predilections and making the instruments⁸⁹ of knowledge more dispassionate even for philosophical work where objective checks of scientific investigations are wanting. Of course the laws of thought themselves are the best safeguards of objectivity. But where the fundamental perception and the initial position are concerned those laws are no protection. Who knows how the initial sense of pessimism regarding life was determined in Schopenhauer. Of course, that given, later on it is all a work of elaboration and substantiation through intellectual work according to the rules of logic. But a philosopher as a seeker after truth and reality will be more interested in that initial perception rather than the subsequent elaboration. If that initial perception was determined by, let us say, dyspepsia, then we can admire his logical ability but will not trust his philosophy as a view of reality.

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Modern psychology has almost demonstratively shown how disturbances in emotional life affects a man's will and intellectual activity. In other words, conflicts of mental life are a source of danger, deflecting or tending to deflect a scientist or philosopher from an impartial exercise of reason. Of course if the conflicts are not too serious and the subject-matter under investigation is physical affording external checks, the thinking faculty can work, reliably enough, but in philosophy, where from inadequate data a view of the universe is sought to be constructed, the need for perfecting the human instrument of knowledge is much greater. A whole and a harmonious life, of which all the energies converge on the single point of seeking for reality is obviously the most necessary condition of the discovery of reality. In Indian life Yoga has gone closely together with philosophy. Perhaps Yoga was a propaedeutic to philosophy. Recalling Kant we might say, yes epistemology before metaphysics, but surely Yoga before both. By Yoga we mean essentially the instrument or art of self-perfection. It is the method of attaining to a harmonisation of the life's energies. There are, of course, Yogas and Yogas and Indian thought knows of a vast literature on the subject. But the writer has found in Sri Aurobindo's extensive writing in the 'Arya' entitled the 'Synthesis of Yoga' a profound and a comparative appraisal of the different systems resulting in the development of a comprehensive and a most illuminating system of his own, called by him the Integral Yoga.

When Yoga or a discipline for the harmonisation of life's energies comes to be recognised, we can hope to witness, in place of what we have to-day for philosophical seeking—an erratic vagary of individual idiosyncracies, a real progress towards a knowledge of reality. The association of Yoga with philosophy of India led to an interesting extension of experience, which philosophy is to interpret. Not only waking experience, but, more than that, the supra-intellectual or spiritual intuition was to determine the philosophical position of a philosopher. For that reason perhaps the Indian systems are called 'Darshanas.' It is a most interesting comparison between Western and Eastern systems of philosophy that whereas the former are in their initial stand ordinarily determined by the fact of temperament, the latter are governed by a fundamental realisation or intuition of reality. Fichte had declared so confidently 'Tell me the character of a man and I will state to you the philosophy that he is likely to have.' In India,⁹⁰ on the other hand, for Buddha or Shankara it was the nature of the spiritual realisations which determined their philosophies. In the case of Buddha the point can be perhaps more easily appreciated. His illumination under the Bodhi tree has been described as that of Nirvana *i.e.*, of cessation of the mental processus.....

This experience is obviously the original source and inspiration for the world-view that Buddha and Buddhism maintained. Take it away and the validity of the thought-structure of Buddhist philosophy becomes relatively difficult to appreciate. In

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the case of Shankara again a certain central realisation seems to provide the life-blood to the entire brilliant structure of thought. That realisation, to my mind, can best be represented in the famous aphorism. ("Hindi passage omitted here") Does the philosopher's entire exposition not breathe the spirit of this realisation as in Buddha it is that of Nirvana?

Now I feel persuaded to contend that where purely intellectual systems are concerned, as is generally the case in modern European philosophy, the fact of personal predilection as a fact of temperament is the first thing to determine in seeking to appraise philosophical thought-constructions. And where there are world-views which on the part of their authors seem to presuppose a spiritual discipline and the possibility of a supra-intellectual intuition or realisation, then such intuition or realisation is the first thing to characterise. It is also pretty obvious that what is in the experience of an individual a dominant and determining trend should be taken account of in understanding and explaining the thought-product of his experience. It can be admitted that there is difficulty in reducing this factor to logical terms. But surely we cannot afford to ignore such a fact either.

The effects of ignoring this fact have been pretty grievous. William James had sought to formulate his pragmatic method for resolving philosophical conflicts. However his attempt proved almost abortive. Often a student of philosophy, not only a general reader, experiences great perplexity. He sees arrayed before him in the history of philosophy a brilliant line of philosophers. Each one of them gives a portrait of reality. But each portrait is different while the object remains the same. And he finds most philosophers by themselves convincing. Now how is a student to recover the peace of his mind in this situation of perplexity? Is the nature of truth so elusive or is the portraying reason too confident? Perhaps both things are true. But if the philosophical systems are taken as logical constructions by themselves their mutual opposition becomes obvious and irresoluble.

Now if they were viewed in their proper relation with the temperamental fact or the initial perception, it could be probably more easily seen and appreciated why Leibnitz and Hegel presented such different philosophies.

And by a wide consideration of philosophers and philosophies, it may be possible to find out their mutual relations in the way of being supplementary or complementary or related in any other way of opposition. The story of the six blind men who went to see an elephant comes to me as illustrative of the situation. Surely, the quarrel amongst them, if they were left to themselves in the exclusive possession of their particular points of view, would be endless. It was only the realisation of the particular circumstances of each man's⁹¹ point of view that could create the possibility

of discovering the supplementary character of them all. Of course, in the story the seeing man, who knows the elephant as a whole, comes in to show to each blind man his partiality. Surely, we do not have a 'seeing' man amongst us to give us an idea of the whole elephant of reality. But even if there were one we could not easily accept him as a superior seeing man. However we do realise more or less the partialities of our points of view and we can appreciate more fully the particular circumstances of each philosopher's way of looking at reality and thereby better assess and appreciate his philosophy.

Similarly, in the case of Indian thinkers the specific spiritual realisations when considered together could perhaps show amongst them some relation and harmony. Sri Aurobindo, in fact, affirms such a thing. He states that spiritual realisations are of varying levels and degrees. From each successively higher status the lower positions become reconciled and understandable. Now from this point of view a possibility is immediately thrown out for discovering a true principle of reconciliation amongst the apparently conflicting world-views taken as pure thought-constructions.

Is this position the same as humanism? Surely not, since it does not question the possibility of objectivity in knowledge.

— *Indra Sen*

ON HUMILITY

Pride, arrogance and vanity—means man trying to impose his self-valuation on others. Humility means man allowing others to value himself without grudging.

* * * *

Pride, arrogance and vanity are, spiritually speaking, man's false proportions of himself: They make him look out of proportion and therefore produce spiritual ugliness.

Humility is the spiritual sense of proportion which is the source of true beauty.

* * * *

Humility is taking the wind out of ego's sail.

* * * *

True humility recognises God as the source of all power, all knowledge, all greatness: He who is humble does not appropriate the power of the Divine to himself.

* * * *

Humility abandons the ego-centric view of the world and life, and has therefore few complaints against universal arrangement.

It often ends by perceiving the hand of the Divine in the world and lives in heaven upon earth.

* * * *

The Consciousness Divine is high above man. It cannot enter into the human consciousness so long as it is filled with ego to overflowing.

Humility creates room for the Divine in man, (by reducing ego to its littleness.)

– *A.B. Purani*

INDIA⁹² IS ONE

II

The Vedic Aryans were yet in the midst of their victorious campaigns to Aryanise the whole of India and bring it within the unifying discipline of a common culture and civilisation, when rose the great king Bharata who, as mentioned in the Rig Veda, extended the Aryan supremacy over a vast territory and consolidated different parts of it into a regional entity bound by the dynamic influence of the Aryan ideals. It is from him that India derives her ancient name *Bharatavarsha*, just as Rome is derived from Romulus. To these Aryans came the earliest vision of the oneness of India expressed in the river-hymns of the Rig Veda. Even today the Hindus chant these hymns and recall and worship the image of their mother-country as the land of seven rivers which cover between them the whole of India. There is another prayer which conjures up the picture of India as the land of seven sacred cities representing the important regions in the north and the south. There is besides a number of religious practices prevalent among the Hindus from very early times which as well as the prayers, mentioned above, indicate that the religious mind of the Hindus is deeply imbued with a conception of the continental integrity of India whose sacredness is enhanced by the influence it exerts in shaping the common destiny of the country as visualised by the ancient seers. Pilgrimage also is another sacred institution, most popular among the Hindus, which accentuates this notion and gives it a still more definite shape. Every principal faith or sect of the Hindus has its holy places spread

over the length and breadth of the country. Pious Hindus visit these places and meet their fellow-pilgrims and feel a sense of comradeship with them fostered by their allegiance to common ideals that are the ideals of their common mother-land. Religious fairs contribute no less to the making of this sense in the Hindu mind.

If it is the land of India that reared up her body of humanity and gave on it the stamp of its own unity, it is her culture, evolved out of the vision of her thinkers, which gave the soul of that body its meaning and intention. What that culture is has been discussed by Sri Aurobindo in a series of luminous essays called *A Defence of Indian culture*, published in the "Arya," from which we shall quote appropriate extracts to show how the life of the Hindus is essentially one in all their varied creative endeavours. Spirituality, says Sri Aurobindo, is the master-key of the Indian mind. It is this dominant inclination of India which gives character to all the expressions of her culture. In fact, they have grown out of her inborn spiritual tendency of which her religion is a natural outflowing. The truth of the unity of her various religious efforts as well as their synthetic sublimity has been revealed by Sri Aurobindo in the following words:— "The Indian mind has always realised that the Supreme is the Infinite and perceived that to the soul in⁹³ Nature the Infinite must always present itself in an infinite variety of aspects. The aggressive and quite illogical idea of a single religion for all mankind, a religion universal by the very force of its narrowness, one set of dogmas, one cult, one system of ceremonies, one ecclesiastical ordinance, one array of prohibitions and injunctions which all minds must accept on peril of persecution by men and spiritual rejection or eternal punishment by God, that grotesque creation of human unreason which has been the parent of so much intolerance, cruelty and obscurantism and aggressive fanaticism, has never been able to take firm hold of the Indian mentality. Men everywhere have common human failings; intolerance and narrowness especially in the matter of observances there has been and is in India, violence of theological disputation, querulous bickerings of sects and their pretensions of spiritual superiority, sometimes, at one time especially in southern India in a period of acute religious differences, even local out-breaks of active mutual tyranny and cruelty. But these things have never taken the proportions which they assumed in Europe; they have been confined for the most part to the minor forms of polemical attack, intolerance and social obstruction or ostracism and have transgressed very little across the line to the major forms of persecution. Behind these weaknesses of human egoism there has stood always in India the saving perception of the higher spiritual mind, which has had its effect on the mass mentality, the living perception that since the minds, the temperaments, the intellectual affinities of men are unlimited in their variety, a perfect liberty of thought and of worship must be allowed to the individual in his approach to the Infinite.....The fundamental idea of Indian religion, the recognition of a one and

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infinite Godhead who can be approached and worshipped through any of his infinite aspects, a supreme and supracosmic Existence which manifests itself in the cosmos and enters into multitudinous relations with the souls in the universe who are one with or part of its own being, gives a many-sided appearance to Indian cult and spiritual experience...When the Indian mind sees the One without a second, it still admits his duality of Spirit and Nature, his many trinities, his million aspects. When it concentrates on a single limiting aspect of the Divinity and seems to see nothing beyond it, it has still at the back of its consciousness the sense of the All, the idea of the One. When it distributes its worship among many objects, it looks beyond the multitude of godheads to their unity. This synthetic turn is not peculiar to the mystics or the literate or the thinkers nourished on the high sublimities of the Veda and Vedanta, but permeates even the popular mind which is filled with the thoughts, the images, the traditions, the cultural symbols of the Purana and Tantra; for the Puranic and Tantric ideas, names, forms and symbols are only concrete representations of the combined monism, unitarianism, universalism and synthetism of the Vedic scriptures.....To understand the effect of Indian spiritual culture on the life of the individual and the community, we must recognise its synthetical character and embracing unity. The One Existence to whom sages give different names of the Veda, the One without a second of the Upanishads, is the fundamental seeing of Indian spirituality. All⁹⁴ comes from, exists in, returns and amounts to that One. To discover, closely approach, enter into whatever unity with this Infinite, this Eternal is the height of spiritual experience. That is the first idea of the religious mind of India. The second idea is the manifold way of man's approach to the Eternal and Infinite. This Infinite is full of many infinities and each of these infinite aspect is the Eternal in his glory. In the limitations of the cosmos God manifests himself to man and fulfils himself in the world in many ways, but each is the way of the Eternal; in each finite we can discover and through all things approach the Infinite. All cosmic powers and manifestations are of the One and behind the workings of Nature are to be seen and adored powers, names, personalities which are the godheads of the one Godhead. The divine Will and Energy are behind all happenings, whether to us fortunate or adverse, and over each way of the universal dealings stands a form of the presiding Deity. He creates and is Brahma, preserve and is Vishnu, destroys or takes to himself and is Rudra or Shiva. His supreme Energy is beneficent in upholding and protection and is the Mother of the worlds, Luxmi or Durga, or beneficent even in the mask of destruction and is Chundi or kali, the dark Mother. He manifests himself in form of his qualities; the God of divine love of the Vaishnava, the God of divine power of the Shakta appear as two different godheads but are the one Deity. These things we try to explain now as symbols, which is by the way of an intellectual compromise with modern rationalism; but the Indian religious mentality saw them not only as symbols but as realities, because between the highest spiritual being and material being it is aware of other psychology planes of

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consciousness and experience and these things are truth of these planes no less real than the outward truths of material universe. Men approaches God at first according to his psychology nature, experience, capacity for this deeper experience, *swabhava, adhikara*, whence comes the variety of religious cult, belie and way of divine union. But also there is a third idea of strongest consequence, that not only through aspects of the universal spirit and all inner and outer Nature can the Divine be approached, but each individual objects and being is in its spiritual being intimately one with the one divine Existence. In each individual man is the divinity, Narayana; all corporate or collective being is a form of the divine Narayana. God is in ourselves and in ourselves we have to find him. The supreme truth of all divisions is a secret unity. These three ideas govern the Indian religious mind and the seeing of them is its whole seeing. Indian spiritual culture opens up a hundred ways to arrive at the truth of our religious being, but its consummation is to see God in man and man in God, God in Nature and Nature in God, God in all things in God, and to go beyond them to their origin in the supracosmic Absolute, Eternal and Infinite." The luminous extracts quoted above unravel the hidden meaning of the religious culture of the Hindus and its essential oneness. They explain why one Hindu is a worshipper of Shiva, another of Krishna and the third of Shakti; why it is that there is a multiplicity of gods and goddesses; and yet how all of them are bound by the golden thread of the same soul's aspiration towards the same spiritual perfection⁹⁵ which to them has always been the ultimate end of human existence.

In ancient India knowledge was transmitted by oral method. Like the *raconteurs* of ancient Greece who preserved and disseminated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, India also had her reciters and declaimers who carried down from generation to generation and from court to people the great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. It was these national minstrels who used to wander about the country singing the story of the epics, thereby imparting the best popular education to the people. The epics abound in noble examples of sages and saints and kings,—people who are the makers of empires and builders of societies,—in ideals of human conduct that exalt and inspire, religious and social teachings that guide and give shape; all these have always been the most profound influence in the life of the race forging it, as it were, into a unity of endeavour to live up to the lessons that the characters in the epics so powerfully inculcate. Even to-day in very remote villages in every part of India the epics whether in Sanscrit or in vernacular versions are recited by the *Kathakas* before gatherings specially organised for the purpose. The art and literature of the Hindus are not a little indebted to them for the themes they have always drawn from these almost inexhaustible fountains of sociological knowledge. The Mahabharata represents the whole history of the race in

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one of the heydays of its glory. Its authorship goes by the name of a great poet, but it has in it contributions from many sources. A great people speaks through it. Its very name suggests the greatness of India's unity. Says Sri Aurobindo, "The Mahabharata is not only the story of the Bharatas, the epic of an early event which had become a national tradition but on a vast scale the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideas and culture and life of India. It is said popularly of it and with a certain measure of truth that whatever is in India is in the Mahabharata. The Mahabharata is the creation and expression not of a single individual mind, but of the mind of a nation; it is the poem of itself written by a whole people." To whatever sect he may belong no Hindu can conceive of spiritual life without its never-failing source of inspiration, the Gita. In the thought of every school of spiritual idealism can be traced the influence of this great scripture. The Gita presents the first synthesis of Hindu thought, and in it lies the secret of a yet greater synthesis of which a revealing exposition has been given by Sri Aurobindo in his *Essays on the Gita*. The influence on the mind of the Hindus all over India of the vast range of literature, both sacred and secular, is no less a unifying factor in the community life of the people.

The earliest evidence of some kind of synthesis in the religious life of India is supplied by the seals of the proto-Indian civilisation of Indus valley which along with other antiquities of similar nature are believed to indicate a common religious life of the people about whom a more remarkable fact is that they were free from the fear of violence and war, as shown by the absence of war weapons, walls, ramparts or fortifications among the relics that have been so far unearthed of those oldest cities of India. Gerald Heard is of opinion that this is most likely the earliest form of pacifism in the world. The influence of the Vedas in shaping the religious life⁹⁶ of the Hindus requires no recapitulation. Says Sri Aurobindo, "The mind of ancient India did not err when it traced back all its philosophy, religion and essential things of its culture to the seer-poets of the Vedas for all the future spirituality of her people is contained there in seed or in first expression." There are many hymns in the Rig and the Atharva Vedas which emphasise in a more subjective sense the need and importance of unity in the community life. They fervently exhort man to be united with all, in heart, in aim and in work, to be friendly with all and to pray so that all may be friendly with him. In the Upanishads the call goes forth from the Rishis to the whole of mankind to come and share with them the delight of their spiritual visions. The Upanishads permeate the entire range of Indian thought. They are also the common source of inspiration to all schools of Indian mysticism. In a word, Vedanta, as the Upanishads are called, represents the highest spiritual idealism of ancient India. Says Sri Aurobindo, "The Upanishads have been the acknowledged source of numerous profound philosophies and religions that flowed from it in India like her great rivers from their Himalayan cradle fertilising the mind and life of the people and kept its soul alive through the logs

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procession of the centuries, constantly returned to for light, never failing to give fresh illumination, a fountain of inexhaustible life-giving waters. Buddhism with all its developments was only a restatement, although from a new standpoint and with fresh terms of intellectual definition and reasoning, of one side of its experience and it carried it thus changed in form but hardly in substance over all Asia and westward towards Europe."

The social institutions of the Hindus contributed no less towards strengthening the bonds of social and cultural unity among the different classes of the people. The essential idea in all their social thinking is that man is not a machine but a god in the making born to blossom forth to the best of his potentialities; and the chief function of the society is to give him every facility so that he might fulfil his highest destiny both in his individual and collective life. Says Sri Aurobindo, "The business of culture and social organisation in ancient India was to lead man, satisfy and support him in some harmony of the four aims of life; desire and enjoyment, material, economic and other aims of the mind and body, ethical conduct and right law of the individual and social life and finally spiritual liberation, *kama*, *artha*, *dharma*, *moksha*. The insistence was always there that except in rare cases the full satisfaction of the first three of these objects must precede the last, fullness of human experience and action prepare for the spiritual liberation; the debt to the family, the community and the gods could not be scamped." By fulfilling the first two of these aims man enriches his mental and physical being, by the third he finds himself bound up with the society, and by the fourth he attains the highest objective of life. But the institution of caste was a more potent force in consolidating the social basis of the Hindu culture. The four grades of culture implicit in the system were integrated into an important factor in the progress of Indian civilisation in the past. The modern idea of a classless society negates the fundamental nature of human⁹⁷ being which generally was divided into the four categories evolved by the psychologists of ancient India. Says Sri Aurobindo, "The real greatness of the Indian system of the four *varnas* did not lie in its well-ordered division; it consisted in the ethical and spiritual contents which the thinkers and builders of the society poured into these forms. They started with the idea of the intellectual, ethical and spiritual growth of the individual as the principal need of humanity, society as its necessary frame-work and its system of relations. A secure place had to be found for him in the community from which he could serve these relations, maintain and pay all his debt to the society and proceed to his self-development with the best possible help from the communal life. This place they conceived as one provided for him by the indications of his capacity, temperament and nature. Birth was taken in practice as the first test; the heredity was of a high importance; it was taken even in later thought as a sign of the nature and the needed surroundings which the individual had prepared for himself by his past soul-development in former existences. But birth was not considered as the

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sole test of *varna*. The intellectual capacity, the turn of the temperament, the ethical nature, the spiritual elevation were the important things." There are many instances of Kshatriya kings excelling in spiritual knowledge. Many of the Upanishads were composed by them. Visvamitra's attaining Brahmanhood is not of course a solitary instance. A society thrives on the intrinsic worth of its members. And the members can prove their worth only when they are given freedom to grow into the height of their possibilities. This livingness of social organism is sought to be replaced today by deadening mechanical means with the object of moulding the human material into a single Procrustean type; and to achieve that end freedom is tabooed lest free-thinking should create opposition, and obedience is exacted forcing man into an artificial existence so that he might conform to the law of the machine. It ought to be clear to those who sponsor these views that the weak who are deprived of their freedom are thereby helped to gather strength to assert their birth-right when the time will come for them to rise. Ancient Indians recognised that true social harmony is possible when every member in the society has had ample opportunities of self-development. The system of caste which was always elastic and flexible was guided by this attitude of the Hindu mind. It is not birth but, as the Gita says, his action and spiritual attainment that determine man's position in society to which every member of any caste, be he a Brahmin or a Shudra, was equally important. It is real worth that matters. In the ancient literature of the Hindus there are many examples of great saints and sages being born of low and unknown parentage. Even young men of doubtful antecedents were admitted to instruction by great sages simply on the score of their personal nobility and earnest seeking for knowledge. Satyakama's cannot certainly be the only example. The strength and cohesion of the Hindu society lay in this catholic outlook which largely prevented division of the people into hostile factions, as well as any series of internecine wars, which have disgraced many countries. With the advent of the foreigners into India, the process of racial chemistry began to⁹⁸ be active again and in the first few centuries of the present era we find that the Hunas, Sakas and Pallavas were being absorbed into the Hindu social structure: and for their valour and devotion to Aryan ideals they were accepted by the Brahmins as Kshatriyas and given equal status in the society. Caste did not stand in the way of this notable racial assimilation, but helped it by recognising the intrinsic merits of those peoples and their readiness to be naturalised as Indians. In the days of India's decline, the system was exploited by interested people for the satisfaction of their selfish ends and for dominating the society whose downfall they brought about by pursuing a policy of deadening obscurantism.

– *Sisirkumar Mitra*

The Spirit is a higher infinite of verities; life is a lower infinite of possibilities which seek to grow and find their own truth and fulfilment in the light of these verities. Our intellect, our will, our ethical and our aesthetic being are the reflectors and the

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mediators. The method of the West is to exaggerate life and to call down as much - or as little - as may be of the higher powers to stimulate and embellish life. But the method of India is, on the contrary, to discover the spirit within and the higher hidden intensities of the superior powers and to dominate life in one way or another so as to make it responsive to and expressive of the spirit and in that way increase the power of life. Its tendency with the intellect, will ethical, aesthetic and emotional being is to sound indeed their normal mental possibilities, but also to upraise them towards the greater light and power of their own highest intuitions. The work of the renaissance in India must be to make this spirit, this higher view of life, this sense of deeper potentiality once more a creative, perhaps a dominant power in the world.

– From Sri Aurobindo's *'The Renaissance in India'*

SRI⁹⁹ AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY AND A JUSTIFICATION OF MAYAVADA

Prof. G.R. Malkani undertakes to justify Mayavada as part and parcel of Advaita in the Philosophical Quarterly Vol. 18 (p. 221) and in this connection, he states that his justification of this doctrine was prompted by his reading of the *Life Divine*, of Sri Aurobindo. Obviously his first complaint is that all those who attacked Mayavada accused it without taking into consideration its birth and growth under the shadowing wings of Advaita or Monism.

He pleads that a system must satisfy the following criteria in order to satisfy him. The first condition is that it must be *grounded in and justified by our experience so that there is nothing in it that transcends our experience*. He naively adds 'after all we can only interpret this experience and not speculate about things that fall outside our experience.' (p. 222). Let me first of all point out what he really means by this test. First and foremost, he rules out any experience that transcends his present experience, his limited conscience, if we may so call this overweening vanity of ignorance parading as experience. Secondly, he speaks of being grounded in and justified by our experience as almost purely an experiential affair, though, to be sure, this justification is to be sought and the grounding is discovered by his very corruptive rationality or conceptualisation. No one denies the right of Prof. Malkani to pat himself on his back with his being so very less speculative than others who have at least the wisdom to admit their limits.

The second test is not serious and indeed is welcome. No system must have 'internal incoherence or instability'. Now even here the second term very much recalls a metaphorical reference to toppling from a table when placed in unstable position. We shall show that Mayavada itself is a very unstable thing, and its coherence with Reality is intolerably difficult, not to speak of its being simply unacceptable and intolerable.

The third criterion is that no problem should be left unsolved. Now the fundamental truth of Mayavada rests on inexplicability of any problem, and there is nothing for it to solve, for all is a mighty mysterious illusion. What problem can remain before this grand disaster? Unanswered they ever will remain.

The fourth and the last criterion is 'There must be nothing hypothetical about its truth; for a philosophical truth cannot be verified. It must be absolutely certain and self-evidently true. This is only possible when the certainty is both rational and intuitive' (p. 222). This last is a very fine sample of the kind of argumentation that pervades the thesis of Prof. G.R. Malkani. First let me start with the last sentence. The certainty of the system must be both rational and intuitive. Now is it the rational or the intuitive experience that falls within our competence? Further are rational and intuitive apprehensions of reality mutually contradictory or complementary? Does not the evidence of reason contradict¹⁰⁰ the evidence of intuition? If they are complementary or supplementary, then, is not the figment of Mayavada, a construction, a conceptual construction, itself negated? The world as objective is stated to be a conceptual fiction – an illusion: What is the experience that brought it about? Is not our experience itself of the sensory level or intuitive level and not of the rational level? If philosophy is of the rational level which contradicts the evidence of the senses and intuition, is not a system conceptually erected on what might be called coherency of concepts a ghost-frame work? Is not philosophy then itself impossible even as the mayavada that has been brought into existence by such a philosophy is impossible? Is there any possibility of self-evidence to intuition? If intuition has to legislate for reason how can the learned professor seek the help of something that he states to be akin to delusion or mysticism? At least Sri Sankara was more aware of the need for the super-rational intuitive as the final arbiter of philosophical intuition than the pseudo-attempts made to reconcile the relational *savikalpaka-jnana* and the unrelational *aparoksa-jnana*, which made one directly aware of Reality as the entire One indivisible experience, super-sensory, super-discriminatory. The self-evidence of Reality is the direct exhibition of its totality in intuition, which includes a powerful annihilation of all differences of subject and object and revels in Supreme Spiritual subjectivity of Oneness. Plurality as separate existences ceases on its attainment.

Having thus shewn that Prof. Malkani's four axioms of Advaita are open to serious internal incoherence, I shall then see what are his justifications.

First, Prof. Malkani takes up the question of our knowledge of the external world. He sees that the *prima facie* refutation of Mayavada consists in pointing out that since all is Brahman without external or internal difference, the very fact of the existence of something called the world or its explanation the Maya is a secondary fact that

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impugns the sovereign unity of the One Brahman. Thus there results a dualism worse indeed in some respects than the original dualism of Spirit and World. He answers, 'we never know the world at all, all the time we have been knowing only Brahman alone'. We merely *conceive* it. Reality is what we *know* but the world we only *conceive*. Lest we should ask the question as to what difference is there between knowing and conceiving, he answers that knowing is absolutely immediate to consciousness or coincides with it, whereas conception is that which is outside consciousness and distinct from it. He proceeds to point out that consciousness alone can be utterly coincident with itself and therefore reality is consciousness. The thesis so established firstly seeks to make 'knowing' something of immediate intuition; but this goes further and makes out that Reality is not known at all, for nothing as such remains. Of course mentalists are not baffled by this non-existence of Reality other than their consciousness. The primary question is firstly why conceptualising? Secondly, why *Outside* Consciousness? Even if conceptualising cannot stand by itself, and therefore must have a consciousness to support it and can only stand as a Self, how did it ever arrive at that outsideness and objectivity? These things are not answered, and Prof. Malkani quietly says "there is nothing forced about this view".¹⁰¹ Surely what else but forced is a view which forces concepts to be outside the self or consciousness, though this equation of consciousness as self itself is something a mystery unexplained in the exposition: The author however leads us to quite a different topic in order to prove that conceptions or perceptions never *fall apart* from the self (p. 225).

Having found that conceptions and perceptions do not *fall apart* from the self if we sufficiently go back *in time* in our experience, he concludes the world never existed because the *truth* is that there is no self and no conception. Indeed there are no knowings. Silence is the Truth. If after so much laborious argumentation this mouse came into existence (or non-existence?) why deny the charge levelled against them that they are nihilists or ajativadins? and why try to *prove* this with the help of a repertory of useless dialectics? Prof. Malkani again says that 'a dualism to *us* need not be a dualism *in reality*' feeling perhaps certain qualms of conscience at having to give up his job any way of being a philosopher. And uncertainly he seeks to bridge the gulf between the human and the Real standpoints, with the hope, – anent the first axiom of his system – building criteria – that the Real is something that falls within his experience, though he himself, to be sure, is a conceptualisation of some reality which he conceptually professes to understand, and ill. The truth is grasped by Prof. Malkani when he writes, "No amount of juggling with thought can succeed in eliminating all dualism" (225 p.). Do we forget that the fourth axiom stated that when we feel uncomfortable with reason that distinguishes and discriminates and analyses we should have recourse to intuition to support and save not reality, but us, from utter damnation? Unfortunately the problem of the many to be reconciled in unity or

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oneness refuses to be solved as he wishes. Damn it: let us like Canute say: "It shall not be". That satisfies our conceit—the conceit of Reality; the soul of man has become the Superman, the One without a second!

Then, having prefaced this wonderful Reality-exposition, as above, Prof. Malkani finds that Maya must have a reason! There is something contained in the concept of Maya that came to explain the existence of duality or manyness. "The opposition between Brahman and the cosmos of our experience has to be resolved; and it is resolved through the concept in question. But does this concept successfully achieve this result?" asks Prof. Malkani (p. 227). Or does it refute itself or does it add to his griefs?*

The whole contention of even advaitically-minded schools of Philosophy is that Mayavada is not a satisfactory instrument for the purposes for which it was devised, and therefore the advaita can exist without the acceptance or even through a refutation of it. Firstly let us see what are its benefits.

(i) We contend that the world is not made at all. It is simply a product¹ of illusion. Maya is the name for this illusion, the illusion of Brahman appearing as¹⁰² the world. It is ultimate irrationality.

(ii) Either the world is real to us or the Brahman but never the two simultaneously. The illusory never *is*.

(iii) Maya can be a power in a general sense in which an illusion is a power. But Maya has not created or produced the illusion. We cannot say there is illusion because there is Maya.

Then follow these questions: "Can we not explain this illusion in some way? Can we not go beyond it?" To which he answers "We contend that we cannot."

However he contends also in the same breath that we can go beyond illusory appearance. Then follow a series of propositions which hinge round this getting out of the illusory appearance, which are all due to the ultimate irrationality (p. 229), which he straight away equates with the *avarna* and *vikshepa*, *avidya*, *upadhi* etc., all those entities which make diversity possible. And with quiet resignation is uttered the words "Beyond this we cannot go" (p. 229, 230).

* Life Divine Vol. 1, p. 261.

¹ The distinction between making and producing is a rather knotty one and is hidden under the cloak of these two synonyms which mean the same activity.

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Then he begins begging the question that has been at issue, how and why did the individual superimpose the quality of self-hood upon the non-self, why should there be illusion in the ever infinite consciousness, the so-called *asraya* and *vishaya* of itself? To this question alone was an answer demanded, and it is evaded by saying that it is a mystery or fundamental irrationality: 'Beyond that we cannot go'.

No one denied that the reality behind everything is Brahman, the support of all things is in Him, and by Him are all kept in their appointed places. By denying the individual soul or the reality of the world we have not untied the knot nor 'dissolved' it by any means (p. 231). The learned professor has debunked it.

The imputation of ignorance to all the pramanas does not avail. The precise process or manner of the deepening of the self in each or the 'perception' (very uncomfortable word that for an Advaitin to use) of the self within which cancels the world and ourselves certainly presupposes the two-fold knowledge of present ignorance and the truth, *simultaneously*, even if this simultaneity be only for a moment. Indeed Advaita has found it necessary in actual practice to accept the period of simultaneous experience of illusion and reality to be considerable—as witnessed to by its postulation of *badhitanuvritti*.

The problems of error as fact, error as *ajnana*, and that illusion is not nothing but that it really resolves into its ground, are then discussed, and not always happily, because the confusion reigns in the mind of Prof. Malkani that knowledge is not awareness, that knowledge is relational and infected with error, a position which we shall have to remember as inconsistent with his thesis, that knowledge or knowing is immediate absolutely (p. 223). Finally with a gusto declares Prof. Malkani: 'Maya! There is no Maya and no problem of Maya'! (p. 238).

It is a thin defence but the best possible under the circumstances perhaps; it could have been done better, if only he were loyal to Sankara who at least did not make reason an ultimate arbiter, though he shewed that reason could only demolish and it is intuition that could grant. Advaita monistics is intellectual, incurably intellectual; and¹⁰³ an inverted intellectuality pervades it; for it makes the real world a conceptual creation, and the primal cause which it has discovered as the truth of its intuition, the transcendent, it makes into an unattainable unknowable substrate, and as such also a conceptual entity. Maya is the concretising force it has recourse to, but this, true to its main purpose, it makes into an element of complete and utter irrationality or

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unintelligibility, since, for Prof. Malkani, it does not explain illusion; it explains not itself, and it can be of no help to Brahman, the sole existent; it cannot explain emergence. It had never been and therefore why talk about it?

Then, that is, after having to his own satisfaction established the non-existence and non-problem of Maya, having after all thought that Maya yet is something to be talked about, he proceeds to answer the objections raised against this non-existent problem. We may well remark that it is he who found a convenient inexplicable peg to hang his brand of advaita, not we, and he cannot get away with its argumentation about its 'unlimited' or penultimate existence or reality. We have every right to ask whether the reality that is awareness is an existence or not, *is* it or is *it* not. No recourse to two standpoints in reference to the same thing is available, for its self-contradiction is patent on the face of it. He now begins answering objections.

The first objection: "If Brahman is the only reality why speak of Maya at all? But if we have to admit the principle of Maya in order to explain our present experience, there will always be some form of ultimate dualism. Maya will have some relation to Brahman" (p. 238)

Prof. Malkani begins with the preface that thought can start with some kind of dualism, and admits otherwise it has no scope. He speaks immediately about planes. Are these planes in Brahman or in us and if in us or in anything else *why* are they? He says that it is the fault of philosophizing itself. Of course no body expects one to jump over one's own shadow. Naively comes the sentence: "Maya (the problem) is the end of all problems" – rather we do not see any end to it. But no sooner he says this than he recovers his philosophical judgment and remarks "Maya is an entity which is real only in the absence of discriminating thought". Well may one exclaim, where are we going to? Thought is essentially dualistic; yet only without thought can we see that maya is an end of all problems; and now maya is refuted by thought. Thought indeed walks in three paces to suit the logical incoherency of the three planes*. But then what can be coherent in this world? The second criterion (that of coherency) is crashing on us and is being swallowed up by the fastest running river in the ravine. "Surely the concept of maya is liquidating itself and all dualism". The naivity is all the more true to type, constant throughout, "And there is no forced logic about it". "The maya stands fully revealed to thought in its true nature when it is described as "anirvachaniya".

* Life Divine 1. "Nowhere in the Upanishads is it actually laid down that the three-fold status is a condition of illusion or the creation of an unreality; it is constantly affirmed that all this that is,—this universe we are now supposing to have been constructed by Maya,—is the Brahman, the Reality."

Th¹⁰⁴e whole argument is a sample of the incoherency of the structure of thought raised by the learned professor. An omnibus-howl that there is no problem; incomprehensibility is something that stands revealed, acceptance of Ignorance of true nature is understanding;—these are all of a piece with the attitude that does not see that the whole approach to the problem of Unity-Multiplicity has misfired, and this cussedness pervades the entire thesis so efficiently carried out in its presentation as in its defence.

The second objection: “The world cannot be *all* an illusion. The illusory is never really known to us but merely conceived. The world is not merely conceived by us. It shows the reign of law and order. It has real objectivity...” The objection is a consequence of the first, for it attacks the maya-concept from the side of the effect—the world.

Prof. Malkani admits that “Thus we have to admit that the illusory is just like any real object” (p. 240), and proceeds to make both the illusory objects and the ‘so-called real’ objects conceptual or rather a ‘construct of thought’. He airily propounds that every thing about the world could ultimately be traced to thought. But is it not the thought that taught him to discriminate? Changing the front he may explain that thought has two modalities (i) constructive or creative and (ii) discriminative analysis. He holds that once we separate the one from the other, we shall arrive at a stage when we shall have no objectivity. And as we shall have no objectivity, neither is there a place for subjectivity. Prof. Malkani however wants to make out that illusion, imagination and conception are different; but having reduced every thing to what we are not capable of ever knowing, he assumes that perception, conception and imagination are all of the same kind (p. 241). But he contends also that there is a difference between conception and imagination, using the so-well-known but well-exploded myth of free-association in the one case, and controlled-association in the other. This resort has already been so thoroughly ruined by the Psycho-analytic school which shows that free-association is in fact an association or redintegrative process that takes place under the guidance of the Unconscious and repressed subliminal consciousness, that we may well call our conceptualising more free than that; but it may yet claim to be free if we mean by it something that is subjective; but then, even this is impossible for the control exercised by the unconscious or the subliminal consciousness is of the universal instincts, the most universal and racial, and as such it is spurious subjectivity that pervades the free-association process. It appears then that the specific conceptualisation that takes place when I conceive a chair and not a table, the control is of the object and not of the subject and there is no choice left for Prof. Malkani to call it by any other name.

Prof. Malkani here diverts himself by describing the illusory as *consciously* perceived and not *consciously* imagined. The rub then is consciousness, and not either objectivity or imagination or perception, and as for that consciousness surely there can be no imputation that it is doing havoc. But precisely the whole complaint of Mayavada is against this Consciousness, this Absolute Consciousness, that does all this tricky business of appearing illusorily in imagination, in perception and in conception too. This truth is, as Sri Aurobindo has¹⁰⁵ stated, and there are weighty authorities and testimonies of Sri Ramanuja, Sri Bhaskara, Sri Madhva, Sri Krishna Chaitanya and a whole host of mystics who point out that there is absolutely no meaning in holding that the 'created', 'manifested', 'exhibited' *is less* real than the Uncreate, Unborn, Unmanifest, Unexhibited or Uncreatable, Unmanifestable, Unexhibitible, which however does appear, does exhibit itself to itself, so to speak. The *vivarta-vada* is an expedient in a refutation of Buddhism; it is futile as an explanation of Vedic and Upanishadic Intuition. The whole doctrine of unreality of the three states of waking, dreaming and sleeping propounded by Mayavada under the distinguished auspices of the Karika-kara-Gaudapada, is alien to the structure of spiritual experience and whatever experience is at the back of the value theories of Mayavada, it is a sheer disservice to the Reality of the Supreme Consciousness, Being-Bliss.

The reply to the third objection (c) (p. 241) complains, in one word, that the refuter of the Mayavada has unfortunately a notion and the objector here holds, that there are real individuals, real knowledge and real liberation. True, these have absolutely no place in Advaita Mayavada, indeed there is no place therein for anything, not even for Sachchidananda. Having argued however that much may be said in favour of the common-sense position seeking a real liberation for a real individual, he holds that freedom is not 'change of a quality for another quality on the part of a self-identical entity' (p. 241); for he holds that freedom is not equivalent to changing of one quality, that of being bound, to one of freedom, for here there is no modification but a dropping of limitation. Change here is certainly not the word to be employed except as a general term. The whole difficulty for Prof. Malkani is that he starts with a very wrong use of the word 'real' and refuses to see that it is leading him and his like to the *cul de sac* of perfect darkness: witness his impervious sentence "A real bondage could not disappear through right knowledge, but a false bondage must" (p. 243) and perhaps students of Mayavada will recall the analogy of fire dying out along with that which burns in it applied to the right knowledge itself; for you will remember that real individuals, real knowledge, and real liberation are unacceptable to Advaita. For blatant logic without relevance this piece is hard to beat. But then we are in such a world and the freedom granted to the individual is, in the Grace of the Divine, to be a *kamacari*.

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The accusing fingers of many thinkers who are also mystics, and not an intellectual bourgeoisie, are raised against the advaitic view that He is Brahman and point out that the *upasana of Aham-brahmasmi* is itself capable of being misdirected towards the exaltation of egoism as in the case of the mythical heroes. And the mystical finger raised against the school of Advaita Mayavada cannot be rebutted unless there is the acceptance of humility by the one who achieving salvation of cancellation of his existence sees not others as even waiting to be liberated or cancelled, though he (?) continues his high spiritual cancellation-business remaining out of the world. Sri Aurobindo as a Seer-mystic lays his unerring finger on this which Prof. Malkani with his own brand of self-justified consciousness (?) speaks of as a private grievance (p. 244). Further Prof. Malkani betrays¹⁰⁶ his lack of understanding of the metaphysical theory of Sri Aurobindo when he says that the individual is 'a phenomenal existence' and a creation of the Lord! (foot note to page 244).

Then comes the reply to the objector who really works out a *reductio ad absurdum* by saying "If indivisible consciousness is the only reality then the world is not and never existed, can never have been conceived." "For do we not first conceive it and *then* deny it?" Now comes Prof. Malkani with his reply; no doubt we have to accept at the level of thought—the terms of duality and multiplicity,—(quite a convenient excuse for thinking in terms of that). Then with as much dogmatism he asserts that 'a unity which accommodates multiplicity can only be, as we have shown, a spurious unity'—the showing as we point out at once is a mere affirmation, not sanctioned by logic, by experience, not even by integral experience. This is sheer nonsense; for the whole problem of any metaphysics is to discover the unity, that unity which shall not cancel but uphold the multiplicity and make experience possible. Abolishing is a child's act of solution and cancelling, sublating and other terms are but veils of this process of a mentality which is unable to stand up to a critical exposition of the integrity of Reality. The fact is, it needs a painstaking effort to understand the secret of unity, Identity is the first-look solution and a false solution. And 'after all we can only realise a real unity when we can go with the aid of thought beyond thought and its dualities,' is a statement of despair when one never makes up his mind to go to that bleak height but goes on rather towards excellent suppers at professorial concerts. And Prof. Malkani's ways of thinking, having been seen for what they are, cannot through any effort on his part but involve his thinking his position to be *reductio ad absurdum*. But the problem of the one and the many is crucial, and has other repercussions on the very structure of society and ethics and these are all debunked by the sweeping phrase, Hitlerian as people will admit, 'Cancel,' which is another way of saying 'put them in the bucket' like puppies. And we know they cannot survive, even the stoutest of them.

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The last objection is against the existence of Maya: Maya *is*, the duality therefore *is*. But we can, from what has gone before, conclude that the explanation will be swift and surely given Maya never is, never was, never will be. But he allows that the whole business is irrational, and we must of course recognize it. After all, that is what philosophy is out to make known, our limits and possibilities. Surely no one underrated the dimensions of the task undertaken to make irrationality respectable and even honourable. No doubt, the Mayavadin has taken all this trouble not for nothing but to make thought irrational and cancel it if possible in a super-irrational which swallows up all the appearance, for that is the meaning of sublation (p. 237)—a swallowing up by the ground leaving no residue either positive or negative,- though what exactly this second alternative means, I leave the reader to discover. Force of habit, you know, in dialectics!

We have arrived at intuition—an intuition that succeeds to the throne where intellect has failed (p. 247). This is a grand quack-business. The magic wand has after all come and lifted us up, our problems, our freedoms as well as¹⁰⁷ our bondages have all disappeared. You know Intuition—it is Omnivorous.

Unfortunately there are intuitionists, revelationists, enjoyers of God, in his absolute Transcendence as His supreme wonderful immanence, who having simultaneously seen and moved and had their being in all the Supreme Vastness, Bliss and Reality, hold that a superficial attraction, a false attraction alone has been presented by Mayavada; an attraction to the Divine so that they may for a while withdraw their own identifications with the world in order to perceive the Divine relationships. Or even when there is to be had indeed a fundamental psychical identity realised by the individual soul, it is not the essence of the search; for God alone is realized as the most perfectly absorbing Reality, and the completest immanence in Him is seen to be the finale or rather the most complete realization of the union, this being the purpose of the search with which the soul started on its struggle after liberation. Complete surrender gives the fullest immanence of oneself in the Divine in every respect, including the loss of this ego-centricism that has marked it out as separate and self. It then perceives what it should ever know that as in the absorption and this total unification which permits the soul to be able to say 'I am not; Thou alone art' or rather 'I am Thou' to use the most pregnant usage of the Upanishads, for 'I no longer am or can be divested of Thee' and 'Thou art all that is I', so also it knows that the vastness infinity of the Divine had always held it to itself and in itself in an inseparable relationship a fundamental mystic and wonderful unity which alone the individual soul did not become aware of and therefore fell into the avidya; even this avidya is for the purpose of the Divine Essence to enjoy Himself, in an extensity and separation that is not separation in essence, in the externally inseparably related souls (aparthaksiddha-sambandha).

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It is equally true that the pantheism that is sought to be arrived at by certain thinkers is not the whole truth about the reality; and monism can never be considered to be anything but an intellectual version of the deeper unity or integral Organicistic Personality of the Divine. So truly have certain advaitic thinkers themselves realized the fruitlessness of the reasonings and so completely have western thinkers and philosophers exhibited with their thorough-going consistency the goal of monism, whether it is the Haeckelian, Hegelian, Beyersonian or Machian kinds, to be the outcome of the intellectual attempt to discover the uniformities of nature, that it is a note-worthy development when we see them claiming that their monism is of the intuitional order. The seven refutations of the Mayavada made by Sri Ramanuja give classical examples of its shifty logic and inspired inconsistency and they have yet to be answered fully. Nor are the objections raised by Prof. Malkani all that can be stated against the school, for the orthodox have many more objections.*

* Sri Ramanuja refutes advaita notion of the Absolute as Consciousness as suffering from very serious faults ; he shows that consciousness as substance is faulty, for in fact it is but the function of a self and may be called a substance because it changes not because it is changeless. It is not something that subsists as substrata of all states for as pointed out it is but the activity or function of a knower ; it is not eternal either because it is an interim activity as our experience itself points out that we cognized, we did not cognize etc.: our contraction or limitation of consciousness or intelligence is due to Karma that is beginningless and this limitation does not affect or infect the knowing self: further it is inconceivable that this consciousness as *anubhuti* should be capable of being deflected or segmented by different avidya or mayas: for if it were so and if this *anubhuti* be indeed the reality which becomes knowers. known objects and knowing, then avidya would overwhelm all uniformly. But this cuts at the root of the theory of Uniform Reality. This is not the teaching of the Scriptures (of course Prof. Malkani has not had recourse to scriptures in his article and has treated it from the standpoint of the modern western-philosophers). The whole theory of Nescience or Avidya is unprovable, by which we mean a wholesale universal nescience, Sri Venkatanatha refutes the Advaita in the following manner:

“Since it is said that all that is other than Brahman is illusion, there is no testimony at all by which to intimate that thing. Nor could the transcendental Brahman prove any of these. Even if the testimony of the phenomenal consciousness is accepted, soon after the phenomena have ceased to appear as true, there can be no adherence to one’s own tenets, as they are said to become false and are identical with dream evidence. Further they themselves have surrendered the validity of testimonies as something not be longing to the transcendent being..... And because of the illusoriness of both the unqualifiedness (of Brahman itself and the world illusoriness, the knowledge of other systems, the knowledge of the world etc., thereby becoming true, these (other and opposed views) would become valid knowledge!” Further he writes “In this thinker who affirms that through the false the truth is gained, (we have to say that) not one of the examples he brings forward helps or harmonises with his doctrine.” (Paramatabhanga: Ch. XI. my trans. JSVOL. 1.)

That whole chapter should be read for a through-going refutation. Thus it can be seen that the whole procedure of Mayavada has been to go the way of nihilism, and nothing can prevent one from going that way once we abandon the criteria we have. The sorriest plight is that of Prof. Malkani who started with the four-point programme of being loyal to *human* experience, and has straight way disloyally sought to refute every human reality and standard and has finally ended by saying that Ignorance never was, Maya never was, World never was, Reality never was or is or will be. As Sri Ramanuja stated, in every respect Mayavada is an unacceptable doctrine.

Prof¹⁰⁸. Malkani wishes to point out that Sri Aurobindo accepts indeed Maya and whether he calls the same *daivi or apara maya*, one of these answers to the maya of the advaita. The word Maya is derived by Sri Aurobindo from the root *ma*, measure, and higher maya is that which 'exhibits' the 'vast illimitable truth of infinite existence' whilst the lower is delusive, separative and of the ignorance. Sri Aurobindo also accepts two levels of evolution, the¹⁰⁹ evolution in the Ignorance and the evolution in the knowledge; the material, vital and mental evolution are of the Ignorance. What is precisely the status of this Ignorance, since 'Self-Ignorance is the root of all perversity of our existence?' No advaita can accept the view, says Prof. Malkani, that reality, the most absolute, can ever suffer from self-ignorance not to speak of Ignorance. Now this cannot be explained by the theory of lapse into ignorance of the most perfect Consciousness-Force: he even holds that 'falling away from Self-Knowledge and Self-illumination into the lowest strata of inconscience can never be a play or *lila* which would fill the heart of reality or sachchidananda with joy' (p.248). It cannot be that error or rather falling into error is a way to truth (p. 248 footnote). Nor is evil inevitable. And triumphantly, says Prof. Malkani, once we admit or accept error as colouring our view of the cosmos or of the things as they are in themselves, we must simply go all the way with Advaitism and admit no explanation of the world except in terms of *maya* or the power of illusion." (p. 249).

The above statements of Prof. Malkani betrays a complete lack of intuition into fundamentals of spiritual life. We have already referred to his definitions of reality or the real, his conception of *maya*, his conception of knowing and conceiving and imagining, and his complete confidence that nothing really can be and nothing has been and we are ever as we were. The advaitic technique suffers from a vague identification of reality with permanence, illusion with knowing and a confusion between intellect

Bhaskara, an earlier commentator on the Vedanta Sutras, has severely criticised Sankara's theory. "In seeking to establish the stability of the absolute the Mayavadin cuts at the root of knowledge" by his theory *vivartavada*, and this certainly goes against the scriptural texts which teach *sad-vidya* and *sat-karya-vada*: false judgment cannot lead to real knowledge, and there is no sublation of one state of the self by the other, and it culminates in that inexplicable nescience called *sarva-anirvacivatva*. Nor can the practice of upasanas and the resort to intuition have any place in the system of identity. The two-standpoint theory is a fertile source of self-delusion Students who would like to know more about the orthodox way of refutation should read Prof. P.N. Srinivasacharya's work on the *Bhedabheda Philosophy* (p. 57-73). He calls these refutations as anticipations of Sri Ramanuja's *Saptavidha-anupapatti*.

Madhva defends the difference theory against the Advaita theory and shows even as Sri Ramanuja does that there is no cognition by any pramana of the undifferenced; and the identity texts must be interpreted in consonance with the Dvaita, the difference-view. Sri Ramanuja alone grants that both the texts— advaitic and dvaitic—must take into consideration the texts which are mediating (ghataka-srutis), which in one sense form the key to the whole science of textual criticism.

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SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY AND A JUSTIFICATION OF MAYAVADA

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SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY AND A JUSTIFICATION OF MAYAVADA

and intuition which is facilitated by a surreptitious hypostatizing of intellectual monism into an intuitive realization or awareness. The truths of spiritual life reveal the grades of ascent of the consciousness, and as Sri Ramanuja pointed out eight centuries ago the technique of Advaita is to deny every evidence and finally hold that all evidences point to their own destruction and to the awareness of Reality. A psychological somersault is the need. The advaitin cannot explain the wherefore of this illusion, while the realists at least realise the actual fact of untruth and seek to get over it and find in the blaze of the illumination that all the untruths have indeed been real and really revealing the wonderful beneficence and even reality of the ascent to Divine nature. True it is that there are several stand-points; the stand-point of the human reveals the *maya* working out the passion of the manyness or multiplicity of souls each seeking an individual ascent into the Divine mansion and it may appear technically as that of the ignorance since it operates diffusively; but this is an ignorance which is implicit or veiled knowledge in the depths and appears to the Supreme Transcendent or the Supermind not as an ignorance but as the puissance of the Self-illuminated operating on the extremest limit of the multiplicity which it gathers in the Divine evolution into the Unity of these in the higher. The language of dimensions is essentially symbolic and yet true of the mystical life, and none who is a mystic can miss these terms in literature. Rightly thus Sri Aurobindo has said "For this ignorance is still in reality a knowledge seeking for itself behind the original mask of Inconscience and missing and finding; its results are the true consequence of the lapse, — in a way, even the right working of the recovery from the lapse," — this¹¹⁰ sentence is nothing more than what I have stated, that the implicit multiplicity in its creative urge of expansion affirms at once on one side the multiplicity as separately working out a harmony or an affirmation through the many individualised personalities, affirming egoism, mind, vital movement, material distension etc., while all through the secret unity, in the depths, sustains and leads and projects these upward and organises in its own freedom the essential ecstasy of the perfections of the Divine. Sin, error, ignorance are the inevitable representations of the figures of these movements on the surface, real and poignant to the individual souls, but in the final culmination of their ascent into the Supermind these can be seen as the real, essential and necessary steps of its ascent in these integral processes or integrating processes. The secret of the system of Sri Aurobindo lies in this essential dictum: the Divine Oneness seeks the self-delight in terms of the eternal and implicit multiplicity of its nature in each and in all simultaneously or successively in space-time nexus.

Mayavada cannot bear this large formulation of the Nature of Brahman, being absorbed by the Oneness, staticism, permanence as statically construed and not dynamically possible without lapse into imperfection or unconsciousness. Sri Aurobindo shews that the two, Oneness and multiplicity, Change and Permanence, Transcendence and Immanence, are all sat-cit-ananda, and the Anandatva,

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chaitanyatva, and *satyatva* are characteristic of both the two types of Self-existence, only they are expressed in terms of the typical formulations and both are at every point capable of being perceived as co-existent. That is to say, to the seer-vision there is visible change in Permanence, as permanence is seen in change; oneness in multiplicity as well as multiplicity in oneness; transcendence in nature or immanence as well as immanence in the transcendence; the stress being different. In the creative Process what we perceive are the dynamic, multiplicity, change, immanence which express the permanent, oneness, transcendence in terms of process in a space-time. It is in this sense the Supreme is supremely wonderful mystery and the *sachchidananda* requires and has its dynamic formulation in the Supermind-consciousness; in this sense too we can speak of dual-governance, *dampatya*, of the Divine in diunity as Siva and Sakti, Vishnu-Laksmi; it is this that is the essentially mystic reality which derealises nothing that is or was or will be but uplifts all and integrates all in the supreme ecstasy of an integral experience. Thus the final criticism of Prof. Malkani that Sri Aurobindo colours his scheme with error and that therefore he must walk into the mayavadic parlour is disposed of as merely a rhetorical pose needing summary rejection.

Prof. Malkani does not raise the value questions to which idealists usually resort having made no success with logic; and that saves our trouble a lot. In a universe wherein everything has no value, and all values are cancelled summarily by closing one's eyes to the problems, there happens not sublation of the values nor yet the transvaluation of all values but the values do not exist at all, the only value being the hypostatized intellectual Absolute raised to the status of a mystical Reality by thinking so hard that it has passed to the level of intuition (or is it hallucination, which also we¹¹¹ are told is the cause of its occurrence?).

Monistic metaphysics excludes love as well as Freedom. And a criticism of the concept of Freedom which is aimed at by monistic theology or philosophy of Religion, reveals that freedom may be the source of both evil and sin as well as of real triumph over creatureliness, though it must be confessed that the former leads ultimately to bondage to the created. It is true also that real mysticism aims at the realisation of the transcendent God, the non-revealed God, who is not revealed in the History, the Para of the Pancharatra-Visishtadvaita, the God who is not even the creator—the apophatic God. But this is indeed not the end of the mystical experience. If Advaita as mysticism is to be considered it can only be described as the effort to arrive at this Non-creator God, the Supreme Unknown. But even this experience finally ends as a personal experience, profoundly so, which appears to 'discard and dissolve personal existence in the impersonal and the super-personal existence! This is what was meant by the

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illuminated sages when they spoke about the Origins and the Deity as transcendent to the Process, which the process cannot know, which however contains in itself the mystery of both personality and impersonality; and since impersonality is usually intellectually reduced to a false generality or pseudo-concept, in the language of Signor Croce, there is a denial of these *jati-vyakti* classifications of experience. Advaita monistics does not go beyond this generality and never emerges into universality. The fact is true universality can only be represented by Supreme Personality. This is the message of Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath and such a personality permits the impersonal as law, as universality, as the figure of identity in all process. As Adrain Coates remarked "Personality is focal to reality," and this personality is certainly not the psychological personality as described by modern psychologists who wander without souls, but the Supreme Sachchidananda and Supermind. It is Sri Aurobindo that has stated it most luminously and shown that the Supermind is the Need for New Spirituality, the Integral Divine Life or Gnostic Being.

— *K.C. Varadachari.*

THOUGHTS ON CURRENT EVENTS

NEEDED A SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT

The¹¹² generous and spontaneous manner in which people in and outside India reacted to the recent famine in Bengal has raised great hopes that the whole world is growing into one vast human family. The causes of that terrible calamity are being investigated and attempts are being made to prevent its repetition. But there is one aspect of the problem which has not received sufficient attention and we want to refer to it here as to us it seems to go to the very root of the matter. In a broadcast from the Calcutta station, Major General Stuart, Military officer in charge of relief operations in Bengal, observed: "There is however one fact which has impressed me very strongly during my tours of the Bengal famine area. I am speaking very frankly because I feel you should all realise the true situation. It is that the average peasant and town-dweller is utterly callous to the suffering of his fellow brethren, men, women and children. He sees so much distress around him, yet he seems entirely unwilling to render practical assistance or to do anything to help. There are voluntary workers of course and they are doing heroic work but their number is comparatively small."

That this is a true presentation of fact is not disputed. Indeed other observers also have made similar reports; thus in the Amrita Bazar Patrika of the 24th November, 1943, a special representative of that paper touring in the villages remarked: "The milk of human kindness seems to have disappeared from the land altogether." That is also

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the report of volunteer relief workers – the villagers are narrowly selfish, apathetic, self-centred. Whence has come to the people this dejection, this stain and darkness of the soul in this hour of difficulty and peril? The Amrita Bazar Patrika, which does not dispute the fact, attempts an explanation by saying that chronic poverty has made the people callous. But that is beside the point. The charge of callousness is brought not against the poor but against those who are above want and can help others if they like. Indeed if the richer and higher classes in the villages had taken any interest in the condition of the poor or made any movement to ameliorate it, they would not certainly have rushed to die in thousands in the streets of Calcutta and other towns.

The scarcity in Bengal was only a question of a few months and the condition there was not so bad as that of the war-ridden countries in Europe. Leningrad for example had to pass through a siege for 900 days. Bengal lacked food, but Leningrad lacked fuel as well with which to warm its people, in the terrible winter of Russia. The enemy was entrenched around the walls of the city; communication with the rest of the country was cut off. The supply of food and fuel ceased. To add to this the enemy was shelling and bombing the city night and day. But it refused to submit. Whatever stores there were in the city and whatever could be somehow brought from the outside were strictly husbanded and¹¹³ economically distributed and by God's grace the people gloriously came out of the ordeal. If the villages of Bengal had a little of the spirit of Leningrad, this terrific death roll due to starvation and allied diseases might not have happened at all.

Certainly our people are not heartless, they have not lost all the virtues of social beings, but they have been overtaken by a terrible load of *tamas* or inertia. It is against this evil in this country that Vivekananda raised his voice and started his plan of campaign. But the battle is evidently not yet won. Political, social and economic movements so far have been of little avail in awakening a true throbbing of life in the country, though there have been some spectacular hectic movements which have even worsened the situation in reaction. Indeed Vivekananda foresaw it when he said: "So every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas." ("My plan of campaign"). Since the Swadeshi days, Bengal has been in the forefront of the political movement in India, but that has not been able to infuse a new life and spirit into the people – that is the glaring lesson of the present crisis. And if this is the state of things in Bengal, we can safely infer that the condition is nothing better in other parts of this great sub-continent. It may be said that the true remedy is political freedom. Freedom is no doubt indispensable; but that by itself is not sufficient. If the people are

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not roused from their present lifelessness, they will not be able to make a proper use of their freedom and may indeed lose it again before long.

The history of India has repeatedly shown that it is only a spiritual movement that can bring about a true awakening in the people of India. By spiritual movement we do not of course mean giving an impetus to the present religious habits of the people; indeed both the Hindus and the Muslims of India are perhaps more religious than any other people in the world, but that has not prevented them from falling into the deepest slough of despondence; Religion is no longer a living spiritual force, the spirit has gone out of it, and it is mostly the outer crust to which people cling through sheer force of habit and custom—and that is a sure sign of *tamas* and lifelessness. What is needed is a revival of the true spirit of religion, breaking the old forms and moulds and creating new ones suitable to the needs and conditions of modern humanity. “To speak again to the world the eternal word under a new form adapted to its present mentality.” In short what is needed is a movement like that started by Buddha, but this time with a greater and vaster aim for which humanity has been preparing itself through all its vicissitudes. We find a similar indication in the Gita, where the Lord says to Arjuna, “The ancient Yoga was lost in the great lapse of time, that has been today declared to thee by Me”. We are on the threshold of a new synthesis which will be even richer and vaster than that of the Gita.

“We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us; we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though¹¹⁴ limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking; and, beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost to the consciousness of mankind but now breaking out again from behind the veil. All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis.”

— *Essays on the Gita.*

RELIGION IN RUSSIA

One remarkable development of the present war is the manner in which Soviet Russia, under the leadership of Stalin, has definitely given up the Marxist attitude towards all religion and spirituality. This is a clear sign that the world is emerging out of an age of materialistic philosophy which has been invaluable as the inspiration for applied Science and also as a corrective of the ascetic denial of life, but which has, at the same time, led to a neglect of other values, a neglect that is, in the words of a scientist,

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“perhaps the ultimate cause of the present war.” (The Structure of Morale By J.T. Maccurdy). The ground for this revival of spiritual values was already prepared by Science itself. Not only Matter cannot give a sufficient explanation of Mind, Matter itself cannot be explained by Matter alone; modern Science has shown that Matter is a manifestation of some Force or Energy, about the ultimate nature of which Science cannot say anything. It is not that Science has furnished proof of Spirit, that cannot be in the nature of things, as Science, that is Physical Science, has no means of testing truths which are beyond sense-experience. But modern Science has definitely given up the 19th century attitude that the ultimate Reality is something material and inconscient, and thus has taken away the basis of the so-called “scientific materialism” on which Marx and Engels relied. Indeed even they in their time admitted that the spiritual view cannot be refuted on theoretical grounds; their objection to religion was primarily on practical grounds, such as “religion is the opium of the people.” This view has been found to be untenable by Soviet Russia after a long period of the most determined anti-religious drive of modern times. Stalin may not have become a religious or spiritual man; but as a realist he has found out that it is false psychology which regards the religious instinct in man as something which can be uprooted and that religion is not necessarily a force of reaction. It is to be hoped that the religious revival in Russia will not be a mere repetition of the old forms and ritualism but will bring in something of the ever-invigorating and creative power of the Spirit.

Critic.

REVIEWS¹¹⁵

Spirit and Reality: Nicolas Berdyaev: Geoffrey Bles. The Centenary Press. Two Manchester Square London. pp. 203.

This book is an English Translation of the author’s Russian work on one of the most important aspects of Mystical thought. It is an exposition of the Christian standpoint but of the new school.

His philosophy of Spirit is that Spirit is the highest reality superconscious, existential, which has primary over being, which is to be known only through persons, whose essential quality is Freedom, it is the agency of the superconscious in consciousness (p. 15), it is creativeness, concrete, subjective, which can and must be interpreted ‘above all in a personalistic way’ (p. 12), it is ‘meaning, creativity, integrity, love, value, and orientation towards the highest Divine world and union with it’ (p. 32); it emanates from God but it is not a Divine Creation like Nature; it is a Divine infusion, an inspiration; (p. 33) Spirit is irrational, extra-rational and supra-rational (p. 34), ‘Spirit is not being but the purpose and truth of being’ (p. 34). Nicolas Berdyaev holds further that Spirit is ‘not the same thing as consciousness, but consciousness is formed through

Spirit and through it again reaches superconsciousness.' Spirit is other than the soul, the former is spiritual, the latter is psychic. "Everyman has a soul –such is his nature—but his spirituality may remain undiscovered or suppressed...Spirit is axiological it is not nature, not even psychic nature, but truth, beauty, purpose, freedom' (p. 39) "The soul is invariably fragmentary and partial; spirit alone is whole and universal. Nor is spirituality opposed to body or material but implies its transfiguration, the realization of the highest quality of the whole man—his personality" (p. 40).

Thus according to Nicolas Berdyaev Spirit is to be interpreted in a dynamic manner as that which is the essential truth of existence. He opposes the view that spirit is objective though he holds it is possible to objectify it. The intellectual interpretation of Spirit is foredoomed to failure, for they are all abstractions or rather abstract interpretations of that which cannot be at any time abstract or non-existential. "The abstract interpretation of Spirit common to intellectuals who as a class are denied the full life, is the result of a false dualism of spirit and flesh, of spiritual and intellectual work on the one hand, and material and physical labour on the other. It is a classic heritage of aristocratic Greek intellectualism" (p. 43).

Students of Indian Philosophy will be able to see that the illusionistic theory is nothing but the abstractification of Spirit, and thus a falsification of Spirit, due to the aristocratic primacy granted to intellect. The primacy is always to Spirit.

Having thus disowned any possibility of objective Spirit and shown that even the vigorous Philosophy of Spirit by Hegel errs on the side of abstraction, the author points out that the one sign or test of Spirit is Freedom. "There is no determination from without. Everything spiritual is subject, inward. There can be no spiritual emanation from the object. The spiritual has no significance other than freedom. Objectification is a secondary and derivative process, it should be grasped from within' (p. 48). "Objectification is a descent into materiality, exterior existence—it loses its chief attribute freedom in this process (p. 47). This means that the¹¹⁶ method of grasping at the truth of the objectified spirit, namely nature or matter, should be from within; by this means its essential freedom gets liberated. The intellectual and any other means of understanding the objectified spirit is only through symbolism.

In the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo we can see that this is what we call the involution of Spirit, a descent of Spirit into finality into mechanism. But there is a vast difference between Berdyaev and Sri Aurobindo in the fact that Berdyaev does not accept evolution of spirit in and through matter with its higher evolutes of life and

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mind, the planes through which it became objectified. "The agency of Spirit is not evolutionary. There is no consistent development of Spirit, for this would imply a law and would be a negation of Freedom" (p. 47). Thus Berdyaev considers law always as restrictive and never anything but organizational, or rather self-organizational or purposive in any other manner. The attribute of purpose that he granted to spirit earlier (p. 39) is not shown to have a primacy which would be a regulative expression of its own primacy over matter or being or intellectual conformity. On this principle, freedom could be restrictive, degrading, even as he himself finds it necessary to hold that the Evil is to be considered to be freedom itself in one of its forms. "Causality is not the only reason why evil, injustice and *unjust* suffering exist in the world; freedom is another reason because it has a certain tendency to become inevitable causality" (p. 118). This is but correct, for human freedom cannot be absolute freedom at all times; it must either ascend to the superconscious or else it will face the movement towards causal necessity, *karma*. The problem of Evil is very important, and Berdyaev makes freedom itself a mystery whose rational explanation would only kill it. (p. 113-115). Reverting to the question of Objectification of Spirit, he calls this socialization. "It produces the bourgeois state (in the spiritual sense) and thus leads to the exhaustion of creative vital energy and activity. It inevitably breeds fiction, generally accepted as a socially useful instrument" (p. 51). Thus all objective organizations which started for preserving the riches spiritual ended in a mass of symbolism and truth was left languishing under the debris of efficacy administrative and otherwise. In the brilliant work *Science and Politics in the Ancient World*, Benjamin Farrington pointed out that much more falsification and myth-making took place under the guise of Spirituality in the Philosophy of Plato than under the most efficient of materialistic philosophies. The way out of this condition of stagnation and lifeless philosophy which idealistic schools of political philosophy and objectivists have made possible is only by arriving at that stage when man will begin to understand all things in and through the subjective, mystically speaking, and the personalistic. "The triumph of spirit in society would be a triumph of personalism, of personal communion of the relation of one personality to another in a human and Humane We, the recognition of the supreme value of every personality. This is the creation of subjective rather than an objective society." This is not individualism, but a true concrete universalism. Human happiness cannot be organised even as one modern Indian writer states: Organization kills the individual, makes him void of personality. He becomes just a number. But it is not possible to hold that it is the business of a spiritual society to enhance the ego-sense or egoism of the individual. Rightly human happiness cannot be established utterly unless the individual impulses of self-seeking and self-increase are also abolished for these two instincts are not spirit-increasing but objectifications of spirit that is within. "The greatest of all rationalistic illusions is that ultimate deliverance from human suffering and unhappiness will be realised in the external sphere of organized life" (p. 101). "Man's spiritual history is a search for inner deliverance both from his own suffering

and that of the world” says the author, and the highest solution offered for this is love. Rightly too the author finds¹¹⁷ that this love is a fact not of the consciousness which is partial and fragmentary, but either of the subconscious or the superconscious. The ancient Indian solution was that the love of the Supreme is the first step towards the love of all, indeed the subconscious or unconscious love is a veiled objectification of the superconscious love for the Divine in each individual. This is love that is a total offering to the multiple Divine.

The most illuminating chapter is the fifth which deals with the nature of mysticism. “Mysticism is essentially a spiritual as distinct from a psychic state and implies a spiritual penetration of the soul. It is the birth of the spiritual man, who apprehends realities in a better and more incisive way than natural or psychic man.” (p. 131). He sketches how the mystic consciousness seeks for the Unknowable God, the apophatic God, the Non-revealed God or what we can call as the Para, the Transcendent. Berdyaev however errs when he considers that non-christian mysticism is abstract and impersonal for in truth real mysticism embraces both the archetypal realities of the things viewed as the Real Idea, and their subordination to the Supreme Transcendent, the entirely Concrete, which is amenable to personal relationship even at its highest. The supreme merit of Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy of the Supermind is that not only does he hold that we can reach the pinnacle of the Supermind within ourselves, for that is the only way—and this has been done by the Vedic Rishis who symbolised this as the Solar Orb—but we can also return to the Earth and transfigure the Earth, Life and Mind with its dynamic puissance from within, that is, subjectively and spiritually.

Nor is the author right in contending that Hindu Mysticism is a mysticism of Identity, abstraction from the world, absorption in the Brahman, mere acosmism, abnegation of the plural world. This criticism is justified only in the Māyāvadīc advaitism. Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy is far from this type as any pluralistic philosophic can be. Monism and Mysticism are opposed to one another; for mysticism seeks integral life, though how it does it is more than the author is aware of. He writes “Of all relations the most mysterious and the most difficult to realise in life is that between freedom and Divine Grace, between the human soul and the Divine or Holy Spirit. This relation defies both monistic and dualistic interpretations; it is situated outside our category of thinking” (p. 155). The bafflement of the method of achieving unity between Freedom and Grace is surely got rid of by the Integral Philosophy which reveals the fact that the whole process of divine evolutionism is a two-way movement of free ascent and aspiration of the individual one of the many of the Integral Divine assisted, stimulated, vivified, transformed and integrated by the Free Omniscient

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Descent of Grace from above of the *one* Divine, the eternal One in the eternal multiple. The organistic view too, in its own limited intellectual way, gets over this problem of relationship through its two processes of autonomy and cooperative subordination to the whole. In the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, as in the thesis of the author, it is clear that “Spirituality is the immanence of the Divine in the human, but this does not infer undifferentiated identity. It is paradoxical that while mystical experience is both a confrontation and an experience of the transcendental, the transcendental is immanent in it; and that the distinction between the transcendental and the immanent is resolved without the Divine being completely absorbed in the human....There can be no greater error than to interpret mystical experience in terms of monistic metaphysics. Monism postulates rationalization, a mental process rather than experience” (p. 133). The defect however in Berdyev’s thesis is that while he is able to go thus far, he is not able to visualise the more fundamental dynamism of the Supermind or the Divine Consciousness. The supramentalisation of the mind or the human is¹¹⁸ within the competence of the Divine Grace that descends and confronts the human, and Christian Theological mysticism cannot stay out when it is so confronted. Nor would Gnostic Mind or Supermind when once earned by the human not be also capable of the Light and Love that vivifies in ever so much obscured a way, nor be disposed only to work in one direction of knowledge or illumination and not of love. The Supermind, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, is integral *Sacchidānanda* mediating between its own transcendent Nature and the manifest lower nature, uplifting and sustaining the entire process through so-called Ignorance (veiled superconscience) at the lower levels and at its higher levels by its own illumined nature.

The final chapter is the most important in one sense, for the author himself states that all the earlier chapters were written to justify his main theme of New Spirituality. It states that the way of New Spirituality through freedom of Spirit, freedom from objectification, and from the subjectification of spirit to the influence of a wicked and fallen society (*Bourgeoisie*), leads to emancipation from spiritual symbolization to spiritual realization, and manifests the creative essence of spirit and it should justify the purpose of creativeness. Throughout this work one looks for the nature of creativeness and finds that though it is stated to be a quality of spirit, even as it turns out to be a fundamental attribute of spiritual life, it is nowhere clear as to what it could create. He has only delineated what spirituality should not and could not be—in other words negatively. But the New Spirituality that Sri Aurobindo points out is something of a fundamental transformation of the human, a fundamental Divine passion having its achievement in the *Sacchidānanda*, the One who is the many souls. This Union in the Divine itself is a creative act, and what it connotes to the Soul born in the Supermind-Consciousness is a *terra incognata*.

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Despite its several weaknesses the thesis put forward by Nicolas Berdyaev is stimulating as an index to the spiritual ferment and direction to the future which all of us are so eagerly anticipating. In his own words "A new movement of the Spirit is imminent and will help to enlighten further our conception of it."

K.C.V.

Niti-vijnāna (Bengali). By Sri Birchandra Sinha. Published by Sri Sitiesh-chandra Sinha, Khanjarpur, Bhagalpur. Rs.1/8.

Sj. Birchandra Sinha is an experienced Professor of Philosophy and he has successfully carried out the task which he set to himself—that of acquainting the Bengali-reading public with the main currents of Western ethical thought. One striking feature of the book is that nowhere we find a single English word or phrase; the author has found suitable Bengali words for all Western technical terms and has shown that whatever is essential and important in Western thought can be expressed through Bengali, and this itself is an achievement. The book will serve as a very good introduction to Western Ethics, and University students also will find it useful. But where we cannot agree with the learned Professor is his comparison of Kant's Ethics with the teaching of the Gita and his finding that the two are very similar. It is a fundamental mistake often committed by Indian Professors of Philosophy to regard the Gita as a book of moral life, *naitik jiban* or even of religious life *dharma jiban*. The Gita is really a book of Yoga and spiritual life, *adhyatma jiban*, and as such stands on a higher level than any system of Morals, not excluding that of Kant or Hegel. No doubt the Gita, as a great synthesis, assigns to morality and religion a proper place, but only as a preparatory discipline; these things belong to the mind, but the Gita asks the¹¹⁹ disciple to go beyond the mind and reason, to rise to a higher spiritual consciousness where one finds his unity with Self, with God—a unity which is lost in the mental consciousness of man, *traigunyavisaya veda nistrigunga bhavarjuna*.

According to Kant the only truly moral action is one which is done following a moral law for its own sake without regard to any other consequences; this is supposed to be essentially the teaching of the desireless action of the Gita. But the similarity is superficial. To Kant the moral law is a command absolute, a categorical imperative. The Gita recognises no moral law or maxim as absolute, commanding allegiance under all circumstances; it also does not make a sharp opposition between duty and happiness

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like Kant. Thus the Guru in the Gita, after giving an exposition of his Yoga, tells Arjuna: "Therefore arise, get thee glory, conquer thy enemies and enjoy an opulent kingdom (11/33)." This certainly does not agree with the stern moral teaching of Kant. The Gita enjoins desireless action not because it recognises any moral maxim as absolute like Kant, but because desire keeps us bound to the movements of the lower nature and thus is the arch enemy of our upward progress, of our rise into the higher nature and the higher consciousness. In ordinary life desire is the ruling principle of action, and as action constitutes the greater part of our life, if we can give up the habit of acting from desire, we shall go a long way in getting rid of desire altogether and rooting it out of our nature thus laying the foundation of a higher spiritual life. This is the true significance of the *niskāma karma* of the Gita. According to Kant, we should act only from a sense of duty; but according to the Gita this sense of duty in man is based on an illusion, for the very sense of being a doer is itself an illusion. "While the actions are being entirely done by the modes of Nature, he whose self is bewildered by egoism thinks that it is his 'I' which is doing them." (3/27). But as long as man is living in the ignorance and does not realise this truth, but has the sense of being the doer, he should acquire the habit of not making the desire for the fruit the motive of his action; in this way he will rise above the illusion and be established in true self-knowledge. But as in ordinary life desire for the fruit is the usual motive of action and it is very difficult to give it up, the Gita points out that this desire for fruit, this looking forward to the consequences of our actions is useless as the consequences do not depend on us but on the operation of complex forces over which we have no control. This is the true significance of the much-quoted saying of the Gita, "Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits." This is quite different from the "Duty for the sake of duty" principle of Western Ethics. As the Sadhaka of the Gita progresses in desireless action, he realises that he is not really the doer but only an agent, a channel and he gives up all his action to the Divine who is the Lord of all action in the world.

So that ignorant men may not fall into *tamas* or inertia and give up the battle of life which is indispensable for their upward progress, the Gita says that they have a right to action and that they must not have any attachment to inaction. At the same time to get rid of the *rajasic* principle of desire they are asked not to act from the desire for fruits. What then should be the standard of our action? The Gita says, the *Shashtra*, and here we find some similarity of the teaching of the Gita with ordinary moral teaching. But for the Gita, it is only a preliminary and preparatory stage in the path. The ultimate teaching of the Gita is to abandon all *Shashtra*, all *dharmas*, rules and maxims and to take our utter refuge in the Divine alone so that the Divine may make us a perfect instrument and channel of the fulfilment of his will in the world, *nimitta matram*. The ideal *Karmayogin* of the Gita has no sense of duty or being the doer, has no¹²⁰ allegiance to any *Shashtra* or maxim. "He has flung away from him all egoistic,

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personal and mental initiative whether of the inner or the outer act (*sarvārambhaparityāgi*), one who lets the divine will and divine knowledge flow through him undeflected by his own resolves, preferences and desires, and yet for that very reason is swift and skilful in all action of his nature, because this flawless unity with the supreme will, this pure instrumentation is the condition of the greatest skill in works." (Essays on the Gita).

Showing the similarity of Kant with the Gita, Professor Sinha observes, "Sri Krishna condemns as a weakness of the heart and an obscurity of the soul the affection and love towards our near and dear relations which we value so much and which is the source of so much good in the world; Nature-given affection, compassion, fellow-feeling are the brightest ornaments of human nature, and to deprive human nature of these things is to deprive it of much of its natural beauty. Still this is the injunction of Krishna to Arjuna, and in this his teaching is on par with that of Kant." There can be no greater misunderstanding of the teaching of the Gita than this. The Gita does not want us to be cruel and hard-hearted; from the Vedantic point of view the ordinary pleasures and pains of men are egoistic deformations of the spontaneous delight of the Spirit, so the Gita asks us to root out this ego from our nature and for this it is necessary to bear the shocks of the dualities of life with *samata*, equality, so that we may realise the equal Spirit that is within us, *samam Brahma*. The sadhaka as well as the liberated man of the Gita are "occupied in doing good to all creatures" (p. 5/25, 12/4). "He who has no egoism, no I-ness and my-ness, who has friendship and pity for all beings and hate for no living thing,"-that is the description of the *bhakta* of the Gita who is dear to the Divine. Friendship, compassion, love, delight are the very stuff of the spiritual consciousness which is the goal set before man by the Gita. The pity of Arjuna, which is so severely condemned by Sri Krishna, "is quite different from the godlike compassion mentioned later on in the Gita, which observes with an eye of love and wisdom and calm strength the battle and the struggle, the strength and weakness of man, his virtues and sins, his joy and suffering, and enters into it all to help and to heal. Arjuna's pity is a form of self-indulgence, it is the physical shrinking of the nerves from the acts of slaughter, the egoistic emotional shrinking of the heart from the destruction of the Dhritarashtrians because they are 'one's own people' and without them life will be empty." (Essays on the Gita).

What Professor Sinha calls *sneha* and *mamatā* are really egoistic attachment to one's wife and children and other relations because they are "one's own people", "my son," "my wife" and so forth. The wife, the son are dear not for their sake but for the sake of the egoistic self. This attachment to one's relations is good for men of a lower grade who, the Gita says, should not be disturbed in their attachment as otherwise they will lose all initiative to work and remain immersed in *tamas* or inertia (p. 3/26). But to a developed Aryan like Arjuna such an egoistic attachment is a bondage, an obstacle in the further growth of his soul and must be discarded. Indeed the egoistic attachment to the family is a great stumbling block on the spiritual path; that is why the Gita raises the

issue so trenchantly at the very beginning of its teaching. The ego is not our true self and all relations through it are based on ignorance and must be discarded, we must become *nirmana*, *nirahankāra* so that we may find our true self in which we are one with God and all other creatures. It is this realisation of unity which is the basis of the highest love and the most intense delight.

The Gita like Kant and all other systems of Morality enjoins self-discipline, the control of the senses, of the lower nature but the method is fundamentally different¹²¹. According to Kant, the senses are to be controlled by reason, following categorical imperatives or maxims determined by reason; the Gita finds this to be an impossibility, because the human reason itself is under the clutches of desire, is the seat of it (3/40). The senses and the lower nature can only be mastered by seeing the Self and living in it, *param dristva* (2/59, 3/43). According to Kant the Self or the ultimate Reality cannot be known. The Gita says, the supreme Reality can be seen, known, entered into by a devotion or bhakti which adores and loves the Divine alone in all things (11/54). Be a doer of my works, says the Lord, accept Me as the supreme being and object, become my Bhakta, be free from attachment and without enmity to all existences; for such a man comes to Me, O, Partha (11/55). "In other words superiority to the lower nature, unity with all creatures, oneness with the Cosmic Godhead and the Transcendent, oneness of will with the Divine in works, absolute love for the One and for God in all, – this is the way to that absolute spiritual self-exceeding and that unimaginable transformation." (*Essays on the Gita*).

– A.B.

We speak of the evolution of Life in Matter, the evolution of Mind in Matter; but evolution is a word which merely states the phenomenon without explaining it. For there seems to be no reason why Life should evolve out of material elements or mind out of living form, unless we accept the Vedantic solution that Life is already involved in Matter and Mind in Life because in essence Matter is a form of veiled Life. Life a form of veiled consciousness. And then there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond Mind. In that case, the unconquerable impulse of man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom. Immortality presents itself in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond Mind, and appears to be as natural, true and just as the impulse towards Life which she has planted in certain forms of Matter or the impulse towards Mind which she has planted in certain forms of Life.....The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory, in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the God. Or shall we not say, rather, to Manifest God?

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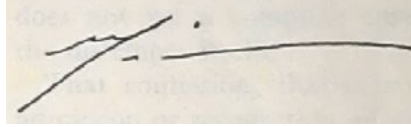
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Le succès est une épreuve plus difficile à traverser que l'infortune.

C'est à l'heure du succès qu'il faut veiller tout spécialement à se surmonter soi-même.



Success is a harder ordeal to pass through than misfortune.

It is in the hour of success that one must be especially vigilant to rise above oneself.

THE MOTHER

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ADVENT**

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo.

CONFESSION AND CONFESSION

The practice of confession—confession of one's errors and lapses and sins—is usually considered necessary as part of spiritual discipline. In the Roman Catholic system it has a very special and important place. Here the confession is made to a particular priest, the father confessor. The penitent opens his heart freely and frankly and the confessor receives the secret as a sacred trust, and gives absolution in return. In India and in older disciplines generally the confession is made to the Guru.

A modern version, however, of the rule is found sometimes in certain groups of spiritual seekers. The confession is made not to a particular person considered fit and worthy and not in secret, but in an open session of the group to which one belongs: it is made to one's comrades, co-practitioners, to each other. The result, it is alleged, is quite

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hopeful and helpful. One derives real benefit. One feels, at least, relief from a pressure and pain, even if one does not get a complete cure of the distemper itself.

That confession, that is to say, admission or recognition of one's fault or error by itself brings some relief is a simple psychological fact. Modern psychotherapy, as practised by psycho-analysts, is based upon this principle. But the crucial problem is to whom should the confession be made – *kasmai devāya*? For that makes considerable difference in the result achieved.

First and foremost, naturally, the confession should be made to one's own self – that is the deity who requires propitiation at the very¹²⁴ outset. To see and recognise an error committed is the initial step that one has to take to correct and rise above it. But there are circumstances when it may not be easy to detect one's error or wrong knot, when one may not have at all the will to do so. Apart from what may be habitual and ingrained to perverse and hardened natures, there are movements, it is pointed out, in our being and consciousness – primitive and aboriginal – which one naturally and stubbornly shrinks from facing. The psycho-analyst volunteers in such a predicament to help and collaborate: he endeavours to make the subject conscious, bring to the surface an imbedded and unrecognised complex that does not like the light of day. His function is that of a physician or surgeon.

The utility of group confession, it is contended, is precisely this that it encourages one to confess, to be frank and open. Usually one seeks to hide and is reticent about one's faults and slips, but when one sees and hears another, one is emboldened to speak out. What the psycho-analyst would find difficult to bring out, could be more easily laid bare in this collective or mutual confession. But there are certain dangers which seem to us not only to neutralise its utility, but warn us to avoid it.

First of all, it may lend itself to dramatisation and fixation. That is to say, one gets a pleasure in recounting one's lapses; in blackening oneself one feels as a sort of hero, and that instead of curing serves only to stabilise and eternize the thing one seeks to get rid of. From that standpoint perhaps the Christian way is a better system, in that it serves to limit the contagion, as it were, and also to inculcate real contrition and humility. Secondly, admission of a wrong movement may be the first step, a necessary and indispensable step, but it is only just the first step, it does not by itself automatically eliminate the undesirable complex, as even psychotherapy seems to assume. The second step is to tackle, to come to grips with the knot. How can that be done securely and successfully? It can be so done only if you are put in contact with a higher consciousness, either within you or outside you, rather both within and outside you. Any other person or persons – standing level with you or perhaps even on a lower

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consciousness – cannot do the thing, they are likely to do the opposite, pin down the consciousness to the normal ignorant level or even bring it down still lower. The psycho-analyst may have a subtler or more detached consciousness, as a clever physician, but¹²⁵ that is not enough, something more is necessary to cure the malady of the soul. The confessor is usually only a repository: he can be a true healer if and when he is one with the Christ consciousness.

The real Redeemer, however, is the Guru; for the Guru is the embodiment of the Divine and one's deepest self. The unfolding of oneself, laying oneself bare to the gaze of the Guru is a divine mystery – it is what we call "opening" in our terminology.

Confession then is to be made first to oneself, that is to say, you must sincerely and genuinely ask for purity and light, for confession is nothing but that at bottom. If you are not conscious or sufficiently strong in the beginning to do it, you must have the good will, must call for the light. The light shall be given and the necessary strength; the Grace will be there automatically if we are open to it. Finally, the process takes a direct dynamic form and effectivity, when it is dedicated to the living personality of the Guru, who concretises the Grace from above and our aspiration from below.

PATTERN AND PLAN

A distinction has been brought out between pattern and plan by some Christian thinkers* who seem nowadays to be coming back to their own once again even in Europe. The distinction is, we agree, very fruitful and immensely significant. Planning, they point out, is only a construction made by man's finite mind, it is arbitrary and artificial, whereas pattern comes from God, it is the design revealed by divine Dispensation in the cosmic purpose. So long as man takes to mere planning, endeavours to fashion himself or the world according to some pet ideas or notions of the limited and narrow and superficial human understanding, it is sure to lead to frustration and nullity. There are many such brilliant plans, neat and even plausible, eked out and elaborated by the brain, but divorced from the living reality. For when they are brought forward to be applied to life, life has to be mutilated to fit into their frame; they are like the Procrustean bed. Especially in these revolutionary days when every thing is questioned and every thing is sought to be built up anew from the very bottom of the foundations, planning is the slogan¹²⁶ in the air: we have political, social, moral, religious, spiritual plans even, all the "isms" and "logies" that pillulate the atmosphere of the modern age. We have seen practically none of these nostrums are of

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Confession and Confession

* The Christian News-Letter. Oxford, Edited by J. H. Oldham.

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PATTERN AND PLAN

much avail when pitted against facts of life. Nay, some are even positively harmful. All have to be amended, modified, corrected both by the pressure of circumstances and an inner necessity. The rigidity of a Marxian frame, the intransigence of a Puritanic moralism, the sweeping arrogance of a totalitarian dispensation, all, all have to bend down to the force of life and give place to a growing revelation of the Divine Pattern.

The Divine Pattern has two elements in it which lend it its authenticity and absolute effectivity. First of all, its transcendent nature, that is to say, it is based on eternal realities, because it is the expression or formulation of the Divine Consciousness. The pattern is, according to us, the formation of the fundamental Idea-Forces of the Truth-Consciousness that stand at the base of Manifestation. Secondly, the Pattern is the dynamic unfoldment of that basic scheme, the general outline, through the mosaic of the evolutionary process. Human mind, itself a product of evolution, attempts to get at this profounder scheme—the real life pattern—of things, but oftener than not succeeds in arriving at a “sorry scheme”; for man’s ignorant and impure nature, his uninstructed and unillumined mind, his very zeal and impatient eagerness produce an aberration, a blurring of the truth. These attempts show only an urge, an aspiration towards better things and a partial—and very often distorted—glimpse of the shape of things to come. But in order that our urge and wish may be fulfilled we must adopt the right attitude and the right approach. We have to seek to mould the earth not simply after our heart’s desire, but after God’s will and the processus of the cosmic Purpose.

An integral spiritual consciousness that supports, illumines and inspires the mind and the life and the body can alone reveal the Pattern that the Divine Shakti harbours in her secret bosom and gradually develops and elaborates in the major lines of world progress. To leaders of men it is this divine wisdom that is necessary, especially in an epoch when a world is crumbling down and another has to be recreated.

ENEMY ¹²⁷NUMBER ONE

He is not far to seek. He is near at home. He is within us, he is our own self. Whenever we look for the enemy outside and away, we shall surely find a good number of them and big ones too. But the arch-enemy will have escaped. We throw the blame on others, on circumstances, on fate, on Nature’s perversity or God’s partiality. But the real cause is elsewhere. The outside is as is the inside—the macrocosm is an echo or projection of the microcosm.

Modern psychology has familiarised us with what has been described as the phenomenon of transference or objectivisation. One ascribes to an object outside movements and happenings in oneself. This is not only true of the dream world—

which was the main field of inquiry of the psychologists – but true also equally of the normal life. Whenever there is anything amiss – even though it may look that the cause is in outward circumstances and in others – it is always wise and it pays in the end to take it for granted that the central, the original cause is within ourselves. Not only so, one must be able to spot the source, otherwise how can there be a cure? If one is sincere, if one develops the right consciousness, one is sure to find out. This, however, should not be confounded with what is termed vicarious atonement or expiation for the sins of others. For that is a question of taking the burden of others on oneself. But sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, if we are concerned with our own burden only and try to dispose of it. Once the inner knot is straightened out, the miracle is sure to happen; there will be no knot outside, even as the Mayic world dissolves directly one finds the Brahmic consciousness within. As the poet says, to the good soul all is propitious, for him horizons clear up, the winds blow smooth. The force of consciousness has this natural and inevitable effect: if it is obscure and wry, it will draw around it men and things and circumstances constituting a similar texture. Circumstances become difficult for him whose inner consciousness is blocked with pill-boxes of egoistic arrogance and ignorance. Clear the consciousness, externally also Nature's course will run fair and even. It is for this reason that the common direction is given to spiritual seekers: liberate thyself, that is the only way to liberate the world.

What¹²⁸ we say is true not only of the individual but of the collective or group consciousness also. It is a familiar spectacle to see nations and peoples blaming each other, pointing out the mote in another's eye, not the beam in our own. We, for example, in India, are never tired of making the demand that there must be a change of heart on the part of the British, then only, we declare, the whole Indian riddle will be solved at a stroke. There may be need of that, but we must not forget that there is a greater need of a change of heart on our side too. If each nation turned to change its own heart, instead of being anxious for the soundness of the heart of others, politics would be a harmonious divine play, and earth itself a heaven.

INDEPENDENCE AND ITS SANCTION

Independence is not a gift which one can receive from another, it is a prize that has to be won. In the words of the poet Bhasa, used in respect of empire, we can say also of liberty:

Taloke na lu yāeyate na lu punardtnāya dtyate

it is not a thing to be got for the mere asking, nor is it a thing to be made over to a weakling.

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The lead Sri Aurbindo gave in this connection has not, sad to say, sufficiently attracted the attention of our people. Indeed what he suggested was exactly, under the circumstances, the best way to acquire the necessary fitness—organised strength, capacity, the might and consequently the right—just the sanction, in other words, that can uphold a demand. We are always ignoring the broad fact that we have not the wherewithal to fight the British, even if it is found necessary to do so for our purpose. We cannot meet them openly and squarely: a “Quit India” programme is sure to end in a fiasco. It was foolishness and foolhardiness that believed we could as easily manage the British as the Japs or the Germans did (once upon a time we should add at this hour). A revolution, meaning a chaos and confusion, is not the best means to drive out the “die-hard Imperialism” as we choose to call it. Nor can cunning or expediency or legal jugglery be of any avail, nor work that is perfunctory, desultory, scampy. The force that can compel a change in the British has got to be of a different character: neither emotional excitement nor anger nor spite (nor a philosophical or moral vindication of our cause¹²⁹) can be an adequate lever. We declare it is a war: well then, we will have to arm ourselves as in war. That is to say, we must command a strength that is calm, collected, poised, organised—objectively acquired and marshalled, not simply subjectively thought out or taken for granted. That can alone be the imperative sanction to all our claims and demands, our wishes and aspirations.

Precisely, the present war brings to our door the opportunity most suited to the acquisition and development of this power and strength. The very things the Indian temperament once had in abundance but now lacks most and has to recover—discipline, organisation, impersonality and objectivity in work, hard and patient labour, skill of execution in minute details—qualities by virtue of which power is not only acquired, but maintained and fostered—are now made more easily available. These qualities cannot be mastered and developed with such facility and swiftness as under the pressure of the demands of a war. This does not mean that we have got to be militarists. But the world is such that if we wish to live and prosper we must know how to make use of the materials and conditions that are given to us. Many good things are imbedded among bad ones and wisdom and common-sense do not advise us to throw out the baby with the bath-water. That is another matter, however.

If we had joined hands with the British in the war work on their own terms (to try to compel them to our terms is to put the cart before the horse), we would have seen that as we proceeded with the work, more and more of it came automatically under our charge, however small or slight it might have looked in the beginning. In the end or very soon we would have found that our possession of the field was an accomplished fact, there could be no question of denying or refusing, the fact had to be accepted—

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admitted and ratified. It is the well-known policy of the camel which Aesop described in one of his Fables. We have to establish the inexorable logic of events which definitively solves the riddle, cuts the Gordian knot as it were. A theoretical that is to say a moral and legal pact or understanding is but a dam of sands.

Power is best gained and increased in this way, viz., through work, through practical application of it, in its painstaking execution—no matter with what insignificant fund we start with. Let all power come into my hands, let me be legally and verbally recognised¹³⁰ as free and invested with plenary power, then alone I can exercise my power, otherwise not—this is the cry of romantic idealism, of sentimental hunger: it has all the impatience and incompetence of visionaries—*illumines*—it is not the clear and solid wisdom of experience.

We consider the British as our enemy and in order to combat and compel them we have been trying to bring together all the differing elements in our midst. Close up the ranks to fight a common enemy—that is our grand strategy. It is an effort that has not succeeded till now and is not likely to succeed soon. We should have looked a little farther ahead: with a longer view we would have spotted the greater enemy, a vastly greater immediate danger. Against that common enemy a larger and effective unification would have been quite feasible and even easy. Indeed, if we had taken the other way round, had first united with the British against the greater common enemy, our union with ourselves—our own peoples and parties—would have been automatically accomplished.

That is how we read the situation. When it looked as though there was no way left at our disposal to compose the acute and bitter differences among the multifarious Indian collectivities and also between the Indians and the British or foreigners, precisely at that critical hour appeared the war bringing an unique opportunity, a call and a message, as it were. There is certainly clash in Nature, but always there is an effort also in her to turn that clash into concord. India had too long been the field *par excellence* of discord and it was time that a movement for real harmony should come. Yes, we say, the war was providential to us, a God-send, offering the chance of centuries. But blinded and perverted our human intelligence refused to take it at its worth.

PRAYERS¹³¹ OF THE MOTHER

I

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Independence and its Sanction

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May 25, 1914.

O divine Master of love and purity, grant that in its least stages, its smallest activities, this instrument which wishes to serve Thee worthily, may be purged of all egoism, of all error, of all obscurity, so that nothing in it may pervert, deform or stay Thy action. How many nooks are yet in the shadow, far from the full brightness of Thy illumination! For them I ask the supreme happiness of that illumination.

O, to be the pure crystal without stain which allows Thy divine ray to pass without obscuring, colouring or perverting it! Not out of a desire for perfection, but that Thy work may be accomplished as perfectly as possible.

And when I ask this of Thee, the "I" which speaks to Thee is the whole Earth, aspiring to be this pure diamond, perfect reflector of Thy supreme light. The hearts of all men beat in my heart, all their thoughts vibrate in my thoughts, the least aspiration of the docile animal or of the modest plant joins in my formidable aspiration, and all this lifts itself towards Thee, to the conquest of Thy love and light, scaling the peaks of the being to attain to Thee, to ravish Thee from Thy immobile beatitude and make Thee penetrate into the shadow of suffering so as to transform it into divine Joy, into sovereign Peace. And this violence is of an infinite love which gives itself and of a confident serenity which smiles in the certitude of Thy perfect Unity.

O my sweet Master, Thou art the triumpher and the triumph, the victor and the victory.

II

June 1, 1914.

O victorious power of divine Love, Thou art the sovereign master of this world, Thou art its creator and saviour; Thou hast made it arise from chaos, and now Thou leadest it towards its eternal ends.

There is nothing humble but that I see Thee shining in it, no beings so hostile in appearance to Thy will but that I feel Thee living, acting, radiating Thy light in it.

O my sweet Master who art the very essence of this Love, I am thy heart, and the torrents of Thy love pass through my entire being in order to awaken Thy love in everything or rather to awaken everything¹³² to the consciousness of Thy love which animates all.

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Those who recognize Thee not, those who know Thee not, those who try to turn away from Thy divine and sweet law, I take them in my arms of love, I cradle them on my heart of love, and I offer them to Thy divine blaze, so that penetrated with Thy miraculous emanations, they may be converted into Thy beatitude. O Love, Thou penetratest and transfigurest all!

Not only to see and find God in oneself, but to see and find God in all, not only to seek one's own individual liberation or perfection, but to seek the liberation and perfection of others is the complete law of the spiritual being. If the divinity sought were a separate godhead within oneself and not God, or if one sought God for oneself alone, then indeed the result might be a grandiose egoism, the Olympian egoism of a Goethe or the Titanic egoism imagined by Nietzsche, or it might be the isolated self knowledge or asceticism of the ivory tower or the Stylites pillar. But he who sees God in all, will serve freely God in all with the service of love. He will, that is to say, seek not only his own freedom, but the freedom of all, not only his own perfection, but the perfection of all. He will not feel his individuality perfect except in the largest universality, nor his own life to be full life except as it is one with universal life. He will not live either for himself or for the State and Society, for the individual ego or the collective ego, but for something much greater, for God in himself and for God in humanity.

— (*From Sri Aurobindo's "The psychology of social development"*)

THY¹³³ WILL BE DONE

Let but Thy will be done,
Mine lost in Thine,
Embodied Ever-Sun
Of Truth divine!

Let but Thy living Ray
Nectared, moon-cool,
Bring here God's golden day
O'er earth to rule.

Let the night transformed become
An altar vast,
Thy immortal sun-fire's home,
O Glory amassed!

Let gods of heavens high

And Titans great
Accept submissively
Thy will, their fate

And help Thy wonder-plan
Becomingly.
To make a god of man
And life death-free,

A field where harmonies
Divine would play,
And Love's profundities
Bloom bright as May.

Let falsehood's force forsake
Its night-mare game,
And all to Thy Truth-Law take
And brightly claim

Thy¹³⁴ Love's down-pouring Grace,
And bathed therein
See Thy dawn's radiant face,
Thy rose divine;

And delivered thus from strife
And struggle dark,
Upon a Truth-born life
Enrapt embark

And reach the diamond haven
That lies at Thy feet,
Home of the ecstasies seven,
Union complete.

— *Punjatal.*

The poet least of all artists needs to create with his eye fixed anxiously on the technique of his art. He has to possess it no doubt; but in the heat of creation the intellectual sense of it becomes a subordinate action or even a mere undertone in his mind, and in his best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it altogether. For then the perfection of his sound-movement and style come entirely as the spontaneous

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form of his soul; that utters itself in an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word * * * * It is this highest speech which is the supreme poetic utterance, the important element in his poetry, and a little of it is enough to save the rest of his work from oblivion. *Swalpam apyasya dharmasya!*

– (From Sri Aurobindo's "The Future Poetry")

YOGIC¹³⁵ INITIATION AND APTITUDE

In the practice of Yoga a condition precedent is usually laid down: it is called *adhikara*, aptitude, fitness or capacity. Every body does not possess this aptitude, it is urged, one cannot take to a life of Yoga at one's sweet will. There must be a preparation, certain rules and regulations must be observed, some discipline must be followed and one must acquire certain qualities or qualifications, must reach a particular stage and degree, rise to a particular level of life and consciousness before one can successfully face the spiritual problem. It is not every one that has a *laisser-passer*, a free pass to enter the city or citadel of the spirit.

The Upanishad gives the warning in most emphatic terms:

"This Atman is not to be gained by the weakling"¹ and again it declares:

"Nor to the fickle and the unsteady should this knowledge be given"² and yet again:

"Nor can one attain the Spirit by discussion and disputation, nor by a varied learning nor even by the power of intelligence."³

Shankara, at the very outset of his commentary on the Sutras, in explaining the very first words, speaks of a fourfold sadhana to acquire fitness—fitness, we may take it, for understanding the Sutras and the commentary and naturally for attaining the Brahman. It seems therefore to be an absolute condition that one must first acquire fitness, develop the right and adequate capacity before one should think of spiritual initiation.

The question, however, can be raised—the moderns do raise it and naturally in the present age of science and universal education—why should not all men equally have the right to spiritual sadhana? If spirituality is the highest truth for man, his greatest good, his supreme ideal, then to deny it to any one on the ground, for example,

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¹ Mundaka 3-2-4;

² Svetasvatara 6-22;

³ Katha 2-23.

of his not being of the right caste, class, creed, or sex, to keep any one at a distance on such or similar grounds is unreasonable, unjust, reprehensible. These notions, however, are born of a sentimental or idealistic or charitable disposition, but unfortunately they do not stand the impact of the realities of life. If you simply claim a thing or even if you possess a lawful right to a worthy object, you do not acquire thereby the capacity to enjoy it. Were it so, there would be no such thing as mal-assimilation. In the domain of spiritual sadhana there are any number of cases of defective metabolism. Those that have fallen, strayed from the Path, become deranged or even had to leave the body make up a casualty list that is not small. They were misfits, they came by their fate, because they encroached upon a thing they were not actually entitled to, they were dragged into a secret, a mystery to which their being was insensible.

In a general way we may perhaps say, without gross error, that every man has the right to become a poet, a scientist or a politician. But when the question arises in respect of a particular person, then it has to be seen whether that¹³⁶ person has a natural ability, an inherent tendency or aptitude for the special training so necessary for the end in view. One cannot, at will, develop into a poet by sheer effort or culture. He alone can be a poet who is to the manner born. The same is true also of the spiritual life. But in this case, there is something more to take into account. If you enter the spiritual path, often, whether you will or not, you come in touch with hidden powers, supra-sensible forces, beings of other worlds and you do not know how to deal with them. You raise ghosts and spirits, demons and gods—Frankensteins that are easily called up but not so easily laid. You break down under their impact, unless your *adhar* has already been prepared, purified and strengthened. Now, in secular matters, when, for example, you have the ambition to be a poet, you can try and fail, fail with impunity. But if you undertake the spiritual life and fail, then you lose both here and hereafter. That is why the Vedic Rishis used to say that the earthen vessel meant to hold the Soma must be properly baked and made perfectly sound. It was for this reason again that among the ancients, in all climes and in all disciplines definite rules and regulations were laid down to test the aptitude or fitness of an aspirant. These tests were of different kinds, varying according to the age, the country and the Path followed—from the capacity for gross physical labour to that for subtle perception. A familiar instance of such a test is found in the story of the aspirant who was asked again and again, for years together, by his Teacher to go and graze cows. A modern mind stares at the irrelevancy of the procedure; for what on earth, he would question, has spiritual sadhana to do with cow-grazing? In defence we need not go into any esoteric significance, but simply suggest that this was perhaps a test for obedience and endurance. These two are fundamental and indispensable conditions in sadhana: without them there is no spiritual practice, one cannot advance a step. It is absolutely necessary that one should carry out the directions of the Guru without question or complaint, with full happiness and alacrity:

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even if there comes no immediate gain one must continue with the same zeal, not giving way to impatience or depression. In ancient Egypt among certain religious orders there was another kind of test. The aspirant was kept confined in a solitary room, sitting in front of a design or diagram, a mystic symbol (*chakra*) drawn on the wall. He had to concentrate and meditate on that figure hour after hour, day after day till he could discover its meaning. If he failed he was declared unfit.

Needless to say that these tests and ordeals are mere externals; at any rate, they have no place in our sadhana. Such or similar virtues many people possess or may possess, but that is no indication that they have an opening to the true spiritual life, to the life divine that we seek. Just as accomplishments on the mental plane,—keen intellect, wide studies, profound scholarship even in the scriptures do not entitle a man to the possession of the spirit, even so capacities on the vital plane,—mere self-control, patience and forbearance or endurance and perseverance do not create a claim to spiritual realisation, let alone physical austerities. In conformity with the Upanishadic standard, one may not be an unworthy son or an unworthy disciple, one may be strong, courageous, patient, calm, self-possessed; one may¹³⁷ even be a consummate master of the sense and be endowed with other great virtues. Yet all this is no assurance of one's success in spiritual sadhana. Even one may be, after Shankara, a *mumukshu*, that is to say, have an ardent yearning for liberation. Still it is doubtful if that alone can give him liberation into the divine life.

What then is the indispensable and unfailing requisite? What is it that gives you the right of entrance into the divine life? What is the element, the factor in you that acts as the *open sesame*, as a magic solvent?

Only one thing, represented by one small homely word—"Call". Whatever may be the case with other paths of sadhana, for Sri Aurobindo's Path this is the keynote. Has the call come to you, have you received the call? That is everything. If you have this call it does not matter in the least whether you have other qualities, be they good, be they bad. That serves as proof and pointer that you are meant for this Path. If you have this one thing needful you have everything, and if you have it not, you have nothing, absolutely nothing. You may be wise beyond measure, your virtues and austerities may be incalculable, yet if you lack this, you lack the fitness for Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. On the other hand, if you have no virtues worth the name, if you are uneducated or ill-educated, if you are weak and miserable, if your nature is full of flaws and lapses, yet if the call is there in you secreted somewhere, then all else will come to you, will be called in as it were inevitably: riches and strengths will grow and develop in you, you will transcend all obstacles and dangers, all your wants will be made good, all your wear and tear will be made whole. In the words of the Upanishad:

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“Sin will not be able to traverse you, you will traverse all sin, sin will not burn you, you will burn it away.”¹

Now what exactly is this wonderful thing? This power that brings into being the non-being, realises the impossible? Whose is this Call, from where does it come? It is none other than the call of your own inmost being, of your secret self. It is the categorical imperative of the Divine seated within your heart. Indeed the first dawning of the spiritual life means the coming forward, the unveiling of this inner being. The ignorant and animal life of man persists so long as the inner being remains in the background away from the dynamic life, so long as man is subject to the needs and impulses of his mind and life and body. True, through the demands and urges of this lower complex, it is always the inner being that gains and has its dictates carried out and is always the secret lord and enjoyer; but that is an indirect effect and it is a phenomenon that takes place behind the veil. The evolution, in other words, of the inner or psychic being proceeds through many and diverse experiences mental, vital and physical. Its consciousness, on the one hand, grows, that is, enlarges itself, becomes wider and wider, from what was infinitesimal it moves towards infinity, and on the other, strengthens, intensifies itself, comes up from behind and takes its stand in front visibly and dynamically. Man’s true individual being started on its career of evolution as a tiny focus of consciousness totally submerged under the huge surface surge of mind and life and body consciousness. It stores up in itself and assimilates the essence of the various experiences that the mind and life and body¹³⁸ bring to it in its unending series of incarnations: as it enriches itself thus, it increases in substance and potency, even like fire that feeds upon fuels. A time comes when the pressure of the developed inner being upon the mind and life and body becomes so great that they begin to lose their aboriginal and unregenerate freedom—the freedom of doing as they like: they have now to pause in their unreflecting career, turn round, as it were, and imbibe and acquire the habit of listening to the deeper, the inner voice, and obey the direction, the command of the Call. This is the “Word inviolate” (*anahata van*) of which the sages speak; this is also referred to as the “still small voice”, for indeed it is scarcely audible at present amidst the din and clamour of the wild surges of the body and life and mind consciousness.

Now, when this call comes clear and distinct, there is no other way for the man than to cut off the old moorings and jump into the shoreless unknown. It is the categorical demand of such an over-whelming experience that made the Indian aspirant declare:

“The moment you feel you are not of the world, loiter no longer in it.”

¹ Brihadaranyaka IV. 2. 23.

It is the same experience that throbs in the Christ's utterance:

"Follow me, let the dead bury their dead."

The inner soul—the psychic—very often undergoes a secret preparation, develops and comes forward but just waits, as it were, behind the thin though opaque screen, because of which, it gives no objective indication of its growth and readiness. We see no patent sign of what is usually known as fitness or aptitude or capacity. Otherwise how to explain the conversion of a profligate and dilettante like Augustine, or of a rebel like Paul, or of scamps like Jagai-Madhai. Often the purest gold hides in the besest ore, the diamond is coal turned, as it were, inside out. This, one would say, is the Divine Grace that blows where it lists—makes of the dumb a prattler, of the lame a mountain-climber. Yes, but what is this Divine Grace and how does it move and act? It does not act on all and sundry, it does not act on all equally. What is the reason? Appearances often belie the reality: a contrary mask is put on, it would appear, deliberately, with a set purpose. The sense and significance of this mystery? The hard obscure obstinate rebel outer crust may continue long but it is corroded from within and one day all on a sudden it crumbles and dissolves and becomes in a new avatar the vehicle and receptacle of the very thing it opposed and denied.

Virtues are not indications of the fire of the inner soul, nor are vices irremediable obstacles to its growth. The inner soul, we have said, feeds upon all—it is indeed fire, the omnivorous, *sarvabhuk*, virtues and vices and everything else—and gathers strength from everywhere. The mystery of miracles, of a sudden change or reversal or revolution in consciousness and way of life lies in the omni-potency of the psychic being. The psychic being has the power of making the apparently impossible possible, for this reason that it is a portion of the almighty Divine, it is the supreme Conscious-Power crystallised and canalised in a centre for the sake of manifestation. It is a particle from the being, a spark of the Consciousness, a ripple from the Delight cast into the fastnesses of Matter and the material body. Now it is the irresistible urge of this particle, this spark, this ripple to grow and expand, to become in the end¹³⁹ the Vast,—the Ocean and the Sun and the sphere of Infinity—to become that not merely in an essential status but in a dynamic and apparent becoming also. The little soul, originally no bigger than a thumb, goes forward through one life after another enlarging and intensifying itself till it recovers and establishes its parent reality in this material body here below, till it unveils what is latent within itself, what is its own, what is itself,—its integral self-fulfilment, the Divine integrality.

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Here in his inner being, as part and parcel of the Divine, man is absolutely free, has infinite capacity and unbounded aptitude; for here he is master, not slave of Nature, and it is slavery to Nature that limits and baulks and stultifies man. So does the Upanishad declare in a magnificent and supreme utterance:

“It is he in whom the soul, sunk in the impenetrable cavern of the body, darkened by dualities, has awakened and become vigilant he it is who is the master of the universe, the master of all yea, his is this world, he is this world.”¹

In the practice of Yoga the fitness or capacity that the inner being thus lends is the only real capacity that a sadhaka possesses; and the natural spontaneous self-sufficing initiation deriving from the inner being is the only initiation that is valid and fruitful. Initiation does not mean necessarily an external rite or ceremony, a *mantra*, an auspicious day or moment: all these things are useless and irrelevant once we take our stand on the authentic self-competence of the soul. The moment the inner being has taken the decision that this time, in this life, in this very body, it will manifest itself, take possession of the body and life and mind, and wait no more, in that moment itself all *mantra* has been uttered and all initiation taken. The disciple has made the final and definitive offering of his heart to his Guru—the psychic Guru—and sought refuge in him and the Guru too has definitely accepted him.

Mantra or Initiation, in its essence, is nothing else than contacting the inner being. In our Path, at least, there is no other rite or rule, injunction or ceremony. The only thing needed is to awake to the consciousness of the psychic being, to hear its call—to live and move and act every moment of our life under the eye of this indwelling Guide, in accordance with its direction and impulsion. Our initiation is not therefore a one-time affair only; but at every moment, at each step, it has to be taken again and again, it must be renewed, revitalised, furthered and strengthened constantly and unceasingly; for it means that at each step and at every moment we have to maintain the contact of our external consciousness with the inner being, at each step and at every moment we have to undergo the test of our sincerity and loyalty—the test whether we are tending to our inner being, moving in its stream or, on the contrary, walking the way of our external animal nature, whether the movements in the mind and life and body are controlled by their habitual inferior nature or are they open to and unified with their hidden divine source. This recurrent and continuous initiation is at the secret basis of all spiritual discipline—in the Integral Yoga this is the one and all-important principle.

Nolinikanta Gupta.

¹ Brihadaranyaka 4-4-13

LETTERS¹⁴⁰ ON DEATH AND AFTER-DEATH

FIRST SERIES

I

I can understand the shock your wife's catastrophic death must have been to you. But you are now a seeker and sadhak of the Truth and must set your mind above the normal reactions of the human being and see things in a larger greater light. Regard your lost wife as a soul that was progressing through the vicissitudes of the life of Ignorance—like all others here—in that progress things happen that seem unfortunate to the human mind and a sudden accidental or violent death cutting short prematurely this always brief spell of terrestrial experience we call life seems to it especially painful and unfortunate. But one who gets behind the outward view knows that all that happens in the progress of the soul has its meaning, its necessity, its place in the series of experiences which are leading it towards the turning point where one can pass from the Ignorance to the Light. He knows that whatever happens in the Divine Providence is for the best even though it may seem to the mind otherwise. Look on your wife as a soul that has passed the barrier between two states of existence. Help her journey towards her place of rest by calm thoughts and the call to the Divine Help to aid her upon it. Grief too long continued does not help but delays the journey of the departed soul. Do not brood on your loss, but think only of her spiritual welfare.

II

Each person follows in the world his own line of destiny which is determined by his own nature and actions—the meaning and necessity of what happens in a particular life cannot be understood except in the light of the whole course of many lives. But this much can be perceived by those who can get beyond the ordinary mind and feelings and see things as a whole, that even errors, misfortunes, calamities are steps by which one travels forward, the soul gathering experience as it passes through and beyond them until it is ripe for the transition which will carry it beyond these things to a higher consciousness and higher life. When one comes to that line of decisive crossing one has to leave behind one the old mind and feelings. One looks then on those who are still fixed in the pleasures and sorrows of the ordinary world with sympathy and wherever it is possible with spiritual helpfulness, but no longer with attachment. One learns that they are being led through all their stumblings and trusts to the Universal Power that is watching and supporting their existence to do for them whatever for them is the best. But the one thing that is really important for us is to get into the greater Light and the Divine Union—to turn to the Divine alone, to put our trust there alone whether for ourselves or for others.

III

The being as it passes through the series of its lives takes on personalities of various kinds and passes through various types of experiences, but it does not carry these on to the next life, as a rule. It takes on a new mind, vital and body. The mental capacities, occupations¹⁴¹, interests, idiosyncrasies of the past mind and vital are not taken over by the new mind and vital, except to the extent that is useful for the new life. One may have the power of poetic expression in one life, but in the next have no such power nor any interest in poetry. On the other hand tendencies suppressed or missed or imperfectly developed in one life may come out in the next. The essence of past experiences is kept by the psychic being but the forms of experience or of personality are not, except such as are needed for the new stage in the soul's progress.

IV

There is after death a period in which one passes through the vital world and lives there for a time. It is only the first part of this transit that can be dangerous or painful; in the rest one works out, under certain surroundings, a remnant of the vital desires and instincts which one had in the body. As soon as one is tired of these and able to go beyond, the vital sheath is dropped and the soul, after a time needed to get rid of some mental survivals, passes into a state of rest in the psychic world and remains there till the next life on earth.

One can help the departed soul by one's good will or by occult means, if one has the knowledge. The one thing that one should not do is to hold them back by sorrow for them or longings or by anything else that would pull them nearer to earth or delay their journey to their place of rest.

V

What has happened must now be accepted calmly as the thing decreed and best for his soul's progress from life to life, though not the best in human eyes which look only at the present and at outside appearance. For the spiritual seeker death is only a passage from one form of life to another, and none is dead but only departed. Look at it as that and shaking from you all reactions of vital grief—that cannot help him in his journey—pursue steadfastly the path to the Divine.

VI

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Immunity from death by anything but one's own will to leave the body, immunity from illness are things that can be achieved only by a complete change of consciousness which each man has to develop in himself,—there can be no automatic immunity without that achievement.

VII

The Divine Force, not using the supramental power, can certainly throw back the forces of Death and that has been done many times. But the Divine Force works here under conditions imposed by the Divine Will and Law; it has to take up an immense mass of conflicting forces, conditions, habits and movements of Nature and out of it arrive at the result of a higher consciousness on earth and a higher state. If it were to act otherwise, then all would be done by miracle or magic, no sadhana would be needed, no way beaten out for the process of spiritual evolution to follow; there would be no real transformation of consciousness but only a temporary feat of force which having no basis in the substance of creation here would vanish as it came. Therefore conditions have to be satisfied, the work to be done has to be wrought out step by step. The powers that hold the field up to now have to be given their¹⁴² chance to oppose, so that the problem may be solved and not evaded or turned into a sham fight or unreal game without significance. Therefore there is a sadhana to be done,—there is a resistance to be overcome, a choice made between the higher and the lower state. The Divine Power doing the work gives a protection and a guidance, but it is not here to use an absolute force,—except when that is sanctioned by the Divine Wisdom and in the light of that Wisdom justifiable. Then the decisive Power acts of itself and does what it has to do.

VIII

It is a very intricate and difficult question to tackle and it can hardly be answered in a few words. Moreover, it is impossible to give a general rule as to why there are these close inner contacts followed by a physical separation through death—in each case there is a difference and one would have to know the persons and be familiar with their soul history to tell what was behind their meeting and separation. In a general way, a life is only one brief episode in a long history of spiritual evolution in which the soul follows the curve of the line set for the earth, passing through many lives to complete it. It is an evolution out of material inconscience to consciousness and towards the divine consciousness, from ignorance to divine knowledge, from darkness through half-light to Light, from death to Immortality, from suffering to the Divine Bliss. Suffering is due first to the ignorance, secondly to the separation of the individual

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consciousness from the Divine Consciousness and Being, a separation created by the Ignorance—when that ceases, when one lives in the Divine and no more in one's separated smaller self, then only suffering can altogether cease. Each soul follows its own line and these lines meet, journey together for a space, then part to meet again perhaps hereafter—often they meet to help each other on the journey in one way or another. As for the after-death period, the soul passes into other planes of existence staying there for a while till it reaches its place of rest where it remains until it is ready for another terrestrial existence. This is the general law; but for the connections of embodied soul with embodied soul, that is a matter of personal evolution on which nothing general can be said, as it is intimate to the soul stories of the two and needs a personal knowledge. That is all I can say, but I don't know that it will be of much help to X as these things are helpful usually only when one enters into the consciousness in which they become not mere ideas but realities. Then one grieves no longer because one has entered into the Truth and the Truth brings calm and peace.

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE PHILOSOPHERS

(A LETTER)

The¹⁴³ difficulties you have mentioned in the way of your seeing eye-to-eye with Sir Aurobindo in the realm of philosophy can very well be insuperable. All difficulties in that realm can be insuperable: if this were not so, then there would be a universal consensus of philosophers instead of Aristotle at loggerheads with Plato, Kant going hammer-and-tongs at the Schoolmen as well as the Empiricists, Bertrand Russell spitting fire at Bergson. The spectacle, though extremely fascinating, is a trifle ludicrous too. Seeing that all these men possessing first-class minds cannot agree, one is inclined to think that the heat of utter self-certainty with which they fight is rather a defect. The history of thought shows that there is endless argumentation possible: the mind can take up any standpoint and plead plausibly about it. To philosophise is one of our instincts, but no philosophising can arrive at indisputable truth. Certain aspects of the ultimate reality appeal to certain types of mind or chime with certain types of experiences—and these we erect into a system by means of logical reasoning which seems cogent to us but which others with equal cogency for themselves put aside as erroneous. The only system which is likely to be accepted in the long run is one which satisfies all the sides of our nature, The acceptance will not be merely by intellectual argument: it will be by a deep instinct which wants harmony and integration rather than the apotheosis of one side at the expense of another.

You declare with Berkeley that we can know only our own minds and that what we call matter is really a form of mind. I shall not for the present try to argue against Berkeley. Any history of philosophy will provide you with the traditional counter-

attack and the work of the neo-realists in our own day will show the modern technique. I shall not try, because it is pretty futile until your *penchant* for Berkeley is weakened: you will be able to argue back and the neo-idealists of our own day will help you to return the blitz of neorealism. What I want to say is simply this: there is no sense of rest in the Berkeleyan philosophy for that in us which strives for harmony. It leaves something in us unconvinced, for, opposed to Berkeley, we have the very strong feeling that, instead of matter being a form of mind, mind seems often to be a form of matter. The whole drift of Science—and it is hard to escape Science in 1944—is away from Berkeley's Idealism. Most of our practical life is based on what appears to be the independent existence of matter. And when we ask ourselves: wouldn't matter be more amenable to mind if it were just an idea?—the answer makes us doubt very much Berkeley's position. Matter does impress us as a power in itself which we contact by means of mind. Mind does not bring us perfect harmony and fulfilment: it struggles and gropes, it is not the master-magician of life. Nor does matter as conceived by Science and known in practical experience hold the secret we are¹⁴⁴ vaguely aware of. There must be something else. Matter and mind seem to be two forms of some other reality which contains the archetypes of them both, archetypes from which they have derived and deflected.

Only when the mind is stilled, there dawns a deeper and higher consciousness which bears golden within it the harmony we are hungering for. Yes, it bears it within itself, but for us to get that harmony we need profound progress in the supra-mental domain. The limitation of the whole superb school of *Atman*-knowers is that they stop with the pure infinite Self beyond our narrow human selves and make no attempt to realise a divine dynamis to replace the dynamis that is human and discordant. At most there is some light reflected in the ordinary workings of the mind—a degree of intuition comes into play—but where is the divinisation of which we dream? The mind must be completely divinised after being stilled and a new faultless activity initiated and substituted for the old stumbling one., Mind must begin to function according to the archetype of it which must exist in the ultimate reality and without which we would never feel in ourselves that urge for perfection which is the mainspring of all our mental life. But can mind realise *wholly* its archetype without the other parts of our being doing the same? No: if, as experience teaches us, we cannot rest finally in mind and, for the sake of harmonious sense of life, grant matter a separate status, we must strive after an archetype of matter too. Here also the perfection we are seeking cannot be got out of matter itself. Not by material progress—though that is useful in its own way just as mental progress is—can we attain the perfection our bodily being desires. Again we must tax the Beyond, the supramental which is at the same time the supramaterial. In that Beyond are powers that transcend Nature. Many Yogis catch snippets, so to speak,

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of these powers, but the real and final miracle to work on Nature is what Sir Aurobindo calls transformation—the utter divinisation of the physical body so that it becomes a form of the Consciousness that is luminous and immortal.

Remember that Sir Aurobindo teaching is Integral Yoga. That word “integral” denotes the Aurobindonian search. Sri Aurobindo says it is no use denying that man is in quest of an all round harmony of perfection. If that quest is a fact, there must be in the unknown depths of the Divine the secret of an all-round fulfilment. Once you feel this, you will not stress intellectually your differences with his teaching. He is not primarily arguing out a system. With his instinct towards harmony he is pressing on in spiritual experience. His is not an integral philosophy for the sake of philosophy, his is an integral Yoga, and all his philosophising is a statement in mental terms of what he has realised. *The Life Divine* expresses nothing except his experience, his realisation. Having attained in constant waking life and not merely in a sealed samadhi the reality which he terms Gnosis, he has but laid out in intellectual exposition what the gnostic consciousness is and what yogic possibilities it holds and what the results of its full descent into our earth-existence will be. And Sri Aurobindo does not proclaim to the world: “Read my book and I shall argue you into my beliefs.” His call is: “Read this¹⁴⁵ book in which I have clothed in philosophical language my actual experience and if you feel in your heart the urge towards the integral realisation I have pictured and propounded, come to me and I will give you every living and glowing bit of it.”

The best way in which I can dissipate your difficulties is to ask you to feel in your heart that the essence of all our human endeavour is the thirst for perfection and that there can be no true perfection unless it is integral, all-round, top-to-toe. It is not very easy to have this feeling. In a weak form it can never be escaped: what I am asking for is not such a form: I want you to have it like a fire—keen and clear. In the path of it there is the whole debris of failure cumbering human history. “Man is finite, man is mortal” this has been the cry through the ages. “Something indeed is infinite and immortal”, the religions say, “but there is a residue of finitude and mortality which is irreducible” and this contention is not based only on argument: it has behind it a lack of realisation. The great prophets have all striven to their utmost and come short. It is the concrete coming short in actual spiritual experience that has created the tremendous obstacle to a keen and clear recognition of the *elan* towards harmony. Yet the *elan* is there. “Thou art THAT”, “Brahmaloka is here and now”, “The Kingdom of God is within you”, “I and my Father are one” — all these words are trying to let that *elan* find voice. The Vedic search for the Sun lost in the cave of Earth, the Vaishnava worship of the Incarnate Divine, the Word become Flesh of neo-platonic Christianity, the belief in the resurrection of the body—these too are the same *elan* seeking an outlet. And an

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outlet is sought in all our straining towards perfect beauty in art, perfect truth in philosophy, perfect law in Science, perfect conduct in ethics, perfect health in day-to-day living. The mind yearns to immortalise its products and finds means to transcend the limits of space and time, the body longs for blissful perpetuation, seeks it vicariously through the process of child-birth, ransacks the entire realm of Nature and of chemistry for the conquest of disease and for the *elixir vitae*. We are labouring to deliver some perfect all-embracing Godhead. Alas, we have laboured and failed—even Sri Krishna came and went without delivering the hidden Divine in a complete invulnerable form. Is it any wonder that we do not see keenly and clearly the hunger for perfection? It is natural that we should envisage it vaguely: veil on veil of disappointment and defeat has covered it. These veils have to be pierced and struck aside, so that the true secret may shine out.

If you hold naked before you this secret and contemplate Sri Aurobindo's teaching in its light, you will perceive how sublimely, how exquisitely, how accurately that teaching answers to every little *nuance* of the world's aspiration. If like a flame you enshrine it in your mind you will put yourself in the right receptive mood to follow Sri Aurobindo's philosophy to its ultimates. The Berkeleyan *penchant*, the scepticism about avatarhood, the shying away from the doctrine of Absolute Union will slowly dissolve and the intellect, inclined to move along new tracks, will fall in line with the Aurobindonian teaching. Does not perfection imply the human ascending to absolute union with its own concealed origin, the Divine?¹⁴⁶ Can there be perfection unless the Divine descends into the human mould—and what in general is the Avatar except the most centrally creative of the descending splendours? Is perfection possible if the mind's idea and experience be the last word on matter and no evaluation be made of the material in terms of a supreme spiritual Consciousness? My impression of you is of a man of great mental plasticity and breadth, a man capable of meeting the challenge of many unknown directions: there is no blind rigidity in you to check any movement towards new horizons. I am afraid, however, that you have slipped into an overstress on philosophical pursuit and not kept the living relation advised by all Indian wisdom between philosophy and Yoga. You have thus not seen for what it is, the philosophical process of *The Life Divine* and other writings of Sri Aurobindo's. There is a mighty intellect in *The Life Divine* which we at once feel to be no whit less than Plato's or Spinoza's or Hegel's, but none of these giants was a full-fledged Yogi. Sri Aurobindo's intellect is an instrument used by a spiritual realisation: not one sentence anywhere is inspired by the intellect alone.

If the philosopher's realisation is poor and fragmentary, the philosophy will seem narrow in spite of the intellect being gigantic. In some respects Plato, Spinoza and

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Hegal seem very narrow, they do not cover our full sense of things: the cause is that each of them elaborated in terms of the intellect a one-sided intuition or a limited set of intuitions. The elaboration was stupendous, this root-sense of the real did not feed on wide intuitive experience. Even where, added to intuition, there is in philosophy actual spiritual contact with the unknown, we often get the impression of a narrow emphasis. Buddha and Shankara and Plotinus are powerful spiritualised intellects, yet their single-track extremism is apparent. Nirvana, the featureless Brahman, the absolute Alone are indeed grand and no Yoga can be complete without them, but as known and presented by the three arch-transcendentalists they cast on much of our life a blank of unfulfilment. Though they are grander than anything in ordinary human life, something in Nature weeps and weeps, the clinging clay of us feels torn, Mother Earth stands defeated and baulked. The hidden instinct of integral harmony is not satisfied, even as it is not satisfied, by the mere vicissitudes of Time, however colourful and varied. Does Sri Aurobindo's philosophy strike us as narrow in any such sense? The trouble here is quite the opposite: Sri Aurobindo is too broad for most minds, he is too comprehensive, he posits things which seem too good to be true, too far-reaching to be believable, too gloriously integral to be realised by human capacity. We are led to say, "Yes, yes, all this is exactly as it should be, it is precisely what the age-old hunger for perfection and harmony wants, but can we really have the moon?" Sri Aurobindo's reply is: "That hunger in you exists because the moon is just what you are made for: in fact, you have the moon, you ARE the moon—only you don't know it. Do the Yoga which I have done and you shall know."

So, there is a twofold solution I offer to your difficulties. First, bring forward into the utmost brightness and with all its facets before you the fiery gem¹⁴⁷ of our secret *elan* towards perfect harmony, so that you may move with ease along thoughts put forth by one who plunged into the Unknown with that occult diamond for his guide. Then, across those thoughts reach out for the concrete spiritual experience, the actual harmonious realisation which the integral Yoga of that master-explorer is bringing to the world's view.

Perhaps you will be disappointed by my letter, since I have not argued out in explicit detail Sri Aurobindo's position *vis-a-vis* the points you have raised. I am hoping that what I have written will attune you to the Aurobindonian note and automatically suggest the arguments. Even if the arguments do not arise of themselves and only some attuning is achieved. I shall be rewarded, for then my future arguing will go home more swiftly.

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– K.D. Sethna.

In laying stress on culture, on the things of the mind and the spirit, there need be no intention of undervaluing the outward, material side of life, belittling that to which Nature always attaches so insistent an importance. On the contrary, the inner and the outer depend upon each other. We see for instance in the life of a nation that a great period of national culture and vigorous mental and soul life is always part of a general stirring and movement which has its counterpart in the outward political, economical, practical life of the nation. It brings the latter about, but also it itself needs that to flourish with an entirely full and healthy vigour. Therefore the peace, well-being and order of the human world is a thing eminently to be desired as a basis for a great world-culture in which all humanity must be united: but neither of these unities, the outward or inward, must be devoid of a thing even more important than peace, order and well being, – freedom and vigour of life, which can only be assured by variation, by group freedom and individual freedom. Not then a uniform unity, not a logically simple, a scientifically rigid, a beautifully neat and mechanical, but a living unity full of healthy freedom and diversity is the ideal which we should keep in view and strive to get realised.

– (From Sri Aurobindo's "The ideal of Human Unity")

THE¹⁴⁸ INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

II. WHAT IS INTEGRAL YOGA?

In the ordinary sense, *Yoga* means union, combination, contact, touch, connection. In the technical sense, the word means a psychological attempt to arrive at unity with the Divine centred in the heart of creatures. The Divine in man is his quintessence. That is otherwise called the Self or the Spirit. The realisation of the Spiritual Self is Yoga. The old systems of yogas which we shall briefly review later on, leave the mental man self-immersed and call that the sole consummation of human existence. Or it conceives of an extra-cosmic entity, a God in the Vaikunta or Kailasa and tries a sudden high-jump to the unknown heaven, deserting the joy and beauty of the existence here. The very word *samsara* or life in the world and among things that promote it are a taboo. This other-worldly tendency, and this love of life-extinction have told heavily upon our national progress for ages. Man is not born to be a lotus-eater. He cannot be indifferent to the planet which homes his destiny. He cannot shut his eyes to the surroundings and the onward march of nations saying "What if Rama rules or Ravana rules." Yoga should make man a sage within and a brave hero in the battle of life. Yoga is not ascetic bareness; it is not a dry simplification of life; it is a rich amplification of life in the Divine Spirit. It is a dynamic spiritual Living.

* * *

This new meaning of yoga was given to us by Sri Aurobindo. He has completely revolutionised the spiritual and the material view of life by his new interpretation of the word Yoga. He is the only Yogi after Sri Krishna who has boldly come forward as the champion of life declaring that Yoga is not life-exclusion; it is the fullness of life in the Divine Spirit. Yoga is not runaway asceticism nor snake-in-the-rope pessimism!

Sri Aurobindo defines Yoga as life in union or communion with the Divine. He calls it Integral Yoga. Integral means entire, whole, not partial but complete and perfect. There are two entities of existence; the Spirit and Matter. The old systems could not harmonise these two truths. Their idea of liberation was actually a separation from matter; a mutual divorce of the two fundamental Co-ordinates of Life was the result and much was the loss thereby to humanity. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo considers Matter as an involution of the Spirit and the Spirit as evolved Matter. Both are Divine and both are eternal. It holds the ideal of a victorious harmony between life in the world of matter and unity in the Spirit within; it gains life without losing the bliss of the Spirit and vice versa. It does not run away from Nature; it faces it, masters it and reunites it with God in the Self. It does not neglect, refuse or deny any phase of life; it takes into account the two sides of the coin. It lights the lamp of life with the Light of the Spirit. The Light glows through the transformed mind, life and the body. It raises a magnificent social edifice upon the strong foundation of the Divinity in man¹⁴⁹. Exclusiveness, separative egoism and other impediments are foreign to its universal nature. No caste, no creed, no dogma, no fanatic obscurantism, no race or colour arrogance—it brings within its limitless scope of endless joy of life, the whole human aggregate. It raises the Spirit's image of beauty, harmony, love, energy and truth upon a virile, transformed divinised pedestal of the gross and the subtle body.

The Integral Yogi is not a sky-gazer; he brings the heaven and its bliss upon earth. His Yoga removes the mystic curtain between the Nara and the Deva God and man, earth and heaven, matter and spirit, the individual and the universal, the ideal and the pragmatic. Intrinsic union of these opposites are its supreme achievement. It regards man as a spiritual being involved in the body, life and mind and evolves him to a plane of consciousness far above the divided mind, and instals him in the unity of transcendent vision and cosmic-consciousness. All the minute details of human life, it scrutinises, transforms, and directs all its movements through the right channel so that the entire life of humanity becomes a collective universal Sadhana of Divine Communion. It accords not only purity, liberty, unity and sanity but also bestows the fullness of bliss in actual work-a-day life. It manifests God in man. It leads to the

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realisation of the One in the self and in the Many and promotes cosmic unity. It makes life an efflux of the Spirit and man a temple of God.

– *Suddhananda Bharati.*

Wherever thou seest a great end, be sure of a great beginning. Where a monstrous and painful destruction appals thy mind, console it with the certainty of a large and great creation. God is there not only in the still small voice, but in the fire and in the whirlwind.

The greater the destruction, the freer the chances of creation: but the destruction is often long, slow and oppressive, the creation tardy in its coming or interrupted in its triumph. The night returns again and again and the day lingers or seems even to have been a false dawning. Despair not therefore, but watch and work. Those who hope violently, despair swiftly; neither hope nor fear, but be sure of God's purpose and thy will to accomplish.

* * *

Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped: as is his material, so is his method. Let it help to transmute itself into nobler, and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.

– (*From Sri Aurobindo's "Thoughts and Glimpses".*)

QUESTIONS¹⁵⁰ AND ANSWERS

II. On Beauty

*"Questions and Answers" is a form as old perhaps
as human awakening to knowledge and even
today it has not outgrown its utility.*

[It is immaterial to ask who is the questioner, for even though the immediate person might be a certain individual, ultimately it is the unenlightened, eternal seeker in man, the ignorant human mind, that questions. And it is the illumined Teacher that answers. Questions are conditioned by the questioner, his mentality and his need, and the answers are relative to him and his condition, i.e., they cannot be absolute and final.]

– *A.B. Purani*

Q. What is the relation between beauty, art and spirituality? Though I thought of asking you first what is beauty I gave it up realising the difficulty of defining such undefinable terms.

A. If you like I might hazard a statement, not a definition:—“Beauty is the language of the All-pervading Delight of existence calling men to itself.”

Q. Does it mean that beauty is universal?

A. Yes, beauty is everywhere; from everything the All-Delight is calling men. Wherever man perceives beauty it is the Universal delight that is calling him. And this delight (that he perceives as beauty) is present even in things ordinarily considered “ugly”. That is to say everyone is not able to perceive beauty which is everywhere. One perceives the kind of beauty to which one is open. It is only the Yogin who can perceive it everywhere. Beauty and delight are inalienable in the ultimate analysis or rather experience of Reality.

Q. Does it then mean that beauty belongs to a higher world than our own?

A. It means that Reality is essentially beautiful and blissful; this Reality manifests its Beauty and Ananda on the plane of our world also, but it is not confined to this world alone.

Beauty is also Transcendental,—it is a quality inseparable from the manifestation of the Absolute.

Q. What you say looks like a metaphysical concept, while I want to know rather the nature of the experience of Beauty.

A. The most general reply would be that the experience of beauty varies according to the individual.

Q. Does it not amount to saying that beauty like so many other things is relative?

A. Yes, there are gradations of the experience of beauty. And though I am not enamoured of metaphysics I must say that at times the knowledge of the metaphysical position helps one to ascertain the probable line of experience. For instance, if you accept Shankara’s view of the Absolute then to you the world would be an illusion. In an illusory world beauty can be merely an appearance. The Absolute of¹⁵¹ Shankara can

have no such *Lakshana*. Shankara perhaps might admit Delight – a pure white self-existent delight, but not colourful play of Delight nor beauty.

Q. Is this not again an intellectual speculation?

A. Not necessarily. It can be an experience along the line of pure Monism. In the intense experience of the Brahmic Consciousness the world loses its reality.

But as I said, that is only one side of spiritual experience. On the other hand there are many seers who have spoken of the Divine Beauty. To them the Absolute is not merely Being but also Beauty. They have said (“Hindi passage omitted here”) – “It is the Divine Himself who is the essential sap of all Delight.”

If you approach the Absolute negatively you reach more and more negation, whereas if you take the positive side it leads you to more positive affirmations of itself.

Q. I was asking about the experience of beauty. Don’t you think that form is indispensable for the experience of beauty? *i.e.*, the experience of beauty is not possible without form?

A. On our material plane it looks as if there could be no experience of beauty without form – but that is not true of all beauty. Let us remember that beauty even on material plane is not entirely a quality of the object. The form which expresses or manifests beauty is not something apart from the beauty; formal beauty is not independent of the inner beauty.

But on planes of consciousness above the mental, form is not indispensable for the experience of beauty. Of course, *our mind* can distinguish between form and beauty and even speak of them as distinct things.

Q. Do the ancient speak of arts – especially plastic arts?

A. In the Veda, the arts are spoken of by implication; – as also is beauty.

In the Ait. Brahamana in 6.27 it is said: “Human arts are an imitation of the Divine arts. It is in imitation of the Angelic works of arts that any work of art is arrived at here – for example, a clay elephant, a brazen object, a garment, a golden object, horse or mule chariot, are works of art.”

Q. Some great artists, like S. J. Abanindra Nath Tagore, say that Yoga is opposed to arts because Yoga demands withdrawal of senses from the outer world whereas for art senses are the indispensable means of perceiving the outer world of Rupa (form) which is the field of art.

What is the relation between art and spirituality?

A. Art may be opposed to Yoga according to some of the old systems of Yoga in which Nature is regarded as a snare to be avoided, – an obstacle to the freedom of the soul. But it is not true of all the Yogas, – especially the Vaishnava, the old Shiva and the Tantric paths. These Yogas advocated acceptance of nature as a mould for manifesting the perfection, of the Spirit. Of that manifestation beauty and art are an integral part.

Moreover, it is not true to say that the artist perceives the outer world merely with his physical sense. As S. A. Tagore admits later on in his book the artist has several eyes. For example: –

- i. The ordinary physical eye.
- ii. The keen, bird's eye.
- iii. ¹⁵²The mental eye.
- iv. The eye of vision.

And these inner faculty of seeing is closely connected with Yoga. So that Yoga instead of crippling the art-faculties should on the contrary develop, stimulate and enhance them.

Q. I was, in fact, struck by S. A. Tagore's unconscious support and tribute to Yoga, for, later on he quotes Kabir's idea of Sahaja-samadhi and advocates it as the ideal condition for the artist!?

In that song Kabir speaks of keeping the doors of his senses open and perceiving through them the delight of Divine Beauty everywhere – in all forms.

A. But Kabir did not get the vision of this all-pervading Divine Beauty by merely keeping his senses open to the outer world. For, in that case all should have that perception because all men keep their senses open to the world of forms.

Nor could Kabir have perceived or seen this beauty with his physical eye only, because the beauty he speaks of is evidently not objective. That experience must have been the result of long period of spiritual discipline or Yoga. The vision of the All-beautiful must have come to Kabir first in his inner consciousness *i.e.*, as an inner realisation. And then the experience must have become strong enough to influence his outer senses. So that even the physical senses were able to participate in the same vision. No one can say that Kabir was not a Yogi.

Q. The question: “If beauty is everywhere, as you say, then why does not everybody perceive it?” still remains in my mind.

A. The devotee sees the Divine Beauty because he seeks the Divine as the All-beautiful (*Bhuvana Sundara*); he seeks them as the “treasure of all Beauty” (*Nikhila Saundarya Nidhi*) as the “ambrosial ocean of the essence of all Beauty (*Akhilarasamrita sindhu*) as the Vaishnavas say.

And this vision does not come merely by wanting it. It usually comes when one is prepared to pay for it by giving up all the cravings of the senses and the impulses and desires of the vital.

Thus the spiritual seeker, the poet and the artist all seek the same Reality, and at times by very similar methods.

Q. Does the Yogi then perceive the same Beauty everywhere irrespective of the outer form? i.e. Is the beauty he perceives uniform?

A. There is an experience in which all things – whether ordinarily considered ugly or beautiful – are equally beautiful because in everything it is the Divine Presence that equally animates the form. But as Sri Aurobindo puts in one of his letters “In the Yogi’s vision of universal beauty, all becomes beautiful, but all is not reduced to a single level. There are gradations in this All beauty. All is Divine but some things are more Divine than others. In the artists vision too there can be gradations, a hierarchy of values.” There is, you can say, an art that pleases, an art that satisfies ambition, an art that succeeds, an art that is useful and an art that touches the Divine etc.

Q. Do the ancient texts speak of the process of art-creation?

A. Yes, they do. And what they say establishes a close connection between¹⁵³ art and spirituality. The Shukranitisara lays down that the artist must be a man who can meditate. He must do his work – *Dhyatwa kuryat* – “after meditation upon it.” So that art was expected to be the result of an inner concentration. The work of art must first be realised within the consciousness of the artist, held before his inner eye and at last projected outwards through perfect mastery over the material by refined and trained instrumentality of the senses. In Europe also the ideal and method of art was similar in the beginning.

Q. I do not quite understand why an artist, say, a painter or a sculptor, should be expected to meditate.

A. The idea seems a little strange to the modernist mind but as a matter of fact I believe the process is familiar to the great artists all over the world. Perhaps the ancient Indians studied the process and arrived at a correct understanding of it.

For instance, if the artist wants to represent a God in sculpture or painting, he has at first to visualise the form of the God in an inner vision and then only to paint or sculpt it.

At times he may arrive at the form by coming in contact with the higher worlds of being or planes of consciousness. In that case the artist brings back the memory of the forms and reproduces them here in the material world. In some cases some super-human agency—a higher being for instance, uses the artist as a medium for its self-expression.

A work of art may be revealed to the artist even in dream.

Q. Does this happen to the Indian artist or is it common to all artists?

A. Ancient Greek artists, it is said, experienced the feeling of exuberation and exaltation during periods of creative activity. There is evidence that all great artists had contact with a higher world of which most of them were occasionally or always conscious.

Q. Granting that the artist must create according to his inner vision, I don't understand why he should be asked to meditate on forms according to fixed formula or Dhyan Mantras, as is prescribed in ancient Indian texts.

A. I quite agree with you. Perhaps, in old times, the ordinary artist was not so conscious of his aim and method as the artist of to-day and so definite formulas had to be prescribed for him to habituate him to look inward and to fix the tradition.

But to-day we need not remain bound to these formulas. There is no reason why art should go on repeating the same forms in order to express the higher Reality of the worlds above mind. For instance Shiva and Ganesh need not have their stereotyped forms. As an illustration take the paintings of Shiva by the great artist Nandalal Bose in which the traditional rules of technique have not been strictly adhered to. And yet the work does not seem to be less authentic on that account. The artist of to-day must be free to have his own vision and create accordingly.

Q. From what you say it seems that the forms created by the artist pre-exist somewhere in the subtle worlds?

A. Most of them do. Only, it does not follow that these forms are always bound to correspond to the ones created here.

Q. You said that form is not indispensable for the experience of beauty while¹⁵⁴ I have heard artists say that form is indispensable for creation.

A. You are confusing two things, – Experience of beauty and artistic creation. To creation form is indispensable: there can be no creation without form. But that is not true of all experience of beauty.

Q. Speaking of art-creation I am reminded of the modernist trend which considers the expression of the artist's personality as the chief and the highest aim of art. It is this expression of personality they' say that gives each art-creation its special value, its uniqueness.

A. To the greatest and true artist art is not a means of expressing his personality but his inspiration. As the Mother says (in "Words of the Mother") True artists look upon art "as a means of expressing their relation with the Divine".

Q. Do you then think that the personality of the artist is something superficial and shallow and that what really matters is the inspiration that comes down through him from above – his personality being only a channel – a thing of no value whatever?

A. That would be perhaps too trenchant a way of putting it. For, after all, it is the personality of the artist that receives the inspiration and in most cases it has to rise higher than ordinary man in order to receive it.

A. great work of art, it must be noted, bears the stamp of its creator. Even in the same field of work each great artist leaves his own stamp on his work. For example, take the Greek dramatists Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus or the French trio, Voltaire, Racine, Corneille – you will find the distinguishing stamp of each on his work.
– *A.B. Purani.*

A soul expressing the eternal spirit of Truth and Beauty through some of the infinite variations of beauty, with the word for its instrument, that is, after all, what the poet is and it is to a similar soul in us seeking the same spirit and responding to it that

he makes his appeal * * * It is the impersonal spirit of Truth and Beauty that is seeking to express itself through personality and it is that which finds its own word and seems itself to create in highest moments of inspiration

—(From Sri Aurobindo's "The Future Poetry")

SRI¹⁵⁵ AUROBINDO'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION

A CRITICISM BY Prof. MALKANI EXAMINED

The first sentence of the criticism runs thus "No theory of creation is ever likely to be true; for it implies transcendent causes. The category of causality has scope only within the empirical. A transcendent cause is really no cause." Thus creation is not; transcendent causes are not; and since the empirical being is not, there can be no causes either there.

Creation-theories are humanisations of the truth, a story and not truth. Our truth is, there was only Being and anything that appeared (why, the Absolute knows! at some place) was illusory. God made truth or was truth and man made error. This in short is the theory of Prof. Malkani. Now why did man appear? illusorily to whom? to himself(?) or to Brahman the ever undeludable? Whose is this story or this humanisation, and for whom is this story of creation or illusory appearance? The whole self-confident assertion of No Cause, Transcendent Cause, Story, Appearance is itself no better than stories of an intellectual dialectic and as such the reactions of the human intellect to the evanescent Reality in an opposite direction. Two persons can play at the same game of rejecting the human and criticising the intellect.

Prof. Malkani concedes that Sri Aurobindo's theory of creation is not like the old story of mechanical creation as the potter does his pots. Indeed he holds that the Brahman becomes the world and thus the world is not a magician's illusory projection as in mayavada. Then he draws out a series of thirteen items of the process of evolution from out of Brahman the saccidananda, through a first movement into the Supermind out of its primal poise which exhibits the immanent or implicit multiplicity in Saccidananda. But this supermind exhibits just one and not all the possibilities of the *Saccidānanda* though it is aware of all of them. Prof. Malkani considers that this is fraught with difficulty. The infinite possibilities in the *Saccidānanda* cannot be *present* at the same time; he contends that if these are implicit nothing *new* is created, and straightaway proceeds to say that no *real* putting forth can occur (italics mine). Certainly on the same count Maya is a real putting forth of appearance, for surely a *new* thing is *real*; the entire structure of the Māyāvāda collapses by this admission, which he brought into the criticism of a theory which holds that Brahman really creates and

creating means only manifesting one of many infinite possibilities in this particular creative period, and in this there is nothing unreal. The real is both the possible in the Absolute Divine as well as the actual in terrestrial evolution.

The second complaint made by Prof. Malkani refers to the arbitrariness of choice in choosing to create this particular possibility rather than any other possibility. And he states that 'Sri Aurobindo's idealism is not based upon the *truth* of existence but the arbitrariness of the limiting idea—let there be such and such a thing.' This is criticism of a kind that has been used against Leibnitz¹⁵⁶ too for his stating that the present one is the best of all possible worlds, a contention which he upheld by the theory of divine beneficence. If Freedom be the essence of reality, then the manifestation of this Freedom is what makes the choice possible and it cannot be held that freedom is arbitrary. There is at least a beneficence at work in the universe, whereas the theory of Mayavada is a mockery of the Absolute Brahman, and as for the *truth* of existence, it is indeed as real as the actual act in Prof. Malkani's way of argument when he defends a position of utter inconsequence to reality which he straightaway dismisses or cancels with his magic arbitrariness of maya. The protest against the impossibility of reconciling being with freedom of force is again *his* difficulty and it is not for one who knows how to act and live or exist or plan or evolve into the higher rungs, or for the matter of that for the Real Idea of the Artist (even the most humble) which proceeds to actualise itself limited only by itself and not by the arbitrariness of Prof. Malkani's wish to create without thought a delusion or illusion in order to gratify his own licence in logic.

Nor again is the third objection valid, that awareness is already reality and there need be no actuality aware of the actual creative activity of the artist or sculptor, and it also betrays a lack of insight into the delight of creativity. He makes much of the distinction between the possibility and the known and says, that possibilities are conceived and not known, and thus betrays the misunderstanding into which he had fallen of not taking into account the nature of the *Saccidānanda* and the Supermind which perceive all possibilities and do not infer them or conceptualise them and thus do not hypostatize essences into existence, to use the convenient distinction that George Santayana has made. The reality of the planes or levels in the Created or manifested Brahman gives the clue to the distinction between the possibilities in the Supermind and Saccidananda which permits one possibility to work out itself in all the planes; this possibility may be only in freedom and the individual many too in freedom work out this Real-Idea which works its way spontaneous from within them and does not appear as the command of a deity or arbitrary fiat of the Divine. The spiritual society or Nature or being does not tolerate arbitrary fiat and exacts freedom for each and all as the

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condition of a self-revelation that shall culminate in the Delight that is Evolution into the Divine. It is because it works under and within each one of the Divine multiplicity that there is freedom to err or sin or ascend or descend and each in a way contributes towards the divine delight, for each is indeed superconsciously moving towards the Divine Manifestation on all levels. It cannot be stated that Sri Aurobindo is contradicting himself when he states that ‘world is a māyā because it is not the essential truth of infinite existence, but only a creation of self-conscious being...The world is not the essential truth of That, but phenomenal truth of its free multiplicity and infinite superficial mutability and not truth of its fundamental and immutable unity” (p. 256); for Sri Aurobindo is merely pointing out what is clearly understood in any evolutionary theory or value-question, that the multiplicity is the phenomenal status of the Oneness and the world is a phenomenal status of the real and is a real phenomenon. It certainly¹⁵⁷ does not mean that the cosmos does not represent the real truth of being; it represents it truly and eternally as much as the Oneness; only there are two forms of the self-same Brahman. The supreme mystery of the Divine Nature consists in the supreme relationship of togetherness or inseparable oneness of the world and Deity souls and God, and this may be expressed as the relationship of *sarīra-sarīrī* or eternal oneness in eternal multiplicity. *Līla* is the essential delight in *sarīra* or multiplicity of the *sarīrī* or the Eternal oneness, and the primacy of *sarīrī* or Oneness is always there in creation as well as prior to creation, *aloka* or *loka*.

The fourth objection then is against the view that the world is conscious Birth of That which is beyond mind into forms of itself; for Prof. Malkani contends that “while it is to a certain extent intelligible” to accept that God’s thought is constitutive of reality, “it is not intelligible how that which is already true in God comes further to birth in the forms of a mental, vital and material cosmos,” either the latter is non-existent in God in which case their creation would be pure conception or if they are already in some sense existent in Him, where is the scope for creation at all?” His own solution is to say that the world was never created at all or that it is a conceptual figment.

All the arguments of Prof. Malkani can be referred to the principle of *vivarta-vāda*, a species of *asatkāryavāda*, which says that things appear otherwise. The learned writer does not see the mote in his own eye while he challenges the beam in others when he writes (and we are forced to remark, unkindly to be sure) naively ‘But what do we mean by manifestation? We can only mean making ‘appear’. The question will naturally arise making appear to whom? “It cannot be God.” Why not, we rejoin, for it is precisely the will and knowledge of the Divine to manifest to Himself for His own Delight that which is possible to Him and in Him. The whole difficulty for the learned critic consists in this impossibility of self-delight and self-willing, for to him all these in

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his system mean limitation, error and do not exist. For whom is Māyā, we ask, in a system that cannot explain appearance of the world, unreal or real? The whole criticism smacks of inability to comprehend the difference between the unmanifest and the manifestation to be not a difference in reality, for both are equally real, but the moreness in the one or transcendence in the one and the immanence of the transcendence in the effect. *Sat-kārya-vāda* means in Sāmkya and Visistādvaita and Sri Aurobindo's philosophy nothing more than what it affirms, the reality of the cause as well as that of the effect; the effect is the exhibition, revealment of that which was in subtle state in the cause. The *sūksma* becomes *sthūla*. There is nothing absolutely new and birth is merely the statement of the emergence to our limited and even planal vision of that which is in the bosom of infinity of the Divine. Every birth is a passage from one plane to another and this is what is stated to be the truth about initiation, conversion or avatār-phenomena. It is a figure that represents the stage at which the soul has arrived in the process of ascent or descent into actuality that is the phenomenal *jāgrat*, waking consciousness. The next charge of *parināma*-vāda affecting the very nature of the Divine is equally full of flaw; for,¹⁵⁸ though the effect is a change of cause into effect-nature, this change does not affect the *Saccidānanda* and Oneness-nature of God at any time. Sri Ramanuja got over this problem by holding that the *sarīra* or *cidacid-visista*-Brahman and not Brahman changed from the causal to the effect state; and the objection that one part cannot undergo change whilst the other remained changeless, is groundless for the change is shewn to be not affecting thereby the main *sarīrī* or Brahman; in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy we can see that, as already stated, the *parināma* is of the self-extension of the Divine which does not affect the self-concentration in Himself; the multiplicity is not opposed to oneness and the *parināma* affecting the many is supported by the *saccidānanda* and oneness of the Brahman. Prof. Malkani's argument proceeding through disjunction of either or—that is, “either it is created by God through an act of His will or God is the ground and reality of world—essentially misses the principle of the System, and this either-or business is a device of the intellectual logic that is incapable of precisely seeing what alternatives are real alternatives, as Sri Rāmānuja has so splendidly shewn in the opening lines of the *Mahāsiddhānta*. And it is the essential trouble of Advaita Vedānta to have placed the world neither in god nor outside Him but in His illusion; and it bespeaks lack of ordinary humour to speak of placing the world somewhere neither outside nor inside Brahman. The mystical insight is amazingly beyond the grasp of the critic's mind.

Tadejati tadu najjati taddūre tadvantike
Tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvas-yāsyā bāhyatah

Isa. 5

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No more than this and this has been throughout stated in ever so many ways in the Upanisads. Further, pray what is the meaning of the statement in the same Upanisad which speaks of the establishment of things in their true forms from sempiternal years:

yathotathyato arthān vyadadāt sāsvan bhyah samabhyah

Thus the estential reality of the universe is granted by the mystical insight and our ordinary understanding even does not belie it and no argument or testimony upholds the doctrine of *vivarta-vāda* or *asatkāryavāda* or *māyavāda* in the sense understood by theorists.

The other questions about the nature of the Supermind and the *Saccidananda* are questions that labour under the first cloud of misunderstanding about the nature of poise, understanding, creativity, reality and possibility, and these are explained by Sri Aurobindo himself in his Life Divine so completely that no further explanation can and need be given. But one question under (10) calls for a remark "For if the delight of being is logically prior and if it is also full and complete then there is no scope for the delight of becoming" (p 263); the delight of being may be full and complete and this does not imply anything more than this that there is complete *puṇatva* in its perfection; and the delight of becoming is a variation of the *puṇatva* in the enjoyment of its multiplicity possibilities. The whole fact is a mysterious movement of the Divine and we can only quote the scriptural statement.

Pūṇamadah pūṇamidam pūṇāt pūṇamudacyate—

Sri Ramanuja's theory however does not involve this explanation because¹⁵⁹ of his acceptance of the redemption of the Individual souls as one of the greatest concerns of the Divine Lord which makes His assumption of creativity as a redemptive act. The true philosophy of reality cannot but be a philosophy of the Divine—a philosophy of Religion. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Divine Life shews the supreme creative manifestation of the Process as an ascent of the souls, the eternal multiplicity of His nature, moving through the planes which have been fashioned by His descent for this delight in Becoming of matter, life, mind, overmind, supermind and others till finally they realise in the Supermind the delight of the many gathered up in the events of an ascent which now registers happiness and delight in every movement and action as the instruments of the Divine One superconsciously known by them. The pains and pleasures, the avoided reactions or the avidly searched for responses or objects equally reveal the supreme ecstasy in which both are perceived as the interweaving of the

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delights. The contention that knowledge, this knowledge alone, can put an end to all our present suffering is correct, but this knowledge is not the Advaitic's recoil-knowledge, nor are the sufferings surmounted in the manner he wishes but in the transvaluation of these and an ability to respond from delight to all the stimuli of the Divine Universe, for, then, in that supermind plane man is face to face with the Divine Universe.

It is somewhat candid to say that Sri Aurobindo's theory is after all Vedāntic, and the only quarrel between the Māyāvāda and his theory consists in the interpretation of the world and the real nature of Sachchidananda; this is certainly a vast difference.

Prof. Malkani has of course taken great pains to answer the questions raised by Sri Aurobindo's theory, and this is in one respect due to the present writer of this criticism having drawn pointed attention in the *Philosophical Quarterly* 1942 to the importance of Sri Aurobindo to modern philosophical re-construction of Vedānta. Prof. Malkani has thus rendered service to Vedānta in general, though, frankly speaking, he has not been able to shew any advantage to the Spiritual life by his defence of an Abstract Absolute that can bear no reality and expunge all evolution, growth, progress, perfection in the name of Supreme Intuition, which is not proved by any mystic without equivocation.

It is indeed true that Māyāvāda has a great exponent in the Maharsi Sri Ramana of Tiruvannamalai; and he holds that the world is māyā, a conceptual construction, and the reality that has to be known is the self, the self that appears as all things, illusorily. The question of spiritual value is implicit in this. Know the self, what you are and who you are; then you can say which is and which is not. The real for you is the central fact as to who you are who suffer and struggle. In this sense, then, the urgency, the poignancy and therefore the reality or rather actuality of pain and confusion, this infinite tossing of the soul in griefs and rounds of frustrations, cause one and should indeed cause one to address to oneself the fundamental question about the nature of the self or who? Sri Ramanuja clearly initiates this catharsis in his Yoga called Mahāyoga. But it is precisely this Mahāyoga that has to culminate in the Pūrṇayoga. It is in this sense that Advaita of Māyāvāda gives¹⁶⁰ a grand schooling to thinkers and students of Yoga – albeit negative.

This negative attitude is an impermanent status; and though this negative status described as *nirvāṇa*¹⁶¹ and *mokṣa*¹⁶² are sought to be explained as not merely negative

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¹⁶¹ In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

but positively as bliss by certain modern interpreters of Buddhistic thought, it is what it denotes but negatively. The passage from the impersonal of nirvāna to the suprapersonal is the passage that entails the depths of the Ananda. It is not certainly denied that the negative has not charm and even a kind of deep delight not comparable to the human and as different from it as anything, being a revolution in the very structure of experience; but deeper and finer and richer is the Superpersonal Divine which manifests the Divine to the illumined vision, no longer under the throes of recoil and passed beyond the impersonal universal. As a modern Russian writer has stated: "There can be no greater error than to interpret mystical experience in terms of monistic metaphysics. Monism postulates rationalisation, a mental process rather than experience." "The idiom of mysticism is founded on love rather than precepts." "Mystical experience is a triumph over creatureliness—an achievement which cannot be adequately described in terms of theological concepts. Thus theology interprets this as pantheism, whereas it is nothing of the sort, but something dynamic and inexpressible." (*Spirit and Reality*: N. Berdyaev). It is thus clear that when Sri Aurobindo affirms the supreme possibility of Divine immanence in the human which entails a restoration of the human now transfigured into a divine-nature, the mystery of real universal indwellingness in the terrestrial human personality is explained. There is no impossibility in the Divine Evolution as it is the logical outcome of the Creative History of the Divine which has so far levelled up the microcosm to the human level. In Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy its authentic realisation is affirmed as the core of New Spirituality.

— *By K.C. Varadachari, M.A., Ph.D.*

To live on your past cultural capital is to end in bankruptcy and pauperism. The past has to be used always as mobile and current capital for some larger profit, acquisition and development, and to gain we must spend we must part with something in order to grow and live more richly, - that is the universal law of our existence. Otherwise the life within will stagnate and perish. * * * * * Though the Spirit is eternal in its essence and in the fundamental principles of harmony immutable, its actual rhythm of its self-expression in form is ever mutable: immutable in being and the powers of its being, but richly mutable in life, that is the very nature of the spirit's manifested existence.

— (*From Sri Aurobindo's "Is India Civilised"*)

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¹⁶² In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

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REVIEWS¹⁶³

Theism and Cosmology. Gifford Lectures, First Series. 325 pp.

Mind and Deity. Gifford Lectures, Second Series. 322 pp.

By John Laird, LL. D., F.B.A., Regius Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Aberdeen. (George Allen & Unwin, 21/-).

In one of the letters included in *The Riddle of This World*, Sri Aurobindo remarks: "European metaphysical thought—even in those thinkers who try to prove or explain the existence and nature of God or of the Absolute—does not in its method and result go by-yond the intellect. But the intellect is incapable of knowing the supreme Truth; it can only range about seeking for Truth, and catch fragmentary representations of it, not the thing itself, and trying to piece them together. Mind cannot arrive at Truth; it can only make some constructed figure that tries to represent it or a combination of figures. At the end of European thought, therefore, there must always be Agnosticism, declared or implicit Intellect, if it goes sincerely to its own end, has to return and give this report: 'I cannot know; there is, or at least it seems to me that there may be or even must be Something beyond, some ultimate Reality, but about its truth I can only speculate; it is either unknowable or cannot be known by me'." The truth of these remarks is borne out by Professor John Laird's Gifford Lectures on the general subject of "Metaphysics and Theism". Given in two series in 1939 and 1940 respectively and now published, as detailed above, in two volumes. Professor Laird is a trained metaphysician and is one of the great names in present-day Western philosophy. Of his scholarship, integrity, sincerity, of his candour and earnestness, of the lucid clarity of his prose style—of these, indeed, there can be no question. But Professor Laird is not a mystic; he is a sensitive humanist, he is a brilliant philosopher and metaphysician,—but he has never had, he admits, "the sort of experience, the sort of theo-pathic susceptibility that so many others honestly believe that they have, and, I dare say, actually do have"; he even readily confesses: "I am very willing to believe that this is one of the more serious of my many deficiencies". The typical Indian philosopher—Yajnavalkya, Sankara, Ramanuja, Sri Aurobindo—"has been a metaphysical thinker doubled with a Yogi". Beginning with Thought, the Indian philosopher invariably seeks to go beyond Thought and to formulate a method of achieving this higher consciousness. And no metaphysical system, no way of salvation, has been put forward in India unless it has first stood the acid test of spiritual experience. The mystic *sees* and *knows*; the philosopher supplies the intellectual background; the teacher takes the disciple by the hand and shows him the way to Realization. A philosophy that lacks the *elan vital* of spiritual experience is a static thing, admirable, perhaps, in its proportions and finish, but of little use to the questing soul of man.

Professor Laird, as sincere an inquirer as any, seeks an answer to the first (and last) question of all: Does God exist? This question begets others in turn: Can His existence be proved in terms of "natural theology"? Is He an extra-cosmic God or is He immanent in the visible universe? Is He the whole or is He rather "a magnified non-natural Roman Emperor"? Is He all-powerful? Is He anywhere, is He everywhere? Is God the celestial architect, the supreme mathematician? Has He attributes? Can we measure His divinity or glimpse His personality? Professor Laird would like to answer these questions either by exercising the faculty of Reason or by testing theories in the light of normal human experience; in other words, he would admit only proofs that can be countenanced by "natural" or "philosophical" theology. In¹⁶⁴ these two volumes, Professor Laird attempts, though somewhat hesitantly, to map out the contours of the Universe and to describe the powers and personality of the omnipresent Reality. There are very detailed discussions on cosmological theism, on the nature of the Mind, on divine omniscience and omnipotence, of the theories of emergent evolution, on value and existence. The views of different schools of thought are efficiently weighed in the balance and, more often than not, found wanting; authorities, ancient and modern, are cited with uncanny and unhurried oppositeness; and the whole two-volume treatise has in result the look of a restrained and unbiassed judicial pronouncement. The wise old Indian thinkers and seers conceived of omnipresent Reality as Sachchidananda; and Sri Aurobindo has re-affirmed the ancient revelation by declaring that "World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing." Evolution, again, has been conceived by Sri Aurobindo, not as a blind unpredictable cosmic up-surge, but rather as the reverse process of the involution of the Spirit in Matter; and evolution and involution have alike their base in the *lila* of the Supreme. To Professor Laird, however, such certainty of knowledge is denied and he can but honestly speculate about these "first and last" things. As an instance of his restrained and impersonal exposition of the subject, the following passage on divine omniscience may be quoted:

"Let us say, then, that God is probably everywhere if he is anywhere, and that if he be nowhere at all, in all relevant senses, cosmology has nothing to do with theology.

If this be a form of pantheism, why should anyone be perturbed? The statement is simply that God is probably everywhere, unless cosmology and theology have nothing to do with one another. It would not follow that the marks of deity are equally plain in every corner of the universe, anymore than it follows that if something mind-like or something life-like pervades the universe, life and mind may not still be more plainly visible in living plants or in Glasgow citizens than in stones and glaciers. It also

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does not follow that the universe is alive in the same sense as a cactus or intelligent in the same manner and degree as a Glasgow citizen. The universe might be worse if it were but it might also be immeasurably better if it were not. There are no simple inferences of this kind to be drawn from the premiss of divine ubiquity: but there is nothing derogatory to the conception of divinity in the idea of a spatial God.”

This is very painstakingly clear and judicial; and yet such a passage cannot be expected to carry one off one’s feet or blind one with the white radiance of Truth.

Nevertheless, Prof. Laird’s volumes have their own importance and value for us. We are nowadays often discomfited and outraged by bogus Sadhus and their hackneyed theism; we are even more outraged and thrown on the defensive by the “soap-box atheism” of emphatic debaters and Marxist propagandists. Professor Laird’s lectures escape the defects of both these extreme positions; his heart is sound and his mind is screwed in the right place,—only the supreme grace of spiritual illumination is wanting. But his Gifford Lectures would repay a careful study; they are meticulously and consciously honest, they are sustained by a wide understanding, and they make no absurd claims. Incidentally, these lectures will help one to gauge all the better the difference between Western and Indian philosophy on the one hand, and, on the other, between a limited—and within limits, a thorough inquiry like these lectures on the subject of *Metaphysics and Theism* and a luminous and integral metaphysical treatise like Sri Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine*.

K.R.S.

*Indian*¹⁶⁵ *Culture*—Vedantaratna Hirendranath Datta—Published by the Calcutta University.

The learned author needs no introduction to the Indian readers. As a profound Vedantic scholar, a vastly erudite student of philosophy, a Theosophist of eminence and an ardent patriot, he was held in high esteem by his country men for over four decades. His death in 1942 has left a gap in public life, which is by no means easy to fill.

Mr Datta wrote mostly on religious and philosophical subjects and in a style unusually lucid and attractive. His outlook in matters spiritual was remarkably broad and cosmopolitan, and he could discuss with equal appreciation and reverence the abstruse speculations of Shankara, the almost agnostic philosophy of the Buddhist and the ecstatic devotion of the Vaishnava. The same broadmindedness and impartial judgment are perhaps not fully maintained in the book under review. The

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thoughtfulness and lucidity of expression that mark Mr Datta's writings are no doubt all here. But the dignity of the subject has in some places been marred by an excess, as it seems to us of patriotic and parochial zeal. That however is not the main point.

The book under review consists of five lectures delivered under the auspices of the Calcutta University. It bears the title—Indian Culture: Its Strands and Trends (a study in contrasts). There are six chapters. The first two seek to bring home to the reader some of the strands of Indian Culture its "antiquity and immortality", its "cosmopolitanity and heterogeneity." The next three are devoted "to a study of the contrasts between Indian Culture and some other cultures, ancient and modern." The comparison is made from the point of view of Religion, of Philosophy, of Sociology and of Statecraft. In the last chapter the author discusses the trends of Indian culture and its future destiny. The scheme is comprehensive enough and the author has expounded his theme with his usual skill. It is marked throughout by warm enthusiasm and a lofty spirit of patriotism. It should however be pointed out that the culture of any particular people cannot be immaculate in every way and superior in all things to all other cultures, ancient and modern. After all the really important thing is to realise that "God fulfils himself in many ways", that the various cultures of the world are but so many aspects of the evolution of human culture, so many paths by which the primitive original man is marching on to perfection and godhood. Any attempt to prove that one path is superior to another is futile. Human life is a gorgeous fabric woven by the Master Weaver with strands of many hues, all equally necessary to the development of the wondrous design thereof. Of course, Mr Datta is no more to blame than Elliot Smith and other myopic savants of Europe who have refused to attach any value to cultures other than those of classical Greece and Rome, and who have at the most condescended to give a stinted praise to the civilisation of ancient Egypt. But times have changed and a new type of scholars with a more comprehensive understanding has appeared in the horizon, who are prepared to concede that ancient culture was not wholly evolved on the shores of the Mediterranean. Any how, it is not for one who owes allegiance to the broadminded and generous culture of ancient India to follow the narrow path.

The learned author has defined culture as the outer expression of the inner genius of a people. We accept his definition for the purposes of this book. Culture is something that each man inherits at birth from his ancestors, and imbibes from his environment. But there is no stagnancy about this heritage. It is something which is ever evolving, a stream getting wider and richer as it rolls along towards its goal. Mr Datta has rightly stressed the truth that India is one and indivisible in spite of its apparent diversity. Indian culture too, is one mighty stream, though its tributaries and branches are many. We have ¹⁶⁶to accept it as a whole. It is not open to us to accept one part of it and reject the others as alien in origin. Asoka the Aryan, Kanishka the

Scythian, and Akbar the Moghul have all made their contribution to its growth. Mr Datta admits this in theory but is yet apparently hurt that in a Rajaput state various officers and institutions bear Persian names. He could with equal reason have gone further and lamented the fact that his own language as commonly spoken contains a very high percentage of Arabic and Persian words. The learned author does not seem to have fully realised the extent to which Islam has influenced Indian thought, Indian Art and Indian literature. The Indo-Saracenic dome, an outstanding feature of Indian architecture evolved under the joint aegis of the Moghul and the Hindu. Khayal in music, not to speak of Thumri, and Ghazal, is the gist of Mussalman musicians. The whole school of painting in the Moghul period developed under joint Indo-Islamic influence. The contribution of the Moslem craftsman in weaving and embroidery, in wood and ivory carving is invaluable. The Cashmere Shawl, the Benarese Kinkhab, the Delhi gold embroidery, the flowered Muslin of Dacca and several other things of which India is justly proud are his creations. It is unnecessary to dilate on the point. By her contact with Islam India became richer in many ways. Likewise, going back to older times, a Scythian emperor presiding over a Buddhist council, a Greeco-Bactrian monarch enquiring solemnly and diligently into the truth of Buddhism, a Greek devotee erecting a pillar to Krishna, these are all instances to show that from the earliest times India was not only tolerant but receptive and assimilative to other cultures. She gave freely and took freely. In fact, it is only those who can give without reserve that can take in without reserve. The Indian of those times studied Greek astronomy and embodies the result of his studies in the Romaka Siddhanta. He studied Greek drama and borrowed the Yavanika or the Greek drop-curtain. He even adopted words and phrases into his language of the gods—"Hora" is an oft-cited example of this. These are all instances of spirit of give and take in culture which characterised the old Hindu. The sculpture of the Gandhara school, stigmatised as hybrid and soulless by many experts, even though inferior to earlier and later styles was undoubtedly an important evolutionary phase.

When India came into close contact with Western culture she had largely lost her powers of assimilation. During the centuries immediately preceding, the nuts and bolts of the Hindu social machinery had been tightened against the onslaught of powerful adverse forces. This rigidity has served its purpose and saved Hindu society from disruption. When the impact of European thought came, people did not realise for some time that the nuts had to be loosened again, and a certain amount of resiliency and shock-absorbing quality had to be restored to society. The result was, as the author points out, an unsettling of the Hindu mind. Some became "mad" imitators of the West while others entrenched themselves behind a rampart of narrow fanaticism. In time, things righted themselves and a period of renaissance set in and saved the soul of India.

The learned author has devoted one entire chapter to Religious culture, written as only he could write. The central and supreme thought in the whole range of Hindi religious literature is, "Verily, all this is Brahman". It is the proud boast of the Hindu

that his ancient lore has taught him to see the immanent Word in all things and all beings. To him all cults are true, all are so many roads leading to the same goal. He is therefore averse to questioning the truth of any faith, or to asserting the superiority of his own faith over that of another. To a Hindu, no comparative study of religious should overstep this limit. Not only is his own religion eternal, but all religions are in his eyes timeless.

The two chapters in social and political culture constitute a study in contrasts. Here, we do not think that Mr Datta¹⁶⁷ has been quite fair to other cultures than his own. There were many deeds done in Indian history, ancient and modern, which undoubtedly fell short of the highest ethical and spiritual ideals. No student of history can plead ignorance of them. A failure to bring these forward while setting forth the delinquencies of other nations is obviously unjust. There has been enough oppressors in our long history and all know of them. We shall cite a few instances casually as they occur to us. The Bahmani Kings and the Vijayanagar emperors, rival monarchs in the Deccan, were engaged in a long drawn struggle for supremacy in the fifteenth century. It is notorious that both sides freely indulged in pillaging the country. So much so that in one treaty between the parties there was a special clause by which they agreed to abstain from this vile practice. Again, later on, in the struggle between Marattas and the Moslem powers it was the settled practice of all conquerors of hill-fortresses to draw sustenance by looting the surrounding country. Apologists on the Maratta side quote the Sukraniti in support of this malpractice. Yet another incident, more curious still, comes to our mind. When the Peshwa's horsemen in their harrying raids went the length of violating the sanctity of the Adi Shankara Math, one of the most sacred seats of religion in India, the holy monks applied for protection to Tippu Sultan of Mysore. So, in spite of all idealism in books the Indian warrior in practice was much the same as his prototypes in other lands. Similarly, with regard to gods and goddesses of mythology, it is quite easy to cite instances from the Epics and the Puranas to show that they were full of human feelings and were creatures of human passions ns much in India as in Greece and Rome, and elsewhere. Indra's lapses were many indeed and as bad as those of Jupiter. One can certainly speak of India's fundamental spirit; yet one should not forget that that works itself out through a mingled strain of elements good and bad, imported and indigenous.

Mr Datta would have done well to show how in the evolution of human culture man has passed through four successive stages – the ideal, the typical, the conventional and the rational. This, not once but several times in his long history. Also, that he must ultimately transcend the rational and enter the Suprarational in order to realise the underlying unity of things. The soul alone can give us this realisation. Man's intelligence can but lead him to the neighbourhood of the tabernacle and there hand

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him over to the guidance of his spirit which will lead him right into the holy of holies, and give him a glimpse of the truth of truths. This is man's destiny. He must fulfil his manhood by stepping into godhood. To this goal he has been travelling along the paths of his diverse cultures through the ages. The Indian path is our own, and to us the supreme path. Let us keep it broad and smooth and free of weeds. To be little others is to tread the narrow path.

Mr Datta's dream of the future world as a great commonwealth of Nations and of India as playing a glorious part therein, "acting as the pivot to move humanity to a happier and holier living", is charming. But it is not likely to come true until man rises above his mentality into a full and bright realisation of the Divine Truth, until he sees his God in every being. A world-state will be possible only if it is His state. C.D.

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The¹⁷³
ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves
without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine.
For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the
freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the
seas of Ananda. *Sri Aurobindo.*

INDIA ONE AND INDIVISIBLE

India is one and indivisible, culturally and spiritually; politically too she must be one and indivisible and is, as a matter of fact, already on the way towards that consummation, in spite of appearances to the contrary. It has got to be so, if India is to be strong and powerful, if her voice is to be heard in the comity of nations, if she is to fulfil her mission in the world.

It is no use laying stress on distinctions and differences: we must, on the contrary, put all emphasis upon the fundamental unity, upon the demand and necessity for a dynamic unity. Naturally there are diverse and even contradictory elements in the make-up of a modern nation. France, for example, was not one, but many to start with and for long. We know of the mortal feud between the Bourguignons and the Armagnacs and the struggle among the Barons generally, some even siding with foreigners against their own countrymen (an Indian parallel we have in the story of Prithwiraj and Jayachand), poor Jeanne Darc lamenting over the "much pity" that was in sweet France. There were several rival languages—Breton, Gascon, Provencal, besides the French of Isle de France. Apart from these provincial or regional rivalries there were schisms on religious grounds—Huguenots and Catholics, Jansenists and Arians were flying at each other's throat and made of France a veritable bedlam of confusion and chaos. Well, all that was beaten down and smoothed under the steam-roller of a strong centralised government. It was the invincible spirit of France¹⁷⁴, one and indivisible and inexorable, that worked itself out through Jeanne Darc and Francis the First and Henry the Great and Richelieu and Napoleon. But all nations have the same story. And it is too late now in the day to start explaining the nature and origin of nationhood: it was done long ago by Mazzini and by Renan and once for all.

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Indeed, what we see rampant in India today is the mediaeval spirit. This reversion to an older – an extinct, we ought to have been able to say – type of mentality is certainly a fall, a lowering of the collective consciousness. It has got to be remedied and set right. Whatever the motive forces that lie at the back of the movement, motives of fear or despair or class interest or parochial loyalty, motives of idealism, misguided and obscurantist, they have to be taken by the horns and dominated and eliminated. A breath of modernism, some pure air of clear perception and knowledge and wider consciousness must blow through the congested hectic atmosphere of the Indian body politic.

It will do no good to anyone to try to Balkanise India. The Balkan malady is no longer tolerated even in its homeland: it cannot be transported to India in this century and after this Great War. To be and remain free and strong and invincible, India must be and remain indivisible. The strength of the United States of America, of the united Soviets of the Russias, of the British Commonwealth (*pace* Churchill) lies precisely on each one of them being a large unified aggregate, all members pooling their resources together. India cannot maintain her freedom, nor utilise her freedom to its utmost effectivity unless she is one and indivisible. The days of small peoples, of isolated independence are gone – gone forever even like Thebes and Nineveh, like Kosala of Dasarathi and Mathura of Yadupati.

India can be and is to be a federation of autonomous units. But then we must very carefully choose or find out the units, those that are real units and not fractions (esp. irrational fractions) and at the same time lay as much stress on federation as on autonomy. To choose or create units on the basis of religion or race or caste or creed, that is exactly what we mean by irrationalism, in other words, mediaevalism. The Units must be, on one side, geographical wholes, and, on the other, cultural (or spiritual – not religious) wholes.

THE BASIC UNITY

There¹⁷⁵ is one unity which cannot be denied to India, because Nature has given it and man cannot withdraw or annul it. It is the geographical, the physical unity. It is so clearly and indelibly marked that it has always been looked upon as a definite unit by all outside its boundaries; one may call in question the cultural unity, if one chooses, one may be sceptic about the spiritual unity, but the unity of the body leaps to the eyes, even as the clear contour of a living organism. As we know, however, an individual human frame may contain many personalities, many Jekyls and Hydes may lodge in the same physical tenement, even so, the physical unity that is India may harbour many and diverse independent elements. Admitting even that, the problem does not end

there, it is only the beginning. The problem that is set in such a case is, as has been pointed out by the psychologists, the problem of the integration of personality.

A firm physical unity presupposes, at least posits the possibility of an integral unity. Otherwise the body itself would tend to break up and disintegrate. Such physical cataclysms are not unknown in Nature. However, a geographical unity cannot remain exclusively limited to itself; it brings about other unities by the very pressure, by the capillary action, as it were, of the boundary. The first unity that is called into being is the economic. A Zollverein (Customs' Union) has almost always been the starting point of a national union. Next or along with it comes the political unity. India's political and economic unity has been the great work of the British rule, however that rule might be distasteful to us. It is an illustration of Nature's method of compulsion and violence, when man's voluntary effort fails. India possesses a resounding roll of great names who endeavoured to give her this solid political and economic unity: Bharata, Yudhishthira, Asoka, Chandragupta, Akbar, Shivaji have all contributed to the ever-growing unification of Indian polity. But still what they realised was not a stable and permanent thing, it was yet fluent and uncertain; it was only the hammer blow, the plastering, as one would say today, from an outside agency that welded, soldered and fixed that unity.

Fissures of late have opened again and they seem to be increasing in depth and width and in number¹⁷⁶. What appeared to be a unified structure, of one piece, whole and entire, now threatens to crash and fall to pieces. We are asked to deny the unity. The political unity, it is said, is an impossibility, the geographical unity an illusion.

In such a predicament the vision of a prophet counts than the arguments of a political huckster. That an Indian consciousness is there and has grown and taken more and more concrete shape through the ages is a fact to which history bears testimony and honest common sense pays homage.

THE WAY TO UNITY

Common love, common labour and, above all, as the great French thinker, Ernest Renan,* pointed out, common suffering—that is the cement which welds together the

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THE BASIC UNITY

* "Dane le passé, un héritage de gloire et de regrets à partager, dans l'avenir un même programme à réaliser; avoir souffert, joui, espéré ensemble voilà ce qui vaut mieux que des douanes communes et des frontières conformes aux idées stratégiques: voilà ce que l'on comprend malgré les diversités de race et de langue. Je disais tout à l'heure: "avoir souffert ensemble"; oui, la souffrance en commun unit plus que la joie. En fait de souvenirs nation-aux, les deuils valent mieux que les triomphes..."

Ernest Renan: "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?"

disparate elements of a nation—a nation is not formed otherwise. A nation means peoples differing in race and religion, caste and creed and even language, fused together into a composite but indivisible unit. Not pact nor balancing of interests nor sharing of power and profit can permanently combine and unify conflicting groups collectivities. Hindus and Muslims, the two major sections that are at loggerheads today in India, must be given a field, indeed more than one field, where they can work together: they must be made to come in contact with each other, to coalesce and dovetail into each other in as many ways and directions as possible. Instead of keeping them separate in water-tight compartments, in barred cages, as it were, lest they pounce upon each other like wild beasts, ¹⁷⁷it would be wiser to throw them together; let them breathe the same air, live the same life, share the same troubles, face the same difficulties, solve the same problems. That is how they will best understand, appreciate and even love each other, become comrades and companions, not rivals and opponents.

To have union, one must unite—division can never lead to unity. Also this unity is established automatically and irrevocably, not by any abstract sense of justice and equality, nor by any romantic or imaginative feeling of fraternity, but by a dynamic *living together*. A common political and civic and economic life creates a field of force that can draw together into a harmonious working the most contrary and refractory elements.

We have said, however, time and again, that the present war is a great opportunity offered by Nature and Providence, opportunity that comes only once in a way: it is precisely the field of which we speak, the field *par excellence*, which can compel all centrifugal elements to come together, labour together, enjoy and suffer together and turn and transmute them into the very strongest centripetal components

THE “LONDON TIMES” AND SRI AUROBINDO

The London Times in its LITERARY SUPPLEMENT, dated July 4, 1944, in the course of a review of Sri Aurobindo’s Collected Poems and Plays, says:

“After the collapse of France he returned to his *home town* where he now lives, surrounded by a growing band of admirers.”

Translation: In the past a heritage of glory and regrets to share, in the future the same programme to realise; to have suffered, enjoyed, hoped together, that indeed is better than common customs and strategic frontiers; that is what one understands in spite of diversities of race and language. I said just now: “to have suffered together”; yes common suffering unites more than common joy. In respect of the memories of a nation griefs are worth more than triumphs.

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THE BASIC UNITY

The information is, of course, quite incorrect, as everybody in India knows. Sri Aurobindo has never left Pondicherry (French India), he has always been there since he went into retirement. The reference to his “home town” sounds also somewhat strange. For, Calcutta, although his birth place, can hardly be called his home; by far the longest periods of his life he passed in England, in Baroda, in Pondicherry, not in Bengal. Besides Sri Aurobindo was never—he will allow us to say—a “homely” or domestic man, his home was always within him.

The reviewer refers to another legend—which is more current—that Sri Aurobindo tried and could not pass the Civil Service test and became chagrined and disappointed and disgruntled and turned Nationalist. Well, it is nothing short of a legend. The real¹⁷⁸ fact is that he purposely and deliberately failed to be present at the riding test, because he did not want to enter the Service: it was only to please his father that he at all consented to prepare for the Service. There was no question of his being sad or disappointed; he was never so even in more serious circumstances.

There is still another story referred to by the reviewer—which is more strange and which we hear for the first time—that the Japanese tried to win over Sri Aurobindo, but he did not deign to reply. We do not know how the Japanese tried; if it was through the Tokio Radio, the appeal naturally fell on unlistening ears. Sri Aurobindo’s views in this matter of the war are well-known and have been broadcast far and wide.

Another error is worth correcting. The reviewer seems to assume that Sri Aurobindo was sent straight from India to King’s College, Cambridge, and that he had to learn English as a foreign language. This is not the fact; Sri Aurobindo in his father’s house already spoke English and Hindustani; he thought in English from his childhood and did not even know his native language, Bengali. At the age of seven he was taken to England and remained there consecutively for fourteen years, speaking English and writing in English and no other tongue. He was educated in French and Latin and other subjects under private tuition in Manchester from seven to eleven and studied afterwards in St. Paul’s School, London, for about seven years. From there he went to King’s College. He had never to study English at all as a subject; though it was not his native language it had become by force of circumstances from the very first his natural language.

The reviewer’s judgment of Sri Aurobindo’s poetry and philosophy, with a few lacunæ here and there, is appreciative and even illuminating, as, for example, when he says:

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“In fact, he is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one’s knowledge”.

Or again,

“And he has crystallised the mellow wisdom of a lifetime into luminous prose in “The Life Divine”, which, it is not too much to say, *is* one of the master works of our age. The book has length, breadth and height. In a real sense, it enriches our experience.”

DEDICATION¹⁷⁹

What’s there in me that I can call my own
And place before Thee as my offering?
For Thy revealing Grace has sweetly shown
Of everything Thou art the mother-spring.

A tiniest portion of Thy infinite
Being became these universes vast,
Wherein Thy single breath has breathed a bright
Luxuriant life of mysteries amassed.

And on this earth inert and stupefied
Thou badest me emerge, a blessed being,
A speck but still a centre of the wide
And various play of Thy powers beyond mind’s seeing.

And faithfully my conscious nature now
Endeavours to work out what Thou hast willed,
And for which Thou hast come here with the vow
That life divine on earth shall be fulfilled.

And every moment now my dull dead clay
Awakes to life’s celestial symphonies,
Transforming all into a blissful play
Of Thy love’s supremely sweet profundities.

The miracles of Thy all-surpassing Grace
Have chosen to be manifest in me,
And change silently my nature’s worthless face
Into a gem of Thy divinity.

A cripple that I am, Thou mak'st me climb
Up heights of heaven I have sensed in dream,
And turn my discord into a sweet rhyme
That makes my dumbness burst into songs supreme.

Accept them with indulgence, condescend,
And bless them with Thy smile that I may feel
The joy of offering: Oh let me bend
Before Thy feet: reveal Thyself, reveal.

And break my night-filled ego-shell beneath
Thy sun-specked feet, that I reborn may rise,
A songful golden dawn's eternal wreath
For Thee to wear and as thine own to prize.

— *Punjatal*

LETTERS ON DEATH AND AFTER-DEATH

SECOND SERIES

I

About ¹⁸⁰spiritism I think I can say this much for the present. It is quite possible for the dead or rather the departed — for they are not dead — who are still in regions near the earth to have communication with the living. Sometimes it happens automatically, sometimes by an effort at communication on one side of the curtain or the other. There is no impossibility of such communication by the means used by the spiritists; usually, however, genuine communications or a contact can only be with those who are yet in a world which is a sort of idealised replica of the earth-consciousness and in which the same personality, ideas, memories persist that the person had here. But everything that pretends to be communication with departed souls is not genuine, — especially when it is done through a paid professional medium. There is there an enormous amount of mixture of a very undesirable kind — for, apart from the great mass of unconscious suggestions from the sitters or the contributions of the medium's subliminal consciousness, one gets into contact with a world of beings which is of a very deceptive or self-deceptive illusory nature. Many of these come and claim to be the departed souls of relatives, acquaintances, well-known men, famous personalities, etc. There are also beings who pick up the discarded feelings and memories of the dead and masquerade with them. There are a great number of beings who come to such seances only to play with the consciousness of men or exercise their powers through this contact

with the earth and who dope the mediums and sitters with their falsehoods, tricks and illusions. (I am supposing, of course, the case of mediums who are not themselves tricksters.) A contact with such a plane of spirits can be harmful (most mediums become nervously or morally unbalanced) and spiritually dangerous. Of course all pretended communications with the famous dead of long-past times are in their very nature deceptive; most of the talk professing to come from recent great names are also largely spurious – that is evident from the character of these communications. Through conscientious mediums one may get sound ¹⁸¹results (in the matter of the dead) but even these are ignorant of the nature of the forces they are handling and have no discrimination which can guard them against trickery from the other side of the wall. Very little genuine knowledge of the nature of the after-life can be gathered from these seances; a true knowledge is more often gained by the experience of individuals who make a serious contact or are able in one way or another to cross the border.

II

It is necessary to understand clearly the difference between the evolving soul (psychic being) and the pure Atman, self or spirit. The pure self is unborn, does not pass through death or birth, is independent of birth or body, mind or life or this manifested Nature. It is not bound by these things, not limited, not affected, even though it assumes and supports them. The soul, on the contrary, is something that comes down into birth and passes through death – although it does not itself die, for it is immortal – from one state to another, from the earth-plane to other planes and back again to the earth-existence. It goes on with this progression from life to life through an evolution which leads it up to the human state and evolves through it all a being of itself which we call the psychic being. This being supports the evolution and develops a physical, a vital, a mental human consciousness as its instruments of world-experience and of a disguised, imperfect, but growing self-expression. All this it does from behind a veil showing something of its divine self only in so far as the imperfection of the instrumental being will allow it. But a time comes when it is able to prepare to come out from behind the veil, to take command and turn all the instrumental nature towards a divine fulfilment. This is the beginning of the true spiritual life. The soul is able now to make itself ready for a higher evolution of manifested consciousness than the mental human – it can pass from the mental to the spiritual and through degrees of the spiritual to the supramental state. Till then, till it has reached the spiritual realisation, there is no reason why it should cease from birth, it cannot in fact so cease. If having reached the spiritual state, it wills to pass out of the terrestrial manifestation, it may

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indeed make such an exit, but there is also possible a higher manifestation, in the Knowledge and not in the Ignorance.

Your question therefore does not arise. It is not the naked spirit, but the psychic being that goes¹⁸² to the psychic plane to rest till it is called again to another life. There is therefore no need of a Force to compel it to take birth anew. It is in its nature something that is put forth from the Divine to support the evolution and it must do so till the Divine's purpose in its evolution is accomplished. Karma is only a machinery, it is not the fundamental cause of terrestrial existence—it cannot be, for when the soul first entered this existence, it had no Karma.

What again do you mean by “the all-veiling Maya” or by “losing all consciousness”? The soul cannot lose all consciousness, for its very nature is consciousness, though not of the mental kind to which we give the name. The consciousness is merely covered, not lost or abolished by the so-called Inconscience of material Nature and then by the half-conscious ignorance of mind, life and body. It manifests, as the individual mind and life and body grow, as much as may be of the consciousness which it holds in potentiality, manifests it in the outward instrumental nature as far as and in the way that is possible through these instruments and through the outer personality that has been prepared for it and by it—for both are true—for the present life.

I know nothing about any terrible suffering endured by the soul in the process of rebirth; popular beliefs even when they have foundation are seldom enlightened and accurate.

III

The movement of the psychic being dropping its outer, its vital and mental sheaths on its way to the psychic plane, is its normal movement after death. But there can be any number of variations; one can return directly from the vital plane without passing on to farther and higher states, and there are cases of an almost immediate rebirth, sometimes even attended with a detailed memory of the events of the past life.

Hell and heaven are often imaginary states of the soul, or rather of the vital being, which it constructs about it after its passing. What is meant by hell is a painful passage through some vital world or a dolorous lingering there, as for instance in many cases of suicide where one remains surrounded by the forces of suffering and turmoil created by this unnatural and violent exit. There are also, of course, real worlds of mind

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and vital worlds which are penetrated with joyful or dark experiences, and one may pass through these as the result of things formed on the nature which create the necessary affinities. But the idea of reward or retribution is¹⁸³ a crude and vulgar conception and we can disregard it as a mere popular error.

There is no rule of complete forgetfulness in the return of the soul to rebirth. There are, especially in childhood, many impressions of the past life which can be strong and vivid enough, but a materialising education and the overpowering influences of the environment most often, but not quite always, prevent their true nature from being recognised. There are even a number of people who have definite recollections of a past life. But these things are discouraged by education and the atmosphere and cannot remain or develop; in most cases they are stifled out of existence. At the same time it must be noted that what the psychic being mainly carries away with it and brings back is the essence and effect of the experiences it has in former lives, and not the details, so that you cannot expect the same coherent memory as one has of past happenings in the present existence.

A soul can go straight to the psychic world but that depends on the state of consciousness at the time of departure. If the psychic is in front at the time, this immediate transition is possible. It does not depend on the acquisition of a mental and vital as well as a psychic immortality – those who have acquired that would rather have the power to move about in the different planes and even act on the physical world without being bound to it. On the whole it may be said that there is no one rigid rule for these things; manifold variations are possible depending upon the consciousness, its energies, tendencies and formations, though there is a general frame-work and design into which all fit and take their place.

– *Sri Aurobindo.*

For the burden of death to man the thinking, willing, feeling creature is not the loss of this poor case or chariot of a body, but it is the blind psychical finality death suggests, the stupid material end of our will and thought and aspiration and endeavour, the brute breaking off of the heart's kind and sweet relations and affections, the futile convicting discontinuity of that marvellous and all-supporting soul-sense which gives us our radiant glimpses of the glory and delight of existence. – that is the discord and harsh inconsequence against which the thinking living creature revolts as incredible and inadmissible. * * * Re-birth takes the difficulty and solves it in the sense of a soul-continuity with a beat of physical repetition.

– (*The significance of Re-birth – Sri Aurobindo*)

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THOUGHTS¹⁸⁴ ON CURRENT EVENTS

A CONFESSION OF FAITH

The spiritual power behind the man who has mobilised China for her epic resistance against Japanese aggression, Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek, is said to be the influence of his wife who has already won the respect and loving admiration of people both in the East and the West. In a recent talk given in America, she has made a confession of her faith in which are clearly indicated the three stages through which she has passed in her spiritual evolution. By nature, she admits, she is not a religious person at least in the common acceptance of that term. "I am practical minded", she said, "and somewhat sceptical. I used to think Faith, Belief, Immortality were more or less imaginary. I believed in the world seen, not the world unseen." But the hard school of life has wrought a great change in her, a spiritual conversion. During the first years of her married life, there was a tremendous enthusiasm and patriotism—a passionate desire to do something for her country. With her husband, she would work ceaselessly, to unite China and make her strong. Then came the second phase, beginning with the Japanese invasion. She said, "I saw the Japanese overrun our riches provinces, I saw our people die from enemy action and flood and famine. All these things have made me realize my own inadequacy and all human insufficiency To try to do anything for the country seemed like trying to put out a great conflagration with a cup of water. I was plunged spiritual despair, bleakness, desolation."

Then the influence which her saintly mother had exercised on her in her young age began to bear fruit and in despair she turned to God as her mother used to do. She said, "Feeling my human inadequacy, I was driven back to my mother's God. I knew there was a power greater than myself... I had formerly prayed that God would do this or that. Now I prayed only that God would make His will known to me. Thus I entered into the third period, where I wanted to do not my will but God's. And despair and despondency are not mine to-day." That gives the direct lie to the communistic slogan. Religion is the opiate of the people. Whatever¹⁸⁵ evil consequences might have followed from the abuse of religion, as of any other good thing in life, religion can be of the greatest help even in our worldly activities and struggles. Leaders in the present world war like Churchill, Roosevelt, Montgomery are intensely religious men, yet they are showing the highest qualities of dynamism and organising capacity. And in Madame Chiang Kai Shek we find well illustrated the coming of the spiritual type in the general upward evolution of humanity. She is a Christian, though the credal part of that religion has not had much effect on her: she was influenced by the trust of her

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mother in a higher divine power, and that is the essence of all religion; and the spiritual type can emerge out of any religion and even from sceptics. And yet the type represented by Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, as revealed in her confession of faith, is hardly yet the spiritual human being; she is still a religious being or a preliminary spiritual form preparing for the true spiritual emergence. There is as yet no awakening to the inner Reality or the Soul which is the essence of spirituality. "An awareness comes perhaps of an inner light, of a guidance or a communion, of a greater Control than the mind and will to which something in us obeys; but all is not yet recast in the mould of that experience. But when these intuitions and illuminations grow in insistence and canalise themselves, make a strong inner formation and claim to govern the whole life and take over the nature, then there begins the spiritual formation of the being; there emerges the saint, the devotee, the spiritual sage, the seer, the prophet, the servant of God, the soldier of the spirit." (The Life Divine, Vol. II, P. 896).

"I am often bewildered," says Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, "I question and doubt my own judgments. Then I seek guidance; in prayer God enlightens my understanding, and when I am sure, I go ahead, leaving the results with him." Thus she is really in the first stage of the Gita's Karma Yoga; she still regards herself as the doer, though she sincerely wants to know the will of God and do it without regard to consequences. But to have a really Yogic spiritual life we must go beyond that; we must find the self within us by inward concentration and meditation (M. Chiang Kai-Shek prefers prayer to meditation); we must realise that it is Nature which does all our actions and that ultimately Nature is an instrument in¹⁸⁶ the hands of the Divine with whom we are one in our inmost Self. "The last or highest emergence is the liberated man who has realised the Self and Spirit within him, entered into the cosmic consciousness, passed into union with the Eternal and, so far as he still accepts life and action, acts by the light and energy of the power within him working through his human instruments of nature. The largest formulation of this spiritual change and achievement is a total liberation of soul, mind, heart and action, a casting of them all into the sense of the cosmic self and the Divine Reality." (L.D. II-897). This is essentially the ideal of the Jivanmukta as we find it delineated in the Gita. But it may be contended that there have been many saints and seers and soldiers of the spirit in the past, still the world goes on pretty much the same as it always has done, then of what avail is it to humanity if a few more exceptional men attain the highest spiritual ideal by a most difficult and arduous sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo has fully discussed this question in The Life Divine. The problems of human life cannot be solved on the past or present mental basis. "Spirituality cannot be called upon to deal with life by a non-spiritual method or

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attempt to cure its ills by the panaceas, the political, social or other mechanical remedies which the mind is constantly attempting and which have always failed and will continue to fail to solve anything." It is not that spiritual men have not rendered great services to humanity, but all that has been in the way of alleviation and not of any radical cure. And that cure can only come when Nature has taken a further step in her evolution and man finds in the supermind the basis of a higher life. To help in that evolution has always been the proper work of spiritual men, and their age-long efforts have gradually prepared mankind for this supreme uplifting.

SCIENTIFIC PLANNING

"We are on the thresh-hold of great changes. As regards the world in general, what the religious precepts of prophets and saints could not achieve for the unity and brotherhood of man, the devastating discovery of modern explosives and flying machines is tending to achieve. Willy-nilly, nations of the world have to live like a family if not out of love, out of fear. What the Gita and the Quran and the Bible could not do, bombers will do. Bombers will¹⁸⁷ make brothers of us all." So spoke Mr Darab Cursetjee Driver in his Presidential Address at the annual General Meeting of the Engineering Association of India. Mr Driver is a scientist with experience of Indian business conditions and he has given several useful suggestions about post-war large scale industrial planning in India without which the appalling poverty of the Indian masses cannot be remedied. But why did he go quite out of his way to cast aspersions on religion and religious scriptures? Eminent scientists in the West have already definitely turned away from the 19th century obscurantist hostility of science to religion, but the Indian scientists seem still to be far behind them in this respect. How could Mr Driver be so innocent of human psychology as to assert that brotherhood can be born out of fear, if not out of love? People saw appalling sufferings and destruction in the last world war, but the fear of those sufferings could not bring about the brotherhood of humanity. What better prospects have we now? It is not willingly that most people have entered into the present war; the Munich episode is there to show how unwilling and unprepared the Allies were for a second World War. Still it could not be prevented. Hitler almost succeeded in exploiting human horror of war in order to establish his barbarous sway over the whole of humanity. No, fear of bombing is certainly not going to inaugurate a new order; if humanity indulges in that, it will easily fall a prey to any Hitlerite gangster who will invent new hellish weapons to intimidate humanity, and scientists will come forward to help him.

It is only if the passion for power and domination can be rooted out of human nature and egoism be replaced by love that there can be real brotherhood and lasting

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peace and it is spirituality alone which can bring about such a radical change in human nature.

As Mr Driver has apparently no faith in spirituality, his vision of the New Order docs not exclude the possibility of war; according to him every nation must remain armed to the teeth and in his post-war plan for India the question of Defence expenses looms large. Thus he says: "The problem is that if we spend too much on defence, there is so much less with which to plan; but defend ourselves we must." Indeed if India is to protect her vast frontiers against foreign aggression, the expenses under modern conditions will be so great that there will not be much left for post-war reconstruction¹⁸⁸. Moreover, if the countries and nations of the world keep and maintain national armies, however small on the plea of self-defence, there is bound to be war, sooner or later; only if an international machinery can be set up in which all national armies will be abolished leaving only an international police force, there will be a reasonable chance of lasting peace, and nations freed from the crushing burden of defence expenditure can look to effective reconstruction insuring a satisfactory standard of life for all men. But humanity will have to change much in order to arrive at this consummation; in the meantime some half-way-house measures have to be adopted; but these can be tolerated only on the presupposition that the problem will be tackled at the very root in all seriousness – the problem of changing human nature integrally.

At the same time we must realise that this change will not come simply by preaching the ideals of non-violence, love and brotherhood or by the old customary ways of religion. It is only by following a technic based on deep knowledge of human nature and world forces that this can be accomplished and that is precisely the aim of Yoga. So long Yoga has been perfecting its methods in solitude and in retirement far from the turmoil of life leaving religion and other cultural activities to prepare the hearts and minds of mankind for the final transformation. Now it is coming back to take its proper place in the organisation and uplifting of human life. Scientific planning is necessary, but it can be effective only when it has a spiritual vision behind it and every step is taken to further the spiritual evolution of mankind.

Mr Driver draws pointed attention to the menace of over-population in India: "Our present population of 400 millions is expected to reach the figure of 550 millions in thirty years. Would it be practicable to give work and food to so many, even with the best planning in the world to modernize our economy? Will not our population, with its unrestricted growth, ultimately pulverize all plans?" Here again it is obvious that some form of birth-control is indispensable; but that by itself would only be a palliative. It is only men who are in the lowest level of culture, the material men who still form the

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majority, who take eating, sleeping and breeding as the highest aims of life. When these people are awakened to the spiritual goal of life and uplifted by spiritual and cultural influences, the problem of over-population will be solved automatically.

– *Critic.*

All¹⁸⁹ Religions are agreed that Reality or God is in essence spiritually governed, that is to say, the nature of God is Love. By love it is usually held to mean that which is sympathetic to the human beings in general and to votaries in particular. There can be no antipathy to any creature in the nature of the Reality or God and therefore God cannot and indeed does not inflict injuries on His creatures. Not only that, His Love is not merely a negative fact, but the positive fact about it is this that He redeems those who are fallen, or have sinned and fallen. The human being turns to its creator in order to be saved. It prays to Him and serves Him in all the ways that it knows and in turn it expects His help and succour. The creature suffers and the creator is the redeemer from its suffering. All this means also that the creator can save and redeem, help and lead. This is an article of faith. If God be finite and limited, He may grieve over the failures and sorrows of others without being able to rescue them or relieve them or redeem them. This would be the quintessence of Tragedy. If God be infinite and omnipotent and illimitable, there is no reason whatsoever for the occurrence or continuance of grief for He could, if so minded, relieve the distress of the creatures He had created. Indeed there is no need for the creatures to suffer at all if He created properly or wisely. It would be therefore a love of self tragedy that must have led to this creation of creatures doomed to suffer and to sin!

Thus the capital fact about these two views will lead to the denial of omniscient Omnipotence on the one hand and on the other the affirmation of a kind of masochistico-sadistic delight in tragedy on the part of God. Now theism cannot accept either of these schools of thought though it seeks to reconcile God's Love with His wisdom. Some Christian theologians say that the dualism is one between the God of Love and the God of Wrath. It is stated that the love of God is seen when He acts as the helper towards peace and understanding of the creatures and that the wrath of God is seen when He punishes the traducers of the Law of Justice of God. But this takes into account only the law and the love and does not see that law may itself be a form of Love and the restoration of law may involve a recovery of love that establishes the real and true understanding of the status of the creature in the scheme of Divine Harmony. The Hindu view has been to shew that the maintenance of Order or law or the right relationship between things is one of the most important functions of the Divine, and Divine intervention in the scheme of existence has this purpose as its foremost aim.

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Further, God's love is not to be measured by human criteria, though this by no means is to be excluded.

We know that Love is most fully displayed when one gives up oneself completely for the well-being of another. This passion for self-offering or sacrifice is the test of love. It is possible only when the offerer of oneself is capable of¹⁹⁰ infinite sympathy with the suffering of the one for whom one is offering oneself. Thus the consciousness of suffering is said to be a self-consciousness of suffering. This means that when I love another not only do I suffer as the other does but also that I am prepared to take up the suffering on myself in his stead. He is thus relieved of his suffering. This is said to be testified by the great advent of God, Jesus the Christ. The maximum price of love or rather the completest exemplification of the law of self-sacrifice or love for another or others, in its universal appeal, is the capacity to take upon oneself the entire suffering of others and release them from the suffering that is their natural portion and desert.

Thus the ideal presented by the teaching of Jesus is to reveal that God indeed suffers not only at the sufferings of His creatures but also suffers for their sake in order to shew them that He is not at all the God of wrath that men previous to His incarnation held but the God of Love, the lord of the suffering people with whom and for whom He suffered Himself to be crucified. Thus man's callousness and unwillingness to understand the inner Nature of God as Love forced God to reveal His infinite compassion to His creatures by an actual crucifixion. God died at the hands of man so that man may understand the infinite mercy and love of God and thus offer himself to Him inwardly and wholly and thus desire Him alone.

The above fact reveals that in the most critical epochs of man's civilization which usually culminate in wars of mutual aggression, when man swerves from his loyalty to normal ideals, and begins to entertain doubts about God's mercy and love, he creates for himself a view that truly God is Love and suffers for man and that His tears as plentiful as his own. This may give satisfaction to the condolence-minded religious man, but it does not promise liberation from sorrows. Tragedy cannot be the truth of the spirit, despite the affirmations of the Christian theologian like Nicolas Berdyev, who writes that "History is a drama which has its act and logical development, its denouement and catharsis—i.e history is tragedy." (M.H. p.28) "History and its conception are possible only when the world process is conceived as a catastrophic one. The catastrophic interpretation of history postulates a central fact, that of divine revelation by which the interior becomes the exterior and the spirit incarnates." (*Meaning of History* p 34).

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This catastrophic view of history as a view postulates further “that the creation of the world by God the father is a movement of the deepest mystery in the relation between God the Father and God the son. The revelation of the divine mystery in the depths of the Divine and spiritual life of the inner passionate divine thirst and longing for the other self, the other self which may be the object of a great and infinite love on the part of God and that infinite thirst for reciprocity and love on the part of the other self, determines for the deep Christian consciousness the very principle of movement and process. This inner tragedy of the love felt by God for his other self and its longing for reciprocal love constitutes that very mystery of the divine life which is associated with the creation of the world and of man.” (*Meaning of History pp. 48-9*)

The¹⁹¹ movement of history as the realization of love between the two natures of the Divine as Love and as Creator, in so far as it is a fundamental revelation of the Divine Nature need not involve this tragic situation. Nor can the relationship between the two vyâhas of the Divine, the Supreme Transcendent All-Perfect and the Immanent incarnation of that self-same Being in the nexus of His creatures verily involve a sundering of the eternal unity between them so as to involve the tragic feeling of suffering. The archetype of suffering may indeed be Christ, but not all the incarnations of the Divine typify this. Nor can it be said that tragedy is the essence of History, though it does play an important part in the lives of men.

The value of the experience of God’s suffering for our sake is inestimable truly and may help the surrender of man to Him, but in the ultimate analysis the goal of man is something that is different, and that is the fullest attainment of the beatific status in God and for God. Delight is the aim and end, and it is this that man seeks in God, for God is delight. It would not be out of place to state that with the Ālvârs in South Indian Mysticism as also in the cult of the Pāncarâtra, the deity has been shewn to be descending into the scheme of things or history not indeed or only for a catastrophic revelation of Himself but also for a cathartic and evolutionary purpose, redeeming men by regenerating them in the life of the Divine, who is Himself the Transcendent, immanent, personal and historical Person, all rolled into one. The holy trinity is an eternal typical structure or integral Unity revealing the Transcendent Spirit-immanent self-Redeeming-Historical Personality. The expression of these three faces of the One Divine is possible and understandable only when God as Creator, Love and Spirit is understood and entered into through total surrender. Historically efficacy of the Divine may not always mean the immediate destruction of the forces of evil; it may be that this descent of the Divine Personality (as son) into the terrestrial scheme may foundationally

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involve an inner transformation of the lives and character of the people and only indirectly influence the outer order of things of social life and government; it may be true also that men whose eyes are glued to the outer and the external ordering of the things, do not and cannot perceive as if by a miracle the inner changes in their own natures by the miracle of descent of God; this may be a sign of the outer defeat of God immediately considered, but a triumph of the Godhead in the progress of history which is but the working out of the inner in terms of the outer order, of that which is beyond space and time in terms of space and time and personalities of men. This is precisely how we have to remember that significant nature of the Divine in His eternal triunity or quintiplicity or septicity.

Divine Evolutionism of Sri Aurobindo points out that the One Divine is not a Suffering God but a Perfect Personality integrally manifest on all planes of Being, historical and supra-historical; He is above all evolution and yet the entire evolution is a grand manifestation of His ever present love of the creation which is seeking its unity in Him.

This is His Delight in existence which rings its change in Being and in Non-Being and Becoming. The processes of becoming are the descents {o??} His ¹⁹²eternal manyness in supreme integral oneness or unity not only as individual souls but also as *avatār* who is the supraconscient Descent, aware supramentally of the integral oneness of Himself with all His transcendence and immanence and creatorship and indwellingness in all and the Goal of all creatures or the many. Thus it becomes possible to arrive at that supreme status on the part of the other souls who are not aware of their integral unity with Godhead, to perceive that in the life and activities of the *avatār*. The suffering of man or the pain in the many is neither the truth about the creation nor its meaning; spirit is not enthroned in matter by the deity so that one may understand how spirit suffers crucifixion in matter, but that one may understand how matter is a possible tenement of the Divine Himself – that is what the miracles of Christ and other great *avatārs* and seers and prophets of God have shown. It is this that is the truth of the spiritual evolution; not the suffering God nor the suffering man. Suffering is the sign, the external sign of the historical juncture as it is at present; and God's incarnation as Son or as *avatār* or Teacher is not merely or even primarily to reveal His condescending Grace and Love of man, but also to exalt and elevate and transform the human being from his lowly and suffering status and to which his consciousness constantly calls him back and society condemns him to the status of the free individual who does not submit to any outer power, arbitrary or otherwise, but only to the rediscovered Divine within. For by the light of this supreme indwelling Seer (*Ekarsi*) who is the indwelling truth of all creatures also, the illumined consciousness of man finds all the solace and integral unity with all creation. Man divinised by this

indwelling seer-consciousness, seer-will, and delight becomes verily a ocean of delight that nothing can disturb.

The finite God, the indefinite God, the suffering God or Neronic God are all postulations of the human mind which is baffled by the supreme mystery of the Multi-manifestational Integral Deity. Delight is the essence of the movement, and delight is the essence of the ultimate integral destiny. Man and God, the Many and the One, play with the terms of Love, and suffering is a term not the whole truth of this Love.

— *K.C. Varadachari.*

Wherefore he selected or made such a material when he had all infinite possibility to choose from? Because of his divine Idea which saw before it not only beauty and sweetness and purity, but also force and will and greatness. Despise not force, nor hate it for the ugliness of some of its faces, nor think that love only is God. All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan. But the greatest force is born out of the greatest difficulty.

— (*Thoughts and Glimpses—Sri Aurobindo*)

INDIA IS ONE

III

The¹⁹³ centres of learning in ancient India had also its contribution in the making of the one cultural life of the people. The hermitages of well-known sages are the earliest universities of India where students from far and near used to flock for instruction in various subjects. The Mahabharata abounds with descriptions of these hermitages in the Naimisha forest of which the presiding personality was Saunaka who was honoured with the title of *kulapati*, sometimes defined as the preceptor of ten thousand disciples. There were conferences convened by great kings where representative thinkers were invited to meet and exchange their views. During sessions of sacrifices the courts and palaces of kings were also the scenes of congregations of learned men who would enter into deliberations over the deepest problems of philosophy in which women also took part. In the age of Buddhism, monasteries were the strongholds and distributing centres of Buddhist culture, which enabled it to maintain its hold upon the country and helped to spread it evently among the different parts thereof. We may mention the four famous special Buddhist Convocations and many other regular and ordinary ones where religious and philosophical problems were discussed and important decisions taken. In his travels from the north-west across the Punjab along the Jumna-Ganges valley down to Tamruk in Bengal Fa-Hien in the fifth century noticed almost numberless monasteries full of monks belonging to either of the great Paths of Buddhism. There were no rigid rules for admission to many of

these monasteries which accommodated monks of different schools. When Hiuen Tsang visited India in the seventh century there were about five thousand monasteries with a population of more than two hundred thousand monks. The well-known universities of this period, developed out of these monasteries, were Taxila, Nalanda, Odantapuri and Vikramsila.

The most notable of these centres of learning in the North was the international University of Nalanda in Magadha, the largest of its kind in the contemporary world in which scholars of different castes, creeds and races hailing not only from the farthest ends of India but also from countries far beyond her geographical boundaries, from China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Bokhara, gathered for carrying on advanced studies in the various branches of knowledge as embodied in the culture, both Brahminical and Buddhistic. Of the 10,000 residents in the University 8,500 were *alumni*, and 1,510 were faculty members. Nalanda was famous for the freedom it sought to encourage in education, for the wide catholicity of its method, for the liberal character of its curriculum. Through its schools of discussion, and the debating and conference methods according to the old Indian tradition it surely helped to unite its varied elements into a superb intellectual fellowship in which the contribution of the wide variety of subjects taught was no less remarkable.¹⁹⁴ The curriculum included all the systems of thought, then prevalent in the country, in spite of the fact that Nalanda was a centre of Mahayanist studies. The Vedas were there as also the arts and sciences of the Hindus. The various schools of Buddhism were represented by their reputed exponents and earnest learners. People belonging to almost all the sects and creeds of the times shared a common cultural life in Nalanda which may be characterised as having upheld the high ideal of a cosmopolitan university in the true sense of the term. No wonder that it should foster a spirit of fellowship among the vast number of its members.

While in the North cultural fellowship grew and developed almost invariably in the Buddhist monasteries, in the South it thrived mostly in the temples, those massive structures of wonderful architecture, surrounded by buildings in big compounds. In fact, each such temple in South India was like a small university town which was the centre of the cultural and religious life of the locality. These temple-colleges maintained free hostels and hospitals and attracted students from different parts of India. Learned Brahmins, in charge of temple worship were connected with the colleges as their professors. Inscriptions furnish authentic information about these centres of learning, many of which flourished during the ninth and the tenth centuries of the present era. A Rastrakuta minister founded the famous residential college at Salotgi in Bijapur, which had twenty seven boarding-houses. The Sanskrit College at Ennayiram in the South Arcot district was well-known as a recognised seat of Vedic studies. The rolls of its *alumni* were strengthened not inconsiderably by learners from the North. The districts

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of Tanjore, Chingleput, Chitaldrug, Shikarpur and Guntur, had in those glorious days a number of educational institutions where the study of philosophy and grammar, of arts and sciences, were pursued by scholars from all parts of India. Thus the Peninsular plateau and the Gangetic plain were linked up by their culture-centres which provided opportunities for the varied expressions of the Indian mind to build up an intellectual brotherhood that for centuries was an unifying force in the cultural life of the people. Indeed, in the world of learning the whole country was one.

The various forms of Indian art are united by their common quality of some spiritual motivation which characterises them more than anything else. In the delicacy of line in painting, in the suggestiveness of plastic figuration or in the majestic grandeur of sacred architecture, the one thing that strikes is a tendency to fulfil some spiritual purpose. In style also there are many points that are identical in works of art produced in places at long distances from one another. In painting, whether in Bagh, Sittannaval in the South or Sigiriya in Ceylon, the dominating style is that of the Ajanta masterpieces. The tradition continued, however indistinctly, in the Rajput and Pahari miniatures; and not a little has it been a source of inspiration to the neo-Bengal School in modern times. In sculpture the Dhyani Buddha of the North cannot be distinguished from its southern figuration and it does not differ much even from its Javanese adaptation. There are many characteristics common to the Saranath and the Mathura Schools of Sculpture and their widespread influence is discernible, that of the former in the work of¹⁹⁵ plastic art in Bengal, that of the latter in the sculpture of as far away as Sind. The art of ancient India had its heyday during the Buddhist age when the Buddhist monks made no distinction in their choice of subjects. It was not unoften that they painted and sculptured Hindu themes. And instances are not rare of Hindu artists working on Buddhist subjects.

A peculiar tendency of the builders of ancient India was to make free use of any style or technique, if it would enhance the beauty of their work. Thus the sacred architecture of India owed very little of its origin and development to a particular creed or cult. No definite idea could therefore be conveyed by designating any type of Indian architecture as specifically Buddhistic, Jainic or Brahminical. The Vedic sacrificial altars and the *mandapam* (porch) are common to temples in the North and the South. The Buddhist *stupas* (mounds) were adapted from the archaic Vedic mounds. The north Indian *nagara*-shrines of Siva and Vishnu influenced enormously the Jainic temples at Khajuraho. The forms of Chalukya or the later Hayasala order were indiscriminately used for Hindu or Jainic shrines. Many Brahminical shrines adopted the barrel-shaped Vesara temples of early Buddhistic uses. The monolithic temples at Mahabalipuram are lineal descendants of the earlier Buddhist Viharas. Many features of the shikhara-temples of the North are unmistakable in the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhi-Gaya. If

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“architecture is the matrix of civilisation” the building art of India was more so, since it not only nurtured other forms of art but has also stood through the ages as the principal visible and material record of the cultural evolution of the race, as the symbol of the unity of its godward aspirations.

* * * *

The attempt so far has been to make a brief survey of the cultural unity of India in the early days of her history, which was the result not always of any conscious effort but largely of the forces that were released by the creative endeavours of the people, their inborn spirituality having inspired them all through. It may now be seen what India was able to achieve towards the political unification of the country. As in their religious and social thinking so also in their political idealism the ancient Indians have always showed a tendency to value freedom above everything and to so build the political structure that it may provide every member in it with ample freedom of self-expression. The governing idea was not to strengthen the frame-work by imposing rules from outside as was done in periods of decline but to allow every man to grow into the fulness of his creative possibilities by which only is a country's culture enriched. It was this outlook of the Indians that among others enabled them to build their great civilisation. But individual freedom was not their only aim. The freedom of the community too was deemed equally necessary for the social progress of the people. To the Indians, like the individual the collectivity also is a manifestation of the Divine. Their scriptures therefore enjoin upon the householder certain duties that he must discharge for the well-being of the community. In their idea of the state they wanted the voice of the people to dominate in all its administrative affairs. That is why a central authority could not fully develop in ancient India. When the king came into the scene he did¹⁹⁶ so more as a protector and servant of the people than as an autocratic ruler.

The life of peace and prosperity, led by the Indus Valley India, (Indians) has been already referred to. It is not yet known if they had developed any kind of political organisation. But that they had a form of corporate life is proved by the excavations which show the high order of civic facilities enjoyed by them. The earliest corporate institution of the Indians was the *samiti* or assembly, mentioned in the Rig Veda, which was constituted by representatives from a group of villages under its jurisdiction. Its function was to conduct every work of administration, social, political and religious. This idea of *samiti* is the seed of all the democratic institutions evolved in India in the past. It did not grow into an unwieldy structure. Its smallness was its sustaining virtue that kept up its vitality throughout the ages in spite of the various disrupting forces that swayed over India. The village assemblies to-day, the *Panchayats* as they are called in

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popular parlance, have descended from their proto-types in ancient India. With the expansion of Aryan civilisation there arose the idea of territory, *janapada*, which gradually developed into a territorial state, *janapadarāiyya*, and then a great territorial state, *mahājanapadarājya*, with a king more secure in his position than before. These states were most of them of a republican character. But all the time the autonomous forms of local bodies in the villages continued. Social life in the Vedic times was one of happiness and all-round prosperity. It was the splendid youth of humanity in India to whom the vision came of the divinity of man and of the essential unity of all existence. It is not difficult to visualise from the stirrings of a new intellectual life in the age of the Upanishads that a happy and contented but more organised social life was there to stimulate those cultural activities of which the Upanishads give vivid pictures. Ideal kings like Janaka were the protectors of the people.

The epics testify to the existence of many prosperous kingdoms where abundant wealth and continued happiness combined to produce a condition in society that was, as they call it, "the envy of the gods." The essential historical significance of the Ramayana was the expansion of the Indo-Aryan culture in the south that was effected by a series of cultural and military campaigns, which is perhaps the second attempt, the first being by Bharata, to extend Aryan supremacy and include within it the non-Aryans after Aryanising them. The sense of territorial unity under the impact of a single culture which began to grow as a result of the campaigns of the king Bharata is found to be more developed in the Ramayana. But it had its yet further flowering in the Mahabharata which reflects the evolution of empire, the first of its kind in India, out of a host of petty states fighting for supremacy with one another. Problems of social and political unity are tackled in this epic with consummate mastery. The fusion of clans and tribes, not wholly Aryan into the social structure of the Hindus is another important event that took place in this period, when the affirmation of the ideals of Dharma, the religious, ethical, social, political, juristic and customary law, organically governing the life of the people served as an effective check on any arbitrary abuse of sovereign power by the king. Any¹⁹⁷ violation of Dharma by the king was severely dealt with. Not to speak of deposition, Manu prescribes even death for the king who would infringe the Law. Thus Dharma asserted as greater than the sovereign whose sole duty it was to administer the Law faithfully and to look to the strict observance of its every injunction both in the individual and the community life of the people. In this way a common Dharma, a common culture administered by a benevolent king and followed by a dutiful people helped to build up a social and political integrity which gave to the state all its power and vitality.

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But the state did not expand beyond a limit; neither was there any organised attempt to co-operate with others towards the formation of a confederacy or any such league. Though the ideal of an all-India empire, *chaturanta-rājya*, and a feeling to regard all Aryans or Indians as one people was always there, and a struggle for empire incessant, yet a kind of regional patriotism remained strong and active. A territorial synthesis, broadbased on a common culture, was all that could and did exist under the conditions prevailing in the period, but a vast empire ruled by a single power or a league of states was far from a reality. Each state valued its own independence as a sacred thing and would resent any interference with it from outside, thereby allowing no neighbouring state to grow into a big power to be able to assert its suzerainty and form a strong central government. An excessive love of freedom made these states selfish and blind to the wider interests of the whole country, with the result that by their internal dissensions and disunity they exposed the country to foreign aggression and were not able to take a concerted stand against it. There were of course other reasons why India then was not able to build political unity in the strict sense of the term. In the beginning of the sixth century B.C. we find that northern India was divided into sixteen independent kingdoms. There were also a number of republics and tribal territories. But no strong power was there to combine them, at least against any invasion from outside. Hence, the way was prepared for the Persian conquest, and then the campaigns of Alexander.

– *Sisirkumar Mitra.*

Until man in his heart is ready, a profound change in the world conditions cannot come; or it can only be brought about by force, physical force or else force of circumstances, and that leaves all the real work to be done. A frame may have then been made but the soul will still have to grow into that mechanical body.

– (*Ideal of Human Unity – Sri Aurobindo*)

AUROBINDONIAN¹⁹⁸ VIEWPOINTS

(A LETTER)

I

You say that it is not in the mind alone that endless contradiction can happen. I concur with you. It is not only philosophers who keep disagreeing. Yogis also take up positions poles apart from one another on the basis of their actual spiritual experiences. This is possible because reality can be spiritually experienced, no less than intellectually reconstructed, in various aspects. But we are naturally led to inquire what should be considered the ultimate truth of which so many aspects are possible. You suggest that

to ascertain that truth we require a new faculty which you call “insight” – a faculty “which, if its possession is gained, will function in precisely the same manner in all persons.” And you add the important remark: “Such a faculty was, I believe, used by sages like Krishna and Buddha.” Two implications I read in your belief. One is indirect – namely, that reality has been “insighted” in past ages and that all we can do is to repeat their performance: the new faculty is in fact old and is new only for those who have not developed it. The other and direct implication is that Sri Krishna and Buddha had the same insight into reality. I hope you will excuse me if to neither implication I can give a fervent Yea. I don’t think that except on very general grounds we can speak of Buddha’s insight and Sri Krishna’s as the same. Immediately we probe into the matter we come upon a big difference. And the difference serves to indicate the line of progress which, despite my acknowledging the grandeur of past spirituality, I consider to be beckoning us beyond everything the past has grandly achieved.

Buddha made an ultimate dichotomy between the world and reality. The world he regarded as an illusion to be discarded at last for a formless and featureless and impersonal beatific a-cosmism which he named Nirvana. Before the final dropping of the world there goes on a strange concomitance of reality and illusion, Nirvana and embodied nature. During that prelude Nirvana throws a luminous quiescence on our mind, vitality and body. Rather, since it is itself actionless, we should say our mind, vitality and body reflect the luminous quiescence of Nirvana. This quiescence means a lot of wonderful change in our nature – a change dynamic as well as static since our nature or Prakriti is a dynamism and unavoidably puts whatever light it catches to active uses. But the change due to Nirvana is not all that is involved in the Gita nor is Nirvana there the *summum bonum*. Though Sri Krishna in the Gita speaks of Nirvana – Brahma- Nirvana he terms it to distinguish it from the utterly negative spiritual shade given it by Buddha – it is for him one aspect of Brahman, an aspect we cannot do without, yet not all-fulfilling Brahman is Purushottama, the Transcendental Being who is not limited by His own static eternity and who dynamically manifests our universe and acts as its Lord. And Purushottama manifests¹⁹⁹ our universe through His Para-Prakriti or Super-Nature. Super-Nature is marked out from Nature here which is a derivation or veiled play of it: it is that which is divine and has the power of divinising all that is below. Its dynamism is the perfect original of the lower one which is the sole dynamism Buddha deals with and Nirvana illuminates. Towards the Supreme Being who is both impersonal and personal and towards His divinising Super-Nature we with our instruments of mind, vitality and body have to move by the Krishnaesque insight: in our experience in the cosmos we have to manifest them. The ideal of divinising the person in us and our embodied existence is involved in Sri Krishna’s pronouncements as it certainly is not in Buddha’s, for it is clear that in

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Nirvana there can be no divine counterpart of the varied complexity that is active in Nature.

In the works of Sri Aurobindo the ideal is brought out in its clearest fullness. His Yoga is founded on his experience of a Consciousness which over and above combining all that Yogis in the past have known, holds the secret of satisfying and fulfilling on earth our whole embodied existence. Such a Consciousness seems to me, because of its integral character, the ultimate Reality—and “insight”, therefore, is in my opinion developable with utter completeness only through the Aurobindonian Yoga. The conditions mentioned by you for developing it are very good indeed, but, as formulated by you, are they not liable to appear somewhat onesided, since they are, in your words, “a ruthless self-pruning?” “Only by this ruthless self-pruning,” you write, “can we respond utterly impersonally to reality and not falsify it.” One may suggest that self-pruning is necessary and impersonality is necessary, yet there is the fact of a diverse personality in us. By self-pruning and impersonality we rise above personality’s defects, but, if carried to an exclusive extreme, they might throw personality entirely into the shade and move finally to submerge it in some Beyond which takes us for good out of the manifested universe. Personality is an important fact of our existence and for manifestation it is indispensable. It wants fulfilment in the Divine and not just to be transcended until it can be annulled. Reality must answer to its impassioned many-toned appeal. So, except at the risk of one-sidedness, “insight” cannot be developed by paying scarce heed to the essence of personality and to personality’s complex richness. We must not grow bare in growing pure. I don’t think you actually mean “bareness” by your “purity”. Manifestation to the utmost is not outside your path. Yet, I may say, your utmost does not reach far enough because you believe we can do nothing save ring appropriate changes of application on the spiritual possibilities revealed in the past. I do not wish to sound cocky. I have a deep reverence for the rishis and masters and prophets whose souls shine from the past like everlasting torches along our troubled ways and I see that we cannot throw aside the core of their realisations. But I can’t help seeing too that the evolution Sri Aurobindo is out to accomplish has no exact precedent.

Taking up the synthesis Sri Krishna made of the Yogas of Knowledge, Works and Devotion, he goes forward to a spiritual integrality exceeding even that splendid synthesis. He says that liberation is not enough; nor is it enough²⁰⁰ to let our embodied nature be influenced by the light of the Divine, not even the dynamic light that was displayed by the synthesis à la Sri Krishna. If everything came originally from the Divine, there must be in the Divine the archetypal truth of everything, a truth not lying idle in the Transcendental but ever pressing for manifestation. And the manifestation of it would be a divine person with a divinised mind, vitality and body. So Sri

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Aurobindo speaks of a descent into us of what he designates Gnosis or Supermind as well as of an ascent to it. The descent will mean an embodied existence of a divine order in every respect and no longer of an order that is flawed by the human and the mortal. Yes, in every respect there must be Godhead and immortality: even our physical stuff must be entirely transformed! A new apocalypse is here beyond the visions of the past—divinisation has, in Sri Aurobindo's vocabulary, a novel significance*—and yet we feel that the unprecedented is most logical. Anything short of the Aurobindonian divinising leaves Nature without sufficient justification of her being: as an emanation of the Divine she must be capable of divinisation in every inch of her when her whole principle is a progressive evolving. Because she is capable we have the thirst for perfection. The thirst has been recognised since the dawn of history, but up to now the integral logic of it has not been grasped. Until it is grasped we shall never be satisfied: always a clash will take place in our psychology and under various guises we shall have "the refusal of the ascetic" and "the denial of the materialist." No compromise will be lasting: every apparent equilibrium will collapse. For, there is an imperative in man's constitution driving him towards the spiritual integrality insisted on by Sri Aurobindo. Without our openly feeling that imperative, there will never be a common "insight" for all persons. How can we reach in the sphere of spiritual experience a common insight unless we envisage with unblurred eyes our total constitution's bedrock need? The bedrock need shows itself in our thirst for perfection—and the common origin, in God, of everything denotes the integral range of the need and the integral range of its satisfaction. You say you believe with me that the thirst for perfection is a pointer to its eventual slaking in the Spirit. But you erect a certain barrier: "there is," you write, "no necessary implication that this will be attained whilst we are here in the flesh and on a level of existence where everything is doomed, as Buddha points out, to decay and death. It is more likely to be done on a higher level where such limitations could not exist." If you attend closely to the words "thirst for perfection" you will seize Sri Aurobindo's view. Can our thirst be for perfection if the cry of the physical being is left without an answer from God? Our physical being has its innate demand for joy, for luminous effectivity, for healthy perpetuation. These demands are summed up in the agelong quest for the *elixit vitae*. Can you ignore the intensity of such a quest?

The misery of an imperfectly constituted body open to attack on every side and gravitating towards dissolution is not²⁰¹ due simply to our attachment to material things: it is due also to our innate sense of a great lack—a lack of what our body is hungering after. We try and try to appease its hunger. Blind alleys meet us everywhere

* The novelty, of course, is not restricted to body transforming. The latter is a sign of the utter integrality of the divinising process and the integrality extends also a transforming to mind and vitality beyond anything done before.

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because we do not turn to “the secret path” of mysticism for the body’s fulfilment. Our failure leaves us frustrated: we may detach our attention from the failure but deep in our subconscious there lurks a brooding dangerous sadness packed with resistance to spirituality if spirituality finds no means to justify earth in terms of earth itself. Not to see in bodily life the thirst for perfection is to close our eyes to a mighty fact. To seek its appeasement outside the Divine is to keep groping for ever. To hold that it will never be slaked in the Divine is to give up aiming at integral realisation of Him, for that realisation must consist in His descent in all the levels of our nature as well as in our ascent to Him in the Gnosis. If we admit that matter has come originally from God and if we admit that matter cries out for fulfilment, there can be no getting away from the conclusion that our body can be divinised and should be divinised. Perfection would not be perfect without fulfilment on our level of flesh no less than on every other level.

By acquiescing in Buddha’s doctrine of the doom of the body we erroneously take a present condition as an everlasting one. It is quite obvious that the body as at present inhabited by us decays and dies. But Sri Aurobindo discerns no inevitability of decay and death. What is the doom Buddha speaks of? Who or what has fixed the doom? The doom, to Buddha, is consequent on the body’s being compounded of parts. The compounded must fall asunder: that is his logic. It is, however, conceivable that a force counteracting the tendency of a compound to break up can hold together the parts indefinitely. It is all an affair of balance. The mere compounding need bring no decomposition and disintegration. So the real cause must lie deeper. The real cause is that no force in Nature is able to maintain the body for good, much less to keep it up at a pitch of perfect health. Must we accept this inability in Nature as final? We must if our attitude is, like Buddha’s, illusionist. Buddha’s logic is binding only if our attitude argues no support or archetype of the body in the Spirit. Give up illusionism and the logic crumbles down. Declare that it is the Spirit that has become all things and immediately we unchain ourselves from Buddha’s dictum. For then there must be, unknown to us, a connection between the incorruptible substance of Spirit and matter’s corruptible substance. Not only this, but, as the Spirit must be one-yet-multiple to manifest a multiple universe, there is a spiritual formation connected with the material formation that is our body. A spiritual body, whose substance and form are in absolute tune with the light and perpetuity that are proper to the Spirit, is all the time behind the unstable aggregate of elements in which we live, and waits to manifest itself in it. Indian Yogas have often spoken of a casual body – *kârana sharira* – governing the gross and the subtle ones from its occult station above in the Spirit’s ether. No complete descent, emergence and organisation of the casual in both the gross and the subtle were taught or methodised. Sri Aurobindo is the first to proclaim the necessity and practicableness of making the *kârana sharira* totally²⁰² active in the open. When the substance, form, law and force of that body are brought into play within our present

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material being, there is no reason why our components, freed from their imperfections, should not perpetually hold together in unmarred health. We are mortal simply because we have not discovered yet how to make our body share in the Spirit's perfect and immortal consciousness. There is no radical gulf between that consciousness and our body, there is only an apparent and pragmatic gulf.

Everything depends on what power of being is in charge. The vital or mental power is unable to bring about a divinisation. Buddha's spirituality, though gigantic in itself, also misses the superb secret. Buddha looked for liberation from the cycle of births, not for divinisation of all that birth involves. The Vedic attempt to establish the Gods in our nature-parts, the Vaishnava attempt to incarnate the personal deity through the love-surge of the central person in us, the soul or psyche round which our personal nature is organised, and the Tantric attempt to render the Shakti, the Mother-power, of the Supreme effective in all our chakras come near to it. There has, however, been a general falling short both in idea and practice because the particular dynamis of the Divine which Sri Aurobindo names Supermind or Gnosis was never completely possessed – or, if possessed, it was mostly in the tranced consciousness and seldom in the wide-awake one. In Sri Krishna the wide-awake possession seems to have been there, but it was not directly operative: the directly operative dynamis was a secondary power of the Supermind – the Overmind. The Overmind is a global and not an integral truth-consciousness: there is in it a well-rounded harmony, on the whole, of the one-yet-multiple Spirit but in detail a penchant for multiplicity and hence for division, while in the Supermind a precise all-balancing and hence all-fulfilling harmony subsists both on the whole and in detail. Under the Overmind's rule we can grow divinised on earth to a considerable extent without being able to preserve ourselves from that outermost dividing-up which is the body's death. Under the sway of the Supermind there can be entire divinisation and no compulsive dragging away from it: we are free to cast aside what we have done, we are not bound to it but we are also able to manifest perfection and preserve it here and now. This capacity and that freedom are the goal of earth: they are the Supermind's prerogatives which Sri Aurobindo wants exercised. Sri Krishna in the Gita heads towards them without overtly disclosing them: while the Supermind is his background the Overmind is his forefront. If his forefront had been supramental he would have done what Sri Aurobindo is doing today.

But the reason why, where dynamic operation was concerned, the Supermind, despite being Sri Krishna's conscious poise, stayed in the background is not just some individual defect in Sri Krishna. Buddha's a-cosmic extremism is also not traceable to merely a *lacuna* in him. There are universal factors no less than individual: the stage of world-evolution, the *Zeitgeist* and the urgent need of the hour combine to colour the spirituality of leaders like Buddha and Sri Krishna. To deem them altogether myopic and incapable is a mistake, as it is also a mistake to deem them the *ne plus ultra* and

forget new conditions and²⁰³ the new spirituality those conditions must demand. Sri Krishna used the Overmind dynamis and could not help doing so because the time was not ripe for the work of the Gnosis, especially on the body. Many ups and downs, many divergent zig-zags had to occur before the time could ripen for the Aurobindonian Yoga. It appears that, among several factors, an age of Science had to emerge for such a work to be taken in hand. Nothing save a stress on the physical as blindly strong as at the beginning was Science's could help the psychological moment of an unusual task like laying the Spirit's touch on its old enemy and despised impediment, the body, for integral divinisation. Then there is the subconscious effect of Science's brilliant endeavour to see in the body the cause, function and aim of everything that we are: by its advances towards proving all spiritual states to be material it also paved the way for a vision of matter as no utterly incommensurate contrary of spiritual states. Further, the development of the radio has in a very impressive manner given the human mind a sense of effective wideness and of practical simultaneity of presence everywhere through a sort of physical translation of the Spirit's consciousness. As impressive in diminishing the incubus of unconquerable inertia and grossness associated with matter in opposition to Spirit is the dissolving of matter into pure energy by the break-up of the atom into electrons. Lastly, we have the admission that so far as the science of physics is concerned we do not require to know the nature of the entities we discuss but only their mathematical structure, the way they affect our measuring instruments; physics, indeed, reflects the fluctuations of world-qualities but our exact knowledge is of their "pointer-readings", not of the qualities and as a result it leaves us open-minded as to what reality is. Developing out of this open-mindedness there are the celebrated Jeans-Eddington trends: what began as a tremendous stress on the physical has, in an important domain of Science, ended in a doubt in the mind of one scientific school whether the physical universe is its own explanation. The doubt does not remove the stress on the physical which is now an inalienable portion of whatever life-programme we may adopt, but it has robbed of trenchant finality the line once drawn between the actual spatio-temporal phenomena and the hypothetical mystery of God. In addition, it has suggested a change in our idea of Nature's laws. Both in Jeans and Eddington you will observe the disposition to consider the nineteenth century's "laws of iron" statistical and nothing more. So the obsession about decay and death is weakened and Buddha's "doom" for the body is found likely to be a statistical law, a generalisation from a large number of past and present cases rather than an absolute inevitability. Thus Science has by many routes co-operated obliquely or straightforwardly with Sri Aurobindo's mission. Apart from the scientific *milieu* the integral Yoga would be an anachronism. Apart from the integral Yoga the scientific *milieu* would lose its deepest *rationale*.

Living in that *milieu* and wanting to do Yoga, a man is bound to be restless and discontented until he embraces Sri Aurobindo's integrality.

– *K.D. Sethna.*

THE²⁰⁴ TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

I

The world is the infinite self-formation of a Spiritual Reality on different levels of itself, covering over covering and sheath within sheath, within and within, over and over. It is not a static formation; it is an infinitely flowing movement all through, from within outward and without inward. The originating Reality resides within the ultimate ether in the inmost centre of its self-formations, as in a cave of secrecy. Knowing it, we attain to the Highest. Knowing it, we know all there is to know. Knowing it, we reach the fulfilment of all desires “along with Brahman” – that is, we share, so to say, in the perfect fulfilment of all desires which dwells in the truth-aware, blissful being of the Supreme.

For desires are the translation in the terms of Life of the great movement of the Spirit, one in its impulsion outward into expression and in its returning impulsion towards its source. The Chandogya¹ speaks of desires as belonging to truth, but as being covered up by untruth, – the untruth of a part which loses the vision of the whole. It is this loss and limitation of vision, this untruth, that vitiates the aim and direction and working of desire and splits it up into man's good and evil, right and wrong. Man, recovering his unity with the one Vast, the Supreme, the Brahman, reaches the fulfilment that is in Him of all desire. Then is he not troubled by the thought, “Why did I not do this right, why did I fall into that wrong?” For he now knows the nature of good and evil and has transcended them both and his desire has become the movement of truth. And because for him the distinction between them is abrogated, it is not an empty or unreal one or one that belongs to a dream or illusory existence. The distinction based on truth in its application to a particular region of existence and when it is passed beyond the distinction vanishes.

This self-formation of Brahman, on Creation, is founded in joy and its culmination is in joy. But how is it that suffering is the badge of life? Partly because life is desire-stricken, *kāma hata*, that is, it is stricken by the accretion of the untruth on desire; and partly because life has to put on a material vesture in a world founded on Matter. It is these special conditions of a particular mode of existence that bring in infelicity and suffering, but otherwise existence is joy For pleasure and pain do not

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¹ *Ta ime satyāḥ kāmā anṛtāpidhānāḥ, 8-3-1.*

touch him who remains free from the body – *aśarīram vāva santam na priyā priye sprśataḥ*²⁰⁵, as the Chandogya declares. It is material existence that as it diffracts truth into various shades of good and evil, also breaks up joy into various shades of pleasure and pain. And all this suffering's well-nigh infinitude in material existence is borne and sustained and triumphed over by just an infinitesimal measure of that joy which is the deep foundation of existence, *etasya eva ānandasya anyāni bhutāni mātrām upajīvanti* (Br²⁰⁶. Up. 4-3-32) And²⁰⁷ with a quiet sublimity of expression the Taittiriya says: Verily, who should move at all, who should breathe at all, if this vast space itself be not joy – *ko hyevānyāt kaḥ prānyāt yad eṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt*.

The seeker who reaches the goal of his world journey reaches this joy, and goes beyond law and fear. He enters and irradiates with this bliss every sheath of his being even to the outermost. To him comes the freedom of the Universe. And he ranges through all realms of existence taking whatever food of enjoyment he may like and whatever form or body he may choose, – an unshackled rapture breaking forth into this paen of victory and triumph: "O ye! I am both the Food and the Eater. I am the maker of the harmonies of Knowledge. I am the first-born of Truth, and prior to the gods am I. I am the navel of immortality. I front and master all existence, like light the world of Heaven!"

This is how the Taittiriya Upanishad presents the Ancient Knowledge, the Knowledge handed down by the Rishis of a previous age, the Knowledge as particularly taught by *Varuṇa* to *Bhr̥gu*. But how is one to enter into this Knowledge?

II

The Upanishad represents the human being as a five-fold person, one inside another. The outer is the material bodily person, the physical being. It is called the *annamaya puruṣa*. The outer person is constituted of food, that is. Matter, for life feeds on matter and is sustained by it. Matter is the basic creative principle of our world-existence. They who commune with Food, that is, Matter, as Brahman they come by all Food, says the Upanishad; that is, they come to know Matter fully and entirely and have access to the riches of sustaining and renovating power locked up in the physical

²⁰⁵ In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

²⁰⁶ In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

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body or the food-sheath, the *annamaya koṣa*. For food is the eldest of things and is rightly called the all-healer, and all living beings are constituted out of it and grow by it.

Permeating and filling the physical being, enselving it, presiding over it as soul over body, is there within it the vital being, the *prāṇamaya puruṣa*. And this self or being is figured by the Upanishad in the likeness of the physical body. The up-moving energy of life is its head; the pervasive energy of life is its right arm or wing; and the down-moving energy of life is its left arm or wing, while its main body is ether¹ and earth its rump or supporting bottom. After Matter, life is the next creative principle of our world existence. They who commune with Life as Brahman, reach the entire length of life, that is, the fulness of life, the whole extent and depth of its active functioning; for to them are opened up all its capacities that lie coiled up in it like a spring, its inherent supremacies over matter.

Permeating²⁰⁸ and filling this vital being, enselving it, presiding over it as soul over body, is there within it the mental being—the *manomaya puruṣa*. *Yajus*, the Veda of the holy rite is its head; *Rik*, the Veda of the illumining hymn is its right arm or wing; *Sāman*, the Veda of the divine melody is its left arm or wing; Commandment or Teaching is its main body; and the Secret Knowledge handed down by the Rishi Atharvan and the Angirases is its rump or support. Mind is the next creative principle of our world-existence and in reference to this principle occurs the following verse: “He who knows the joy of Brahman, from which fall back both speech and mind, getting no hold, him no more does fear visit.”¹

¹ Akasa. Sankara makes *ākāśa* mean the *samāna* which is situated in the *ākāśa*, and he retains the earth, taking it to mean its presiding deity, who holds firm the *apāna*. Sayana gets rid of the earth too by making it stand for the *udāna*, on the ground that we are concerned here with the vital being, who should be all made up of the motions of life, and thus completes the system of the five vital motions constitutive of the life principle. There are passages in the Upanishads in which the vital principle seems to be regarded as complete with the three divisions of *prāna*, *apāna* and *vyāna*. Taking this to be the case here, ether and earth may be taken to have been intended as entering into the composition of the life sheath in their subtle forms. There should be no difficulty on this score, seeing that mind itself is regarded as *annamaya*.

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THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

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¹ From the regular pattern followed in the text, we should expect here a verse of authority showing mind as a creative principle and then a statement of the results that would ensue from its realization as such. On the other hand we find here a verse showing the mind's constitutional incapacity to arrive at the joy of Brahman. The original passage here seems to have been lost and its place filled up by the verse of authority in the section on the *Anandamaya puruṣa* with just one slight verbal alteration, simply because the word *manas*

Permeating and filling this body, enselving it, presiding over it as soul over body, is there within it the knowledge-being – the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*. The faith of Truth is his head: Truth Creative is his right arm or wing; Truth actualised is his left arm or wing; union with the Spirit is his main body or self; and the world of the vast Truth is his rump or support. *Vijñāna* is the eldest of creative principles. It is *vijñāna* which effectuates the purifying worship, and works also it accomplishes. He who knows *vijñāna* as Brahman and does never fall away from the knowledge, he throws out all the sins in his body and obtains all desires completely.

Permeating and filling the *vijñānamaya being*, enselving it, presiding over it as soul over body, is there within it the joy-being or the *ānandamaya puruṣa*. Endearment is its head; gladness its right arm or wing; delight its left arm or wing; joy is its main body or self; and Brahman its rump on support. He who knows the joy of Brahman, from which both speech and thought turn back unable to reach, for him no more is there anything that can give rise to fear. For it is Brahman who has created all that is and entered into it. He is the sap of ecstasy, the sap that builds the worlds. Only by getting at this sap does man become a being of Joy. He finds fearless station invisible in the ineffable, abodeless Reality that transcends all self-hood. He sees there he who dwells in the human beings and he who dwells in the Sun – that is, the Truth which is the source, life and light of all existence, – both are one. His is the highest knowledge and the supreme realization, for *ānanda* is the supreme Brahman himself. With this realization he enters into sheath after sheath of his being and ranges through the worlds, singing the paen triumphal: “O Ye! I am both the Food and the Eater. I am the maker of the harmonies of knowledge; I am the first-born of Truth, and prior to the gods am I. I am the navel of immortality. I front and master all existence, like light the world of Heaven!”

III

We shall here just remark that this Upanishad of joy and spiritual victory casts not the lightest suspicion on the reality of the world. What is the spiritual victory of which it speaks? It is²⁰⁹ first a realisation of the truth of the creative principles of Matter, Life, Mind, *Vijñāna* and Ananda, then a realization of the one indwelling Person in all existence, and finally, with this realization a re-entering, as it were, into the different personal formations based on Matter, Life, Mind, *Vijñāna* and *Ānanda*. Then

occurs in it. Sankara however, makes an unconvincing effort to show that the verse is intended “in praise of mind”.

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THE TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD

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sounds forth the proclamation of complete victory – I have overcome the entire world – *akam viśvam bhuvanam abhyabhavam!* This is not just an exit from an unending cycle of births and deaths, not merely an escape from some perversion, illusion, wrong self-projection or evil dream, but a real fulfilment and victory, a triumphal re-entering into every part of the dark cave of our being with the luminous and blissful truth and a ranging forth over all realms of becoming in joyous freedom. The Upanishad shows existence as having a divine purpose and goal – something entirely different from that stupendous desperation which is Eternal Recurrence.

We shall now concern ourselves to examine a little more closely the Upanishad's description of the *manomaya puruṣa* and the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*; for between these two, evidently, it places the great Crossing from the Ignorance into the Knowledge. He who knows *vijñāna* as Brahman and gets himself firmly fixed in the knowledge, the Upanishad declares, casts away the sins in his body and reaches the entire fulfilment of all his desires – *vijñānam brahma ched veda, tasmāt chen na pramādyati, śarīre pāpmano hitvā sarvān kāmān samaśnute*. So, the crossing from sin into sinlessness, from desire, suffering and evil into fulfilment has been effected by the knower of *vijñāna*. Sinlessness and fulfilment the *manomaya puruṣa* has not, and it is for them that he seeks. In order to find what he seeks, according to the Upanishad therefore, he has to transform himself into the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*.

It represents the head and arms and the support of the *manomaya puruṣa* as constituted by the highest knowledge attained or attainable by the mind of man – the highest, of course, in the view of the Upanishad. The highest knowledge to which the human mind can attain is, obviously, the knowledge about the Reality of existence and the way of reaching it; this for the Upanishad is embodied or symbolized by the *Yajus*, the *Rik* and the *Sāman*, which are figured as the head and the two arms of the mental being. The secret knowledge of the truth whose discovery has been ascribed by Vedic Tradition to the Rishi *Atharvan* and the *Ṇgirases*, the Ancient Fathers of the Race, is represented as the foundation on which the structure of the mental being rests. But all this knowledge of the mental being is external to it, so to say; something based upon inference or belief or tradition or teaching. So the Upanishad calls the main body of the *manomaya puruṣa*, as distinguished from his limbs, *ādeśa*¹, that is, Commandment or Teaching. The why and ultimate cause of things is above the reach of the mind, for the world is *ūrdhvamūla*, it has its roots above. The why of right and wrong, of good and evil, mind cannot satisfactorily tackle; for its knowledge and guidance on these things it has to rely on a categorical imperative, either within man's own heart, or, when it is not sufficiently imperative, within the accumulated experience²¹⁰ of the human race. So, in

¹ Sankara makes *ādeśa* mean the ritual injunctions of the *Brāhmanas*.

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respect of fundamentals, both as regards knowledge and action, the human mind has to rely on “Teaching” or “Commandment.” *Adeśa*, therefore, forms the fundamental part of man’s mental life.

The *vijñānamaya puruṣa* is described as constituted of quite a different order of knowledge. *Śraddhā*, the implacable urge of the inmost truth of the being into expression, known or unknown, ever exerting its pressure; not to be deceived, not to be refused; no mental belief or matter of assent or dissent, but if belief, a belief of the very being itself; this *śraddhā* is what is called the head of the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*. *Ṛta*, the rhythm of the Spirit going forth into the ways of manifold being, the free creative Truth presiding over the manifestation and beckoning to the *śraddhā* in the depths of manifested being, the unerring working of the Divine Agencies, this is what is called *Ṛta* by the Rigvedic Rishis: this *Ṛta* is the right arm of the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*. And the support for this structure is *mahaḥ*¹—the Vast Truth, the world which is the “foundation above” of the three worlds, *Bhūh*, *Bhavaḥ* and *Suvaḥ* and which are called the three *vyāhṛtis* or the three great Utterances of the Spirit. These are the several limbs; but *yoga*, union with the Spirit, is the main body, the essential part of the *vijñānamaya Puruṣa*, in contrast to *ādeśa*, Commandment or Teaching, which has been said to be the main body of the *manomaya puruṣa*. Ever-present union with the Spirit is the essential characteristic of the *vijñānamaya Puruṣa*; it is his main self. It is through this union with the Spirit that for him is illumined the why of things, the why of right and wrong, the why of good and evil. Now he is gone beyond the *ādeśa*, which is the light on the path of the mental being. *Yoga* is his light; he knows through *yoga*, he acts through *yoga*.

Now, what should we understand by the term *vijñāna*? There is the difficulty that it is used with varying significance in the Upanishads, and the precise meaning of the term in any place can be fixed only by the content. We have in this place a sufficiently detailed description of *vijñāna* and the *vijñānamaya puruṣa* to be able fully to understand its import, though it would be hazardous to fix too precisely the connotation of the psychological terminology of the ancient mystics of a far-away age. First, we can see that *vijñāna* is regarded as a creative principle, like Matter, Life and Mind and not as a particular activity or working of the mind. Secondly, it is not the “Word” conveying the truth that forms the parts of its body, as is the case with the Mind. Truth itself, of difference grades or levels, goes to make up its body. So in the *vijñāna* knowing is becoming; it is experience, not report; it is a growth in the very

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¹ Mahah. In the earlier portion of the Upanishad *Mahāchamasya* is said to have announced it as the fourth *vyāhṛti*. Sankara says the word means *Mahattatva*. which is identified by him with *Hiranyagarbha*. But why stray into what is probably a different order of ideas when the Upanishad itself gives an explanation of the word?

nature of the being, not a growing store, as it were in one of its rooms, as is the mind's knowledge. Thirdly, he that is fixed is the knowledge that *vijñāna* is the first Creative Principle, *jyeṣṭham brahms*, casts away sin and suffering, *śanre pāpmano hitvā*, and reaches the utter fulfilment of all desires, *sarvān kāmās samaśnute*²¹¹. From this it is clear that *vijñāna* is the consciousness of that level of being where, freed from suffering and sin, it reaches fulfilment.

But Sankara makes *vijñāna* mean the determining *buddhi*. The *antaḥkaraṇa*, man's inner instrument of knowledge, is said to function in three ways—as mind, *buddhi* and *ahamkāra*. That which helps us to come to a definite conclusion or decision on the given content of a perception is called *adhyavasāya*, and this is made the distinguishing characteristic of *buddhi*. And the *vijñānamaya puruṣa* in the human being, according to Sankara, is he that proceeds on the basis of proved definite knowledge. But surely, mental *adhyavasāya* or *buddhi* cannot be “the eldest of creative principles which the Divine Agencies wait upon and serve”; and the *vijñānamaya puruṣa* who is described as constituted of truth-knowledge and as founded on *mahaḥ*, the fourth world of truth-being,—*Bhūḥ*, *Bhūvaḥ* and *Suvaḥ*, standing for the three worlds of Matter, Life and Mind respectively, where the truth of being is broken and distorted—cannot be the being that proceeds, as Sankara says, on definite knowledge ascertained to be true through proper logical ways of proof. If we follow Sankara, we are still in the province of the *antaḥkaraṇa*, and even when we reach the *ānandamaya puruṣa* we are still concerned with another working of the *antaḥkaraṇa*. And from the *antaḥkaraṇa* we have to take the great leap into the Ineffable,—the *adrśya*, *anātmya*, *anirukta*, *anilayana*, and in between there is nothing but void.

IV

From all this it is clear we cannot follow Sankara in his interpretation. The Upanishad speaks of the *vijñānamaya puruṣa* as the inner self of the *manomaya puruṣa* and of *vijñāna* as a creative principle superior to the mental. *Vijñāna* is knowledge which is quite different from the mental knowledge, it is the knowledge of the spiritual being in man. The Upanishads speak of the self in the human being as *vijñānamaya—ātmā vijñānamayaḥ*, and of the infinite Being as *vijñānaghana*. Obviously *vijñāna* is gnosis, the knowledge in the spiritual consciousness. But Sankara says that the self is called *vijñānamaya* because it is realized only in contact with the understanding of the mind—*buddhi-vijñāna*, and that *vijñānaghana* is Pure Awareness or Intelligence and is so called because there is nothing else but awareness or intelligence in it. And upon this

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misunderstanding of *vijñāna* and the wrong turn which it gave to philosophy hangs a tale of grave consequence to Indian life and spirituality. We shall, therefore, make no apology in quoting here a passage from Sri Aurobindo touching upon this important matter.

“.....But the *vijñāna* or gnosis is the very working of the infinite and divine nature; it is the divine knowledge one with the divine will in the delight of spontaneous and luminous self-fulfilment. By the gnosis, then, we change our human into a divine nature.

“What then is this gnosis and how can we describe it? There are in the ordinary philosophical notions of the term *vijñāna* two opposite errors which disfigure two opposite sides of the truth with regard to the gnosis. In one *vijñāna* is used as synonymous with the *buddhi* and the Indian term *buddhi* as synonymous with the reason or discerning intellect. The classifications which accept this significance, pass at once from²¹² a plane of pure intellect to a plane of pure spirit; they recognise no intermediate power, no diviner action of knowledge than the pure reason. In the other error it is supposed that *vijñāna* is the consciousness which gives us the knowledge of the Infinite free from all ideation or with ideation packed into one essence of thought, lost in the single and invariable idea of the one, the *chaitanyaghana* of the Upanishad. But the gnosis, the *vijñāna* is not only this concentrated consciousness of the infinite Being, it is also the infinite knowledge of the play of the Infinite; it contains all ideation in itself though it is not limited by ideation. This ideation, however, is not in its character intellectual ideation, not what we call the reason; for that is mental in its methods, mental in its basis, mental in its acquisitions, but the ideation of the gnosis is supramental in its methods, its basis, its yield of thought-light. There is a relation, even a sort of broken identity between the two forms of thought, one indeed proceeds from the other; but they act on different planes and reverse each other's process. Even the purest reason, the most luminous rational intellectuality is not the gnosis.”¹

What the Taittiriya teaches is the discovery by man, the mental being of the *vijñānamaya puruṣa* who is his self. And the means of casting out suffering and evil, *pāpām*, from his body is to establish himself in *vijñāna*, the consciousness of the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*. *Vijñāna* is a power not only for the purifying adoration which lifts the being to the ultimate goal, yajna, but it is also a power for works which help

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¹ Arya. Vol 4. Page 86.

forward the world, {*karmā??*} – – *vijñānam yajñam tanute, {karmā??} tanute'pi cha.* And evil touches him not who is fixed in *vijñāna*, for he lives acts in union with the Spirit – that is, in yoga.

And the entire teaching of Sri Aurobindo is hinged on the true conception of this Upanishadic *vijñāna* Man's fullest spiritual development is through *vijñāna*. It is not merely to reach the rippleless peace and joy of the Brahman-consciousness and then to wait till the body falls away for the final mergence. Man is called to a greater adventure. He is to bring down the power of *vijñāna* into his life here, and free it from evil and suffering. And to that end, he has to transform his nature from top to bottom – the very physical nature of the body must see and act with the light and power of *vijñāna*. – May I, O Lord of Light, become a vessel for immortality! May my body be envisioned! Rapturous-sweet be my tongue! May I with my ears hear the Vast! – *Amṛtasya deva dhārano bhūyāsam, śarīram me vicharsaṇam, jīhvā me madhumattamā, karṇābhyām bhūri viśruvam.*

– V. Chandrasekharam.

JEWELS²¹³ RECOVERED

– By A.B. Purani

I

There are three demands of the Yoga:

1. The will – not mere inclination or desire – for a greater truth.
2. Complete consecration to that truth.
3. Complete transformation by the working of the Higher Power.

* * * *

First samata, then complete quiet. Then working of the Shakti in the instruments: This is the basis.

* * * *

II

Two things really matter:

1. The Spirit above that is dynamic.
2. Life which is its expression in the actual field of consciousness – i.e. Mind, emotion, life etc.

* * * *

Mind, emotion, nerves, body etc. are only intermediate terms.

Mind is only a channel, so is heart. Body is only a mould.

* * * *

To go through this Yoga – two things are necessary:

1. Balance.
2. A strong hold on earth.

Balance means different parts of the being well adjusted, a certain steadiness and a quiet poise in the being.

* * * *

In the Integral Yoga:

1. Permanent change of consciousness is the one thing important.
2. Want of one-pointed concentration for the achievement of the goal is a great bar.
3. And so is also the tendency not to be harsh to oneself. Man generally wants self-satisfaction and self-justification.

* * * *

III

Even among things that come from above there are degrees and gradations and one has to find the true truth.

At one stage certain things appear to be the final truth. But when one goes higher, it appears only as partial.

There are ranges of the higher consciousness.

* * * *

The Universal is full of things, true and false. One must distinguish between the true and the false.

It is not safe to open to the Universal without discrimination.

All things—good and bad, Asuric, Paishachic even can come into the Sadhaka through indiscriminate opening.

* * * *

There are Yogis who take delight in Universal manifestation feeling themselves free-Mukta. But that is not spiritual perfection. The Universal is unmoral and so those who go into it try to behave indifferently. But they do not get transformation. Those people who want to run away into the Infinite not satisfied with the Universal do not care for the manifestation.

* * * *

IV²¹⁴

SAT: is existence, — the essence of pure Being, infinite, and undivided.

CHIT-TAPAS: is pure energy of consciousness, free in its rest or action, sovereign in its will.

ANANDA: is the bliss of pure Existence, of pure consciousness.

VIJNANA: the Supramental is the Causal Idea which by secretly guiding and supporting the confused activities of mind, life and body ensures and compels the right arrangement of the Universe.

BUDDHI: is the lower, divided intelligence.

MANAS: is the sense mind: The coordinating perceptive faculty which presides over sensations—nervous responses of our senses.

CHITTA: is the seat of emotions.

PRANA: is the conscious life-force,— the hampered dynamic energy which is concerned with creation, with power, and conquest, action and expansion—with satisfaction of desire.

ANNAM: is the divisible being which founds itself on the constant changeableness of physical substance.

* * * *

V

What you generally know as yourself is only the surface being and its superficial workings: what a man thinks of as “himself” is only a movement in nature—a movement in universal mind, in universal life and universal matter.

What you have to do is to separate, that is, detach yourself from the movements of nature.

* * * *

VI

To be free from the ego:— what does it mean?

In ordinary sense anything done for oneself is egoistic. That which is not done for the self is regarded as un-egoistic.

But that is not the sense in the Yoga. One can do all unselfish actions and yet be full of egoism. Egolessness means first desirelessness. One should therefore establish within a condition in which bad as well as good desires are absent.

* * * *

1. What do we want to achieve in this Yoga?

We want to bring down the Truth, the Divine Himself into the integral human being—no part of him left out.

2. Who can achieve this goal?

It is Higher Power that can achieve the goal; it is the Divine Mother coming down into the human being that can fulfil the Yoga.

3. Then, what has the sadhaka got to do?

To open himself to her.

4. Why does not the Divine Shakti work in all openly and directly?

Because at present man is shut up in his mental, vital and physical being and its limitations.

5. What do you mean by “opening” yourself to the Divine Consciousness, to the Mother?

By opening is meant an aspiration in the heart for Her coming down, a will in the mind that She should act and even a will above the mind.

6. What happens when you open yourself to the Divine Mother?

Her²¹⁵ working establishes a quiet, a peace in all the Parts of the being. It then prepares the human nature for Her still higher working.

* * * *

VII

Yoga and work for humanity:

What one puts forth outside in the form of action is generally what he internally is.

Our first aim is not to work for humanity in the current sense of the term, but first to found life on a Higher Consciousness than the present limited and ignorant consciousness of mind, life and body.

The present average man is physical and vital in his nature using his mind for satisfying his vital being.

* * * *

VIII

Obscurantism is of various kinds, e.g.

1. there is an obscurantism which refuses to enquire;
2. An attachment to the boundaries of mental normality also leads to an obscurantism.

These shut away or turn away from new vistas.

* * * *

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Metaphysics is reason examining its own data, its own laws.

Science is reason studying objects and processes of things.

What we see in the material universe is a stupendous system of mechanical recurrences. A huge mechanical recurrence rules that which is long-enduring and vast; a similar but frailer recurrence sways all that is ephemeral and small. The suns leap up into being, flame wheeling in space, squander force by motion and fade and are extinct, again perhaps to blaze into being and repeat their course or else other suns take their place and fulfil their round. The seasons of Time repeat their unending and unchanging cycle. Always the tree of life puts forth its various flowers and sheds them and breaks into the same flowers in their recurring season. The body of man is born and grows and decays and perishes, but it gives birth to other bodies which maintain the one same futile cycle. What baffles the intelligence in all this intent and persistent process is that it seems to have in it no soul of meaning, no significance except the simple fact of causeless and purposeless existence, dogged or relieved by the annulling or compensating fact of individual cessation. And this is because we perceive the mechanism, but do not see the Power that uses the mechanism and the intention in its use. But the moment we know that there is a conscious Spirit self-wise and infinite brooding upon the universe and a secret slowly self-finding in things, we get to the necessity of an idea in its consciousness, a thing conceived, willed, set in motion and securely to be done, progressively to be fulfilled by these great deliberate workings.

– (*The Significance of Rebirth—Sri Aurobindo*)

REVIEWS²¹⁶

The Fundamentals of the Four Schools of Vedic Philosophy. By A.S. Iyengar, B.A., LL.B., J.P. Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay 2, Price One Rupee (nett).

This was originally written as an introduction to the *Mata-traya-Sāra-angraha** of Sri Ubhaya-Vedāntācārya V.K. Rāgacārya Swāmin. The latter is “a pioneer among pandits in the field of comparative philosophy” and his book is “an epoch-making publication as it brings together within a small compass all the salient arguments for and against the different interpretations of each adhikarana by the three schools of Dvaitam, Advaitam, and Viṣistādvaitam.” Though a Ramanujist himself, he is said to have done full justice to the different points of view in “this monumental piece of

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* In Sanskrit, 600 pages, Rs. 12. Can be had from the author Ambalpuram, Pudukkotai.

work.” Mr Iyengar, who himself had studied the Sri Bhāṣya under renowned Sanskrit pundits, was specially chosen by the author to write this introduction. So we can assume that this booklet gives a faithful presentation of the views and the attitude of the orthodox Ramanujist school of the present day. The account he has given of the four schools of Vedānta – Advaitam, Viṣiṣṭādvaitam, Dvaitam and Suddhadvaitam—is too meagre and has nothing very remarkable in it. His real intention is to assert the immense superiority of the system of Ramanuja and he approaches the subject with a philosophical attitude. Thus he observes: “Some writers try to make out that there is no difference at all among the Acāryas. This, however, does more credit to their spirit of conciliation than to their intellectual acumen or honesty ... Others try to shirk the issue by stating that we intellectual pygmies should not sit in judgment over the Acāryan (who were all avatārs and therefore infallible). All honour to this spirit of humility, but we have to be convinced of the truth and there is no other way but to weigh the pros and cons although in a mood of humility and prayerfulness.” He even goes so far as to say that the Upanishads cannot be believed if they state anything diametrically opposed to reason. But we do not as a matter of fact find much reasoning in his support of Ramanuja; whatever interpretation Ramanuja has given of the Sruti texts is *ipso facto* valid—that seems to be his position. Indeed his enthusiasm for Ramanuja makes one doubt whether he can sit in judgment on his teacher or correctly appraise other philosophers. Thus in one rhapsodic passage he asserts that all religions and philosophies of the world and all teachers and prophets down to Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo—“all these appear to be but dim reflections of an infinitesimal part of the glory that was Sri Ramanuja.” “As a redeemer of souls Sri Ramanuja has done more than even what Sri Rama or Sri Krishna was able to achieve.”

“No Acārya except Sri Sankara distinguishes between nirguna Brahman and saguna Brahman and pāramārthiks and vyāvahārika satya or proclaims that the individual self and the Overself are identical. These theories mainly based on *vivartabāda* are supported neither by the Sutras of Badrayana nor by the Upanishads of the vedapurusa”, so says Mr Iyengar. But it is well-known that Sankara based all these theories on the Sutras and the Sruti texts; to refute him you must show that his interpretation is wrong; we see no attempt made in this direction in the booklet under review. Mr Iyengar quotes some of the Sruti texts as interpreted by Ramanuja. “For example, *ekamivādvitīyam* and *dvitīyād vai bharam bhavati* do not mean the absence of a second entity but of only a rival ... *nirguna* does not mean that He has no attributes at all but only that He has no bad qualities; *deśakāla-paricchedarāhitya* does not mean that He is beyond time and space and that He is everything but that He is everywhere, and that everything belongs²¹⁷ to Him, is under His inner and outer control, and that He is superior to everything even in their special merits; *Purna* does

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not mean the Absolute without any relation but the infinite and perfect whole without any relation brought about by *karma*;... *sāyujya* does not mean identity but only similarity of enjoyment; *aikya* does not mean unity but union; *neha nānāsti kincana* and *yatra nānyat pasyatīti* do not mean that there is no diversity at all but only that there is no manifoldness anywhere without Brahman as the inner directing spirit, etc. etc. There are innumerable matters in which Sri Ramanuja has led the way and other Acāryas after him have followed."

If words have any meaning, the *mahāvākyas* of the Upanishads mean that Brahman is essentially one and identical with the Jiva, *tattvamasī*, *aham brahmāsmi*; *ekamevādvītyam* means that Reality is absolutely one without a second. But as this obvious and natural meaning does not fit with the theory of Ramanuja, he has put his own meanings into the words of the Sruti and passed them as true interpretations; in this respect all the acāryas seem to be on the same boat." The Advaitic commentators," says Swami Vivekananda, "whenever an Advaitic text comes, preserves it just as it is; but the same commentator, as soon as a Dualistic text presents itself, tortures it, if he can, and brings the most queer meaning out of it...in the same way, if not in a still worse fashion, the texts are handled by the Dualistic commentators." Ramanuja got his inspiration from the Vaishnava saints, the Azhvārs who had a dualistic approach to the Divine, their path being that of *bhakti*, devotion. There is no place for devotion in absolute Monism; so real dualism must be asserted to give a philosophical basis to this spiritual path. But the Srutis, which must be followed if any system is to be recognised as a *siddhanta*, unmistakably teach Monism. So a Monistic garb was required for the real Dualism which he supposed was necessary for justifying the path of devotion. To meet this requirement he found out the formula, *sarīrātmabhāva*, which is a fundamental principle of his philosophy." The meaning of a body is not a thing which has limbs and senses but a thing whose characteristic is to exist for the use of a sentient being, to be supported and controlled by him. What the individual soul is to the body, Brahman is to the entire universe including the individual selves. In this sense, He is the Atman and the cosmos is His body." With this formula Ramanuja gave an explanation of the *bheda* and *abheda* Srutis. The *bheda* Srutis signify that the world of *cit* and *acit* is essentially different from Brahman, just as the material body is essentially different from the spiritual self. The *abheda* Srutis mean that the world is dependent on Brahman and cannot exist or function apart from it. But this is a gross misinterpretation of the *abheda* srutis like *tattvamasī*; and *visistādvaita* is miscalled Advaita or monism, it is pure and simple Dualism. Madhwa recognised this and threw away this garb and openly called the system Dualism; there is really no other difference between him and Ramanuja. Madhwa went so far as to say that the *tattvamasī* of the Sruti is a misprint, the real word is *atattvamasī*; or if the word is correct it can only mean *tadahinas tvam asi*.

Shankara, on the other hand, was impressed by the spiritual experience of the *nirguṇa*²¹⁸ Brahman, of a Reality which is one, indivisible, silent, inactive, immutable, undifferentiated; in that experience there is no world, no separate Jivas, Once experiencing the peace and silence of that immutable Brahman, the whole world with all its multiplicity appears to be unreal; but the world is there as a hard fact of experience; so to explain this he constructed mentally the famous theory of Mayavad. He probably got the suggestion of this theory from the Buddhists, and he supported it by the common experience of mistaking a rope for a snake. There is some inexplicable power which for the time being creates a snake, and the man under its influence regards it as hard fact. It is a similar power²¹⁹ which creates the illusion of a manifold world in the absolute unity of Brahman; it has no reality and disappears completely when one has the knowledge of Brahman. So the only effective means of escaping from this world full of suffering is to have the knowledge of *nirguṇa* Brahman. He found support for this theory in the *abheda* texts of the Upanishads; the *bheda* texts he explained as referring to the *vyāvahārika satya* created by Maya. It was the real strength of Ramanuja to have refuted this logical theory of Mayavada by a still subtler logic. But judging from the hold which the Mayavad of Sankara still has on the Indian mind, it becomes apparent that Sankara has had a greater influence than Ramanuja. And there are good reasons for this; for Sankara's fundamental experience of the *nirguṇa* Brahman is supported both by the Srutis and high spiritual realisation. Sankara did not deny the Saguna Brahman and the world created by it, but called it a lower truth. If we drop the *nirguṇa* Brahman of Sankara and keep only his *saguna* Brahman as the highest Reality, there is practically no difference between Ramanuja and Sankara in spiritual theory or practice. Sankara went beyond Ramanuja and the other Acāryas in his conception of the *nirguṇa* Brahman; but he did not go sufficiently far to find a place for the essential truths of the other systems in a higher synthesis. That synthesis we find in the great conception of the Puruṣottama of the Gita, who is both saguna and nirguṇa,* *kṣara* and *akṣara*, one and many, and yet above all these realities, holding all those apparently contradictory things as different aspects of his being. Sankara did not see the significance of this synthesis and explained away the world-creating and dynamic aspect of the Puruṣottama as Maya or illusion. Ramanuja in the same manner did not see the transcendent aspect of the divine Puruṣottama in which he is above all

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REVIEWS

The Fundamentals of the Four Schools of Vedic Philosophy

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**nirguṇa guṇabhoktrica*.

manifestation in time and space; the Lord says in the Gita, “Neither the gods nor the great Rishis know any birth of Me” (10/2); the transcendent Ineffable is altogether and in every way the origin of the gods and the great Rishis. What Ramanuja calls Sri Narayana is really the Kshara Purusha of the Gita and the saguna Brahman of Sankara.

The Ramanujists criticise Sankara by saying: “It is not clear how Brahman, the self-luminous, and maya, the enveloping veil of subtle avidya or ignorance, can co-exist any more than the blazing sun and pitch darkness can. The real answer of the Advaitin is he does not know. A strange answer in a philosophy purporting to explain the why and wherefore of things. This is a finally valid reasoning no doubt, but is not the Ramanujist system open to the same objection? There also no attempt has been made explain how such impure and imperfect things as *cit* and *acit* constituting the world remain organically connected with the self-luminous Brahman as his body. In this respect, Madhwa, who puts these things altogether outside Brahman is more consistent, but he then flagrantly goes against the *abheda* srutis. Ramanuja, of course, cites Sruti texts in support of his theory and calls his system Monism in a special sense, *Visistādvaitam*. Mr Iyengar thus interprets the term:” “The famous Tattvamasi does not show the *svarsaīkya* of the Over-self and the individual self. It merely indicates that Brahman Himself is the cause and effect with the *cetanācetasas* in their subtle and gross states as His body or inseparable attributes...The *saksms cidacidvisiṣṭa* Brahman is the cause and the *sthala cidacidvisiṣṭa* Brahman is the effect and both cause and effect are identical. This is what is meant by *Visiṣṭdvaitam* and the mahāvākya Tattvamasi.” This no doubt makes clear the significance of the term visistādvaita, but as an interpretation of the mahāvākya it seems to us to be most wonderful. But apart from that, the other fundamental question remains, how can *acit* be the body of a self²²⁰-luminous *cetana* Brahman? Ramanuja does not give any explanation of this, but simply cites Sruti texts where it is said that the earth is the body of Brahman, he enters into the world as its soul and so forth. No doubt the Srutis say that this world is the body of Brahman, but nowhere it has been said that this world is essentially different from Brahman and that it is not made of the same stuff as Brahman himself; as a matter of fact the Sruti has said in so many terms that Matter is Brahman, all this world is Brahman, *anna brahma, sarvam khalu idam brahma*.

So coming to ultimate explanation, Ramanuja’s system fails as much as that of Sankara. That however is not a serious objection against either of them. After all, philosophy has no fundamental importance; its only utility is to serve as an aid to

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spiritual experience; so if the māyāvād of Sankara has helped people to realise the imperfection and transitoriness of human life and the eternal truth of the spirit, and if visistādvaita has helped people to enter into a relation of devotion and love with the supreme Divine Being, they have amply justified themselves. Still if a philosophy can be found which gives a rational and reasonable answer to all questions which the modern mind can raise, that will be a great aid to the spiritual endeavour of mankind at this critical stage, and it is obvious that such a philosophy should be able to take into itself all that is essential in the different schools of thought. "The hard and intellectual notion of truth as a single idea which all must accept, one idea or system of ideas defeating all other ideas or systems, or a single limited fact or single formula of facts which all must recognise, is an illegitimate transference from the limited truth of the physical field to the much more complex and plastic field of life and mind and spirit. This transference has been responsible for much harm: it brings into thought narrowness, limitation, an intolerance of the necessary variation and multiplicity of view-points without which there can be no totality of truth-finding, and by the narrowness and limitation much obstinacy in error. It reduces philosophy to an endless maze of sterile disputes; religion has been invaded by this misprision and infected with credal dogmatism, bigotry and intolerance." (The Life Divine, Vol. II. pp. 904).

The Srutis make it quite clear that as all pots made of earth are essentially nothing but earth, though they differ in their forms, so the manifold world with *cit* and *acit* is essentially made of the stuff of Brahman who is Saccidananda and One without a second; but the logical minds of Sankara as well as of Ramanuja find it impossible to admit that this world so full of misery, suffering and imperfection should be made of the saccidananda stuff; even the Srutis cannot be accepted if they offend reason. So Sankara says it is not real, and Ramanuja says it is real but essentially different from Brahman. But, as the two schools of thought by their wrangle with each other have shown, none of these positions is, in themselves, logically tenable. So if the Srutis appear as illogical, still they should be accepted as true, as truth is above the principles of formal logic. That seems to be the position of Sri Vallabha, the founder of the school known as *Suddhādvaitam*. "It is monism because it believes in one *sat* or Brahman, from whom *sat* (matter), *cit* (individual selves) and Ananda (Overself) are voluntarily manifested as sparks from fire or the web from the spider as a result of the operation of the free will of Brahman. It is pure because it believes in *avikṛta-parināma-vāda* or evolution without change as in the case of the serpent lying in a circle or a straight line or ornaments of gold and not in *vikṛta-parināma* or evolution with change as in the case of curds produced out of milk ... In *sat* or matter the *cit* and Ananda aspects of Brahman are not manifested and in *cit* or individual souls the Ananda aspect of Brahman lies concealed. The Jiva attains bliss by realising Brahman who is Rasa..... Whenever any apparent discrepancy or philosophical discrepancy arises in his system it is explained away by resorting to God's attribute of Viruddha-dharmāśrayatta or being

the abode²²¹ of contrary qualities or sarvasaktatva or omnipotence.” This, as far as it goes, seems to be closer to the Srutis than the systems of Sankara or Ramanuja; but it is philosophically defective as it offers no explanation why or how God manifests this world so full of misery and suffering. Thus Mr Iyengar argues: “That God in spite of His omniscience should Himself become *cit* and *acit* and subject himself to all the ills which flesh and stone are heir to is incomprehensible... We would rather believe in an intelligent and apparently cruel but really good God than in a foolish one who torments Himself and is beyond reform.” But what should we say of a God who lives eternally in Bliss but inflicts torments on creatures who are essentially different from him? Of course the Ramanujist explains that the jivas suffer from their own sins; but wherefrom they got their impulse to commit sins if not from God Himself who is their source, origin and eternal abode? The theory of *anādi* or beginningless karma is no philosophical explanation but only shifts the question. The only satisfactory explanation of evil in the world is that God Himself has become the individual souls and undergoes all their torments, though the suffering is only in their external superficial consciousness,—all individual souls remaining eternally as blissful and perfect as God in their essential self in which they are one with God; and this suffering in the superficial consciousness has been deliberately accepted by God as a temporary device for manifesting His eternal Bliss in ever new forms.

The fundamental difficulty with Ramanuja was that he could not reconcile Vaishnava *bhakti* with Upanishadic Monism. If the individual souls were not really different from God there could not be the relation of devotion and service, and that relation is a fact of the deepest spiritual experience as evidenced in the lives of great saints. Dualism is no doubt necessary for the experience of relation and it is for this purpose that Brahman who is above all relation and indivisibly and eternally one has become many souls in a manifold world. If he could not become many, if he were confined to His unity he would be a limited and imperfect Absolute, that is, no Absolute at all. It is His Yoga Maya that while remaining eternally One he can assume many forms and relations. The Upanishad says, “As one Fire has entered into the world and taken shapes according to the various forms in the world so the one being has become all these names and forms and yet remains the one.” And it is this mystery which is the real foundation of the highest form of devotion which is love; in that highest consummation the individual soul feels his essential unity with the Divine Beloved while still remaining different from Him in his self-formulation. It was this aspect of love, which was realised by Sri Chaitanya. We find the same truth emphasised in *Sandilya Bhakti-Sutra*, 85: “The entire phenomena is one with the Adorable as everything indeed is He.”

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But how the one can become many without losing His oneness was not clearly grasped by the intellect, so this relation of identity-cum-difference, *bhedābheda*, was called *acintya*, unthinkable. It is Sri Aurobindo who has for the first time given in his *magnum opus*, *The Life Divine*, a detailed philosophical account of this mystery of the self-manifestation of Brahman in the world and its multiplicity of Jivas. Brahman is consciousness the essential nature of which is bliss, and the souls and the material world are all made of the same stuff, the difference is only in the status of the same consciousness; the individual is a particular centre through which Brahman enjoys his own bliss in infinite variety: in Matter the Brahman consciousness remains, as it were, in a trance. As we withdraw our consciousness from some of our physical movements allowing them to go on mechanically, so in Matter the Brahman consciousness remains behind allowing Matter to operate mechanically thus furnishing a stable mould for the manifestation of the One as the Many in a world of relations where the individual soul can taste the ineffable joy²²² of the most intimate union with its own highest Self.

“It is indeed only when our human mentality lays an exclusive emphasis on one side of spiritual experience, affirms that to be the sole eternal truth and states it in the terms of our all dividing mental logic that the necessity for mutually destructive schools of philosophy arises. Thus, emphasising the sole truth of the unitarian consciousness, we admit the play of the divine unity erroneously rendered by our mentality into the terms of real difference, but not satisfied with correcting this error of the mind by the truth of a higher principle, we assert that the play itself is an illusion. Or, emphasising the play of the One in the Many, we declare a qualified unity and regard the individual soul as a soul form of the Supreme but would assert the eternity of this qualified existence and deny altogether the experience of a pure consciousness in an unqualified oneness. Or, again, emphasising the play of difference, we assert that the Supreme and the human soul are eternally different and reject the validity of an experience which exceeds and seems to abolish that difference. But the position that we have now firmly taken absolves us from the necessity of these negations and exclusions; we see that there is a truth behind all these affirmations, but at the same time an excess which leads to an ill-founded negation. Affirming, as we have done, the absolute absoluteness of That, not limited by our ideas of unity, not limited by our ideas of multiplicity, affirming the unity as a basis for the manifestation of the multiplicity and the multiplicity as the basis for the return to oneness and the enjoyment of unity in the divine manifestation, we need not burden our present statement with these discussions or undertake the vain labour of enslaving to our mental distinctions the absolute freedom of the Divine infinite.”

(*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 227-28).

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Man the Master—By Gerald Heard, Faber and Faber, London, 1942.

This new book by Mr Gerald Heard is a very important contribution to the study of problems connected with human evolution and human destiny. Coming as it does from the pen of such an acute and constructive thinker as Mr Heard, it merits serious consideration, not only from philosophers, but also from sociologists. In the few remarks which we propose to offer here, we shall, however, confine ourselves to the philosophical aspects of the views which the author has propounded in this book.

As the author states in the Introduction, “the thesis of the book is that the present crisis is a psychological crisis; it is due to a state of mind.” This is a very correct diagnosis of the malady from which the world is suffering at the present moment. Important as each of them is, it is neither the economic, nor the political, nor the social problem which can be said to be *the* problem of the present day. The real problem of to-day is undoubtedly that of a psychological change, that is to say, a change in the nature of human consciousness. Unless this occurs, no improvement in the economic or political or social conditions of man can bring about a fundamental change in the conditions of his life.

The book is divided into two parts, called respectively, diagnosis and prognosis. In the first part the author has given a diagnosis of the present malady of the world. The malady in his view is due to its neglect of the subconscious and exclusive preoccupation with the surface consciousness. The latter is an atomic consciousness which splits the world into an infinite number of separate and isolated entities. Thanks to our preoccupation with this consciousness, individualism of an extreme form has raised its hydra head. Indeed, the growth of individualism in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century was so great that it became necessary to check it. Fascism and²²³ Bolshevism owe in fact their origin to this necessity. To quote our author’s own words: “Totalitarianism has succeeded because natural, traditional cohesion has become exhausted and no religious reform, no extension of knowledge, has appeared to show how that natural cohesion may be renewed. The one-sided evolution of consciousness has ended in producing communities filled with self-conscious individuals. These self-conscious individuals, severed from their own subconscious, cannot experience social cohesion. Hence, to save society from collapsing, it is necessary to have an autocrat who will by force of arms preserve that which can no longer cohere by consent”. (p. 13).

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But the remedy has proved worse than the disease. And quite naturally, for coercion destroys more quickly than even individualism whatever vestiges there remain of cohesion. Thus, both democracy producing an extreme type of individualism, and fascism, which destroys individualism only to set up in its place coercive dictatorship, are inimical to the growth of humanity. If, therefore, mankind is to be saved, we must steer clear of both democracy and dictatorship.

It is psychology that can come to the rescue of man at this crisis. What is wanted is the discovery, or rather the rediscovery – for mankind did possess in ancient times a good deal of knowledge of the subconscious which unfortunately it has lost today – of the subconscious forces working within us. It is unfortunate that due to our preoccupation with the physical universe, we have neglected psychological studies. To quote our author again: “Had there been proportionate discoveries made in the human mind, in discovering how it apprehended the universe which it was now seeing with such intense but narrow clarity, there would have been true progress. But the important fact which we have overlooked, and which we must now recognize, is that, far from proportionate discoveries being made in psychology, the psychological discoveries of the past were actually being lost” (p. 39).

It is clear, then, that it is only on the emergence of a higher level of consciousness, where the fissure between the surface-consciousness and the profounder inner consciousness is removed, that there can be any hope of man being lifted out of the rut in which he finds himself at the present moment. But is there any chance? Is there really any hope of man being saved from his present hopeless condition? None, if the dictators’ world-view is correct. That view is the completely amoral view of the world. In that view goodness has no place at all in the universe; it is only a notion which exists in men’s minds.

Fortunately, however, the dictator world-view is wrong. Their prognosis about the continuance of the present conditions is false. They have totally misjudged the course of human evolution. “The dictators were right”, says our author (p. 81), “in realizing that the age of individualism was over. But they have wholly misconceived the form into which human consciousness is tending to evolve once it discards the transition-cocoon of individual self-consciousness, once the temporary division of the human mind into self-conscious and subconscious is reconciled. Their vision of this evolution was of man evolving as the insects in their societies have evolved. The individual then would be submerged in the social unit, as in the hive, the ant-hill and the termitary. But, as we have seen, the fissure is not between man and his community but in the individual himself, between his conscious and his subconscious minds. The goal then is not the fusing of all individuals in a giant organism, the State which alone would be conscious.”

We have already evidence of the emergence of this higher consciousness. This we find in what our author, borrowing an expression of Jung's, calls 'second adolescence'. The evidence consists in this, that many men who have led successful lives, who have happy homes and have achieved success in their professions, come to be oppressed, when they reach the age of forty with doubts and questionings and exhibit²²⁴ a kind of peculiar restlessness. They feel that with all their success, there is something lacking in their lives. This consciousness of something lacking, this uneasiness, this restlessness are a sure sign, according to our author, of the emergence of a higher consciousness. Proper use should be made of this fact for the purpose of building up a higher society. Unfortunately, in our country, where this fact was clearly observed, no proper use was made of it, for "the second adolescent did not proceed through his adolescence to a second adulthood." "Instead of returning to society after his breakaway", as he should have done, our author "observes, he remained away; as though the boy, seized with the wanderlust of the first adolescence, should never come back to yield and harvest his experience, but become a chronic nomad, a confirmed migrant." (p. 111).

But although India failed to rear a higher society by not utilizing properly this fact of second adolescence, this is no reason why we should not make use of it in order to create a better and nobler society. India's failure here does not prove, thinks our author, the impossibility of attaining a higher level of evolution than what we have so far succeeded in doing.

In fact, the constructive suggestions of our author, which he has given in the second part of the book, consist in showing how we can make proper use of this higher consciousness that emerges in the form of the second adolescence. This second adolescence should remain in the world and should be helped to grow into the second adulthood. In other words, the world should be given an opportunity of benefiting by it. The policy followed in India, which encourages it to leave the world and seek shelter in the forest, is a very wrong one.

What the author suggests here is in plain English that the man with the superior consciousness, the 'seer', should be given his due place in society. His suggestion, in fact, is very similar to that of Plato who wanted to make the philosopher the ruler of the State. Just as Plato said, "Until philosophers are kings and kings are philosophers, cities shall not cease from evil ", so our author says that until these men with the right vision, these seers, are made our leaders, we cannot advance to a higher stage of evolution.

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On the seer-leader as the foundation, our author wants to build a quadritype social organization, somewhat similar to our ancient social order based upon the four castes. To the position of the Brahmana in our ancient system corresponds that of the seer in our author's scheme. He is to be the guide, the director, the initiator of the policy of the whole State. Under him and guided by him are the three other classes, the politicians, the technicians and the 'domesticians'. When properly guided by the seers, these three classes are absolutely essential to the maintenance of the social well-being. The pivot of the whole scheme, however, is the seer. "He must give up his life to seership, he must so become the conscience and sanction of mankind. He will thus be able to guide and inspire the actual administrator. Himself not touching actual power he will be able to keep both himself and the handler from contamination. Here is a true balance of power." (p. 248).

Such, in brief, is our author's conception of the higher social order which it should be our endeavour to establish. Such is his scheme of the future social organization that must replace the present degenerate one, if mankind is to be saved.

The central-idea which guides the whole of this scheme is that of the emergence of a higher consciousness. The recognition and clear enunciation of this principle constitute, as we have already remarked, the great merit of this book. But when we examine the nature of this higher consciousness, the emergence of which, according to our author, will mean the deliverance of the world from its present hopeless state of confusion, then our difficulties begin. Our author, in the first place, calls it the subconscious and contrasts it with our surface-consciousness. Granting that the subconscious reveals to us unsuspected²²⁵ and hidden regions of our consciousness and brings into view deeper layers of our personality than those which appear on our surface-consciousness, can it be said that the mere opening of this underground current is enough to ensure a radical change of our consciousness? Due to the influence of Freud, it is the fashion in these days to credit the subconscious with almost supernatural powers. But even if we credit it with such powers, Freud's own theory shows that it cannot be regarded always as a power that makes for good, for it possesses sometimes demoniac powers which have an absolutely contrary tendency. The subconscious *qua* subconscious, therefore, cannot be treated as being necessarily something higher than our surface-consciousness, and its light cannot be regarded as a better guide than that of our ordinary consciousness. Various strands of consciousness are blended in what we call the subconscious. There is, in the first place, the true subliminal consciousness emanating from the inner core of our being, what Sri Aurobindo calls our psychic being or *chaitya purusha*. But mixed with this there are

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various strands of our desire-soul or the demoniac element in us which creates sudden disturbances in our mental economy and tend to bring us down to a lower level.

But even the true subliminal consciousness, illumined by the light of our psychic being, is not enough to bring about that fundamental change in our consciousness which is needed to raise us to a higher level of evolution, unless it is reinforced by light from above. So although the value of subliminal consciousness is very great, it by itself is not in a position to effect that radical change in our nature which is necessary for lifting us out of our present rut. What is needed above all things is the emergence of a higher light from above, from the domain of the supra-conscious. This emergence must be in the nature of a descent of a Superior Light Not until such a descent from the supra-conscious realms takes place, can we hope for that radical transformation of our nature which is implied in a higher stage of evolution.

Secondly, there is a good deal of confusion in our author's statements about what he calls the second adolescence. Is this second adolescence a kind of subconscious which emerges at a certain stage of a man's life, or is it of the nature of an intuition which makes its appearance at this Unfortunately, our author has nowhere made any distinction between the subconscious and the intuitive, although much of what he puts under the conscious properly comes under the class of intuitions. Moreover, can it be said that there is any particular age or stage of life where this type of the subconscious or this kind of intuition makes its appearance? The lives of saints show a bewildering variety in this respect. Further, the mere appearance of this kind of intuition in a man's middle age is not a matter of much importance. It is the quality of the emergent consciousness that really matters. Sometimes young men and even children are found to possess intuitions of the requisite quality which older people may not possess.

Thirdly, our author does not seem to realize fully the radical transformation of society that will be needed if man is to attain a really higher status than what he enjoys to-day. He seems to think that the same quadritype order of society which more or less prevails to-day will continue in the future. But this is to forget that this order may have no meaning when there is a radical change in human nature.

In spite of these shortcomings however, the book under review is very valuable contribution to philosophical thought and fully maintains the very high standard of excellence which characterizes all the works of our author.

— *S.K. Maitra.*

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SECOND ANNUAL**

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(15th August, 1943)

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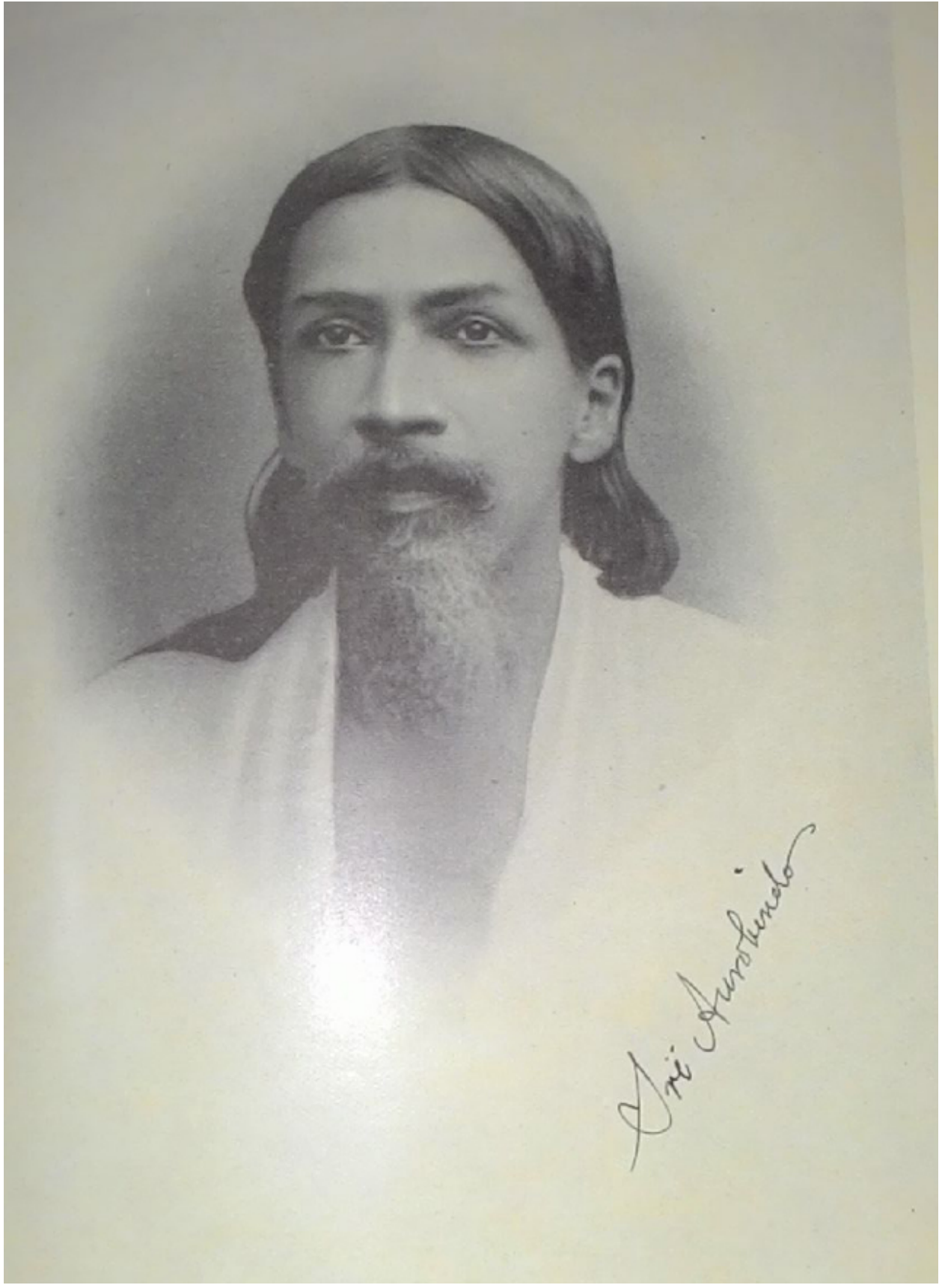
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D. A. Anand

SRI²²⁶ AUROBINDO

If now at last thou art aflower in clay,
How shall its gardeners be love-pledged to thee,
Who wearest human mask for a deep play
Sowing in dust thy Immortality?

Thou art a guest long-awaited of our earth,
O everlasting solvent of dark pain,
Bringing in storms thy message: a New birth
Of coral isles beyond all shadow's stain!

Soul kept her vigil through her livelong nights,
For the answer of thy Dawn how she implored
Dumb Destiny to flash the Light of lights
Reaving our veils of ignorance like a sword!

We can but clamour: 'tis for kings to give;
We fret and fume: the Gods alone appease;
We talk of faith declining to believe;
Prisoned in ash we cry for fire's increase.

The prayer is heard: thou art incarnate, Friend!
Our right to blindness must we still defend?

8th May, 1943

DILIP KUMAR ROY

NOW²²⁷....

Now that I have embraced Thy feet of light,
The refuge of all earth whose mounting cry
Has brought the succour of Thy victor might
To our Darkness-ridden deathful misery,

My drooping bower of life revives again,
My desert-dearth is crowned with hope in spring,
And all my being bathes in a rich man
Of blooms divine that thrill and make me sing;

The sadness that had seized my heart of joy
And buried all its brightness with deep gloom
Is there no more to sicken and annoy
My spirit which now towers above that tomb.

My sight was sealed by mists of gathered murk,
But then Thy golden glory dawned on me:
And now Thy quenchless suns are all at work:
Dissolved are the blind nights revealingly.

Now one by one, my lotus-soul awake
Unfolds the petals pure, O Grace Divine!
That the beauty of Thy feet may wholly take
Possession of my self and make it Thine.

PUNJALAL

Lines of the Descent of Consciousness²²⁸

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

I

The world has been created by a descent of consciousness; it maintains itself, it proceeds and develops through a series of descent. In fact creation itself is a descent, the first and original one, the descent of the supreme Reality into Matter and as Matter. The supreme Reality – the fount and origin of things and even that which is beyond – although essentially something absolute, indescribable, ineffable, indeterminable, has been, for purposes of the human understanding, signalised as a triune entity of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. That is to say, first of all, it *is*, it exists always and for ever – invariably, in unbroken continuity; secondly, it exists not unconsciously, but consciously, in and as full consciousness; thirdly, it exists in delight – through delight and for and as delight; it has no other reason for existence but the pleasure and joy of simply existing. This primal, this original truth or reality transcends creation and is beyond and antecedent to it. What then is creation, what is its nature and character? Strange to say, it is the very opposite of the primal reality. First of all, it is not really existent: its existence is only another name for non-existence, as, in its phenomenal constitution, it is variable, ephemeral, transient and fragmentary or even seems made, as it were, of the stuff of dream. Secondly it is not conscious; on the contrary, it is unconsciousness. And lastly it is not Delight; there is an original insensibility and much undelight, grief and sorrow. That is the actual physical creation; or so, at least, it appears to be. How is this paradox to be explained? What is the significance of this riddle?

Descent is the master-key that unravels the mystery – that is to say, the descent of the delight conscious existence as the material world. But why this descent at all? What was the need? What was the purpose? Thy *why* of a thing is always difficult, if not impossible, to gauge. But we shall try to understand the *how* of the phenomenon, and in so doing perhaps we may get at the *why* of it also. At present let us content ourselves by saying that such was His will – *la sua voluntade* – such was²²⁹ His wish – *sa aichhat*. For once perhaps instead of saying, “let there be light”, He (or something in Him) must have said, “let there be darkness”, and there was Darkness.

But the point is, this darkness did not come all on a sudden but arrived gradually, through a developing process – we do not refer to physical time here but

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something antecedent, something parallel to it in another dimension. Let us see how it all came about.

The Absolute in its triple or triune status (not in its supreme being but as we see it prior to manifestation), is in essence and principle an infinity and unity. Indeed it is *the* infinite unity, and its fundamental character is a supreme and utter equality—*samam Brahma*. It is then a *status* or *stasis*, that is to say, a state of perfectly stable equilibrium in which there is no movement of difference or distinction, no ripple of high and low or ebb and flow, no mark of quantity or quality. It is a stilled sea of self-identity, a vast limitless or pure consciousness brooding in trance and immobility. And yet in the bosom of this ineffable and inviolable equality, in the very hush and lull there lies secreted an urge, a pressure, a possibility towards activity, variation and even an eventual inequality. For the presence and possibility of dynamism is posited by the very infinity of the Infinite, since without it, the Infinite would be incapable of motion, expression and fulfilment of its Force.

There is thus inherent in the vast inalienable equality of the absolute Reality, a Force which can bring out centres of pressure, nuclei of dynamism, nodes of modulation. It is precisely round these centres of precipitation that the original and basic unity crystallises itself and weaves a pattern of harmonious multiplicity. Consciousness, by self-pressure,—*tapas taptva*—turns its even and undifferentiated pristine equanimity into ripples and swirls, eddies and vortices of delight, matrices of creative activity. Thus, the One becomes Many by a process of self-concentration and self-limitation.

At the very outset when and where the Many has come out into manifestation in the One—here also it must be remembered that we are using a temporal figure in respect of an extra-temporal fact—there and then is formed a characteristic range of reality which is a perfect equation of the one and the many: that is to say, the one in becoming many still remains the same immaculate one in and through the many and likewise the many in spite of its manifoldness—and because of the special quality of the manifoldness—still continues to be the one in the uttermost²³⁰ degree. It is the world of fundamental realities. Sri Aurobindo names it the Supermind or Gnosis. It is something higher than but distantly akin to Plato's world of Ideas or Noumena (*ideai, noumena*) or to what Plotinus calls the first divine emanation (*nous*). These archetypal realities are realities of the Spirit, Idea-forces, truth-energies, the root consciousness-forms—*Rita chit*, in Vedic terminology. They are seed truths, the original mother-truths in the Divine Consciousness. They comprise the fundamental essential many aspects and formulations of an infinite Infinity. At this stage these do not come into clash or conflict, for here each contains all and the All contains each one in absolute unity and

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essential identity. Each individual formation is united with and partakes of the nature of the one supreme Reality. Although difference is born here, separation is not yet come. Variety is there, but not discord, individuality is there, not egoism. This is the first step of Descent, the earliest one—not, we must remind again, historically but psychologically and logically—the descent of the Transcendent into the Cosmic as the vast and varied Supermind—*chitra praketo ajanishta vibhwa*—of the Absolute into the relational manifestation as *Vidyāshakti* (Gnosis).

The next steps, farther down or away, arrive when the drive towards differentiation and multiplication gathers momentum, becomes accentuated, and separation and isolation increase in degree and emphasis. The lines of individuation fall more and more apart from each other, tending to form closed circles, each confining more and more exclusively to itself, stressing its own particular and special value and function, in contradistinction to or even against other lines. Thus the descent or fall from the supermind leads, in the first instance, to the creation or appearance of the Overmind. It is the level of consciousness where the perfect balance of the One and the Many is disturbed and the emphasis begins to be laid on the many. The source of incompatibility between the two just starts here as if Many is not-One and One is not-Many. It is the beginning of Ignorance, Avidya, Maya. Still in the higher hemisphere of the Overmind, the sense of unity is yet maintained, although there is no longer the sense of absolute identity of the two they are experienced as complementaries, both form a harmony, a harmony as of different and distinct but conjoint notes. The Many has come forward, yet the unity is also there supporting it—the unity is an immanent godhead, controlling the patent reality of the Many. It is in the lower hemisphere of the Overmind that unity is thrown²³¹ into the background half-submerged, flickering, and the principle of multiplicity comes forward with all insistence. Division and rivalry are the characteristic marks of its organisation. Yet the unity does not disappear altogether; only it remains very much inactive, like a sleeping partner. It is not directly perceived and envisaged, not immediately felt but is evoked as a reminiscence. The Supermind, then, is the first crystallisation of the Infinite into individual centres; in the Overmind these centres at the outset become more exclusively individualised and then jealously self-centred.

The next step of descent is the Mind where the original unity and identity and harmony are disrupted to a yet greater degree, almost completely. The self-delimitation of consciousness—which is proper to the Supermind and even to the Overmind, at least in its higher domains—gives way to self-limitation, to intolerant egoism and solipsism. The consciousness withdraws from its high and wide sweep, narrows down to introvert orbits. The sense of unity in the mind is, at most, a thing of idealism and imagination; it is an abstract notion, a supposition and a deduction. Here we enter into the very arcana

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of Maya, the rightful possession of Ignorance. The individualities here have totally isolated and independent and mutually conflicting lines of movement. Hence the natural incapacity of mind, as it is said, to comprehend more than one object simultaneously. The Supermind and, less absolutely, the Overmind have a global and integral outlook: they can take in in its purview all at once the total assemblage of things, they differentiate but do not divide—the Supermind not all, the Overmind not categorically. The Mind has not this synthetic view, it proceeds analytically. It observes its object by division, taking the parts piecemeal, dismantling them, separating them, attending to each one at a time. And when it observes it fixes itself on one point, withdrawing its attention from all the rest. If it has to arrive at a synthesis, it can only do so by collating, aggregating and summing. Mental consciousness is thus narrowly one-pointed: and in narrowing itself, being farther away from the source it becomes obscurer, more and more outward gazing (*parancikhani*) and superficial. The One Absolute in its downward march towards multiplicity, fragmentation and partiality loses also gradually its subtlety, its suppleness, its refinement, becomes more and more obtuse, crude, rigid, dense.

Between the Overmind and the Mind proper, varying according to the degree of immixture of the two, according to the²³² degree of descent and of emergence of one and the other respectively, there are several levels of consciousness of which three main ones have been named and described by Sri Aurobindo. The first one nearest to the Overmind and the least contaminated by the Mind is pure Intuition; next, the intermediary one is called the Illumined Mind, and last comes the Higher Mind. They are all powers of the Overmind functioning in the Mind. The higher ranges are always more direct, intense, synthetic, dynamic than the lower ones where consciousness is slower, duller, more uncertain, more disintegrated. The lower the consciousness descends the more veiled it becomes, losing more and more the directness, the sureness, the intensity and force and the synthetic unity native to the highest ranges of our consciousness and being.

A further descent into obscurity occurs when consciousness passes from Mind to life. Darkness is almost visible here: there is a greater withdrawal on the part of each unit from its surrounding reality, a narrower concentration upon one's own separative existence—shades of the prison house have gathered close around. The light, already dulled and faint in the mind, has become a lurid glare here. Passion has arisen and desire and hunger and battle and combat.

Here also in the vital three ranges can be distinguished—the lower becoming more and more turbid and turbulent and fierce or more and more self-centred and selfish. These levels can best be seen by their impact on our vital being and formations

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there. The first, the highest one, the meeting or confluence of the Mind and the Vital is the Heart, the centre of emotion, the knot of the external or instrumental vehicle, of the frontal consciousness, behind which is born and hides the true individualised consciousness, the psyche. The mid-region is the Higher Vital consisting of larger (egoistic) dynamisms, such as high ambition, great enterprise, heroic courage, capacity for work, adventure, masterfulness, also such movements as sweeping violences, mighty hungers, intense arrogances. The physical seat of this movement is, as perhaps the *Tantras* would say, the domain ranging between the heart and the navel. Lower down ranges the Lower Vital which consists of small desires, petty hankerings, blind cravings—all urges and impulses that are more or less linked up with the body and move to gross physical satisfactions.

But always the Consciousness is driving towards a yet greater disintegration and fragmentation obscuration and condensation of²³³ self-oblivion. The last step in the process of transmutation or Involution is Matter where consciousness has wiped itself out or buried itself within so completely and thoroughly that it has become in its outward form totally dark, dense, hard, pulverised into mutually exclusive grains. The supreme luminous Will of Consciousness in its gradual descent and self-obliteration finally ends in a rigid process of mere mechanised drive.

This is, so far then, the original and primal line of descent. It is the line down which the Absolute Reality, the absolute Consciousness and the absolute Delight have turned into unreality and unconsciousness and undelight. But it is not all loss and debit. There is a credit side too. For it is only in this way, *viz.*, by the manifestation of utter Ignorance, that the supreme Absolute has become concrete, the Formless has entered into form, the Bodiless has found a body: what was originally an indeterminate equal Infinity of pure consciousness, has become determinate and dynamic in the individual multiplicity of corporeal consciousness. What is the sense in all that, what is the gain or upshot? We shall presently see.

When consciousness has reached the farthest limit of its opposite, when it has reduced itself to absolutely unconscious and mechanical atoms of matter, when the highest has descended into and become the lowest, then, by the very force of its downward drive, it has swung round and begun to mount up again. As it could not proceed farther on the downward gradient, having reached the extreme and ultimate limit of inconscience, consciousness had to turn round, as it were, by the very pressure of its inner impetus. First, then, there is a descent, a gradual involution, a veiling and closing up; next, an ascent, a gradual evolution, unfoldment and expression. We now see, however, that the last limit at the bottom—Matter—although appearing to be unconscious, is really not so: it is inconscient. That is to say, it holds consciousness

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secreted and involved within itself; it is, indeed, a special formulation of consciousness. It is the exclusive concentration of consciousness upon single points in itself: it is consciousness throwing itself out in scattered units and, by reason of separative identification with them and absorption into them, losing itself, forgetting itself in an absolute fixation of attention. The phenomenon is very similar to what happens when in the ordinary consciousness a worker while doing a work becomes so engrossed in it that he loses consciousness of himself, identifies himself with the work and in fact becomes the work, the visible resultant being a mechanical execution.

Now²³⁴ this imprisoned consciousness in Matter forces Matter to be conscious again when driven on the upward gradient. This tension creates a fire, as it were, in the heart of matter, a mighty combustion and whorl in the core of things, of which the blazing sun is an image and a symbol. All this pressure and heat and concussion and explosion mean a mighty struggle in matter to give birth to that which is within. Consciousness that is latent must be made patent; it must reveal itself in Matter and through Matter, making Matter its vehicle and embodiment. This is the mystery of the birth of Life, the first sprouting of consciousness in Matter. Life is half-awakened consciousness, consciousness yet in a dream state. Its earliest and most rudimentary manifestation is embodied in the plant or vegetable world. The submerged consciousness strives to come still further up, to express itself to a greater degree and in a clearer mode, to become more free and plastic in its movement; hence the appearance of the animal as the next higher formulation. Here consciousness delivers itself as a psyche, a rudimentary one, no doubt, a being of feeling and sensation, an elementary mentality playing in a field of vitalised Matter. Even then it is not satisfied with itself, it asks for a still more free and clear articulation: it is not satisfied, for it has not yet found its own level. Hence after the animal arrives man with a full-fledged Mind, with intelligence and self-consciousness and capacity for self-determination.

Thus we see that evolution, the unfolding of consciousness follows exactly the line of its involution, only the other way round: the mounting consciousness reascends step by step the same gradient, retraces the same path along which it descended. The descending steps are broadly speaking (1) Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, (2) Supermind and its secondary form Overmind, (3) Mind – (i) mind proper and (ii) the intermediary psyche, (4) Life, (5) Matter. The ascending consciousness starting from Matter rises into Life, passes on through Life and Psyche into Mind, driving towards the Supermind and Sachchidananda. At the present stage of evolution, consciousness has arrived at the higher levels of Mind; it is now striving to cross it altogether and enter the Overmind and the Supermind. It will not rest content until it arrives at the organisation

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in and through the Supermind: for that is the drive and purpose of Nature in the next cycle of evolution.

Physical science speaks of irreversibility and entropy in Nature's process. That is to say, it is stated that Nature is rushing²³⁵ down and running down: she is falling irrevocably from a higher to an ever lower potential of energy. The machine that Nature is, is driven by energy made available by a break-up of parts and particles constituting its substance. This katabolic process cannot be dead equilibrium. You cannot lead the river up the channel to its source, it moves inevitably, unceasingly towards the sea in which it exhausts itself and finds its last repose and – extinction. But whatever physical Science may say, the science of the spirit declares emphatically that Nature's process is reversible, that a growing entropy can be checked and countermanded: in other words, Nature's downward current resulting in a continual loss of energy and a break-up of substance is not the only process of her activity. This aspect is more than counterbalanced by another one of upward drive and building up, of re-energisation and reintegration. Indeed evolution, as we have explained it, is nothing but such a process of synthesis and new creation.

Evolution, which means the return movement of consciousness, consists, in its apparent and outward aspect, of two processes, or rather two parallel lines in a single process. First, there is the line of sublimation, that is to say, the lower purifies and modifies itself into the higher; the denser, the obscurer, the baser mode of consciousness is led into and becomes the finer, the clearer, the nobler mode. Thus it is that Matter rises into Life, Life into Psyche and Mind, Mind into Overmind and Supermind. Now this sublimation is not simply a process of refinement or elimination, something in the nature of our old Indian *nivritti* or *pratyāhāra*, or what Plotinus called *epistrophe* (a turning back, withdrawal or reabsorption): it includes and is attended by the process of integration also. That is to say, as the lower rises into the higher, the lower does not cease to exist thereby, it exists but lifted up into the higher, infused and modified by the higher. Thus when Matter yields Life, Matter is not destroyed: it means Life has appeared in Matter and exists in and through Matter and Matter thereby has attained a new mode and constitution, for it is no longer merely a bundle of chemical or mechanical reactions, it is instinct with life, it has become organic matter. Even so when Life arrives at Mind, it is not dissolved into Mind but both Life and Matter are taken up by the mental stuff, life becomes dynamic sentience and Matter is transformed into the grey substance of the brain. Matter thus has passed through a first transformation in life and a second transformation²³⁶ in Mind; it awaits other transformations in other levels beyond Mind. Likewise, Life has passed through a first transformation in Mind

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and there are stages in this transformation. In the plant, Life is in its original pristine mode; in the animal, it has become sentient and centralised round a rudimentary desire-soul; in man, life-force is taken up by the higher mind and intelligence giving birth to idealism and ambition, dynamisms of a forward looking purposive will.

We have, till now, spoken of the evolution of consciousness as a movement of ascension, consisting of a double process of sublimation and integration. But ascension itself is only one line of a yet another larger double process. For along with the visible movement of ascent, there is a hidden movement of descent. The ascent represents the pressure from below, the force of buoyancy exerted by the involved and secreted consciousness. But the mere drive from below is not sufficient all alone to bring out or establish the higher status. The higher status itself has to descend in order to be manifest. The urge from below is an aspiration, a yearning to move ever upward and forward; but the precise goal, the status to be arrived at is not given there. The more or less vague and groping surge from below is canalised, it assumes a definite figure and shape, assumes a local habitation and a name when the higher descends at the crucial moment, takes the lower at its peak tide and fixes upon it its own norm and form. We have said that all the levels of consciousness are created—loosened out—by a first Descent; but in the line of the first descent the only level that stands in front at the outset is Matter, all the other levels are created no doubt but remain invisible in the background, behind the gross veil of Matter. Each status stands confined, as it were, to its own region and bides its time when each will be summoned to concretise itself in Matter. Thus life was already there on the plane of life even when it did not manifest itself in matter, when mere matter, dead matter was the only apparent reality on the material plane. When matter was stirred and churned sufficiently so as to reach a certain tension and saturation, when it was raised to a certain degree of maturity, as it were, then life appeared: life appeared, not because that was the inevitable and unavoidable result of the churning, but because life descended from its own level to the level of matter and took matter up in its embrace. The churning, the development in matter was only the occasion, the condition precedent. For however much one may shake or churn matter, whatever change one may create in²³⁷ it by a shuffling and reshuffling of its elements, one can never produce life by that alone. A new and unforeseen factor makes its appearance, precisely because it comes from elsewhere. It is true all the planes are imbedded, submerged, involved in the complex of Matter; but in point of fact all planes are involved in every other plane. The appearance or manifestation of a new plane is certainly prepared, made ready to the last—the last but one—degree by the urge of the inner, the latent mode of consciousness that is to be; still the actualisation, the bursting forth happens only when the thing that has to manifest itself descends, the actual form and pattern can be imprinted and established by that alone. Thus, again, when Life attains a certain level of growth and maturity, a certain

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tension and orientation—a definite vector, so to say, in the mathematical language—when it has, for example, sufficiently organised itself as a vehicle of the psychic element of consciousness, then it buds forth into Mind, but only when the Mind has descended upon it and into it. As in the previous stage, here also Life cannot produce Mind, cannot develop into Mind by any amount of mechanical or chemical operations within itself, by any amount of permutation and combination or commutation and culture of its constituent elements, unless it is seized on by Mind itself. After the Mind, the next higher grade of consciousness shall come by the same method and process, *viz.*, first by an uplifting of the mental consciousness—a certain widening and deepening and katharsis of the mental consciousness—and then by a descent, gradual or sudden, of the level or levels that lie above it.

This, then, is the nature of creation and its process. First, there is an Involution, a gradual foreshortening—a disintegration and concretisation, an exclusive concentration and self-oblivion—of consciousness, by which the various levels of diminishing consciousness are brought forth from the plenary light of the One Supreme Spirit, all the levels down to the complete eclipse in the unconsciousness of the multiple and disintegrate Matter. Next, there is an Evolution, that is to say, embodiment in matter of all these successive states, appearing one by one from the downmost to the topmost; Matter incarnates, all other states contribute to the incarnation and uphold it, the higher always transforming the lower in a new degree of consciousness.

Creation, the universe in its activity, is thus not simply a meaningless play, a pointless fancy. It has purpose, an end, a goal, a fulfilment, and it follows naturally a definite pattern of process. The goal is the concretisation, the materialisation (which²³⁸ includes, of course, vitalisation and mentalisation) of the Spirit and the spiritual values. It means the establishment of divine names and forms in terrestrial individuals leading a divine life, individually and collectively here below.

II

We have so far spoken of two lines of descent. But in either case the descent was of a general and impersonal character. Consciousness was considered as a mere force, movement or quality. There is another aspect, however, in which the descent is of a particular and personal character and consciousness is not force or status only but conscious being or Person.

The various movements or forces of consciousness that play in the various fields or levels of creation are not merely states or degrees and magnitudes, currents and streams of consciousness: they are also personalities with definite forms and figures—

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not physical indeed, yet very definite even when subtle and fluidic. Thus the supreme Reality, which is usually described as the perfect status of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, is not merely a principle but a personality. It is the Supreme Person with his triune nature (Purushottama) It is the Divine as the supreme Knower and Doer or Creator and Lover. The creation in or from that status of consciousness is not simply a play or result of the force of consciousness, it is even more truly the embodiment of a conscious Will; it is the will of the Divine Father executed by the Divine Mother.

Now, as the Reality along with its consciousness, in the downward involutory course towards materialisation, has been gradually disintegrating itself, multiplying itself, becoming more and more obscure and dense in separated and isolated units, even so the Person too has been following a parallel course of disintegration and multiplication and obscuration and isolation. At the origin lies, as we have said, the Perfect Person, the Supreme Person, in his dual aspect of being and nature, appearing as the supreme *Purusha* and the supreme *Prakriti*, our Father and our Mother in the highest heaven.

Next is the domain of the Supermind with which the *manifestation* of the Divine starts. We have said it is the world of typical realities, of the first seed-realities, where the One and the Many are united and fused in each other, where the absolute unity of the Supreme maintains itself in undiminished magnitude and²³⁹ expresses and formulates itself perfectly in and through the original multiplicity. Here take birth the first personalities, absolute truth forms of the Divine. Here are the highest gods, the direct formations of the Divine himself. Here are the Four Powers and Personalities of *Ishwara* whom Sri Aurobindo has named after the Vaishnava terminology: (i) Mahāvira, embodying the Brahmin quality of Knowledge and Light and wide Consciousness, (ii) Balarama, embodying the Kshatriya quality of Force and intense dynamism, (iii) Pradyumna, embodying the quality of love and beauty—the Vaisya virtue of mutuality and harmony and solidarity, (iv) Aniruddha, embodying the Sudra quality of competent service—of organisation and execution in detail. Corresponding with these Four there are the other Four Powers and Personalities of the Divine Mother—Ishwari: (i) Maheshwari, (ii) Mahakali, (iii) Mahalakshmi and (iv) Mahasaraswati. Next in the downward gradient comes the Overmind where the individualised powers and personalities of the Divine tend to become self-sufficient and self-regarding; their absolute unity is loosened and the lines of multiplicity begin to be more independent of each other, each aiming at a special fulfilment of its own. Still the veil that is being drawn over the unity is yet transparent which continues to be

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sufficiently dynamic. This is the abode of the gods, the true and high gods: it is these that the Vedic Rishis appear to have envisaged and sought after. The all-gods (*Viśve devāḥ*) were indeed acknowledged to be but different names and forms of one supreme godhead (*devaḥ*): it is the one god, says Rishi Dirghatamas, who is called multifariously whether as Agni or Yama or Mātariśwān; it is the one god, again, who is described as having a thousand heads and a thousand feet. And yet they are separate entities, each has his own distinct and distinctive character and attribute, each demands a characteristic way of approach and worship. The tendency towards an exclusive stress is already at work on this level and it is the perception of this truth that lies behind the term *henotheism* used by European scholars to describe the Vedic Religion.

The next stage of devolution is the Mind proper. There or perhaps even before, on the lower reaches of the Overmind, the gods have become all quite separate, – self-centred, each bounded in his own particular sphere and horizon. The overmind gods – the true gods – are creators in a world of balanced or harmoniously held difference; they are powers that fashion each a special fulfilment, enhancing one another at the same time²⁴⁰ (*parasparam bhāvayantaḥ*). Between the Overmind and the Mind there is a class of lesser gods – they have been called “Formateurs”; they do not create in the strict sense of the term, they give form to what the anterior gods have created and projected. These form-makers that consolidate the encasement, fix definitely the image have most probably been envisaged in the Indian *dhyānamurtis*. But in the Mind the gods become still more fixed and rigid, “stereotyped”; the mental gods inspire exclusive systems, extreme and abstract generalisations, theories and principles and formulæ that, even when they seek to force and englobe all in their cast-iron mould, can hardly understand or tolerate each other.

Mind is the birth-place of absolute division and exclusivism – it is the “own home” of egoism. Egoism is that ignorant mode – a twist or knot of consciousness which cuts up the universal unity into disparate and antagonistic units: it creates isolated, mutually exclusive whorls in the harmonious rhythm and vast commonality of the one consciousness or conscious existence. The Sankhya speaks of the principle of ego coming or appearing after the principle of Vastness (*Mahat*). The Vast is the region above the Mind, where the unitary consciousness is still intact; with the appearance of the Mind has also appeared an intolerant self-engrossed individualism that culminates, as its extreme and violent expression, in the *Asura* – Asura, the mentalised vital being.

The Asura or the Titan stands where consciousness descends from the Mind into the Vital or Life-Force. He is the personification of ambition and authority and arrogance, he is the intolerant and absolute self-seeker – he is Daitya, the son of division. The Asura belongs to what we call the Higher Vital; but lower down in the

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Mid Vital, made wholly of unmixed life impulses, appear beings that are still less luminous, less controlled, more passionate, vehement and violent in their self-regarding appetite. They are the Rākshasas. If the Asura is perverse power, the Rākshasa is insatiate hunger.

All the ancient legends about a principle—and a personality—of Denial and Ignorance, of an Everlasting Nay—refer to this fact of a descending consciousness, a Fall. The Vedantic *Māyā*, spoken of sometimes as the Dark Mother, seems to be the personification of the lower Overmind. Jehovah and Satan of the Hebrews, Olympians and Titans of the Greeks, Arhiman and Arhumzad of old Iran, the sons of Diti and Aditi the Indian Puranas speak of, are powers and personalities of consciousness when²⁴¹ it has descended entirely into the mind and the vital where the division is complete. These lower reaches have completely lost the unitary consciousness; still there are beings even here that have succeeded in maintaining it as a memory or an aspiration, although in a general way the living reality of the oneness is absent. It is significant that the term *asura* which came to mean in classical and mythological ages *a + sura*, not-god, the Titan, had originally a different connotation and etymology, *asu + ra*, one having force or strength, and was used as a general attribute of all the gods. The degradation in the sense of the word is a pointer to the spiritual Fall: Satan was once Lucifer, the bringer or bearer of light. We may mention in this connection that these beings of which we are speaking, dwelling in unseen worlds, are of two broad categories—(1) beings that are native to each plane and immutably confined and bound to that plane, and (2) those that extend their existence through many or all planes and assume on each plane the norm and form appropriate to that plane. But this is a problem of individual destiny with which we are not concerned at present.

We were speaking of the descent into the vital, domain of dynamism, desire and hunger. The vital is also the field of some strong creative Powers who follow, or are in secret contact with, the line of unitary consciousness, who are open to influences from a deeper or higher or subtler consciousness. Along with the demons there is also a line of *daimona*, guardian angels, in the hierarchy of vital beings. Much of what is known as aesthetic or artistic creation derives its spirit from this sphere. Many of the gods of beauty and delight are denizens of this heaven. Gandharvas and Kinnaras are here, Dionysus and even Apollo perhaps (at least in their mythological aspect—in their occult reality they properly belong to the overmind which is the own home of the gods), many of the angels, seraphs and cherubs dwell here. In fact, the mythological heaven for the most part can be located in this region.

All this is comprised within what we term the Higher or the Middle Vital. In the lower vital, we have said, consciousness has become still more circumscribed, dark,

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ignorantly obstinate, disparately disintegrated. It is the seed-bed of lust and cruelty, of all that is small and petty and low and mean, all that is dirt and filth. It is here that we place the *Pisāchas*, djinns, ghouls, and ghosts, and vampires, beings who possess the “possessed”.

Further down in the scale where life-force touches Matter, where²⁴² Life is about to precipitate as Matter, appear beings of a still lower order, of smaller dimensions and magnitudes—imps, elves, pixies, goblins, gnomes, fairies or dryads and naiads. There are even creatures or entities so close to Matter that they come into being and pass away with the building up and breaking of a definite pattern of material organisation. This individualisation of consciousness as beings or persons seems to disappear altogether when we enter the strictly material plane. There is here only an agglomeration of uniform dead particles.

We have thus far followed the course of the break-up of Personality, from the original one supreme Person, through a continuous process of multiplication and disintegration, of parcellation and crystallisation into more and more small self-centred units, until we reach the final pulverisation as purely material physico-chemical atoms. Now with the reversal of consciousness, in its return movement, we have again a process of growth and building up of individuality and personality; with the awakening and ascension of consciousness from level to level on the physical plane and in the material embodiment, there occurs too an evolution of the personal aspect of the reality.

We say that at the lowest level of involution, in Matter, where consciousness has zero magnitude, there is no personality or individuality. It is all a mechanical play of clashing particles that constantly fly apart or come together according to the force or the resultant of forces that act upon them. And individuality means a bounded form as its basis of reaction and a form that tends to persist and grow by assimilation: it means a centre of a definite manner and pattern of reaction. Individuality, in its literal sense, designates that which cannot be divided (*in + dividus*). Division is only another name for death for the particular entity. Even in the case of cell-division or self-division of some lower organisms, in the first instance the original living entity disappears and, secondly, the succeeding entities, created by division, always re-form themselves again into integral wholes. A material particle, on the other hand, is divisible *ad infinitum*. We have been able to divide even an atom (which means also *that which cannot be divided*) to such an extent as to reduce it to a mere charge of energy, nay, we have sublimated it to a geometrical point. Individualisation starts with the coming of life. It

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is a ganglion of life-force round which a particular system of action and reaction weaves itself. The characteristic of individuality is that each one is unique, each relates itself to others and to the environment in its own way, each²⁴³ expresses itself, puts forth its energy, receives impacts from outside in a manner that distinguishes it from others. It is true this character of individuality is not very pronounced in the earlier or rudimentary forms of life. Still it is there: it grows and develops slowly along the ladder of evolution. Only in the higher animals it attains a clear and definite norm and form.

In man something else or something more happens. For man is not merely an individual, he is also a personality. He is the outcome of a twofold growth and revelation. He has outgrown the vital and climbed into Mind, and he has dived into the Heart and touched his inner soul, his true psychic centre. It is this soul that is the source of his personality.

The formulation or revelation of the Psyche marks another line of what we have been describing as the Descent of Consciousness. The phenomenon of individualisation has at its back the phenomenon of the growth of the Psyche. It is originally a spark or nucleus of consciousness thrown into matter that starts growing and organising itself behind the veil, in and through the movements and activities of the apparent vehicle consisting of the triple nexus of Body (Matter) and Life and Mind. The extreme root of the psychic growth extends perhaps right into the body consciousness or Matter but its real physical basis and tenement it found only with the growth and formation of the physical heart. And yet the psychic individuality behind the animal organisation is very rudimentary. All that can be said it that it is there, in potentia, it exists, it is simple *being*: it has not started *becoming*. This is man's especiality: in him the psychic begins to be dynamic, to be organised and to organise, it is a psychic personality that he possesses. Now this flowering of the psychic personality is due to an especial Descent, the descent of a Person from another level of consciousness. That Person (or Super-person) is the *Jivātman*, the Individual Self, the Central being of each individual formation. The Jivas are centres of multiplicity thrown up in the bosom of the Infinite Consciousness: it is the supreme consciousness eddying in unit formations to serve as the basis for the play of manifestation. They are not within the frame of the manifestation (as the typical formations in the Supermind are), they are above or beyond or beside it and stand there eternally and invariably in and as part and parcel of the one supreme reality—Sachchidananda. But the Jivatman from its own status casts its projection, representation, delegated formulation—"emanation", in the phraseology of the neo-Platonists—into the manifestation of the triple²⁴⁴ complex of mind, life and

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body, that is to say, into the human vehicle, and stands behind as the psychic personality or the soul. This soul, we have seen, is a developing, organising focus of consciousness growing from below and come to its own in the human being: or we can put it the other way, that is to say, when it comes to its own, then the human being appears. And it has come to its own precisely by a descent of its own self from above, in the same manner as with the other descents already described. Now, this “coming to its own” means that it begins henceforth to exercise its royal power, its natural and inherent divine right, *viz.*, of consciously and directly controlling and organising its terrestrial kingdom composing body and life and mind. The exercise of conscious directive will, supported and illumined by a self-consciousness, that occurs with the advent of the Mind is a function of the Purusha, the Self-conscious being, in the Mind; but this self-conscious being has been able to come up, manifest itself and be active, because of pressure of the underlying psychic personality that has formed here.

Thus we have three characteristics of the human personality accruing from the psychic consciousness that supports and inspires it: –(1) self-consciousness: an animal acts, feels and even knows; but man knows that he acts, knows that he feels, knows even that he knows. This phenomenon of consciousness turning round upon itself is the hall-mark of the human being; (2) a conscious will holding together and harmonising, fashioning and integrating the whole external nature evolved till now; (3) a purposive drive, a deliberate and voluntary orientation towards a higher and ever higher status of individualisation and personalisation, –not only a horizontal movement seeking to embrace and organise the normal, the already attained level of consciousness, but also a vertical movement seeking to raise the level, altogether attain a new poise of higher organisation.

These characters, it is true, are not clear and pronounced, do not lie in front, at the beginning of the human personality. The normal human person has his psyche very much behind; but it is still there as *antaryāmin*, as the secret Inner Controller. And whatever the vagaries of the outer, instruments or their slavery to the mode of Ignorance, in and through all that it is this Inner Guide that holds the rein and drives upward in the end.

Thus naturally there appear gradations of the human personality; as the consciousness in the human being rises higher and higher, the psychic centre organises a higher and higher²⁴⁵—a richer, wider, deeper—personality. The first great conversion, the first turning of the human personality to a new mode of life and living, that is to say, living even externally according to the inner truth and reality, the first attempt at a conscious harmonisation of the psychic consciousness with its surface agents and vehicles, is what is known as spiritual initiation. This may happen and it

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does happen even when man lives in his normal mental consciousness. But there is the possibility of growth and evolution and transformation of personality in higher and higher spiritual degrees through the upper reaches of the Higher Mind, the varying degrees of Overmind and finally the Supermind. These are the spheres, the fields, even the continents of the personality, but the stuff, the substance of the personality, the inner nucleus of consciousness-force is formed, first, by the flaming aspiration, the upward drive within the developing and increasing psychic being itself, and, secondly, by the descent to a greater and greater degree of the original Being from which it emanated. The final coalescence of the fully and integrally developed psychic being with the supreme splendour of its very source, the Jivatman, occurs in the Supermind. When this happens the supramental personality becomes incarnate in the physical body: Matter in the material plane is transformed into a radiant substance made of pure consciousness, the human personality becomes a living form of the Divine. Thus the wheel comes full circle: creation returns to the point from which it started but with an added significance, a new fulfilment.

The mystery or rebirth in the evolution of the human personality is nothing but the mystery of the developing Psyche. At first this psyche or soul is truly a being “no bigger than the thumb” – it is the hardly audible “still small voice.” The experiences of life – sweet or bitter, happy or unhappy, good or bad, howsoever they may appear to the outward eye and perception – all the dialectics of a terrestrial existence contribute to the growth and development of the psychic consciousness. Each span of life means a special degree or mode of growth necessitated by the inner demand and drive of the divine Individual seated within the heart. The whole end in view of this secret soul is to move always towards and be united again with its oversoul, its original and high archetype in the Divine Consciousness: the entire course of its earthly evolution is chalked and patterned by the exact need of its growth. Whatever happens in each particular life, all the currents of all the lives converge and coalesce²⁴⁶, and serve the psychic consciousness to swell in volume and intensity and be one with the Divine Consciousness. Or, in a different imagery, one can say that the multifarious experiences of various lives are as fuel to the Inner Fire – this Psychic Agni which is just a Spark or a thin tongue at the outset of the human evolutionary course; but with the addition of fuel from life to life this Fire flames up, indeed, becomes ultimately a conflagration that burns and purifies the entire outer vehicle and transforms it into radiant matter – a fit receptacle, incarnation of the supernal Light. The mounting Fire (the consciousness-energy secreted in the earth-bound heart of Matter) finally flares up, discloses itself in its full amplitude and calls and attracts into it the incandescent supramental Solar Sphere which is the type and pattern it has to embody and express. This is the marriage of Heaven and Earth, of which the mystics all over the earth in all ages spoke and

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sang—to which the Vedic Rishi refers when he declares *Dyaur me pitā mātā pṛthivīriyam*²⁴⁷.

The supramentalisation of the personality which means the perfect divinisation of the personality, is yet not the final end of Nature’s march. Her path is endless, since she follows the trail of infinity. There are still higher modes of consciousness, or, if they cannot properly be called higher, other modes of consciousness that lie in waiting to be brought out and placed and established in the front of terrestrial evolution. Only, supramentalisation means the definite crossing over from Ignorance, from every trace and shadow of Ignorance, into the abiding and perennial Knowledge and Freedom. Thenceforward the course of Nature’s evolution may be more of the kind of expression than ascension; for, beyond the supermind it is very difficult to speak of a higher or lower order of consciousness. Everything thereafter is in the full perfect light—the difference comes in the mode or manner or stress of expression. However, that is a problem with which we are not immediately concerned.

We have spoken of four lines of Descent in the evolution and organisation of consciousness. There yet remains a fifth line. It is more occult. It is really the secret of secrets, the *Supreme Secret*. It is the descent of the Divine Himself. The Divine, the supreme Person himself descends, not directly through emanations, projections, partial or lesser formulations, but directly in his own plenary self. He descends not as a disembodied force acting as a general movement, possessing, at the most, other objects and persons as its medium, or instrument, but²⁴⁸ in an embodied form and in the fullness of his consciousness. The Indian word for Divine Incarnation *Avatārā* literally means *he who has descended*. The Divine comes down himself as a terrestrial being, on this material plane of ours, in order to raise the terrestrial and material Nature to a new status in her evolutionary course—even as He incarnated as the Great Boar who, with his mighty tusk, lifted a solid earth from out of the waters of Deluge. It is his purpose to effect an ascension of consciousness, a transmutation of being, to establish a truly New order, a New Dharma, as it is termed (*dharmasamsthāpanārthāya*²⁴⁹). On the human level, he appears as a human person—for two purposes. First of all, he shows, by example, how the ascension, the transmutation is to be effected, how a normal human being can rise from a lower status of consciousness to a higher one. The Divine is therefore known as the Lord of Yoga—for Yoga is the means and method by which one consciously uplifts oneself, unites oneself with the Higher Reality. The embodied Divine is the ideal and pattern: he shows the path, himself walks the path and man can follow, if he chooses. The Biblical conception of the Son of God—God made flesh—as the intermediary between the human and the Divine, declaring “I am the Way and the

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Goal", expresses a very similar truth. The Divine takes a body for another—occult—reason also. It is this: Matter or terrestrial life cannot be changed,—changed radically, that is to say, *transformed*—by the pure spiritual consciousness alone, lying above or within; also it is not sufficient to bring about only that much of change in terrestrial life which can be effected by the mere spiritual force acting in a general way. It looks as if the physical transformation which is what is meant by an ascension or emergence in the evolutionary gradient were possible only by a physical impact embodying and canalising the spiritual force: it is with his physical body that the Divine Incarnation seems to push and lift up physical Nature to a new and higher status.

The occult seers declare that we are today on the earth at such a crisis of evolution. Earth and Man and man's earthly life need to be radically transfigured. The trouble and turbulence, the chaos and confusion that are now overwhelming this earth, indicate the acute tension before the release, the *détente* of a NEW MANIFESTATION.

The²⁵⁰ Individual Self in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo

BY DR K.C. VARADACHARI, M.A., Ph.D.

I

The individual problem is the world problem. All enquiries into reality revolve round the status of the individual, the enquirer into the nature of reality who is a part and parcel of it. It is he who feels his bondage, and it is indeed he who seeks to surmount it and all that it connotes or signifies. The nature of the individual has itself been a real problem, for we find various explanations for his existence are given. The individual soul is said to be a part of the material nature or a simulacrum of spiritual ego or reality; its cognitive nature has been stated to be due to an accident of connexion with outer objects and not belonging to it as a sentience-point. Its substantiality has been questioned by some who called it but a congeries or constellation of cognitions, feelings and desireful volitions rather than a cognizer; its immortality has been seriously assailed; some have called it limited in duration to the period of segmentation of reality by some indescribable but real adjuncts; or to the period of veiling by Māyā. Thus the Māyāvāda and Bhāskara monists have throughout denied eternity to the individual soul; whilst the one granted reality to it during the period of its existence also, the other denied that too to it. Nyāya Philosophy affirmed its atomicity, a bare abstract spirituality bereft of consciousness when no objects are perceived or contacted; Buddhism denied its substantiality though it affirmed its real momentariness as a

constellation, and pleaded for the acceptance of an ever-recurring continuity of the originations of this constellation as a series. In all the above systems there is no clear-cut need for postulating the existence of the soul or individual self at all nor its efforts to arrive at salvation.¹

The individual soul is a psychic fact. We cannot however find any reasons whatever for postulating its immortality as an unchangeable²⁵¹ spiritual entity, nor can we affirm its incarnations in matter in the theory of rebirths without any modification of its nature, as the theories of atomic abstract point-souls or monads or Māyāvāda or Buddhism affirm. There can be no theory of rebirth without a theory of immortality of the individual soul, and the acceptance of rebirth in their systems is unwarranted. Whether it is the materialistic theory or the superconscient theory of a Changeless Being or the Nihilistic theory, we arrive at one conclusion: “the apparent soul or spiritual individuality of the creature is not immortal in the sense of eternity, but has a beginning and an end in Time, is a creation by Māyā or by Nature Force or cosmic Action out of the Inconscient or Superconscient, and is therefore impermanent in its existence. In all three, rebirth is either unnecessary or else illusory; it is either the prolongation by repetition of an illusion, or it is an additional revolving wheel among the many wheels of the complex machinery of the Becoming, or it is excluded since a single birth is all that can be asked for by a conscious being fortuitously engendered as part of an inconscient creation.” (*The Life Divine*. Vol. II, p. 690).

It is only in the realistic (who were also theistic) schools of Vedānta we have the acceptance of the reality and plurality of the individual souls, and their relationship to the One Divine Lord is not of such a kind as to involve at any time the abolition of the individuals. It is in *laya*, dissolution that they lose their activity so as to look as stones, inconscient, whilst in Liberation or *mukti* their relationship is one of perfect illumination of consciousness, with the Divine as their inner self and Lord from which state of ecstatic oneness or unity there can be no fall. The theory of rebirth in these theories is due to their beginning less ignorance or *anādi-pravāha-karma*, as a series of experiences of pleasure and pain, sorrows and strivings which perfect the individual or imperil its ascent into the kinds of births that make their devotion to the Divine perfect and incorruptible. The immortality of the individual souls is vouchsafed here in so far as their innate spiritual natures persist undispersed into original atoms of matter at death but continue the voyage interrupted here on other planes or return here itself. The soul beginning undoubtedly with little consciousness-vision in the lowest stratum of existence gets its consciousness purified and perfected or more properly enlarged till at the human level it is enabled to discriminate the real values of life from the false.

¹ *Vedānta Sūtra* I, i. 4 (*Śrī Bhāṣya*)

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Growth is predicated of the soul not indeed in the sense that it²⁵² becomes big or vast as it ascends in the scale of existence according to the size of its body as the Jainas said, but intensively and extensively in terms of the ambit of consciousness or more truly *divya-jñāna*, superconsciousness till it becomes omniscient or omnipervasive. Even when occupying a body of matter this limit might be reached, for consciousness understood not as the human consciousness but as the highest consciousness identical with the Divine consciousness which knows no limitation at any time is eternally vast, illimitable, omniscient, omnipervasive, beneficent and puissant.

In the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo immortality of the individual soul is accepted and therefore its rebirths are also accepted. The purpose of the individual atomic soul in trying to achieve its real nature of immortality in and through the process of rebirths into matter and other lower forms of life is not explained as adequately as may be desired in the philosophies of realistic Vedānta. If Māyā had been inexplicable in Māyāvāda, it is no less true of the Karma. The explanation that it is inexplicable because its origination is unknown will not fully satisfy the seeker after a real and valuable explanation. We find in the philosophies of realisms too, Māyā gets a place if not as a deluding agent, at least as a power-concept or knowledge-concept. The creative act is one of Delight of Brahman or God. If creation is a deluding operative or degrading action or punitive expedition, it cannot be the Divine's action but of a Nero. It cannot be *līlā* whether understood as the Grace of the Divine or as the *Kridā* of the Divine.¹

According to Sri Aurobindo "the Universe is a self-creative process of the Supreme Reality whose presence makes spirit the substance of things,—all things are there as the spirit's powers and means and forms of manifestation. An infinite existence, an infinite consciousness, an infinite force and will, an infinite delight of being is the Reality secret behind the appearances of the universe; its divine Supermind or Gnosis has arranged the cosmic order, but arranged it indirectly through the three subordinate and limiting terms of which we are conscious here, Mind, Life and Matter. The material universe is the lowest stage of a downward plunge of the manifestation, an involution of the manifested being of this triune Reality into an apparent nescience of itself, that which we now call the Inconscient; but out of this nescience the evolution of that manifested being into a²⁵³ recovered self-awareness was from the very first inevitable. It was inevitable because *that which is involved must evolve*; for it is not only there as an existence, a force hidden in its apparent opposite, and every such force

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¹ cf. my *concept of Līlā*: JBHU. Vol. I. 1937.

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must in its inmost nature be moved to find itself, to realise itself, to release itself into play, but it is the reality of that which conceals it, it is the self which the Nescience has lost and which therefore it must be the whole secret meaning, the constant drift of its action to seek for and recover. *It is through the conscious individual being that this recovery is possible*; it is in him that the evolving consciousness becomes organised and capable of awaking to its own Reality. The immense importance of the individual being, which increases as he rises in the scale, is the most remarkable and significant fact of a universe which started without consciousness and without individuality in an undifferentiated Nescience. This importance can only be justified if the Self as individual is no less real than the Self as cosmic Being or Spirit and both are powers of the Eternal. It is only so that can be explained the necessity for the growth of the individual and his discovery of himself as a condition for the discovery of the cosmic self and consciousness and of the Supreme Reality. If we adopt this solution, this is the first result, the reality of the persistent individual; but from that first consequence the other result follows, that rebirth of some kind is no longer a possible machinery which may or may not be accepted, it *becomes a necessity*, an inevitable outcome of the root nature of our existence." (*ibid.*, pp. 703-4) (italics mine).

The above long extract is to put in clearest light the entire relevancy of the growth of the individual immortal soul from a concealed or veiled consciousness towards the superconscious consciousness of the Divine shaping its immortality with its ascent in the Organic through reducing the impenetrable and refractory Inconscient in a series of rebirths. The individual soul's delight it is, and not its karma, that mystifying force of bondage, beginningless and mechanical, that propels it to organize the Inconscient, plane by plane, and to integrate them in the single organism of his highest achievement—the Divine Body, pure, immortal too, a perfect instrument of its own inner light, truth, delight and Consciousness-power. Thus the individual soul in its involution and evolution is undoubtedly persistent, not in an unreal manner nor in the manner of a fictitious stream nor is it helplessly caught up in the vice-grip of a terrible fate or karma or kismet or *adriṣṭa*²⁵⁴, wheeled forward and²⁵⁵ backward from one place of existence to another. In fact, the individual soul is a shaper of its own inner law of ascent and descent for the sake of enjoying that secret delight of its existence even when it is being overwhelmed by the tribulations of its ascending journey. It is, at first appearance, a coarse, selfish aggressive egoism placed in opposition to matter, struggling for survival, against it as well as against all that came to be with it. Thus the philosophies that devote themselves exclusively to the realization of the Inner Transcendent Self or Ātmā or Brahman or the *Puruṣottama* are forced to explain their togetherness, opposition, and their indivisible solidarity in respect of genus, race or vocation or aspiration or need, with the other selves or souls which display the identical

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urge to transcend the limitations of environment, and seek to arrive at social harmony. It is therefore important to remember that the individual is not single but a multiplicity having within it the problems of unity and struggle and competition. In the modern world it is this aspect that is occupying a large portion of the thought of thinking men. Not without justice. The problem of social harmony and the individual freedom is not a simple calculus of gives and takes, but a real question of discovery of the foundations of our life, materially, vitally and spiritually, which can be the basis of our future ends or *puruṣārthas*²⁵⁶. A material or economic equality is indeed necessary for all, equally a vital equality to work and endeavour as well as the spiritual equality in respect of transcendent goals of religious and cultural and artistic things. These are not all. But yet without these the individual is no more than an abstraction, a ghost that is without any vestige of actuality.

II

There are two ways of approach in metaphysics in respect of the derivation of the social consciousness and the individual consciousness. The individual is derived from the homogeneous mass of Nature or the group of crowd as a gradual disruption of its unity through the unconscious focalisation of interests of each part. The purpose of this disruption into many may be conceivable for the sake of greater social development which is indeed for the sake of social unity; such a unity impels its own self-divisioning into an infinite plurality. Such a thesis has to be accepted by all schools, whether they call this pluralization real ²⁵⁷or unreal, temporary or permanent. The One-many problem is thus the rock on which absolutisms and phenomenalisms are wrecked.

The second way is to derive the social mass or homogeneity from the collections of individuals or the many through devices of absorption, subordination or subsumption, annihilation of uniquenesses in each individual or reduction to uniformity through impositions of conformity to routine law, and logically to evolve a general idea (*jāti*) which is hypostatized into a real thing. The social unity or unification is achieved as the inner necessity of the individual plurality. All pluralists are forced to accord to plurality a unity or God or harmony of co-existence or order of service so that they could be together in harmony without rift or divergent pulls. They too have to accept Unity or Oneness of the plurality whether they are prepared to call this real or unreal, temporary or permanent.

In both these ways there is inevitable the affirmation of evolution of the individual or the evolution of the social unity or Universe, the former involving the

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abolition of the society or mass uniformity or Nature in the raw, and the latter involving the abolition of the individual uniquenesses.

Sri Aurobindo finds that the truth of the Oneness is its eternal manyness, expressed or unexpressed in the texture of experience, whilst the truth of the manyness lies in their oneness, an eternal and compelling oneness that substands the divergent currents of life. Thus the individuals are not mere fragmentations or portions, sundered apart, of the Divine, but are charged intrinsically with the *nisus* to unity, even whilst the social homogeneity or Nature is impelled unconsciously to realise the infinite potentialities of manyness enfolded in it.

“For the initiation of the evolutionary emergence from the Inconscient works out by two forces, a secret cosmic consciousness and an individual consciousness manifest on the surface. The secret cosmic consciousness remains secret and subliminal to the surface individual, it organises itself on the surface by the creation of separate objects and beings. But while it organises the separate object and the body and mind of the individual being, it creates also collective powers of consciousness which are large subjective formations of cosmic Nature; but it does not provide for them an organised mind and body, it bases them on the group of individuals, develops for them a group mind, a changing yet continuous group body.” (*ibid.*, pp. 606-7).

These two movements are in the supramental Divine worked out²⁵⁸ simultaneously from the realm of Nature or matter as a constant fulguration of its unity, and from the realm of souls as a constant effort at discovering the secret of unity. The soul’s apparent finitude is the cause or reason for its search after a larger and profounder synthesis, not indeed in terms of the Nature from which it has emerged, as its owning a body reveals to it, but in terms of the spiritual Oneness interpenetrating all that exists.

Thus the perfection of the natural world with its diversities due to the individuating process within it that after all leads to the foundation of groups, and the perfection of the unifying impulse in souls due to their *nisus* to Unity or transcendence of their differences, are what appear superficially as two opposite movements of evolution. It should be clear also that we cannot speak of the involutive and evolutive movements in respect of these two processes, for both these are really evolutive in so far as they are registering progress by throwing up the unique diversities of individuals on the one hand equipped with highly developed organic bodies and revealing heights of consciousness and intelligences far superior to the inconscience or nescience, and on the other hand, the individuals are evolving types of social organization from the crudest of associative groups to the spiritual utopia of *bhāgavatas*, souls forged in the fire Divine,

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lit within with the light Divine, free, joyous and true. Since these two movements are simultaneous or successive, "it follows that only as the individuals become more and more conscious can the group-being also become more and more conscious; the growth of the individual is the indispensable means for the inner growth as distinguished from the outer force and expansion of the collective being. This indeed is the dual importance of the individual that it is through him that the cosmic spirit organises its collective units and makes them self-expressive and progressive and through him that it raises Nature from the Inconscience to the Superconscience and exalts it to meet the transcendent." (*ibid.*, p. 607).

Thus the souls are in their highest development just the Divine in His manyness, upheld in the supramental unity of His Divine Oneness. They may be considered to be the infinite perfections of the Divine upheld by the Supreme Perfection of His Self-Identity in all of them, which is their solid reality, benediction, wherefore He is the *satyasya Satyam*. The essential delight of His nature makes all these souls in their unique multiplicity or individualities, seek that profound and ultimate and everlasting²⁵⁹ plenitude of Delight that is of the Oneness. The seeking or searching or the divining of that Delight (*Vanam*, as the *Kenopaniṣad* puts it) is the nīśus of the individual souls, because they discover that to be their integral need for undiluted happiness. It is that which necessitates their realization of the delight in the Oneness even as they have in some measure realised their delight in His manyness. The One without the other ends in the realisation of an isolated and truly pathetic egoism or egoness, whilst the other alone stands in the gloom of Divine Solitariness, even as it has been described by the *Upaniṣads*. The metaphysical truth that Sri Aurobindo has pointed out in his formulation of the Advaita is that the multiplicity involved in Matter and in progress can find its fulfilment only in and through the Divine Oneness, and there its culmination does not mean annulment or liquidation or absorption but exaltation in the light, power, delight of the simultaneous experience of Oneness-Manyness, which are both eternal and eternally true of the Supreme Being.

III

The sufferings of the individual souls are the signs of their birth-throes, not signs of imperfection and finitude as such, for indeed there are no essential or intrinsic imperfections, but of the propelling inward need or drive to arrive at the formula of unity with the rest. One has to individualise oneself ere one can socialise oneself completely. This dual movement is always present. The individual soul is a

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concentration of the Total All so that it might in return arrive at the fullest diffusion of the Total All in and through its secret unity within it. We can understand thus the soul's voyage through material (*sic*) forms of matter, life and mind and overmind, so as to emerge as the patent one of the Many gathering within itself fully all the knowledge and delight inherent in the Total All as its essential *amśa*, or organ, through a series of rebirths, not meaningless rounds alone nor regressive rebirths compelled by the inexplicable Māyā or Karma or Avidyā. The fulfilment of the Universe is in the growing personality of the individual as a superconscious One of the Divine One in His eternal manyness, unique significant *vibhūti*; fulfilling some supreme delight of His in the terrestrial movement or *līlā*. Rebirth need not at all times be a sign of decadence or descent into a lower form—a torture of dwelling in the wombs²⁶⁰ of imperfect creatures; it might as well be a deepening sense of oneness with Matter which is also spiritual, endowed with its riches of change and modifications, and convertibility. The birth of a soul in matter or material or vital form is, as it were, a sign of matter's essential transformability or transmutability. It is a secret of evolution of the individual's immortal pursuit; it is not a sign of failure but a sign of integrative action brought about by processes of compensations and accelerations and retardations of some parts at the expense of other parts till in the long run, there emerges a full-blown integral personality that does not act in subordination to matter but controls and shapes it and exhibits its own true spiritual nature and thus achieves delight for itself in terms of its own being.

Thus whether it is the breaking up of social organizations or of individuals, there emerge constantly recurrences or rebirths of these social forms and individuals till the equation of the social perfection and individual integral perfection is realised in all levels of true spiritual being.

The relationship between the individual and the society appears at first look to be one of part and whole. The society is seeking its fulfilment in and through the individuals even as the fulfilment of the individuals is affirmed to consist in the fullest realisation of Society. The *aṅgāṅgī-bhāva* (whole and part relation) or *śeṣa-śeś*²⁶¹ (dependent-principal relation) between the society and the individual is the highest that humanism has been able to offer as a consolation to the distraught world. Of course from the standpoint of the idealistic metaphysics the reality of the individual is only the society or the Absolute. Pluralistic idealism has in modern years affirmed that the individual has a uniqueness that is to be considered to be at its highest in harmony with the uniquenesses of other souls or personalities. The aim of philosophy is to present in clearest light the nature of the fundamental harmony that subsists between the souls. This harmony is something inherent in the very existence of the multiplicity but it is

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also necessary to make it conscious or superconscious in the individuals composing the society. Leibnitz affirmed a kind of ascent and descent of souls in the wheel of progress, but it was a kind of mechanical procession having in essence no necessity towards integral revelation of a full-blown personality. The *monadus monadum* was also in constant peril of losing its primacy to its successors, in the chain of process. The organistic view, on the other hand, affirms the evolution of the individual from the simple mechanical structure of²⁶² the protoplasm to the highly diversified human organism characterised by mind, vital life and material organisation. The social life typical of the animal herds and cell-life such as the bee-hive or ant-colony, is one in which the unity is organic, for a loss of its central life, or member in the Queen Bee or Ant involves a total disruption of the entire colony. The earlier organisations of the human being dominated by the leadership of a King or Tyrant (*born*, not made) were very similar to the above vitalistic organisations and in this respect there is a lot of truth in the contention that the State is an Organism whose soul or head is the King or Tyrant or Dictator. This however is a condition that has not seen the emergence of individuals *qua* individuals. If in the words of M. Bergson¹ we consider the first development to be one moment of the dialectical frenzy, the exhaustion of this entails the second development of the individual effort at recovering his freedom that was inevitably and forcibly suppressed and stopped by the first. The specific descriptions of the twofold frenzy by M. Bergson do not bring out the metaphysical basis for the diversifications of functions in the organism or their unification or synthesis or integration in the light of the intuitive or supramental, in the individuals nor, for the matter of that, in the society developing its moral and religious life. In this respect he follows his own original thesis of instinct *versus* intellect, to explain the twofold frenzy of individual struggle after freedom from conformity to society and the social struggle for establishing uniformity and discipline in the lives of its members. In Sri Aurobindo's thesis, however, we have a clear enunciation of the metaphysical reality of the society as well as the integrity of the individuals through his unique thesis of eternal oneness in the eternal multiplicity, whether it be of the organism or the society, planes or powers, individuals or the Deity. It is this metaphysical basis that makes multiplicity seek the freedom for its many individuals even as the individuals are impelled towards some sort of unity wherein lies their strength. The two moments in the history of growth of individual freedom in society and achievement of social solidarity are, even when in frenzied movement, explained by his thesis.

The individual soul truly grows into a universal being, that is, a being having universal responsiveness and love and value for all, even as the universal Being is enabled to manifest itself in and through each of the individuals. The mystical

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¹ *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p. 256 f.

consciousness which²⁶³ is the pioneering spirit ever after adventure into planes and spaces beyond the intellect, according to M. Bergson, seeks to evolve into the universal consciousness by a leap or a burst into the same through concentration, not indeed of its consciousness nor by a surrender to the Divine All, but by the strength of its vital impulse (*élan vital*). This explanation does scant justice to the fundamental uniqueness of each soul and the continuity of evolution, as it aims at the abolition of the true individuality in the expanse of Mind-energy of the intuitive level. It forgets that the mystics are realists and are unique personalities who, inspite of their universal outlook and disinterested activity, are strong personalities. On the other hand, according to Sri Aurobindo, the individual is a real one of the eternal multiplicity of the Divine, mounting or ascending the evolutionary rungs by rejecting the lower with the help of the Divine, so that ultimately the lower may be orientated or transmuted so as to express more and more fully the higher and highest planes of the individual soul, which indeed is a Divine personality.

Thus the individual in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo does not have merely a temporary existence nor is it a term in the phenomenal creation due to the operation of a *Māyā* or *upādhi*; on the other hand, it can be a portion, *amśa*, a ray, or organ of the Divine, if by these terms we understand an integral oneness of the soul with the Divine One in every respect as one of the eternal multiplicity. Thus it is that the individual soul is capable of realising the supreme formula of its identity with the Divine of Brahman in a real manner through a real evolution and a real surrender to the Divine which it apprehends to be its complementary and not a counter-reality.

The doctrine of limitational manifestation of Bhāskara has no place in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo for the individual is in no sense a gross perversion or segmentation of the seamless garment of Reality. The Brahman is indivisible and the limitation, even when real, cannot limit really. Nor is the fulgurational theory of Yādava Prakāśa any more in place, for the reason that Matter, souls and Īśvara cannot have the nisus or effort to recover their liberation. There can be no endeavour or aspiration in the souls nor in the inconscient matter towards the achievement of the evolutionary culmination in the Transcendent vision of the One-many Unity. The Īśvara is less than the All. Further, in both these systems the individual soul is impermanent. The *bhedābheda* or identity-difference theories suffer²⁶⁴ usually from the

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defect of postulating identity and difference between the Divine One and the individual many and the multiplicity of Nature *simultaneously and unlimitedly*, that is to say, without reference to space and time or causality. In the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, the Original Nature of the Divine as an eternal oneness in eternal multiplicity rescues it from the attacks directed against the former schools. The One is eternally manifested in or motivating the many, whilst the many are manifesting or yearning to manifest the Oneness in the forms of harmony, organisation, unity or union of themselves. The many and the One are the one same Divine. The descent into matter, life, mind, overmind and the triple superminds above, as also the ascent worked out in terms of these seven planes by the eternal multiplicity of His nature does not entail the loss of the soul's nature as consciousness-delight – *Cidānanda-svarūpa*. On the contrary, this *Cidānanda* it is that is the informing principle in these planes which shapes the ascent of matter and the other succeeding grades of evolution to their own fullest possibilities as all great art reveals.

It may be asked with appropriateness whether this eternal multiplicity cannot be considered to be 'a body' (*śarīra*) of the Divine, a thing or entity that is absolutely existing for the sake of the Divine being supported and controlled and enjoyed by Him, whilst it is that which lives and moves and has its being in Him.¹ The view of Sri Aurobindo does not envisage this thesis of Ramanuja except indirectly. The many may be considered to be the body of the One but what is likely to be missed by the *śarīra-śarīrī-bhāva* even when it is considered to be *aprathaksiddha*, inseparable or eternal, is that there is the affirmation of the soul as a *śarīrī* in respect of its body whilst it has to be or play the role of the *śarīra* in respect of the Divine simultaneously for the purposes of an identical act. The individual soul then will become a passive or receptive conduit of the Infinite's Purposes. If we accept this we will be forced to accept or at least are open to a possible objection that the individual soul can be reduced to the status of a sheath of the Ātma (*jñāna-maya-kośa*, for example, as in Advaita), and this is certainly not what the eternal multiplicity is. It is true that Ramanuja was against this type of identification of the *jīva* or soul with a *kośa* and²⁶⁵ his definition of the *śarīra* does not lend itself to this interpretation.

If again we accept the Divine is resident in the heart of every self in the literal sense we shall have a dyarchy or dual government of the individual organism however harmonious their relationship might be through the willing and consecrated surrender of the individual soul to the Divine. Ramanuja saw clearly this possibility but it was inevitable *in the ascent*, as also in intimate union, to dislodge or absorb the individual

¹ *Śri Bhāṣya*. yasya cetanasya yad dravyam sarvātmanā svārthe niyantum dhārayitum ca śakyam yaccheṣātaika svarūpam ca tat tasya śarīram. (II. i. 9).

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into the One Divine.¹ The highest consciousness at which he arrived was the experience of love that means co-existence *samānādhi-karaṇya*²⁶⁶ in mystical consciousness.

In the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo since the individual souls are not impermanent, and are not sheaths but real eternal many of the Divine, and cannot be at any time merged or absorbed into the One except in the sense of being withdrawn into the potential condition (*sūkṣmāvasthā*²⁶⁷), their freedom or liberation is the freedom in the One. This *mukti* is something that enriches the soul or the self and is different from the causal condition of potential existence, the inchoate homogeneity. The liberated condition in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is one rich integral omniplanal perfection lit with the experience of Seership. This is due to the evolutionary ascent of delight culminating in the double experience of multiplicity and oneness simultaneously. Such an experience is impossible in the mechanical dispensation of *ācchādana* or veilings or limitations, for according to the systems of *Māyā* and others, liberation is indistinguishable from *laya*, cosmic withdrawal, or when individually applied, *nirvāṇa*²⁶⁸, cessation. Ramanuja saw clearly this truth even as Sri Aurobindo has. The evolutionary theory of Sri Aurobindo however grants to the eternal multiplicity of the Divine a possibility of the Vision of ultimate transformation and attainment of all that exists in the One Ātman, in and through Itself. Thus the radical affirmation of the oneness of the individual soul with the Divine is rendered possible. Such a unity-experience is impossible without the Divine being that in its multiplicity. The individual soul is in any case not originated nor annulled; it is a real individual, finite in so far as it is the many, but it is not because of that imperfect, incapable²⁶⁹ of developing or evolving in process into the divine Nature. It is not the All though it is the All in its manyness. The Divine One in His totality is more than all the multiplicity put together, for He is not a college of souls nor a community of persons however evolved, perfected and harmonised in Divine Unity. The Transcendent transcends every height and group.

IV

¹ The defect of *Kalpanā-gauravam* or multiplication of categories in violation of the principle of the Occam's razor is refuted by orthodox logicians in cases where the Śruti or Śabda-pramāṇam sanctions or affirms more categories in violation of the intellectual principle.

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The individual soul or self or personality that we have so far described as one of the eternal multiplicity of the Divine, is not a bare point of consciousness, qualitiless and contentless nor a false embodied creature whose one business it is to get rid of its imperfect and false body at the earliest possible moment nor is it a windowless monad incapable of becoming a master of the universe of matter, life and mind except impermanently and uncertainly, condemned to an eternal chain of successions in Ignorance or ever at the grim mercy and pleasure of the Inconscient Prakṛti. If this be not the destiny of the individual, and if his continuous commerce with Inconscience, vital and mental and overmental planes by means of his continuous births in them have meaning and value to his own superb destiny, that is to say, if he does indeed become enriched in every manner in every plane through an intimate and interior knowledge of these in his own widest actuality of terrestrial experience, then the individual is a unique personality manifesting divine life and perfection and eternity here and now, even in the body of matter, life, mind and overmind transformed in the Divine Light and Knowledge for the sake of the Delight. The true sense of immortality on all levels is attained since it no longer means mere persistence in or amid changes and stripping off of the sheaths which had covered the inner nature of the spiritual being. *Amṛtatva* is worked out possibly in terms of *Ānandatva* of Oneness of the multiplicity of the Divine, and not through descent into and ascent from Ignorance and Inconscience.

The destiny of the human individual is not to attain *after death* a transcendental or divine body (*aprākṛta-śarīra*) or to achieve a mergence or Divine Oneness after such a donning of the eternal luminous body, but even here to feel the Divine in oneself in His Oneness as also in His eternal multiplicity, and because of that presence undergo the changes in nature which are verily the formation of the *aprākṛta-divya-śarīra*. This is the ²⁷⁰significant possibility of the indwellingness of the Supreme Divine 'superiorly' in the individual through a radical surrender and prayer to Him. The *Jīvan-mukta* ideal is reinforced by the siddha-ideal, for it is not the *Jīvan-mukta* of the Advaita Vedānta that we arrive at but a more integral realisation of the Divine Personality in the individual. This is so much the case that the final movement of the Total Liberation of all individuals, if indeed that should happen, will be such that the eternal multiplicity is to remain a multiplicity of perfect unique personalities of the Divine and would on no account become liquidated in the Oneness of the Divine on the principle of 'Identity of indiscernables' of Leibnitz.

Certain Western philosophers of the pluralistic school have canvassed the possibility of the ultimate society of such individuals being a-religious, a-theistic, a-moral and anarchistic. Some thinkers other than these have beheld the final emergence of a society to consist of children of God in a Heaven, blissfully enjoying the governance of God, the father, without being assailed by the forces of Evil which presumably have

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been permitted by the Divine to work a purgatory for the religious and a hell for the rest on Earth. Some theologians have hoped that after the attainment of salvation abandoning their bodies the freed souls would enjoy continuously the beatific glory, beauty and ecstasies of union, even as the eternally freed souls (*nitya-muktas*) of the Divine Godhead do. These thinkers envisage a community characterised by equality as between these freed souls, by freedom for each soul to manifest itself fully superconsciously and by a sense of fullness in stature, communion of love and delight.

Thus whether we have the political utopia of 'ingenuous philosophers outside history' or the theological utopias outside the temporal sojourn on this refractory planet, the fulfilment of the Divine consummation of integral all-sided existence is beyond the possibilities of the soul. In the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, the ideal of human unity is fashioned in the Superconscient life of each individual who has ascended and thereby fulfilled the mission set before himself at the beginning of the creature adventure to realise the divine pattern of his unique evolution of the Total All in the Divine, in His eternal multiplicity. The individual indeed becomes a *buddha* and a *siddha*, not in the sense of having attained to a state of *nirvāṇa*²⁷¹ nor yet in the sense of possessing occult powers, but in the sense of fulfilling the Divine Eternity, Truth, Delight and²⁷² Reality in terms of the Divine knowledge or Gnosis. In that supreme consummation there is *pūrṇatva*²⁷³, fullness in the individual as it is in the Divine, constantly renewing the Divine activity of bliss and love and varied infinities of relationships, none of which limit to detriment, frustrate to annihilation or force into neurosis or veil to bind. Every individual personality of the Divine in his fullest vision perceives all as the play of the Divine and himself as the exponent of unique beauties and creative *māyās* of the Divine.

The mechanical theocratic government is not at all the truth of the Divine World Order, nor can it be the ideal of the gnostic individual. Nor is it the materialistic view of reality that develops into a type of communistic or fascistic or imperialistic competitive nostrums which promise all individual development, social harmony and efficient government. The constant peril under which our humanity lies is the peril of its own regression, due to excessive and ill-balanced application of the principles of government at the back of the above three kinds of State. Unless mankind is changed fundamentally inwardly, the individual who has been a child of the material evolution and vital aspiration will not be secure even in the humanity to which he has ascended. Mere rationalism or intellectualism has indeed been helpful and yet it has not been able to see the essential structure or shape of the evolutionary process. A pseudo-mystical religion or pseudo-religious mysticism may lead to the attainment on the part of one or

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more individuals to the top-point of human evolution but a fundamental change is impossible without the help of an education based on the essential reality of the Divine Evolutionism that is being worked out in terms of the conflict between the individual's freedom and social unity.

The divine nature must be achieved, and it can only be achieved with the help of the Divine in each individual (*antaryāmin*) who can and does perform the transformation and transvaluation of the individual's life at the conscious and willing surrender of the individual to Him of all his firm attachments to material, vital and mental assets. The Divine does not demand of the individual the surrender of his social life nor even the love that beautifies his ugly sufferings; what is demanded of him is the abnegation of all ways of material, vital and mental approach to them. A divine approach is all that is needed, and this cannot happen except through total surrender in freedom or through total self-giving. Without an intelligent understanding²⁷⁴ of the divine situation and divine need, not all the rationalistic hopes of humanists will avail. A complete unification of society or rather the foundation of real society involves the recognition that the Divine is the Society of perfect individuals in His eternal manyness in terms of process of *līlā*, whilst His own eternal Oneness performs the office of the Divine Ruler – *Niyantā*. Both are real and both are to be realised by the striving soul if an integral realisation should happen.

The theory of classless society adverted to by many socialists and religious men, is when considered in the context of the highest evolution a matter of no great consequence, for in that state there can be nothing exploited or no one exploitable. An infinite diversity of functions will always remain which may however cast no shadow on the faces of others. Is it so strange then that in ancient Indian mythology its Gods have no shadows?

Sri Aurobindo's interest, and his main and abiding concern in all that he has given us, is in the future of the human individual, his race, and his prospects. In the Divine Life, Divine Race and Divine Unity he sees the secret founts of aspiration of man so far. His meridian or culmination is all that can make may yield his lower treasures, not once for all but only for a time, so that attaining he could descend to transform or even in ascending transform his world and society and relationships in the pattern of transcending delights.

("Hindi passage omitted here")

THE ²⁷⁵MASTER

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..... till one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat

– *Milton.*

O Heaven's Unborn, incarnate on this earth,
Immortal Bliss, crowning our mortal birth,
To thee we offer heart's obeisance,
Dim sparks of thy sun-haloed radiance!

Cast from our ancient heritage, we are
Wandering from deep to deep like a lost star:
A life of inner loneliness we lead,
In our bosom shines the slumbering spirit-seed.

Our dreams are born of Time's ephemeral breath,
Our hopes, pursued by shadow-wings of death;
Pale like a waning moon, they leave behind
A trail across the azure of the mind.

Always we move on, spurred by a blind will
To live; dumb tools of the invisible
Forces of Nature, we destroy or build,
Our vision by the hands of Fate is sealed.

To lead us back to our home of felicity
We have prayed through longing centuries to thee;
At last thou hast come, O omnipotent Grace,
And worn by thy God-love a human face!

O Heaven's Unborn, incarnate on this earth,
Immortal Bliss, crowning our mortal birth,
To thee we offer heart's obeisance
Dim sparks of thy Sun-haloed radiance!

NIRODBARAN



The²⁷⁶ Problem of Life
and
Sri Aurobindo

BY DR INDRA SEN, M.A., Ph.D.,

Professor, Hindu College, Delhi

Particularly at this time, when the world is engaged in a catastrophic struggle and nearer home too, when we have had conflict on many hands, is the problem of human life most irresistibly forced upon us. We find men dying by the million and conflict ruthlessly carried to each civilian home. We feel terribly shaken and ask ourselves in relative desperation, is that the end and goal of our life? Our hearths and homes are razed to the ground by the sweep of a devastating war and we ask, is that the fate of the values which we have always sought to realise and conserve? We do not seem to have time for art, literature and philosophy and we inquire, what do we really live for? Men go to the battlefields, fight bravely for nation, country and great ideals and if they return, they not infrequently become crazy and insane. We are horrified at the sight of them, and exclaim, this is worse than death!

The conflict as it is going on to-day is tremendous and proportionately great is the demand for a resolution of it. The war-weary world is looking forward to peace and we are already considering problems of the post-war reconstruction. It appears an almost radical revaluation of social and political values will take place. A new world seems to be on the anvil and taking shape, as it were. We feel surprised and slightly reassured by the feeling that perhaps we needed the terrible shock of such an unheard-of war to awaken us to a new sense of values. For the new construction that seems to be slowly arising perhaps all this destruction was necessary.

Sri Aurobindo has a unique perception of the realities of the war situation. Behind the array of fighting peoples and countries, on this side or that, he sees great world or cosmic forces in conflict. These forces are, to him, related to the evolutionary destiny of man. He not long ago wrote in a communication to a disciple saying "It is a struggle for an ideal that²⁷⁷ has to establish itself in the life of humanity, for a truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to

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overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance.”

Evidently a great issue is at stake. But the conventional man is too much engrossed in his immediate needs to find time and interest for a reflection on life and its issue. The problem of life is a persistent problem of the philosophical mind and we ever ask its meaning under the changing vicissitudes of history. For the reflective person it is a question as much for the peace time as for the war situation. Human life in the individual as in society perpetually bristles up with unsolved problems and a thinker is powerfully struck by them and he cannot help asking what is the true meaning of life. But the radicalism of a war like the present may serve to shake the conventional self-complacency of even an average man and force him to think about life, its seekings and their validity, even as Arjun had to wait for a situation of the Kurukshetra battlefield to become self-conscious about life and its meaning. But for the vast hordes that had collected there even that emergency had become in some sense conventionalised so as to lose its value as a particularly sharp stimulus to set them thinking. The same is virtually happening to most of us now, who do not feel the war as the grave cultural crisis that it really is. But it is interesting to recall an observation of Sir Francis Younghusband, the famous author, who, while reporting about the rigours of war from his own experience of A.R.P. work in London, states that this great ordeal “has turned men’s minds to God”. What abiding value, we should like to ask, does man clutch at when all others seem to fail him? The Upanishadic seeker had in the world history a most remarkable daringness and tenacity in asking for the truth of his own self and the universal being. What is *Ātman*? What is *Brahman*? How is immortality to be attained? and what reality belongs to the world? are the questions which powerfully agitated his mind. He seems to have had a clear perception of their abiding worth and would not be deterred by any rival consideration of wealth and power from insistently asking for the meanings of those values. He has evidently a clear sense of the inadequacy of the ordinary life and its ideals and therefore seeks goals which are worth realising for their own sake. The Upanishadic literature depicts incident after incident of the most inspiring kind where the *Jijnāsu*²⁷⁸ reveals a supreme grandeur of the soul, already possessed by him, in clearly appreciating the limitedness of our usual pursuits of wealth, honour, name and position and persistently asks of the *Guru* to initiate him into the knowledge of the *Ātman* and the *Brahman*. The seeker is not satisfied with anything but the very highest. Our ordinary ambitions are, indeed, petty. The Upanishadic seeker asks for *THAT* after attaining which all is attained and no further craving is left for getting this or that. He wants such knowledge as will light up the mystery of the whole existence. He wants a joy and satisfaction, which is complete and final. In this world of ours, he seeks the very fullness of being, joy and knowledge. Nothing short of a completely perfected life, entirely freed from its sense of

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inadequacy and limitedness, will really satisfy him. The modern man with his long practical preoccupation will demur at such ideology and will protestingly exclaim, that is all theoretical. After all a perfect life can have reality only in the imagination of man. The actual life is too imperfect and has to be like that. But this is too unfortunate. When we refuse to see the essential potentialities of our life, we can surely have no seeking for the realisation of them.

Sri Aurobindo reaffirms in a most vivid manner the reality of the Upanishadic seeking and that constitutes a striking contribution to our modern notions about life. In fact, he goes very much beyond all former spirituality in declaring that it is possible for man in this terrestrial life, and in this physical body, to attain complete Divinity. The world is not to be necessarily rejected for rising to the spiritual status. The whole world and society must be spiritualised. There is certainly nothing essentially evil about the world and the body. This is the vision of life that Sri Aurobindo sets about realising in perfect seriousness through his discipline of Yoga, which is the instrument for effecting the transformation from the present imperfect human nature to perfected Divine Nature. The whole truth of 'a kingdom of heaven on earth' is the objective and its attainability a definite possibility. In fact, says Sri Aurobindo, that is the inevitable evolutionary destiny of man and that stage is coming sooner rather than later. But our minds usually turn away from great ideals. They seem to us too distantly placed and we refuse to set ourselves even in the right attitude towards our final goal. Our very disbelief in our perfected happiness becomes our most serious handicap. Sri Aurobindo's own words on this subject are most heartening and elevating. "To know, possess²⁷⁹ and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilit or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation—this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution."¹ Further "if it be true that Spirit is involved in matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aims possible to man upon earth."² The realisation of God within and without is not only the most legitimate aim for man, but also the necessary consequence of the process of evolution. As man succeeded the animal, so will he be followed by the superman, who will possess and manifest the higher divine consciousness in him. The implications of a harmonised consciousness are inherent in the division and conflict of

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¹ The Life Divine, Vol. I, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

human consciousness. This higher consciousness, according to Sri Aurobindo, has to come even as a necessity of evolution, through nature's unconscious yoga, but in man the possibility of conscious yoga can greatly expedite the realisation of that ideal.

Here is evidently a message of tremendous hope, of all the hope of life and joy to man. It is assured he can virtually become a god, a being with a consciousness of full knowledge, joy and power. But the convention sits tight on our minds, the routine is inviolable and we find it awfully straining to think for ourselves. Psychologically a problem is said to arise when we are beset with a difficulty. And it is a situation of difficulty, which makes us think, so as to overcome it. A consciousness of the problem of life implies a sense for the essential issue and difficulty of life.

But is there a difficulty involved in human life? For the layman there are difficulties enough in life. There is frustration, deprivation, disease and death. But he accepts them as necessary incidents of life, grumbles awhile and then forgets them. His life psychologically consists in the first instance of a number of instinctive propensities such as hunger, sex etc. and then the civilised²⁸⁰ life of society modifies these and creates in him some fresh susceptibilities for reputation, prestige, a moral and religious life and a lot more as represented in the customs and manners of the society. But his life is no harmonious whole. He thirsts for many 'goods' and satisfactions and strikes amongst them a working adjustment. Some money and wealth, some position and prestige and some religion and morals. That makes his scheme of life and in spite of its difficulties he dares not depart from it, because that commands the general social approval. That scheme, on the whole, works until life gets confronted with an unheard-of situation where convention itself fails to afford guidance.

This average life of man possesses a compromise sort of philosophy of its own. A vision of a single ultimate purpose, giving meaning to the individual acts of life, is absolutely lacking. Instead a plurality of goals which may and do conflict with one another is implicitly accepted. The social form is the highest ideal and the immediate needs the effective stimuli. Man thus, though having the capacity of looking before and after, largely lives in the present moment. It is with reference to such a life that Wordsworth's line "Getting and spending we lay waste our powers" has its special force and validity.

The man awakened to an independent curiosity regarding life will naturally act differently. The difficulties of it compel a deep thinking on the true meanings of life. Such a man finds himself driven from problem to problem until he feels he has to find an answer to the question, what is ultimately real? A conception of reality then, he expects, will give the true meaning of human life. He will perhaps in that moment

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realise the force of Tennyson's affirmation that to understand one petal of a flower one must know man, nature and God. Very much more must one understand nature and God and the whole reality to comprehend the meanings of human life.

Now what is the difficulty or the problem presented by man rather from the point of view of comprehensive reality? The question is, what is exactly the place that man occupies in reality or the relation he bears to the other terms of existence, *viz.* nature and God. Is man a product of nature with no higher destiny than that of the matter, out of which he has been fashioned, as says, *e.g.*, materialism. Or is nature too a manifestation of a universal consciousness so that man, though evolved by nature, contains a concealed or involved Divinity in him, to rise to which may be his real destiny? That is what the various religious²⁸¹ beliefs, more or less, affirm, as also philosophical doctrine known as spiritualism or idealism. This is how the metaphysical problem of human life really arises.

But for one not metaphysically inclined life may become a pressing question altogether in an empirical way. A Gotama, for example, lost the conventional self-complacency of life through an experience of a sick man, a dying man and so on. Life became unbearable to him, in spite of the evident comforts of a prince's life and he preferred hunger and cold and untold suffering, but he could have no peace without the realisation of the true meaning of life. Many are roused to the problem of life through the death of a near one. And there are surely some intellectually inclined, who observe life and find tremendous contradictions and unexplained points in it and thus become seriously engaged in an inquiry as to the meaning of life. There are also cases of not a few who were awakened to a seeking of true living by some very simple incident.

Evidently perhaps no particular kind or kinds of experiences are necessary for a man to become conscious of the deeper potentialities of his life. Given certain general psychological conditions, an individual will very likely be struck by a higher possibility of life. Anything that intensifies his sense of inadequacy of the conventional life and its pursuit will evidently prepare the ground for the growth of a deeper seeking. Not without purpose then has spiritual teaching, as the outset, sought to emphasise the unreality of our ordinary social living of conventional pursuits. But a man will further require some curiosity and courage to search for another meaning of life. We suffer from life, groan under the weight of its difficulties, still ordinarily lack the courage to seriously ask for a fresh orientation of it. We accept the conventional solutions of our trouble and believe that none better really exists.

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But history shows that, at times, when a great spiritual personality existed, who in his life demonstrated as it were, the joys and beauties of higher life, the general people were more easily roused to a consciousness of inadequacy of the present life and a seeking for a truer life. The touch of a great Master is a more potent force in spiritual life than the ordinarily recognised influence of an example.

In recent times psycho-therapy and psycho-analysis have served to draw the scientific attention to the problem of human life. The phenomena of mental disorders and the relatively wide prevalence of nervousness as 'the disease of the age' forcefully raises²⁸² the question, how is life to be lived, what would be a proper management of life? The problem of life in this form is a live issue to-day. The plight of a neurasthenic patient is serious. He suffers from impossible sorts of anxieties, cannot go to sleep, and helplessly and aimlessly tossing about the night through, he thinks on. He is obliged to go to the new priest of the age—the psychologist, who tells him that the life has been mismanaged for long years and that a complete reorganisation and orientation of mental life is necessary. The patient goes through a discipline, a yoga, one can say, of modern psychology to recover his mental health. The facts of psychotherapeutic practice, to my mind, present the most unfavourable kind of practical criticism on the culture of the present time. We have now a mode and style of living, an ideology of life, which tends to produce in such a large measure of complete rupture and failure of life. A way of living which threatens man with insanity can surely not be itself sane.

Here is obviously a most serious symptom, unavoidable and compelling in its force to make us reflect upon life and its right and wrong management.

We have devoted, it will appear, an awfully long space to just raising the problem. But psychologically the raising of the problem is relatively far more important than the stating of its solution. And if our labour has in some measure succeeded in formulating and stimulating the problem, then, surely it has not been in vain.

Let us say that we have now some consciousness of our problem. That means that we do recognise the inadequacy of the customary and conventional view of it and do also further, by implication, recognise that there must be a consistent and satisfactory meaning discoverable in life. What is this more consistent and satisfactory meaning of life? We seek here primarily to present the solution of this problem, which Sri Aurobindo's prolonged intensive Yogic seeking and reflection have yielded to him.

It can be legitimately asked as to what is, in particular, the significance of Sri Aurobindo's answer. The problem being a persistent one, any number of answers have

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been offered since reflective thinking began in human history. That is true and still it is correct that the relative validity and importance of them widely vary. And to seekers each important solution must naturally be inviting and tempting. To the writer of this article Sri Aurobindo's answer has appealed in a number of ways. The²⁸³ uniqueness of the intrinsic worth of the answer, philosophically considered, is the first point. Secondly, by the characteristic education and seeking of life Sri Aurobindo is among living personalities the man *par excellence* of the problem and issue of life. He is, therefore, our best interpreter on this fundamental subject. Truly has Romain Rolland, the famous biographer and humanitarian thinker, characterised him as "the completest synthesis that has been realised to this day, of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe." He uniquely combines in himself the best intellectual culture of Europe, acquired through a long stay and exceptionally brilliant career of education there, with a most extraordinary passion and pursuit of yoga and the spiritual experience and wisdom of India. He is therefore pre-eminently the person to whom a modern man will turn for light on the meaning of life and existence. His life stands symbolised to me as an infinite aspiration for the completest and profoundest synthesis of life.

It therefore interests me deeply to invite those seeking the true meanings of life to the feast of solution which Sri Aurobindo offers to the contemporary world.

Is this life of man real or is it of the same stuff that dreams are made of? And is this stage of the world also real or illusory? If real, what is its true character? Are our human endeavours and seekings, too, real? Will our aspirations be fulfilled or which of them will be fulfilled and which are bound to be ultimately frustrated? In one word, human life, being a fact of total reality, we ask, what is it that truly exists?

According to Sri Aurobindo, the reality of the universe is *Sat, Chit* and *Ānanda* or *Sachchidānanda*. It is characterised by the qualities of existence, consciousness and delight. It is the absolute which comprehends everything. It is a concrete absolute which gives validity to every detail of happening and existence and offers the best and the completest synthesis of all apparent contradictions. This absolute is the source and the end of all things. But while the absolute is ever perfect, it is nevertheless dynamic. Sri Aurobindo's absolute is a most remarkable conception. Philosophically one could say, it is an Absolute in an absolutely absolute way. It is governed by its own logic of the absolute, the logic of the finite and the relative being inadequate for it. The former conceptions of the Absolute in the history of philosophy have often suffered in one way or another from some taint of the relative. Here the Absolute is a real Absolute, which is personal as well impersonal, complete and²⁸⁴ perfect as well as dynamic and evolutionary and an infinite lot more.

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To a reader unaccustomed to philosophical language this description will appear too astounding. But the question here is of the total reality of the universe and that involves a number of complications. For our present purpose we must not permit ourselves to be confused, and should feel satisfied if we can recognise that at the root of all things there appears to be a supreme consciousness, which must comprehend full knowledge, highest delight and complete power.

The world, consisting of inanimate matter, plants, animals and man, is the dynamic expression of the Absolute. The successive stages of Matter, Life and Mind are the evolutionary stages, through which the Absolute is progressively rising to its own full self-consciousness. The very fact, assures Sri Aurobindo, that life seems to come out of matter and mind out of life, necessitates the conclusion that the last term of evolution must have been present as a potentiality from the beginning. Mind, which is at present the highest term of evolution, already seems to point to something higher than itself.

The rational mind of man working by logical judgments, as it does, also seems to reveal at times intuitive cognition of direct and certain knowledge. This power of intuitive and certain knowledge, affirms Sri Aurobindo, on the basis of both argument as well as personal yogic experience, is the essential quality of the next higher stage of evolution, which he calls supermind, as rationality is of the present mind of man. The progress of evolution seems to be towards the full realization of the Absolute Consciousness. It is the absolute returning to its own full self-consciousness after an enriched experience of an evolutionary process gone through. Since the last stage is the Absolute returning to its full self-consciousness, it must be supposed to be present in matter itself right at the initial stage. The matter is thus the Absolute involved, ("Hindi passage omitted here"), Matter is Brahman, declared the Upanishad. Involution and evolution are thus the complementary processes of the world drama.

But what is the motive of the whole show? The love of the thing or self-delight or *Lilā*—that is the answer. A utilitarian age will find it hard to appreciate this motive as a possible goal to action at all. But a little reflection will show that the highest motive which man too realises in his moments of creativeness is just joy for the thing itself. An artist's delight in artistic creation is its own motive as well as the reward. That can be the²⁸⁵ only motive conceivable for the Absolute in its activity of cosmic manifestation.

This is too abstrusely philosophical a statement. But it affords the ultimate background of existence for human life. The question may once again be asked, what is the meaning of life? Our answer can now be easily inferred from the above. This life is an essential part of a total reality which is absolute consciousness and delight. Thus in its ultimate potentiality this life is consciousness and joy. Human life is, further, at the moment the highest term of the cosmic evolutionary process, the previous stages of which are matter and life. Man, representing the manifestation of mind in evolution already anticipates the next higher stage, which is that of supermind. Mind is analytical, supermind, as affirmed on the basis of concrete Yogic experience and also as an inference from mind and the general character of the evolutionary process, will be intuitive, comprehending the spiritual unity of all. Our present consciousness is egoistic, that is, in the words of a great contemporary psychological authority, C.G. Jung, it is characterised by 'exclusiveness, selection and discrimination'. The next stage of supermind will be marked by comprehensiveness, unity and identity. That gives evidently the main purpose of our life and our endeavours and aspirations will naturally draw their meanings from their relation to this evolutionary purpose of our existence. The world, the stage of human activity and the evolutionary drama of the *SACHCHIDĀNANDA*, is surely real. It is the artistic creation of the self-delight of the absolute consciousness. Life and the world have an earnest meaning in the self-expressing and self-realising activity of the ultimate reality. Sri Aurobindo's is, therefore, no philosophy of life-negation and world-negation. Still it does not want life at its animal or even human levels, but rather at the level or levels clearly indicated in the human, but yet only partially realised. The whole evolution is involved in the labour of forging ahead to the next higher stage, the super-rational or super-human or the stage of superman. There is an unconscious yoga or discipline working through all Nature, but in man consciousness becomes capable of being used intensively, so as to expedite the realization of the next higher stage. Sri Aurobindo's occupation with yoga has had just this single object, that of consciously and intensively preparing the ground and expediting through promoting a collective effort the realisation of the superman stage on earth.

The word superman has many European associations attached²⁸⁶ to it, which will unfortunately altogether tend to pervert Sri Aurobindo's meaning. The superman to him is no magnification of the egoistic man, however great. It is qualitatively a new value in evolution, involving a complete supersession of the present egoistic consciousness, which, as we have said above, is divisive and exclusive. Supermind, the term we used to represent the consciousness of superman, is, on the other hand, intuitive, involving a perception of the spiritual unity of all reality. It is divine consciousness itself and the superman is an angel or god. A race of such supermen is in the making, affirms Sri Aurobindo, and the dream of a kingdom of heaven on earth will

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virtually come true. The present man, ignorant and grieving, is going to be replaced by a higher man, who will possess light, love and power. Such is the great message of hope and fulfilment which Sri Aurobindo has to offer to the world.

In recent times, more revolutions, social, political and economic have been packed together than has perhaps ever been the case in the past. Ours is the age of slogans and 'isms'. And we wonder if we are better for all or any of them, while each claims to be a panacea for all our ills. Sri Aurobindo's perception in this connection is very clear. According to his diagnosis the real cause of all our ills is our 'humanity', the egoistic mode of our consciousness. That consciousness itself does not permit us to see and recognise our real common good, that is why all our unities have to take the form of pacts and adjustments of give and take. A consciousness which would see the real identity in our existence alone could solve the differences of to-day. All our so-called solutions, though good in a way, appear to Sri Aurobindo as merest palliatives. He is, therefore, not interested in them and instead seeks the most radical of the radical solutions ever sought in history in aiming at a change in the mode of consciousness itself which is the real ultimate cause of our troubles and differences. This is bound to strike the reader as impossible, but it is just this 'impossibility' that Sri Aurobindo has been at, in perfect seriousness and earnestness, and confidently looks forward to the realisation of the imagined heaven on this very earth.

But what is going to be your contribution to this great change, Sri Aurobindo will ask and the reader perhaps will inquire, how is this epochal transformation going to be effected? Well, Yoga is the instrument of this change. Sri Aurobindo has naturally been long at testing and improving this instrument and in his comprehensive exposition, entitled "The Synthesis of Yoga²⁸⁷" through a comparative investigation of the various systems of yoga he has perfected a new instrument called by him the Integral Yoga. An essential psychological soundness is the principal merit of it, which, however, to be properly appreciated will require some practical experience.

Yoga is, with Sri Aurobindo, a very comprehensive term. "All life is Yoga." "In the right view of both life and yoga," says he, "all life is either consciously or subconsciously a yoga. For we mean by this term a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities of the being."¹ However in man this effort becomes self-conscious, through which the work of self-perfection can be carried on very much more swiftly and puissantly. More directly, Yoga, therefore, comes to mean this self-conscious effort at self-perfection. It is really an effort at the realisation of the spiritual possibilities of our life.

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¹ Arya, Vol. I, p. 37.

The concept 'spiritual life' carries with it usually a number of misgivings. Firstly, its contrast with worldly life is unfortunate. The separation between the two in the past has had the necessary effect of leaving worldly life relatively unspiritualised and the spiritual life devoid of proper content. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, however, contemplates spiritualisation of the entire life of man. "Our object is" says he, "to make the spiritual life and its experiences fully active and fully utilisable in the waking state and even in the normal use of functions."² Sri Aurobindo's yoga is also for the whole humanity, as it seeks to transform the consciousness of man as such, by making it a fuller expression of divine consciousness. The spirituality here contemplated, therefore, is not for the individual's release from life, though individual seekers may for a time, as needed by the circumstances of their yogic discipline, go into a relative seclusion from society. But the ultimate goal is always a complete transformation of the concrete whole life of man.

Sri Aurobindo's opinion regarding money reveals his correct attitude to the world in a most convincing form. "You must neither turn with an ascetic shrinking from the money power, the means it gives and the objects it brings", runs a passage, "nor cherish a *rajasic* attachment to them, or a spirit of enslaving self-indulgence in their gratification. Regard wealth simply as a power to be won for the Mother (The Divine) and placed at her service."³ The correct Yogic attitude towards money is that "all wealth²⁸⁸ belongs to the Divine and those who hold it are trustees, not possessors."¹ Another passage is so inspiring and concretely elucidating that it may also be permitted here. "The ideal Sādhaka (Yogic student)", says Sri Aurobindo, "in this kind is one who if required to live poorly can so live and no sense of want will affect him or interfere with the full inner play of the divine consciousness, and if he is required to live richly, can so live and never for a moment fall into desire or attachment to his wealth or to the things that he uses or servitude to self-indulgence or a weak bondage to the habits that the possession of riches creates. The Divine Will is all for him and the Divine Ānanda."²

The relation of the individual to the society is a weak point in most forms of spiritual life. We have already indicated how with Sri Aurobindo's view of life and the world this is not the case. But we should like to state more clearly his position on this point. According to him "the right relation of the individual with the collectivity is neither to pursue egoistically his own material or mental progress or spiritual salvation without regard to his fellows, nor for the sake of the community to suppress or maim

² Arya, Vol. I, p. 246.

³ The Mother, page 21.

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¹ *Ibid.*, page 22.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 24 & 25.

his proper development but to sum up in himself all its best and completest possibilities and pour them out by thought, action and all other means on his surroundings so that the whole race may approach nearer to attainment of its supreme personalities.”³ It may be noticed it is definitely affirmed that an individual may not even seek his spiritual salvation without regard to his fellows.

We should now be able to turn to the technique and the character of yogic process itself. We have already said this is the great instrument perfected by Sri Aurobindo in the course of over thirty years of experimentation and work for purposes of effecting transformation in man from the egoistic mode of consciousness to the divine or the universal consciousness. The Master’s own words, in this connection, are clear and illuminating. “The process of yoga”, says he “is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the transcendent and universal consciousness can pour itself into the individual mould and transform it.”⁴

The²⁸⁹ question now is of the nature of the yogic process. Shall we recall for a moment from the earlier part of the essay that the problem of life for yoga exists, in the first instance, in the individual? The individual suffers from an inner disharmony and conflict, which yoga must remove. The numerous impulses of our life, which urge on individual gratifications, come into conflict with social prohibitions and press for a solution. Our processes of knowledge, will and emotion, show disparity, and a harmonisation has to be attempted amongst them. All these statements propound, in so many forms, the yogic issue and problem.

How does Yoga solve the problem? That is really done by an inner discipline, which takes its fundamental stand on a principle which is equally honoured by yoga as by modern psychology. ‘The symptoms of the disease (mental) are willed by the patient.’ This ranks perhaps as the greatest discovery of modern psychology as a whole. The point is that a neurasthenic suffers from, let us say, certain anxieties, because he derives some satisfaction from them. An exact corroboration of it one finds in Yoga. “Nothing can endure,” declares Sri Aurobindo, “if it has not a will in our nature, a sanction of the Purusha, a sustained pleasure in some part of the being, even though it is a secret or a perverse pleasure, to keep it in continuance.”¹

That is to say, any thought that our mind chooses or an action that follows, takes place, because it has been willed by us. The solution of it will evidently lie in

³ Arya, Vol. I, p. 174.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 369.

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¹ The Life Divine, Vol. II, Pt. II, p. 149.

withdrawing or rejecting the 'will' from behind the thought or action. But how is that to be done?

Exactly there comes the technique of Yoga. Aspiration, rejection and opening oneself up to the higher consciousness constitute the triple process of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. When once it has been clearly recognised that the root of all that we think and do lies in our 'willing', then it will be easy to realise the ineffectivity of controlling life from the outside. One who continues to inwardly will a thing, but in bodily behaviour denies it, we get, what the Gita calls '*Mithyāchāra*', false behaviour. The right thing to do is to aim, while controlling behaviour, primarily at the modification and transformation of the will. This transformation is to be achieved through a sincere and a whole-hearted aspiration for the right will or the higher will, which progressively seeks delights of the spirit, the calmer and²⁹⁰ serener joys of life rather than the violent pleasures of the senses and the body. Man's life is a clear picture of conflict and transition. We are animals, who have the capacity of becoming gods. And the way of our progress exactly consists in rising from the status of the animal instincts to that of the spirit, which will not reject the body and its pleasures, but transform and enhance them. To rise to that fuller status of the spirit or the soul is the aim of spiritual life and yoga. But obviously that calls for great patience and perseverance. However that is the only way in life for which any effort put in never goes wasted. The *yogabhrashta*, as says Krishna, is reborn under more favourable circumstances from where he can more easily go forward with the interrupted work of yoga.

An undying aspiration for the complete and full life of the soul-status is the main lever of the yogic transformation. Knock at the door and it shall be opened unto you, is the language of the Christian Scripture, stating the same essential idea. But the idea of the original and fundamental sin we do not countenance in Yoga. There are right movements and there are wrong movements in our being. The wrong ones, every time that they occur, must be readily noticed and sincerely rejected, and the right willing in place of them aspired for. Each such sincere rejection and aspiration will silently but surely perfect the change in you that you desire to produce. And you will before long begin to feel an increasing tendency to think and act in the right way spontaneously.

The third movement in the triple yogic process is opening oneself up to the Higher Consciousness. The task of a complete transformation of the lower nature into higher nature is the greatest and most adventurous of all undertakings. One who achieves it is greater than one who conquers the whole world. The accomplishment of such a thing will require calling into action the Supreme Consciousness of the universe. The individual gives himself up, surrenders or invokes and calls in the working of the Divine Consciousness for the complete change. It involves essentially an attitude of

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adoration and love for the Supreme Reality, with which a complete union and identification is sought by the human individual.

We might recapitulate here. We started by formulating the problem of life and that we attempted to do in a number of ways. We then sought to present Sri Aurobindo's answer and in doing so we stated his view of the ultimate reality, the conception of human life in the individual and the society, the character²⁹¹ of perfection and the nature of yoga as the instrument for its attainment.

It is obvious, reality and life have fundamentally been conceived as spiritual and perfection consists in the full realisation and expression of the spiritual potentialities of life and existence. The reader will see that the same or something similar is aimed at and attempted by religion. But there is a real difference between the religious and the yogic approach to the problem of life. To religion a "hereafter" is almost essential. 'Fear' and 'repentance' too play a very dominant part in religious life. Religion further involves rather a sharp contrast with secularism. Yoga demands of the individual, on the other hand, a dispassionate, *scientific* attitude towards life. Instead of sin it contemplates wrong movements in our nature, which have simply to be recognised, acknowledged, and whole-heartedly rejected. This must be done without shrinking and worrying. Fear is a weak attitude to be necessarily eliminated. A 'hereafter' like that of religion is irrelevant. Here and now and ever hereafter, that is what yoga aims at. Besides it claims the whole life. It can brook no departmentalisation. Ceremonial is to religion, at the least, an indispensable part. To yoga it is, however, at best, a secondary means, which the individual may use for a particular purpose of transformation in his experience.

If the above comparisons are carefully considered, it will be relatively easy to see that the yogic view of life and world above presented has an immense possibility for the future as a general instrument for human spiritual advancement and perfection. In fact it may prove to be an all-comprehensive future religion of spiritual life. At any rate, it does possess possibilities for the same. It can accommodate the varying ceremonials of different religions as means for certain experiences. It has an essential respect for the *scientific* attitude and does thereby assimilate the principal value of the scientific age. Lastly, it secures more effectively, here and now, and in the full sphere of life, the spiritual realisation, which all religions aspire after.

A treatment of the problem of life is bound to be rather grievously incomplete without a statement regarding the nature of evil. In an implied way our exposition has already said that pain, suffering and other evils while being real, are the incidents of our present stage of evolution. They are surely not final to our life. They are rather the

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obstacles and difficulties meant to be the touch-stones for discovering the persisting weakness of²⁹² our nature, so that they may be eliminated. The evil points out our weaknesses forcefully enough, by the pain that it causes, so that they may be attended to and eradicated.

Does Sri Aurobindo's philosophy paint the world and life in too rosy a colour? It presents, no doubt, the highest possible idealism, but in an extremely realistic spirit and manner. What is more important, it is not just a thought-construction. It furnishes also an effective instrument of yoga, which is unique to it, for testing and realising for oneself the realisation of experience which it presents.

Sri²⁹³ Aurobindo and the Religion of the Future

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I must congratulate the organizers of the Sri Aurobindo Pātha Mandir upon their enterprise in bringing out another Annual this year. The yearly publication of a volume dealing with different aspects of Sri Aurobindo's teaching is perhaps the best way of bringing the vitalising thought of that great sage into contact with the main problems of life. One such main problem is the problem of religion. And here the chief problem is one concerning its future. What is the shape which religion will take in the future? What is to be the religion of the future? I propose to discuss briefly in this article what Sri Aurobindo has to say on this question.

It must be admitted that the problem of religion has become very acute in these days. From some countries she has been banished entirely. In some others she is just tolerated. Nowhere does she live a vigorous and independent life.

Why is this so? Why has religion fallen so low? What is the cause of her present decline? An investigation of this question is of importance, not only from the point of view of history, but also from that of the evolution of the human spirit.

It brings into view certain aspects of the evolution of the spirit which otherwise would have remained undetected. It is sheer nonsense to suggest that the decline of religion has been due to a cruel fate. The sooner religion gives up this sort of indolent, self-complacent attitude and turns the searchlight of inquiry upon herself, the better it will be for her and for the world.

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For if she does this, she will discover that the cause of her present decline lies mainly in herself. She has lost her position because she has lost her spiritual force. Yes, it is a fact that she has lost her spiritual force. And no amount of weeping and bemoaning her sad fate can make her get rid of this fundamental and essential fact.

She is no longer the spiritual force that she once was. Part of it is due to inevitable causes connected with the nature of the evolutionary process. The course of the world's progress necessitated²⁹⁴ the diversion of the spiritual force, which is at the root of the evolutionary process, into several channels. As a result of this, religion, which used to receive the whole of the spiritual force of evolution—for she was the sole repository of it and had no rival—had to share it with other branches of human culture, such as Science and Philosophy.

But it is chiefly due to religion's abuse of her position and her hostility to the separation from her of other lines of human spiritual activity. She occupied in the beginning, in fact, a totalitarian position. She was religion, science, philosophy, politics, sociology, etc., all rolled in one. Whatever spiritual activity there was in man was centred in her. She was the sole repository of the spiritual energy of mankind.

This envious position naturally could not last for ever. And indeed, it would have been a very bad thing for mankind if it had done so. For it would have meant a crippling of man's culture, as the full development of man's spiritual activity requires its free expression in as many ways as possible.

A totalitarian religion in fact is unthinkable under the present conditions of human development. And it is not good for religion either. For it is impossible, on account of the growth of so many special departments of human activity, for religion to try to control them without detriment to herself.

If religion had understood this earlier, all the quarrels between the Church and the State and between religion and philosophy, which have disfigured the pages of the history of the mediaeval age in Europe, would not have occurred. The quarrel between religion and science is of more recent origin, but it is born of the same spirit of jealousy and intolerance. Now, of course, it is religion which is the victim, but if she had not mercilessly persecuted science when she had power, it is doubtful whether science would have retaliated as she has done.

But my object is not to write a history of the quarrel between religion and philosophy or between religion and science, but to point out the lesson which this history teaches. It is that religion's proper rôle is not to assume a totalitarian attitude

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and try to control philosophy and science, but to concentrate on her proper function, which is to serve as the central reservoir of spiritual force.

Yes, this is the proper function of religion—to serve as such a central reservoir. Or rather, I would say, it is to serve as the central fire which feeds all other fires, for it is essentially dynamic and not static. Much of the confusion which the old controversies²⁹⁵ between religion and philosophy and religion and science have generated will disappear, if it is remembered that religion is not a storehouse of knowledge, not a museum where isolated bits of information are carefully labelled and preserved, but a powerhouse of spiritual energy which is to supply this energy to all departments of human activity.

But what is the character of this central reservoir, this powerhouse of spiritual energy? It is indicated by the word 'Faith'. It is faith which is the dynamic spiritual energy which feeds all the other energies of man. And this faith is religion's own special domain. Or rather, this faith *is* religion.

I need not labour this point. It is sufficiently clear to those who have anything to do with creative work, whether in the department of philosophy or science or literature. It is faith which is the driving force of all such creative work. The scientist feels it, the philosopher feels it, the poet feels it, to name only three departments of human culture. Can the scientist achieve anything unless he has a burning faith in truth? And such a faith sometimes makes a fanatic of him. He is prepared to lay down his life for the sake of truth, and the history of science is full of records of the great martyrs who in the cause of truth have sacrificed their lives. The philosopher has also gladly mounted the scaffold or died at the stake for the sake of his burning love for truth, which is a matter of faith with him. The poet also in his way, though less spectacularly, stakes his all for the sake of his faith in truth, beauty and goodness.

Faith, then, is the great dynamic force behind all human activity. And that direction of human activity which makes faith its very self is religion. But faith must be faith in something. It cannot hang in mid-air. What is that towards which faith is directed? It is what we call Value, a term which unfortunately it is not possible to make more clear, for it is indefinable. It is nothing short of a tragedy—is it not?—that all the great and noble things which make life worth living, such as truth, goodness, beauty, etc., are all indefinable. In another place I have dealt with this, but here clearly I cannot discuss it and must content myself with the remark that it is a great tragedy.

However that may be, religion is faith in value. Perhaps I should say *values*, for there is not one value but several values. Faith in values, then, constitutes the essence

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of religion. Faith, when it is misdirected, when it does not point towards values, but²⁹⁶ rather towards what is their opposite, namely, disvalues, is what we call fanaticism. Religion and fanaticism are alike, so far as faith is concerned, but differ *toto caelo* in the objects towards which their respective faiths are directed, for while the one faith is directed towards values, the other faith is directed towards anti-values.

But religion is not merely faith in values, but faith in the *realization* of values. Let me explain. Religion is not content with a mere otiose contemplation of values. She is interested in their realization. Values may exist, and may exist for eternity, but that is not the question for religion. It is rather a question, as we shall presently see, for philosophy. For religion the vital question is the realization of values.

I would have accepted Höffding's definition of religion as faith in the conservation of values, but for two reasons. In the first place, Höffding's definition rests upon the idea of a perpetual conflict between value and existence. Indeed, it is one of the central ideas of his philosophy that such a conflict exists. Now I cannot subscribe to this view. To my mind there cannot be any conflict between existence and value. Existence itself is a value, and values must also exist, or they will be nothing. Values, of course, have more than mere existence, but they must have that at least. When I say goodness is a value, I do, of course, mean that it has something more than existence, that it has a content which is not fully expressed by saying that it exists. But I mean certainly that it exists. My second objection to Höffding's definition is that it does not sufficiently bring out the dynamic character of religion. Conservation is a static concept; it indicates merely keeping things as they are. Realization is something far more dynamic; it indicates directly the creative function of faith. Realization does not merely conserve, but it creates, and it indicates a process which is eternal. Religion as faith in the realization of values, is continuously growing, continuously evolving. It is just the opposite of any static constancy. It is very necessary to understand this, for in what I shall say in the sequel, I shall have to emphasize mainly the evolutionary character of religion and the possibility – nay the certainty – of its rising to higher and higher levels.

But if religion is faith in the realization of values, what, it may be asked, is philosophy? What is the distinction between philosophy and religion? Philosophy I define as the universal science of values. It has two main tasks. The first is the discovery of the values, and the second is the estimation of them and ²⁹⁷an integration of all experience in the light of them. It is not concerned with the realization of values. Whether values are realized or not, is a matter of complete indifference to it. Its attitude

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towards values, moreover, is not one of faith, but one of knowledge. Of course, faith is the driving force behind its quest, as it is behind all quests, as I have already explained. But that quest is a quest for knowledge, and not for faith.

Can there be conflict between religion and philosophy? Of course, there can be, as the history of the Middle Ages in Europe has shown. But that the conflict need not be a permanent feature of their relation with each other, is also proved by the history of our country, where these two most vital branches of human spiritual activity have always acted in closest co-operation with each other. Why has this been so in our country and why has the history of the Western countries a different story to tell? The reason is, that in our country the values which religion held most firmly, and in the realization of which she had intense faith, were also those which philosophy discovered to be the highest. Whether this was due to any pre-established harmony between religion and philosophy or was due only to a "gentle-men's agreement" between them, I need not discuss. Suffice it for me to say that the two have never quarrelled or never quarrelled to the extent to which they did in Europe. In Europe the conflict between them was due to the fact that many of the values which philosophy looked upon as most essential, were cried down by religion, while, on the other hand, many which were held in great esteem by religion were treated with scant respect by philosophy. As examples we may mention freedom and authority. Philosophy esteemed very highly the value of freedom, while religion looked down upon it. So again, authority, which was very highly prized by religion, was regarded by philosophy as an inferior value, if not treated as a disvalue.

Coming now to the relation between religion and ethics, the important thing to remember is that ethics is a branch of philosophy. As a branch of philosophy it is a theoretical study of values. It is not interested in the realization of values, as religion is. And it does not deal with faith but with knowledge. Its difference from philosophy is that it does not deal with all values, but only with some special ones, called moral values. Unfortunately, as we shall see in the sequel, religion is sometimes confused with ethics, a confusion which is not to the advantage of either and certainly is very much to the disadvantage of religion.

A²⁹⁸ word may be said here about the relation between religion and yoga. Both are concerned with the realization of values, but while religion is faith in such realization, yoga supplies the method by which this faith can be converted into an actual realization. Religion puts forward certain eternal values as objects, the realization of which is demanded by faith, but how they are to be realized, religion is powerless to indicate. It is here that yoga comes to the aid of religion. It shows the way in which these values are to be realized. In this sense yoga is ("Hindi passage omitted

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here”), as the Bhagavadgītā says, the *karma* here being the actual realization of that which is put forward as an object of faith by religion.

The nature of religion and her relation to the sister disciplines being now understood, we are in a position to know what value to attach to various statements which are made by well-meaning critics about what religion is to do and what she is not to do. For instance, Prof. C.E.M. Joad, a very sympathetic critic of religion, has, in a book¹, with the main sentiments of which I fully agree, mentioned two things which, in his view, religion must not do if she is to survive. What are these two things? He enumerates them as follows: “(a) It (religion) must not teach beliefs about the nature of the physical universe which science has shown to be false. (b) With regard to the non-physical universe, it must not teach as absolute truths dogmas which cannot be known to be either true or false, but which there is no reason to think true”. This statement of Prof. Joad is nothing more than a truism. Who has ever suggested that religion should teach things which have been proved to be false by science, or put forward as absolute truths things which are at best problematic? If religion ever did any of these foolish things, people would not have been content to administer a mild warning, such as Prof. Joad does, but would have banished religion completely from the realm.

Again, what is meant by saying, “If religion were to survive”? Who is to be the arbiter of her destiny? Is it Science? Is it settled beyond all possibility of dispute that in all questions concerning the right of things to survive, the judgment is always to be pronounced by science? If such a state of things is accepted as a settled fact, what remains there for either science or philosophy to do?

I²⁹⁹ am afraid I have expressed my views rather strongly, but this is because I feel a protest is needed against the rather facile assumption that religion must show her credentials to science. However, this is only a side issue into which I was led in the course of my remarks on the relation between religion and other human disciplines. Prof. Joad has not mentioned here (though he has done so elsewhere) the most important fact about religion, namely, that she is concerned with values and not with facts. It is not true facts or false facts which is the main issue here, but whether religion deals with facts or values.

One question which specially interests us in our country is how far religion is concerned with ritual and ceremony. Institutional religions have always had, as a necessary part of their organization, usages and customs, ritual and ceremony. For the same reason, however, for which we have seen religion must give up dabbling in facts, she must abandon her connection with ritual and ceremony. This is not to say that they

¹ *Vide The Present and Future of Religion*, p. 212.

are unnecessary. They certainly fulfil a very important function. But their importance is in the domain of social life, not in that of religion. It is true they are a part—and a very important part—of institutional religions. Institutional religions, however, have an inner core, which is the truly religious part of them, and which consists in nothing but pure faith. Over and above this inner core, they have what I may call an outer ring, where are deposited various things, social customs and usages, myths, legends, rites and ceremonies. The kernel is pure faith—faith in the realization of values. All those things that have gathered round the outer ring may be looked upon more or less as excrescences.

It is the nature of the values in which a religion is interested, which determines the type to which it belongs. The values which at present dominate the field of religion are mainly four, namely, the values of humanity, the values of inner realization, the values of the organic unity of man with the Greater Man in the universe, preached by the poet Tagore, and the values of the Superman, taught by Sri Aurobindo. Consequently, there are four types of religion which hold the field to-day, namely, (a) religion of humanity, (b) religion of mysticism or of individual realization, (c) Tagore's religion of man, and (d) Sri Aurobindo's religion of the Superman. Historically, there have been other types, such as physical religion, consisting in the worship of natural forces, and that kind of religion which consists in the worship of the Manes or spirits of ancestors, but these now definitely³⁰⁰ belong to a superseded stage of evolution, and therefore do not call for any discussion here.

I will now briefly explain the method I will adopt in discussing these four types of religion. As my object is to find out what religion can be looked upon as the future religion, I shall give mainly a critical analysis of these different types, with a view to determining their relative merits. If this results in showing that one of these type is not only distinctly superior to the others, but is also their natural culmination and fulfilment, then this fact will be a sufficient warrant for our declaring that to be the future religion. The future religion must be the perfection and consummation of the previous types; she must not miss any of the values of the earlier types, but must take them up and transform them, adding at the same time some new values of her own.

(a) RELIGION OF HUMANITY

With these prefatory remarks I begin my examination of the four types of religion mentioned above. First, there is the religion of humanity, the origin of which is the celebrated *homomensura* doctrine of Protagoras. This celebrated doctrine

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undoubtedly gave a new impetus to Greek thought, which previously had been mainly occupied with external nature. The Protagorean doctrine was the beginning of a great wave of humanism which swept over Greece for two centuries. In fact, Greek culture is known to this day as humanistic, though there are certain features in it, especially in the philosophy of Plato, which transcend humanism. The philosophy of the Stoics was not humanistic, though it shared the ethicism of the previous age, which was itself an offshoot of humanism.

In our country there never was a movement which was purely humanistic, though Buddhism, on account of the fact that there was no place for God in it, and also on account of the emphasis it laid upon ethics, is often spoken of as humanistic. But Buddhism had also its Absolute, which was Nirvāna or the Buddha, and its object was not the fullest development of the capacities of man, but rather the complete suppression of the sensuous part of man's life. In fact, what it advocated was the extirpation of all desires, which totally runs counter to the humanistic ideal of life.

In religion humanism gives rise to a kind of ethical religion, where the place of God is taken by humanity. It was therefore given ³⁰¹the characteristic title 'religion of humanity' by Auguste Comte, one of its chief champions. Humanity is here deified and conceived as a person. Its essential features are thus stated in a pamphlet², quoted by Bridge, as follows:

"Positive religion has nothing to do with any supernatural or extra-terrestrial being; it is the Religion of Humanity. The moral code of Positivism; may be summed up thus: Physical, intellectual and moral amelioration with the view of becoming more and more fit for the service of others. By *others* are understood three collective existences ranged in order of magnitude – the Family, the State, Humanity".

John Stuart Mill was also a champion of this religion of humanity. He indicated this very clearly in a letter to Comte³:

"It has been my lot, a rare one in my country, never to have believed in God, even when a child. I have always seen that the construction of a true philosophy of society was the only possible foundation on which a general regeneration of human morality could rest, and that the idea of Humanity was the only substitute for the idea

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² *Vide illustrations of Positivism*, p. 222.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

of God". In his *Three Essays on Religion*⁴ Mill similarly tried to show that this religion fulfilled all the requirements of religion.

The religion of humanity no doubt gives us a lofty conception of service of man, but this is a poor consolation for its depriving humanity of all chances of receiving inspiration from a higher source. Useful and elevating as the religion of the service of man is, it for ever pins man down to his present level. There is no hope in such a system for a radical transformation of the nature of man. The ethical religion which it preaches serves only to perpetuate, in a slightly improved form, the present institutions of man.

It would be a gross mistake to call the gospel of the service of man, which was preached by Sri Rāmakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekānanda, a religion of humanity. It is something far higher than this, for the service of man, as preached by these great saints, is only a deduction from the more general principle of the immanence of God in the universe. It is because³⁰² every human being (given by them the significant appellation *Naranārāyaṇa*³⁰³) is, according to them, a visible manifestation of God, that service of man becomes synonymous for them with service of God. The whole fabric of the religion of Rāmakrishna-Vivekānanda rests upon an intense faith in the realization of God, and is far removed from the religion of humanity as anything possibly can be.

(b) RELIGION OF MYSTICISM OR INDIVIDUAL REALIZATION

Another type of religion which has been in vogue from time immemorial and which recently, thanks to Bergson, has received a new accession of strength, is the religion of mysticism or individual realization. This religion has, in fact, been historically the most popular religion in our country, with the exception of the religion of ritual and ceremony. In Europe it has survived only in the mystics, but recently it has been brought very much into prominence by Bergson. I have discussed elsewhere the philosophical implications of this religion, and shall only say a few words here about its shortcomings as a religion. Great as is the appeal of this religion of mysticism, it suffers from one fundamental defect, and that is that it misses the organic unity of the universe. It detaches the individual from the world, and believes that it is only in this detachment that the individual's higher realization is possible. This type of realization has been

⁴ See the second Essay *Utility of Religion* (p. 109), where Mill said: "The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over selfish objects of desire. This condition is fulfilled by the Religion of Humanity in as eminent a degree, and in as high a sense, as by the supernatural religions even in their best manifestations, and far more so than in any of their others."

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³⁰³ In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

sought in our country for ages, but although it has produced a few higher individuals, it has not helped in any way the general evolution of the universe to a higher level. And this is because the gifted individuals have cut themselves adrift from the main currents of evolution, so that their influence has not been able to reach, except very indirectly, the world outside. From this point of view, the active mystics, as Bergson calls them, those whose realization refuses to confine itself within themselves, but expresses itself in many forms of social service, perhaps contribute more towards raising the level of world-evolution than the contemplative type, for they come more in contact with the world and are more interested in the uplift of the universe than the latter. But the contemplative mystic also can, if he so desires, create an atmosphere around him, which may draw other kindred souls into it, and thereby set up a higher sphere which is bound to have its repercussions upon the world outside. But this influence spreads very slowly, whereas the³⁰⁴ social work of the active mystic produces more rapidly a change in the outside world.

But even the work of the active mystic cannot do much to raise the level of world-evolution, for the work that he does is social service which, as we have seen, only perpetuates certain conditions of human life as they exist to-day. It has not got the power to dynamise life, to galvanise it into a higher expression of itself.

The religion of mysticism, therefore, with all its immense possibilities of individual realization, must be pronounced to be a failure, so far as the general evolution of the universe is concerned. Moreover, individual realization also is immensely helped by cosmic realization. When the whole universe receives a new light and attains a new and higher status, individuals *ipso facto* attain a higher realization. This is the normal and natural way of obtaining a higher realization. The religion of mysticism substitutes for his normal way an abnormal one, namely, that of dissociating the individual completely from the rest of the world. It is at best therefore a freak, and is not of much value from the general evolutionary standpoint.

(c) TAGORE'S RELIGION OF MAN

Tagore has outlined a religion which he has called the religion of man, which resembles in many respects the religion of humanity and the religion of mysticism, but also differs from both in many essentials. It resembles the former, in that it looks at religion from the point of view of man, but unlike it, it does not look at it from the point of view of the moral man only. It does not look upon social service as the goal of religion, but takes into account other aspects of man also, which have a deeper spiritual significance. For example, it believes in man's kinship with Nature, and feels a sort of exhilaration in the contemplation of beauty and sublimity as showing man's

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fundamental unity with the rest of creation. It is also, like mysticism, a religion of personal realization, but unlike it, it does not believe that the realization is only possible by a complete detachment of the individual from the world, but rather believes in a common ground between individual and cosmic realization. The individual realization of beauty and harmony, for example, it links with the cosmic realization of these values in Nature.

The essence of Tagore's religion consists in the recognition of a Higher Reality in intimate touch with man and defined in terms³⁰⁵ of humanity. What it seeks is the meeting of the infinite and the finite in man. "It gives me a great joy", he says,⁵ "to feel in my life detachment at the idea of a mystery of a meeting of the two in a creative comradeship. I felt that I had found my religion at last, the Religion of Man, in which the Infinite became defined in humanity and came close to me so as to need my love and co-operation". This idea he expressed beautifully in a poem in the *Gitānjali*:

("Hindi passage omitted here")

"When shall I break the walls of my private chamber and come out into the wide world, riding the chariot of life?"

As I have shown elsewhere⁶, there are two ways in which the union of the finite and the infinite can be effected in man. The first is by man coming out of his seclusion and bringing himself into union with the world. This is what is expressed in the above verse. The other is by God choosing to make man the vehicle of his expression. The second idea we also find in another poem in the *Gitanjali*:

("Hindi passage omitted here")

'Thou soundest Thy note, O Infinite, in the finite. That is why Thy manifestation is so sweet in me'.

This idea he further developed in his poem *Jīvana Devatā*. The central idea of this poem is that there is in every man an indwelling Divine principle which is in intimate personal touch with all his feelings, thoughts and volitions. It is the inner guide and controller of all that he feels, all that he thinks, and all that he desires. But it does all this, not by remaining outside, like an external authority, but by being completely internal. In fact, it is man's partner in the great enterprise which we call

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⁵ *Vide Religion of Man*, p. 96.

⁶ See the writer's article *Tagore's conception of the destiny of Man and his mission in life* ("Calcutta Review", Oct. 1941).

life.³⁰⁶ The Poet made this very clear in the following lines of this poem (I give the Poet's own translation):

"I know not why thou chocest me for thy partner,
Lord of my life!
Didst thou show my days and nights,
My deeds and dreams for the alchemy of thy art,
And string in the chain of thy music my songs of autumn and spring,
And gather the flowers from my mature moments for thy crown?"

This intimate personal touch with God is the chief note of his religion. It was the privilege of man, he thought, to be always in such intimate touch. His religion must therefore exhibit it; it must be nothing else than an expression of this intimate contact.

This is another reason why we must say that Tagore's religion is very different from the religion of humanity. Its gaze is not confined to the narrow sphere of human interests but extends far beyond it to the limitless field of the Infinite. Only it wants the Infinite to maintain a living touch with man. Man is not a forsaken creature; God has honoured him by maintaining constant contact with him.

The core of Tagore's religion is a sense of organic unity of man with the universe. It is the realization of an all-pervading personality in the universe answering to the personality of man. He found inspiration in the songs of the Vaishnava poets who "sang of a love that ever flows through numerous obstacles between man and Man the Divine, the eternal relation which has the relationship of mutual dependence for a fulfilment that needs perfect union of individuals and the Individual".

His religion, he confessed, was "a poet's religion". All that he felt about it was from vision, not from knowledge. This gave him an advantage, he thought, which those who relied upon logic and reason did not possess. For it is the man of inner sense who alone can realize the inner unity manifesting itself through all differences. The man of reason and logic, on the contrary, stumbles at every step over individual objects and individual facts. He has no dissolvent by which the separateness of these can be merged in the unity of a greater whole. For him, therefore, facts are final, and he does not care for their hidden meanings.

So far Tagore went with the man of inner vision. But religion³⁰⁷ with him was not only a matter of vision, but also of the heart. The man of the heart unlocks his heart

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to the Infinite Heart of the Man Divine. The pulsations of the latter he feels in the pulsations of his own heart. Tagore quoted a number of sayings of the wandering minstrels of Bengal, called Bāüls, who had such a heart-to-heart communion with the Man Divine. One such minstrel sang: "Man seeks the man in me and I loose myself and run out". Ravidas, a poet-singer of mediaeval India, sang: "Thou seest me, O Divine Man (*Narahari*), and I see thee, and our love becomes mutual". God, therefore, appeared to all these mystics as "the Man of my heart". The essence of this realization is "the expansion of our consciousness in a great reality of Man to which we belong".

The result of this survey of the essential nature of religion he summed up as follows⁷: "Science may include in its field of knowledge the starry world and the world beyond it; philosophy may try to find some universal principle which is at the root of all things, but religion inevitably concentrates itself on humanity, which illumines our reason, inspires our wisdom, stimulates our love, claims our intelligent service."

He was proud to admit that this was anthropomorphism, and sad that man's religion could not but be anthropomorphic. He looked upon man as the crown of the whole process of evolution.

This may be all true, but the question is: Cannot man himself evolve into something higher? Why should we think that man, as he is, represents all that he ever can be? And if he can become something different from what he is, why should not his religion also take this into account? Why should its gaze be confined to him, when he himself is only a passing phase? If the destiny of man is to be more than man, religion cannot be content with looking at the world from his point of view.

(d) RELIGION OF THE SUPERMAN

In other words, the standpoint of religion must be, not the standpoint of man, but that of the Superman. This is the great truth proclaimed by Sri Aurobindo. Not man as he is, but man as he shall be, as he is destined to be, sets the standard for religion.

The limitations of the types of religion we have just examined³⁰⁸, may all be attributed to this one cause, the failure to perceive that *man is not the goal of evolution*. The anxiety which the religion of humanity shows to preserve in a somewhat improved form the existing institutions of man, for instance, is due to its failure to grasp that these institutions may not be the last thing in the scheme of world-evolution. Even its

⁷ *Religion of Man*, pp. 113-14.

principle of the universal brotherhood of man may have to be transformed, as we shall presently see, in the light of the higher destiny of man.

So, too, individual realization is not enough. The history of the world has already shown this. There have been in every age and in every country men who have attained individual realization, and through it, individual emancipation, but their attaining individual salvation has not improved the general condition of the world. The world is just where it is, in spite of their obtaining individual realization. From the point of view of world-progress, therefore, a religion whose outlook is confined to individual realization, no matter how satisfying it may be to the individuals concerned, must be pronounced a failure. Religion must have a cosmic outlook; it is faith in the *cosmic* realization of values. Let me explain. Religion does not believe in a static condition of the universe. If it did, it would not be the dynamic element in the spiritual life that it is. It believes in the progress of the world – a progress which is not limited by any conditions, but is truly endless. The world at present has not reached the perfection which is its due. There are possibilities of its further improvement which are simply unlimited. There are values which are still unrealized in it, but which it is its destiny to realize. The goal of evolution is not individual realization but cosmic realization, that is to say, the realization of higher and higher values in the universe, leading to a higher and higher status of it.

The religion of the Superman is a prophecy of a new heaven and a new earth. It does *not* say to man, “Lo, you are in a gross, stupid, unkind world. The physical universe which surrounds you is the field of blind, unconscious force. Even your own little world, the world of your neighbours, friends and relations is a world of gross stupidity and darkness. You can expect nothing but opposition and obstruction from your physical as well as your social environment at every step in your march towards higher and higher realization. In spite of all this opposition, however, you will succeed, provided you can detach yourself thoroughly from the world and have a sufficiently intense hankering ³⁰⁹after realization”. But it says to him, “Behold, a new heaven and a new earth is coming. A new age, a *Satyayuga*, is about to dawn. This earth will not be the stupid and blind earth that it is to-day. This atmosphere will not be the dense atmosphere that you breathe to-day. Your society, the society of your friends and relations and fellow-beings, will not be the dull and callous and unkind society that you see to-day. All this is going to change. A new physical universe, not controlled by unconscious forces, but illumined by the light of a Superior Light, is about to emerge, and a new society, a society of gnostic beings, is going to make its appearance, and you will find yourself, not obstructed and opposed, but encouraged and helped at every

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step in your march towards higher realization. In fact, you will march hand-in-hand with your fellows, the gnostic beings, aided by a new and transformed material universe, towards heights undreamt-of before”.

This is the message of the religion of the Superman, as proclaimed by Sri Aurobindo. Its two main components are: (1) that religion is religion of the Superman, and not of Man, (2) that it visualizes a cosmic, and not merely an individual realization. They completely change the outlook of religion. The religion of the Superman differs fundamentally from the religion of man, just as the latter differs fundamentally from physical religion. It does not value very highly those things which man wants to cling to, such as social, economic and political institutions.

It makes a transvaluation of values—a complete overhauling and transformation of human values. It does more than this, for it brings into view certain values of which man at present has no consciousness. It would be idle to pretend to know and grasp all the values that will reveal themselves to the consciousness of the Superman. We at the human level can at best faintly guess the values that will dawn upon such a consciousness. We are too prone to suppose that all our cherished dreams will be realized, and that too, as we precisely wish them to be realized, in that higher life. In this we are sure to be disappointed.

One great thing which the famous English thinker Bradley has taught us is that we must not suppose all our dear and cherished things to remain just as they are, when seen in the light of a higher principle. If we seek the guidance of the Absolute, we must be prepared to give up many of them and see them transformed, some into mere skeletons, others even into ghosts. Those dear things without which we cannot conceive life ³¹⁰to be possible, would, when viewed in the light of the Absolute, simply melt away, as did the great pretensions of learning of Nārada when subjected to the searching examination of his instructor, Sanatkumāra. Even some of the values which appear to us most essential, may, when viewed in relation to the Absolute, lose their importance.

This is why Sri Aurobindo says that ethics is only a passing phase of evolution. His object is not to underrate the value of ethics. Ethics undoubtedly holds a very important place in the organization of human society. But human society as it exists at present is not the last word of evolution. It is bound to undergo a radical transformation when evolution jumps to its next higher stage. When this takes place, the values of morality will lose the importance which they possess at present. Family relations, the relations between capital and labour, the State and the individual, etc., will all undergo a fundamental change when man will experience a radical change in

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his nature due to the emergence of a higher principle in him. It is not possible, therefore, to look upon any of these as ultimate values.

Take, again, the great principle of humanism, the Universal Brotherhood of Man. Why should we think that in the higher life which is destined to be ours, this principle will be realized as we wish it to be done? Do we not see that in spite of its spectacular grandeur, there is narrowness and prejudice at the bottom of it? Why should we suppose that man will for ever lead a separate life from the rest of creation? Why should we always hate the lower animals? Why should we think it impossible to have any brotherhood with them? And then the physical universe? Must we suppose that it will for ever remain alien to us? Can we not feel any fellowship with it? Should we always consider ourselves to be superior to it and should we always consider it to be our duty to curb and control it? Should it remain the highest ambition of man to be master of the physical universe and use it for his ends? The growth of science has undoubtedly given man unlimited opportunities for realizing this ambition, but nevertheless, is this ambition one which it is the duty of man always to cherish? Are those eternal words of wisdom of our sages, ("Hindi passage omitted here") mere phrases? Is there no inner ballast of fundamental, vital truth behind these great words? Is that great ideal of a fundamental organic unity of the whole universe, physical, vital, mental, a mere idle fancy? Are these great sayings mere lugubrations of mentally unbalanced, *soma*-intoxicated dreamers?

If³¹¹ we think so, I have nothing to say except that we should refrain from mourning the sad state in which religion finds herself to-day, and should give up for ever all hope of raising her to her former glorious position. If all that we expect from religion is that she should maintain all the goody, goody ideas of our respectable morality, then the sooner we cease to talk of reviving and reforming religion, the better it will be for us and for religion.

It may be said that the brotherhood of the whole universe or man's organic unity with the whole creation is too thin and dilute a conception to serve as a foundation for religion. I admit that it is so. But this is precisely what we have to change. Why is this conception so thin and dilute? Is it not because we are incapable of grasping as a concrete reality the fundamental organic unity of the whole creation? And why so? *Because we look at everything through the spectacles of mind.* And mind is only capable of comprehending such a unity as a mere abstraction and not as a concrete reality. This incapacity is something inherent in the very nature of mind, and mind can no more get rid of it than the leopard can change its skin. All constructions of mind have this fundamental weakness about them, that they make abstractions of all principles. All mental principles have this essential defect that they are unsubstantial

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masses, floating in mid-air, without being rooted in the soil of concrete reality. And that is why one breath of wind takes them to one abstraction, as another carries them to another. To move from one abstraction to another, from eternity to eternity – this is the fate of mind.

No doubt a very sad fate. But this is not the fate of man. And this is the glorious message which the religion of the Superman gives us. Its first and most essential teaching is that mind is not the last stage of evolution, but that mind must consummate itself in something higher than mind. This ‘some thing higher than mind’ is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind. The Supermind is bound to descend into the process of evolution and give it a new push. And when this happens, principles will no longer remain frothy abstractions, but will become living, concrete realities. This principle, for instance, which we were discussing, the principle of the organic unity of the whole creation, will then become charged with concrete reality. It will no longer remain thin as it now is, but will be clothed in the flesh and blood of a living reality. That is why I said, “We have³¹² got to change all this”. Under the religion of the Superman the organic unity of the universe will be one of the most living and dynamic realities. The so-called thinness, therefore, of this vital principle is only a passing phase, and will disappear with the disappearance of the rule of mind and the emergence of the Supermind.

We thus see that the principle of the Universal Brotherhood of Man will be transformed into that of the organic unity of the whole universe, when the Supermind will descend into the process of evolution. Similarly, the principles of nationalism and internationalism will lose all their distinguishing characteristics and be merged in a higher principle of unity. Bergson is right when he says that nationalism and internationalism differ not in degree, but in kind. Bergson, however, is wrong when he thinks that this difference is one between closed and open morality, that is, between institutional morality and the morality of inner realization. Inner or individual realization is not competent to give a full view of internationalism. This can only be obtained through cosmic realization, that is to say, when not only the individual, but the whole world receives a new light and reaches a higher stage of its evolution. The full realization of internationalism is not possible at the human level; man, so long as he is merely man, will always have his quarrels with his fellow-men in one form or another. This is why, in spite of the best efforts of so many philosophers and other ardent souls who have dedicated their lives to it, internationalism is still as far off as ever. It must wait till the emergence of a higher principle leading to a radical cosmic transformation. But when this consummation takes place—and here is the most wonderful part of the whole process—internationalism itself will be transformed into something higher, for instance, into a principle of universal cosmic unity.

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This is true also of the other offshoot of internationalism, namely, peace and goodwill among men. This also is not capable of realization at the human stage. Wars will continue to disfigure our civilization, so long as it remains only human. It is impossible to formulate any scheme by which we can hope permanently to get rid of war, so long as world-evolution remains where it is, that is, so long as it continues to be dominated by mind. For this imposes certain fundamental limitations of outlook, which preclude the possibility of our taking a truly broad view of things, which alone can make war an impossibility.

If this is pessimism, then it is pessimism to say that fire burns.³¹³ Fire is fire, and so long as it continues to be fire, it must burn. So also man is man, and so long as he continues to be man, there is no escape for him from war. But man is not destined to remain for ever mere man. *He has a higher destiny, and that is to become more than man, to become Superman.*

This is the great optimistic note of Sri Aurobindo's religion and philosophy. It emphatically declares that there is bound to come a time when man will be free from his present limitations and will pass into the state of Superman. There is no possibility of doubt about this. It asserts this as an absolute certainty. Where it speaks hesitatingly or haltingly is about the possibility of eliminating war under the present conditions of human society. But this hesitation means nothing more than that imperfection is imperfection. That there are certain inherent weaknesses in man, even the greatest champion of humanism cannot deny. That on account of these weaknesses war cannot be completely eliminated, is also what it is impossible to deny.

Indeed, it is difficult to find a greater optimist than Sri Aurobindo. He gives us a picture of a future state of evolution, where not only will war become absolutely unthinkable, but a spirit of harmony and order will descend even to the lower order of creation. For, as he says⁸, "the supramental gnostic being ... would not only found all his living on an intimate sense and effective realization of harmonic unity in his own inner and outer life or group life, but would create a harmonic unity also with the still surviving mental world, even if that world remained altogether a world of Ignorance. For the gnostic consciousness in him would perceive and bring out the evolving truth and principle of harmony hidden in the formations of the Ignorance; it would be natural to his sense of integrality and it would be within his power to link them in a true order with his own gnostic principle and the evolved truth and harmony of his own greater life-creation".

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⁸ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 1033.

As a result of this penetration of the Supramental consciousness into the lower forms of creation, there will be established a greater unity between the higher and the lower forms than exists to-day. The result will be a greater solidarity between individual and individual, leading to a greater organic unity. This appears clearly from the following sketch⁹ of the change brought about in the relation of the individual to other individuals and to³¹⁴ life and matter: "For the gnostic being would be in unison and communion with the Consciousness-Force that is at the root of everything: his vision and his will would be the channel of the supramental Real-Idea, the self-effective. Truth-Force; his action would be a free manifestation of the power and workings of the root Force of existence, the force of an all-determining conscious spirit whose formulations of consciousness work out inevitably in mind, life and matter. Acting in the light and power of the supramental knowledge, the evolving gnostic being would be more and more master of himself, master of the forces of consciousness, master of the energies of Nature, master of his instrumentation of life and matter ... A new power and powers of consciousness would then be an inevitable consequence of an evolution of Consciousness-Force passing beyond mind to a superior cognitive and dynamic principle. In their essential nature these new powers must have the character of a control of mind over life and matter, of the conscious life-will and life-force over matter, of the spirit over mind, life and matter; they would have the character also of a breaking down of the barriers between soul and soul, mind and mind, life and life: such a change would be indispensable for the instrumentation of the gnostic life. For a total gnostic or divine living would include not only the individual life of the being but the life of others made one with the individual in a common uniting consciousness"⁹.

The characteristics of this higher social unity Sri Aurobindo further describes as follows: "There must be an inner and direct mutual knowledge, based upon a consciousness of oneness and identity, a consciousness of each other's being, thought, feeling, inner and outer movements, a conscious communication of mind with mind, of heart with heart, a conscious impact of life upon life, a conscious interchange of forces of being with forces of being; in any absence or deficiency of these powers and their intimate light there could not be a real and complete unity or a real and complete natural fitting of each individual's being, thought, feeling, inner and outer movements with those of the individuals around him. A growing basis and structure of conscious unanimism, we might say, would be the character of this more evolved life."¹⁰

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⁹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 1138-40.

¹⁰ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 1140.

There is great chaos, says Sri Aurobindo, in men's ideas about the relative values of society and the individual, some maintaining³¹⁵ that society exists for the individual, and others holding just the opposite view. What should be the proper attitude of religion towards this question? There is no doubt that the individual is the key to the whole process of evolution. He is the carrier of values, and it is by the level which he attains that the stage of evolution is to be determined. Nevertheless, it is necessary to understand wherein lies his value as an individual. Briefly it may be said that his value lies in the extent to which through him. But this self-expression of the Reality in the individual has infinite grades. The individual began as infra-human and will end as supra-human. "For", says Sri Aurobindo, "our humanity is not the whole of the Reality or its best possible self-formation or self-expression—the Reality has assumed before man existed an infra-human formation and self-creation and can assume after him or in him a supra-human formation and self-creation"¹¹. The growth of the individual has indeed no limit; as he can surpass humanity, so can he surpass the universe. "The universe finds itself through him even as he finds himself in the universe, ... since he can surpass it and enter into something in himself and in it and beyond it that is absolute"¹².

It is clear from this that the individual does not owe any allegiance either to the community or humanity, but solely to the Reality, that is, to God. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "his allegiance must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all".

Does this mean, however, that the future religion must go back to individualism? The answer is both 'Yes' and 'No'. It is 'Yes' in the sense that the ultimate carrier of value is undoubtedly the individual, and if the individual is crushed by the social machinery, then the mainspring of evolution will disappear and the evolutionary process will come to a standstill. It is indeed at such times that, as the Gita says, the need of an *Avatāra* arises, for it is only an *Avatāra* that can help the world-evolution to tide over such a crisis. But it should be noted that the *Avatāra* himself is only a Higher Individual who releases the forces which suffered a temporary check due to the crushing of individuality by a lifeless, soulless machinery, whether the machinery is that of laws which have lost all their inner spiritual content and have become mere dead husks, or whether it is that of ³¹⁶the arbitrary dictates of an autocrat who rules by sheer physical force.

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¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1153.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1153.

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Be that as it may, the fact remains that the evolutionary process can only continue so long as there is continuous growth of the individual. Evolution, in fact, may be defined from one point of view as a growth from a lower to a higher individual. In inorganic evolution we have to deal with the lowest type of individual. In organic evolution we have to deal with a higher type; in mind, with a still higher. And then when evolution crosses the boundaries of ignorance and passes into the domain of knowledge, it comes across for the first time the true individual.

And what does it find there? Does it find an individual who is in eternal conflict with society? Just the reverse. The higher we ascend in the scale of individuality, the less will be the conflict between the individual and society. And that is why we have to say 'No' to the question: Does the future religion mean going back to individualism? Individualism, as we understand it, does not really favour the growth of a higher type of individual. The individual it contemplates is one who seeks his economic, social and political advantage, regardless of the interests of others, and often in opposition to them. It wants to give such an individual unlimited opportunities for self-aggrandisement, subject only to such limitations as will ensure for others also similar opportunities. Individualism of this type stands self-condemned. Future religion can have nothing to do with it. The individual whose growth it looks upon as a fundamental need of evolution is a very different individual from that contemplated by individualism. For one thing, he does not consider his interests to clash with those of others. Rather he does not consider anything good for him which is not good for others.

A society of such individuals is very different from any society that we know of. In all kinds of society of which we have any knowledge, an individual *qua* individual does not feel his identity with other individuals. Through education and through social pressure, he is made to realize some sort of common bond with his fellow-individuals. But this realization is never complete; the common bond breaks at the most crucial moments, and a constant need is felt of some external authority to bring about by force some sort of outward union. There is thus constant friction between individual and individual, and between the individual and society.

In³¹⁷ the society envisaged by the religion of the future, the gnostic society, as it may be called, such a state of things is unthinkable. From the sketch of this society which Sri Aurobindo has given¹³, it is perfectly clear that the very possibility of any clash between individuals is absolutely unthinkable. "One in self with all", he says, "the supramental being will seek the delight of self-manifestation of the Spirit in

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¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 1041.

himself, but equally the delight of the Divine in all, he will have the cosmic joy and will be a power for bringing the bliss of the spirit, the joy of being to others; for their joy will be part of his own joy of existence. To be occupied with the good of all beings, to make the joy and grief of others one's own has been described as a sign of the liberated and fulfilled spiritual man. The supramental being will have no need for that of an altruistic self-effacement, since this occupation will be intimate to his self-fulfilment, the fulfilment of the One in all, and there will be no contradiction or strife between his own good and the good of others: nor will he have any need to acquire a universal sympathy by subjecting himself to the joys and griefs of creatures in the Ignorance; his cosmic sympathy will be part of his inborn truth of being and not dependent on a personal participation in the lesser joy and suffering; it will transcend what it embraces and in that transcendence will be its power. His feeling of universality, his action of universality will be always a spontaneous state and natural movement, an automatic expression of the Truth, an act of the joy of the spirit's self-existence."

An act of the joy of the spirit's self-existence! This is, in fact, the transformation which occurs when Man passes into Superman. The conscious effort which in the human stage is required to make man seek the good of others is changed into a pure joy of being, an undiluted *ānanda*, when the transition from Man to Superman takes place. This transition may be described briefly as one from duty to *ānanda*. Kant is perfectly right when he says that the categorical imperative or the unconditional law of duty can alone make us men. But he is wrong in thinking that no higher state can be conceived than what is pictured in the notion of unconditional obedience to the moral law. No matter how essential this notion may be at the human stage of evolution, it becomes an anachronism when the boundary is crossed which separates man from the superman. Then duty becomes a pure *ānanda*, obedience to the moral law is then transformed into a sheer joy of existence.

For ³¹⁸the sheer joy of existence the Superman links himself with others, nay, with the whole of creation. All sense of effort vanishes from him, all consciousness of duty. Effort and duty can have place only when the normal consciousness is a consciousness of difference and a sense of identity is only attained by suppressing this consciousness by a violent exertion. But where the normal consciousness is one of profound identity with the whole universe, how can there be any room for effort and duty? How can there be also any room for sorrow or delusion, for these are the outcome of a sense of division:

("Hindi passage omitted here")

These are some of the main features of the religion of the Superman, the religion of the future, as I shall now call it, for it fulfils all the conditions I have already mentioned, which the religion of the future must satisfy, inasmuch as it takes up into itself and brings into perfection the values of the other types of religion, at the same time adding some new values of which they were not conscious. It is not a compromise between the different ideals of religion as they are in vogue to-day, but it will chalk out a new path, guided by the new consciousness that will emerge when world-evolution will take its next most momentous leap forward. It will be neither humanism, nor a religion of mysticism, nor a religion of man; nor will it be individualistic or socialistic or nationalistic or internationalistic, for these terms, as we have seen, have reference to the present world-conditions and will lose all their meaning when these conditions undergo a radical change.

What, however, will be the immediate future of religion? That depends upon how far religion understands her mission, which is neither to quarrel with science about matters of fact, nor to exhibit an inordinate desire to be in her good books. Why should religion be so anxious to placate science? The world neither wants scientific religion nor religious science, but it wants religion pure and simple. Religion must have something of her own to proclaim. And she must have the courage to proclaim it, without caring whether science accepts it or not. If history has taught us anything, it is this, that if you want to win the respect of the world, you must proclaim your views fearlessly. This is as true in the sphere of religion as in other spheres. Religion has suffered enormously in world-estimation by reason of her being tied to the apron-strings of the dogmatic theories of the Church in the Middle Ages, and in the present age ³¹⁹by reason of her morbid anxiety to seek the good opinion of science. If she is to succeed, she must get rid of her attitude of subservience and boldly proclaim what she thinks and what she feels. She has an assured position in the world-order as the repository of faith—faith in the realization of values—and nothing can dislodge her from her position, neither science nor anything else, unless she chooses to dislodge herself.

Sri ³²⁰Aurobindo as a Literary Artist

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There are people who read Sri Aurobindo for the mystery and glamour surrounding his terrestrial career, more exclusive people who see in him the promise—nay, the reality—of the Superman and read him as the propounder of integral yoga,

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others who remember him mainly as the apostle of virile nationalism and read him as the living soul of nascent India, and there are some others still to whom he is primarily a literary artist and hence read him merely to lose themselves in the luminous radiances of his poetry or in the many enchanting expanses of his weighty prose works. It is the last named aspect of a many-faceted achievement that is the subject of this diffident attempt at appraisal.

I

An artist is ever one who strives to induce form into seemingly formless matter, who wrestles with the raw-stuff of reality to explore its significances and exhibit them to the world; he is thus something of an explorer and creator in his own sovereign right. The potter handles only foul, frail clay, but his exertions end in the production of a beautiful and useful article; the carpenter slaves at his task, sawing and splitting huge masses of timber, but he ends by creating a chair or a chandelier or a chariot; the weaver and the basket-maker, the master-builder of churches and bridges and mosques and temples, the music-makers who waft the human soul to the seventh heaven of felicity, the painter and the poet whose inspired creations offer the balm of incommensurable hope to ailing humanity, they are artists all, explorers of reality and creators of beauty which at the same time that it is beautiful is also purposive.

The distinction that is often elaborated between the 'mechanical' arts on the one hand and the 'fine' arts on the other does not really touch the root of the matter. It is not as though the³²¹ former are wholly utilitarian and the latter are utter superfluities in life. So long as there is no difference in their capacity, why does one prefer a beautiful to an ugly basket? Beauty may have, strictly speaking, no 'use' for us, but it is of much 'value' to those who can respond to it—and where is the man with a soul so dead that he has never felt his sensibilities quicken in the presence of beauty? On the other hand, the so-called 'fine' arts—music, painting, sculpture, architecture and poetry—are not mere luxuries, delectable toys in one's exclusive Ivory Tower, but rather the oxygen whose inhalation helps the human soul to realize, at auspicious moments, that

A life of intensities wide, immune
Floats behind the earth and her life-fret,
A magic of realms mastered by spell and rune,
Grandiose, blissful, coloured, increate.¹

Art can be neither wholly utilitarian (in its lesser, material sense) nor can it be pursued or professed or practiced in an absolute vacuum. It is as meaningless to cry

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¹ *Collected Poems and Plays*, II, p. 282.

down an artisan because he produces marketable chairs and baskets as it is to extol a Bright Young Thing that loudly proclaims the heresy that Art is ever for Art's sake alone. Even the basket-maker is an artist, for he too is conscious of beauty, and is able to realize it here and now; and even the most gifted of poets is something of an artisan, for he too has laboriously to learn to master his material by using the delicate tools of his own forging. All products of artistic activity must thus possess value in our eyes; we go to them, we cherish them, because they are useful to us in one way or another, because they both serve us and enlighten us, because they make life livable and enjoyable in its different planes and diverse manifestations.

While all the arts are no doubt reared on a common base, they nevertheless differ from one another in their possibilities and in their completed development. It is, in the main, a question of lesser or greater comprehension, and this, again, is largely determined by the nature of the medium in each particular instance; the more intractable the medium is, the less scope has the artist to achieve a totality of comprehension. In general terms, every artist aims at storming the citadel of Reality and revealing its purposive core and manifold significances; he aims—to vary the member—at bridging the seeming chasm that divides the real from the ideal, Time from Eternity, the human from ³²²the Divine; he aims at portraying infinity in a grain of sand, ineffable beauty in a few dots and dashes, the music of the spheres in a song or a lyric.

II

The aim is the same—but the media vary, and the different arts offer, in consequence, an interesting study in secondary differentiation. Architect or sculptor or painter or musician or poet, the artist would glimpse Infinity and attempt to realize it in terms of his medium—stone, marble, palette, sound, symbol, as the case may be. The architect can really give his visions a local—almost a material—habitation and a name; the finished structure is there before us, it immediately makes an assault upon our emotions and imaginations. But the medium at the disposal of the architect is essentially intractable; it can be made to convey only a limited number of ideas. The grandeur of a Gopura or of a Gothic church or of a Taj bathed in moonlight is certain to transport the human soul from its prosaic habitation on the earth; but the experience comes in a flood, overwhelms us at once; and anon leaves us behind amidst the shallows and miseries of our humdrum occupations. The nuances, curves, and gradations that make life a rich and varied store of significance, the embracing fluidities of love and play and laughter, these cannot come within the purview of architecture, nor yet that of sculpture—for, although human and divine features may be portrayed by a sculptor, he can never reproduce the dynamics of passion, the fluctuations in the fever and the fret that agitate the perennially human in us all; although wonders have

been achieved with masses of stone and blocks of marble or brass, a great deal must yet always elude the grasp of the architect and the sculptor.

The painter is better placed in respect of his medium than are the architect and the sculptor. Colours are fluid things, they are fascinating and intriguing things; you can choose your colours, you can mix them in any way you please, and you can load the canvas less or more with the many colours at your disposal. Since a two-dimensional canvas has to do duty for a three-dimensional material world and a multi-dimensional spiritual world, the painter has to leave much of illusion. Less strictly realized in terms of matter, painting is none the less more suggestive than is either sculpture or architecture; movement, the dynamics of action, variety, multiplicity, all these can be ³²³subtly insinuated by the accomplished painter. In other words, painting is a more inclusive—more variously comprehending-art than are architecture and sculpture, which, in their turn, are more inclusive and vitally comprehensive than are merely mechanical arts like pottery or carpentry or basket-making.

Music and poetry, the most ethereal of the arts, are also the most inclusive among them. The musician's medium is sound,—and music is therefore called an art of the ear in contrast to painting, sculpture and architecture, which are called arts of the eye. Now sounds are deceptively fluid and they can be made to signify almost the entire gamut of human emotions, passions, and aspirations. The musician is thus in a position to convey the very rhythm of life in its different altitudes; he can make the stream of sound mirror the darkling current of human life; and music can accurately reiterate life's significances and emphasize their splendours unity.

Tenuous, indeed, is the musician's medium, but even sound is more concrete than the medium at the disposal of a literary artist. Poets and prose writers are alike compelled to use words—words only, words alone—in the practice of their art. But what are words! When words are printed, they no doubt catch the eye, but words were not always printed or even written; when words are spoken, they are doubtless heard by the human ear, but words are not always spoken. What is the true content of a word, then? It has a particular look on the printed page, it conveys a particular sound to the ear, it communicates something akin to an idea to the mind; but a word is more than what it looks and what it sounds and what it seems to mean; it is a symbol, it is a wave that floats in the ocean of Eternity, sometimes carrying a whisper from God to man or a prayer from man to God. In logical phraseology we might say that a word has both a definite denotation and an unknown, almost limitless connotation; we might say that a word has both a semantic import and a phonetic significance; but we cannot ever hope to dispossess words of their potency, their mystery and their magic.

A literary artist has greater potentialities of expression, not because as an artist he has aims other than those that inspire the musician or the painter or the sculptor or the architect, but because his medium is capable of infinite variation, it is the most ethereal and comprehensive medium of all. A block of wayside stone may appear to be a crude and useless thing; but the gifted sculptor ³²⁴sees the form implicit in it, chisels away the superfluous masses, and lo and behold, a beautiful image results from his exertions! It is not as if he has created the image—he has only released it from its amorphous prison-house and allowed it to pursue its career of beauty and breathe the air of freedom. In like manner, stray words in the Dictionary, like so many wayside stones, may appear prosaic and harsh and crude; but the magic touch of the literary artist will kindle them into a flame of beauty, that radiates “thoughts that wander through eternity”. The words that a literary artist uses are in physical appearance just like the words in a Dictionary; but they are not so to be understood or apprehended; a poet’s words are not printed bundles of letters, nor are they a grouping of pleasure-giving sounds; while poetry does appeal to the ear and although it is now-a-days preserved in print, the poetic word ever attempts to reach the inward ear, to sink into the human soul and enrich it; the poetic word is the least material of all media and is akin rather to a winged squadron of the spirit that annihilates space and time and links the human soul with infinity and eternity.

III

Sri Aurobindo, being a literary artist, has perforce to use words as the medium of his expression. If his father had sent him, not to the Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling and thence to London and to Cambridge, but to native schools and colleges in Calcutta, Sri Aurobindo might have early familiarized himself with his mother tongue and become in the fulness of time another Bankim Chandra or Rabindranath, wielding with power and grace the most dynamic of modern Indian languages. But that was not to be. English became for all practical purposes Sri Aurobindo’s mother tongue and he acquired in an incredibly short time an astonishing mastery over this difficult language. A profound knowledge of Greek and Latin and a fair acquaintance with French, Italian and German helped him to study the language and the literature of the English people both in their origins and in their present European setting. Back in India at long last, Sri Aurobindo started reading Sanskrit and Bengali, and quickly grew proficient in both—but English remained his mother tongue; he loved Sanskrit and Bengali and mastered them much as a Sir William Jones loved Sanskrit and studied it.³²⁵

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Be that as it may, Sri Aurobindo was now, at the age of twenty-five, a master of many languages and knowledges, and a gifted writer in English who found it as easy and natural to turn his thoughts into limpid verse as to give them the “other harmony of prose”.

In the course of a long and varied career, Sri Aurobindo has been writing incessantly; writing prose and verse; letters, journalistic essays, reviews, exhortations, critical and philosophical expositions, commentaries and treatises, all in prose; and in verse, epigrams, translations, adaptations, lyrics, narrative poems, dramas, and, in recent years, a set of remarkable exhibits in futurist poetry. In result, Sri Aurobindo produces in one the impression that he is a born lord of language; he scatters words about, at once with precision and with liberality; he is both voluble in appearance and compact in effect; he is so consummate a literary artist that his art ever covers up the traces of its toils, leaving only the well-cut diamond behind.

When we refer to an artist’s toils, we do not necessarily mean that the pursuit of art is but a travail of double, double, toil and trouble. Creative composition is almost always a matter of taking considerable—if not infinite—pains; but neither should pleasure be ruled out altogether; indeed, the pains of labour admitted, is there not also a fury of pleasure as well in the throes of parturition? Moreover, once an artist has gone through a severe discipline in works, artistic activity becomes almost second nature to him and he seems to paint or to sing or to write easily, effortlessly and as it were involuntarily. How much more true is it in the life of a true yogi, who has undergone the severest disciplines in the vital, mental and spiritual planes, and who has transformed them all into engines of purposeful activity dedicated to the Life Divine? Yoga is indeed skill in works—and there is nothing surprising in a yogi wielding the instrument of language with ease, skill, dexterity, and unflinching success.

Read Sri. Aurobindo’s letters—there are, perhaps, several thousands of them—and they all hum and sparkle and whisper, at once a voice near one’s ear and a voice from above; they are neither poems, nor rhetorical pieces of prose, but they reproduce rather the delicate rhythms of common speech; they are best described as verbal curtains that shut us in—and then we almost decipher the very features and recognize the unique modulations of³²⁶ the voice of the remarkable writer of these letters. Quotations is difficult, but this one will do for a specimen: “*Dilip,*

I cannot say that I follow very well the logic of your doubts. How does a noble and selfless friend suffering in a prison-hospital invalidate the hope of yoga? There are many dismal spectacles in the world, but that is after all the very reason why yoga has to be done. If the world were all happy and beautiful and ideal, who would want to

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change it or find it necessary to bring down a higher consciousness into the earthly Mind and Matter? Your other argument is that the work of the yoga itself is not easy – not a happy canter to the goal. Of course it isn't, because the world and human nature are what they are. I never said it was easy or that there were not obstinate difficulties in the way of the endeavour.

Again I do not understand your point about raising up a new race by my going on writing trivial letters ten hours a day. Of course not – nor by writing important letters either; even if I were to spend my time writing fine poems it would not build up a new race. Each activity is important in its own place: an electron or a molecule or a grain may be small things in themselves, but in their place they are indispensable to the building up of world; it cannot be made up only of mountains and sunsets and streamings of the aurora borealis – though these have their place there. All depends on the force behind these things and the purpose in their action – and that is known to the Cosmic Spirit which is at work; and It works, I may add, not by the mind or according to human standards but by a greater consciousness which, starting from an electron, can build up a world and, using a tangle of ganglia, can make them the base here for the work of the Mind and Spirit in Matter, produce a Ramakrishna, a Napoleon, a Shakespeare..."¹ The phrasing is impeccable, and even the two unusual words 'canter' and 'ganglia' but enrich the passage; the rhythms are akin to those of subdued conversational speech and play on one's tongue with disarming familiarity. One can picture to oneself this imaginary scene – the *chela* agitatedly putting forward one animadversion after another, the *guru* patiently and almost smilingly meeting them, explaining, arguing, persuading. Only a casual letter – a "trivial" letter! – but it reveals the writer, explains the core of his faith, and, incidentally, illustrates his prose art.

IV³²⁷

Sri Aurobindo's more deliberate compositions in prose are distinguished by the same qualities of quiet assurance, classical phrasing, and appropriateness to the theme and the mood and the occasion. You may tackle any of his prose 'tracts for the times' or journalistic effusions or massive treatises – there is no faltering at the exordium, no thinness in the structure of the argument, no weakness in the peroration. Works like *The Life Divine*, *The Future Poetry*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Ideal of Human Unity* are mighty edifices, boldly conceived and executed with both imagination and a minute particularity. Sri Aurobindo has never felt it beneath his notice to attend to details; a true artist, he has always realized that even seeming trifles have their own appointed place in the fulness of the final achievement. Although the above sequences were originally written under the peculiar exigencies of periodical

¹ Quoted in Dilip Kumar Roy's *Tirthankar*.

publication, they nevertheless preserve form and unity of impression, and claim and secure for Sri Aurobindo a place among the great modern masters of English prose.

It is, perhaps, convenient as it is also necessary to study in particular the two monumental works, *Essays on the Gita* and *The Life Divine*, because these have gone through a process of revision since their publication in the *Arya* and are now easily accessible in book form. The *Essays* are in intention exegetical; the *Gita* is paraphrased, often verse by verse; Lord Krishna's uttered and unuttered thoughts are sifted, arranged, illustrated, expanded; seemingly and endlessly repetitive, the *Essays* are seen in the end to be somehow endowed with a marvellous compactness and unity of its own. What has happened is this: while doubtless deriving his primary inspiration from the Song Celestial, Sri Aurobindo has created out of it his own individual music that enchants and exhilarates the reader and gradually effects in him a heightened awareness and a keener sensibility.

Likewise, when superficially considered, a work like *The Life Divine* would appear to be a severely – forbiddingly – abstruse treatise, bristling with obscurities and technical terms and hair-splitting differentiations. On the other hand, closer acquaintance with it makes one realize that the whole Himalayan edifice is only a vast prose symphony. There are discussions, no doubt, and in so far as they are discussions they give adequate proof of a virile mental forge at work; no mere logician developed a thesis or elaborated an argument better than Sri Aurobindo³²⁸ does in *The Life Divine*. And how admirable – metallic in its hardness and lucid clarity – is a summing-up like this:

“This then is the origin, this the nature, these the boundaries of the Ignorance. Its origin is a limitation of knowledge, its distinctive character a separation of the being from its own integrality and entire reality; its boundaries are determined by this separative development of the consciousness, for it shuts us to our true self and to the true self and whole nature of things and obliges us to live in an apparent surface existence”.¹

It is, of course, not the story of Jack and Jill going up the hill and fetching water in a pail; it is the crest of an argument that has taken Sri Aurobindo some five hundred pages to elaborate. But it is not spoilt by any avoidable obscurity – on the contrary! Here are some more specimens of such granite phrasing picked at random from these two books:

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¹ *The Life Divine*, II, p. 517.

“Harmony is the natural rule of the spirit, it is the inherent law and spontaneous consequence of unity in multiplicity, of unity in diversity, of a various manifestation of oneness. In a pure and blank unity there could be indeed no place for harmony, for there is nothing to harmonise; in a complete or a governing diversity there must be either discord or a fitting together of differences, a constructed harmony. But in a gnostic unity in multiplicity the harmony would be there as a spontaneous expression of the unity....”²

“There is a Reality, a truth of all existence which is greater and more abiding than all its formations and manifestations; to find that truth and Reality and live in it, achieve the most perfect manifestation and formation possible of it, must be the secret of perfection whether of individual or communal being. This Reality is there within each thing and gives to each of its formations, its power of being and value of being”.³

“The love of the world spiritualised, changed from a sense-experience to a soul-experience, is founded on the love of God and in that love there is no peril and no shortcoming. Fear and disgust of the world may often be necessary for the recoil from the lower nature, for it is³²⁹ really the fear and disgust of our own ego which reflects itself in the world. But to see God in the world is to fear nothing, it is to embrace all in the being of God; to see all as the divine is to hate and loathe nothing, but love God in the world and the world in God”.¹

One comes across many such passages in the body of Sri Aurobindo’s prose writings and indeed their balance, their clarity and the vigour of their phrasing are almost as worthy of reverent study as are their logical structure and their close-grained fabric of thought.

V

Not infrequently, however, Sri Aurobindo’s prose art emits unexpected poetic flashes which subtly illumine and transfigure whole sentences and paragraphs. Simile and metaphor trespass upon the domain of cogent prose and language crystallizes into glittering images like these:

“We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future”.²

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 1140.

³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 1152.

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, I, p. 359.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 12.

“For now the world Being appears to him as the body of God ensouled by the eternal Time-spirit and with its majestic and dreadful voice missions him to the crash of battle”.³

“It has enormous burning eyes; it has mouths that grape to devour terrible with many tusks of destruction; it has faces like the fires of Death and Time”.⁴

“...Kali with her garland of skulls trampling naked in battle and flecked with the blood of the slaughtered Titans...”⁵

“Knowledge waits seated beyond mind and intellectual reasoning, throned in the luminous vast of illimitable self-vision”.⁶

Dialectical skill gives place to direct vision, the knife-edge clarity and sharpness of prose dissolve into poetic imagery and symbolism; and Sri Aurobindo is seen to be poet no less than the wielder of an animated and effective English prose style.

Some of Sri Aurobindo’s characteristically epigrammatic or impassioned³³⁰ bits of prose are contained in his “minor” works—notable in *The Mother, Thoughts and Glimpses, The Riddle of this World* and *Bases of Yoga*. One is occasionally overwhelmed by a whole shower of epigrams as in:

“What is there new that we have yet to accomplish? Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished error and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have only accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association.

In a word, godhead; to remake ourselves in the divine image”.¹

“And what is the end of the whole matter? As if honey could taste itself and all its drops together and all its drops could taste each other and each the

³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 178.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 179.

⁶ *The Life Divine*, I, p. 183.

whole honey-comb as itself, so should the end be with God and the soul of man and the universe.

Love is the keynote, Joy is the music, Power is the strain, Knowledge, is the performer, the infinite All is the composer and audience. We know only the preliminary discords which are as fierce as the harmony shall be great; but we shall arrive surely at the fugue of the Divine Beatitudes".²

Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo's wit and imagination fuse into gem-like images, fascinating, clear-cut and profoundly true:

"God and Nature are like a boy and a girl at play and in love. They hide and run from each other when glimpsed so that they may be sought after and chased and captured".³

"What is God after all? An eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden".⁴

How pretty, you'll say – but also how suggestive and how true! The author of *The Life Divine* is not the crusty metaphysician some take him to be—he was a sensitive humanist before ever he dreamed of yoga, and he remains a humanist still.

Parts³³¹ of Sri Aurobindo's great little book, *The Mother*, reveal his verbal suppleness at its best. In particular, the sixth section that evokes with intuitive certainty and imaginative precision the manifold "powers" and "personalities" of the Mother—the home-of-all, womb-of-all created things—is surely among the very finest achievements of Sri Aurobindo as an impassioned literary artist. We have to content ourselves with but one significant extract from the book—which, indeed, suffers somewhat in being taken out of its context:

"Wisdom and Force are not the only manifestations of the supreme Mother; there is a subtler mystery of her nature and without it Wisdom and Force would be incomplete things and without it perfection would not be perfect. Above them is the miracle of eternal beauty, an unseizable secret of divine harmonies, the compelling magic of an irresistible universal charm and attraction that draws and holds things and forces and beings together and obliges them to meet and unite that a hidden Ananda may play from behind the veil and make of

² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

them its rhythms and its figures. This is the power of Mahalakshmi and there is no aspect of the Divine Shakti more attractive to the heart of embodied beings. Maheshwari can appear too calm and great and distant for the littleness of earthly nature to approach or contain her, Mahakali too swift and formidable for its weakness to bear; but all turn with joy and longing to Mahalakshmi. For she throws the spell of the intoxicating sweetness of the Divine: to be close to her is a profound happiness and to feel her within the heart is to make existence a rapture and a marvel; grace and charm and tenderness flow out from her like light from the sun and wherever she fixes her wonderful gaze or lets fall the loveliness of her smile, the soul is seized and made captive and plunged into the depths of an unfathomable bliss. Magnetic is the touch of her hands and their occult and delicate influence refines mind and life and body and where she presses her feet course miraculous streams of an entrancing Ananda.”¹

Is it a recordation of demonstrable fact or only the subtle elaboration of a poet’s fancy? In any case it is a passage that a Sir Thomas Browne or a Walter Pater might have felt proud to have written; and *The Mother* is full of such beautiful and memorable things.

Of ³³²Sri Aurobindo’s prose treatises and essays one might say, borrowing his own words, that “the language ... the structure of thought, the combination and balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of a sectarian teacher nor to the spirit of a rigorous analytical dialectics cutting off one angle of the truth to exclude all the others; but rather there is a wide, undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind and a rich synthetic experience”.¹ Here have we, in pointed brevity, both the material for an appraisal of Sri Aurobindo as a literary artist in prose – and a judicious appraisal as well!

VI

We now turn to Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. Whereas in prose the sentence, with its precision and balance and thought-content, is ever the primary meaning-unit, in poetry everything almost hinges on the word. A single word like “idiot” or “incarnadine” or “mandragora” suffuses a whole passage with the true incandescence of poetry. This alone is the criterion that enables us to differentiate a passage of pure poetry from merely competent or meritorious verse. When reading poetry, we are all the time asking ourselves the question: “What made him write like that? But then—how else could it have been said!”

¹ *The Mother*, pp. 59-62.

¹ *Essays on the Gita*, I, pp. 8-9.

It has been remarked that poetry is “particular words in a particular order”; and this cryptic definition includes all that we generally imply by terms like “poetic diction”, “rhythm”, “metre”, “pattern”, and the rest. The poet sees life—his own or other people’s—imaginatively: sees it with his whole being, and is one with it for the nonce; and then he re-creates the experience in terms of rhythmical language,—in other words, language that is both speech and song and achieves at one and the same time their dual purposes. There is such a thing as rhythm in prose also and prose sentences too have to be constructed in a particular order; but just as the meaning-unit in poetry is the word, and not the sentence as it is in prose, so also the syllable, and not as in prose the word, is the unit of rhythm in poetry. Poetry at its purest should be able to achieve that triumphant utterance which is

seraphically free
From taint of personality,

and³³³ is timeless in its content and rhythmical quality. But poetry can no doubt exist in less pure but more familiar categories of meaning-content and rhythmical expression; it may be seemingly trivial, it may be intellectually, rather than emotionally or imaginatively, sustained; it may assume the form of epigram, or elegy, or narrative, or drama, or ode, or epic, or lyric, and it may either submit itself to the severe discipline of the couplet or the quatrain or the sonnet, or boldly venture forth into the freer and subtler harmonies of blank verse or sprung rhythm or even free verse.

Sri Aurobindo’s poetical output is very considerable in quantity and the published portion alone (which, we are assured, is but a fraction of the total) occupies two sumptuous volumes of nearly seven hundred pages. This represents the work of a period of about fifty years. We have translations from the original Greek, Sanskrit and Bengali; we have free adaptations,—a good number of them; we have interesting clusters of lyrics, some secular, others suffused with the fervour of religious faith or the glow of mystical experience; we have a literary tour-de-force in the drama, *Perseus the Deliverer*; we have, at one end, poetry inspired by the romantic poets and Victorians, and, at the other end, poetry distinctly futurist in aim and achievement; in a word, here’s indeed “God’s plenty”, and one can freely participate in its munificence according to one’s capacity and inclinations.

The juvenile poems and the early narratives—*Urvashi* and *Love and Death*—are interesting in themselves and are clearly the work of an authentic poet. The lines

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agreeably trip on one's tongue, the words are carefully – perhaps extra-carefully – chosen, and the “numbers” are rarely unpleasing. One comes across many a beautiful line and many a memorable phrase:

A perfect face amid barbarian faces...¹
A broken prodigal from pleasure's mart...²
Titanic on the old stupendous hills...³
Bridal outpantings of her broken name...⁴
Alone with woodlands and the voiceless hills...⁵

There are descriptions – Ruru's descent into Pātāla, for instance, – that by the sheer power of the rhythmic word galvanize the very scenes before the reader's eyes; there are poems like “The Lover's³³⁴ Complaint” and “Love in Sorrow” that are delightful expressions of a vivacious and youthful fancy, if not of a soaring poetic imagination. One thing, however, is certain: these early lyrics and narratives are quite clearly the work of a super-sensitive poet, richly endowed with a head as well as a heart, and both being of imagination all compact. The earlier pieces are by no means poetic masterpieces – but they are a sure prelude to victory in the realms of rhyme. After all, when winter's travails are over, can the laurels of spring be far behind?

VII

Sri Aurobindo's rendering of Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasie* is comparable to Laurence Binyon's *Sakuntala*; for, besides fairly reproducing the fever and the flavour of the original, they both succeed in making Kalidasa himself feel at home in an alien garb. Like Binyon, Sri Aurobindo also has made his verse rhythms often approximate to those of ordinary speech, as in:

My lord,
We will not talk of that. I have fulfilled
My rite, and with observance earned your kindness.
Girls, let us go;¹

or in:

Never heed that,

¹ Collected Poems and Plays, I, p. 9.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 95.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 103.

Speak boldly. She has given you up as hopeless.
So doctors leave a patient, when disease
Defies all remedy.²

But as frequently, or even more frequently, the blank verse luxuriates into arabesque and one experiences, if only for a moment, a sudden sense of glory:

The lily of the night
Needs not to guess it is the moon's cool touch.
She starts not to the sunbeam...³
His hair is matted all a tawny yellow
Like ochre-streaks, his holy thread is white
And brilliant like a digit of the moon.
He looks as if the faery-tree of Heaven
Came moving, shooting twigs all gold, and twinkling
Pearl splendours for its leaves...⁴

It³³⁵ is often said that great poetry cannot be translated; it can be, and it has been, again and again; Sri Aurobindo, for instance, has repeatedly performed the feat. Neither Kalidasa's verse rhythm nor his honey-sweet music nor his peculiar verbal wizardry nor yet the precise texture of his thought is quite reproduced in Sri Aurobindo's English version; but the poetical essence—what Pope called 'the fire' of it all—has somehow trickled through and it makes *The Hero and the Nymph* genuine English poetry.

It is impossible within the limits of a brief study to discuss in detail Sri Aurobindo's literary artistry as a translator and as a poet. His translations are never mere translations; they are almost as a rule poems in their own right. The great translator—a Chapman, a Pope, a Fitzgerald, a Romesh Chandra, an Aurobindo—is more a partner than a slave and he gives us as much of himself as of the original, and the two in such harmonious fusion that it is ever a puerile task to attempt to dissociate one from the other. Thus *The Songs of the Sea*, that magnificent sequence that is almost a continuum of poetic iridescence, is as much Aurobindo Ghose as it is Chittaranjan Das, and indubitable poetry in any case. These forty "songs" are composed in a variety of rhythmical patterns and with unerring sureness of touch they evoke at once the strange lure of the sea, its abiding sublimity and its bottomless mystery. Quotation can but give a more or less distorted picture—for the whole sequence is to be considered one and indivisible, it is to be interpreted as the recordation in moving verse of the cry of the *jīva* for final union with the hourly experienced, yet unapprehended, mystery of

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 55.

³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 93.

the universe. No wonder the “Songs” have puzzled many critics. The sea is visualized, no doubt, in terms of colour, sound and rhythm; but the sea is not simply the “Bay of Bengal” or the “Indian Ocean”, but something much more elemental and much more ethereal as well. As it is to Ellidra in Ibsen’s *The Lady from the Sea*, to Chittaranjan—and to Sri Aurobindo also—the sea is a veritable symbol of romance, a baffling concretion of multifoliate Nature, of its reserves of power no less than its undying mystery. Sri Aurobindo’s verbal artistry is taxed to the uttermost—but the result is poetry: the sea is successfully evoked in a hundred and one different ways—it is the “unhoped-for elusive wonder of the skies”, it is the “Infinite Voice”, it is the “minstrel of infinity”, it is the “shoreless main”, it is the “great mad sea”, it is the “illimitable”, it is the “mighty One”, and it is the “king of mysteries³³⁶”; the poet thus approaches the sea as a friend, as a lover, as a loyal subject, as a devotee, as a shadow that ever pursues the object, as a waif that would return to the bosom of the mother; and the music with its subtle undulations of dissolving sweetness fuses at last poet and reader and subject into a closed universe of harmony and bliss.

VIII

Besides *Vikramorvasie* and *Sagar-Sangit*, Sri Aurobindo has also translated—with the same verbal mastery and metrical resilience—Bhartrihari’s *Niti Shatakam*, four chapters from the Udyog-parva of the *Mahabharata*, and several songs from the original Bengali, including Bankimchandra’s immortal anthem, *Bande Mataram*. The renderings from Bhartrihari exhibit a rich variety in stanza-forms and one can judge Sri Aurobindo’s feeling for the innate beauty of words even by merely studying the titles: “The Human Cobra”, “Aut Caesar aut Nullus”, “Altruism Oceanic”, “The Immutable Courage”, “The Script of Fate”, “Flower from a hidden Root”, “The Flame of the Soul”, “Gaster Anaides”, etc. Epigrammatic and aphoristic, *The Century of Life* is reared upon experience and worldly wisdom, and the incandescent fury of poetic imagination but fitfully shines upon these verses. Nevertheless the verses are crystal-pure and also crystal-clear, and one cannot withhold admiration from a literary artist who achieves lines like:

Only man’s soul looks out with luminous eyes
 Upon the worlds illimitably wise...¹
 The sweet fair girl-wife broken with bridal bliss...²
 Seven griefs are as seven daggers in my heart...³
 In the dim-glinting womb and luminous murk...⁴

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¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 218.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 189.

³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 194.

Thorns are her nature, but her face the rose...⁵

The Century of Life, like most didactic poetry, appeals to the head rather than to the heart; but there are not wanting occasional flashes that penetrate much deeper.

Vidula, on the other hand, is a scream of passion—radiant, full-throated and immediately effective. Sri Aurobindo wields the Locksley Hall metre with commendable dexterity and power. The³³⁷ mother's exhortation to the son acquires the topicality and universality of a moving patriotic anthem:

Sunjoy, Sunjoy, waste not thou thy flame in smoke! Impetuous, dire,
Leap upon thy foes for havoc as a famished lion leaps,
Storming through thy vanquished victors till thou fall on slaughtered heaps...
When thou winnest difficult victory from the clutch of fearful strife,
I shall know thou art my offspring and shall love my son indeed.¹

Sri Aurobindo admits that the style of the original Sanskrit is "terse, brief, packed and allusive, sometimes knotted into a pregnant obscurity by the drastic economy of words and phrase."² But the "free poetic paraphrase" conveys an adequate impression of the original, and an occasional line like—

Gathering here an earthly glory, shining there like Indra's sun—assumes a diamond's edge and glitter. However, it is only when the poem is read aloud at a stretch that it fully brings out Sri Aurobindo's mastery of rhythm and language which are often seen to be perfectly attuned to *Vidula*'s tempestuous passion and truly torrential speech.

Very different is the effect produced by Sri Aurobindo's felicitous adaptations from Chundidas and other Bengali masters of song. Pieces like "Radha's Complaint in Absence", "Radha's Appeal", "Karma", "Appeal", "Hymn to the Mother", "Mother India" and "Mahalakshmi"—composed at widely separated intervals in the course of four or five decades—have all the lilt of song and make a ready assault on our emotions. It is, perhaps, a far cry from the Elizabethan simplicity and grace of the earlier pieces to the complicated harmonies of the more recent ones: but the hand of the literary artist is equally, if not to an equally fruitful extent, discernible in them all. If Shakespeare remarked that "Youth's a stuff will not endure", Sri Aurobindo sings that

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 211.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 217.

¹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 234, 242.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 231.

“Life is a bliss that cannot long abide”: and the moral is the same, though not expressed in identical terms:

But while thou livest, love. For love the sky
Was founded, earth upheaved from the deep cry
Of waters, and by love is sweetly tied
The golden cordage of our youth and pride.³

That³³⁸ is very pretty, in thought and in utterance, and so are all the pieces adapted from Chundidas; but the rendering of Bankimchandra is rather organ-voiced and deep throated and likewise “Mother India” and “Mahalakshmi”, with their rhythmical elaboration, feast the ear and uplift the heart at once.

IX

Baji Prabhou and *Perseus the Deliverer* are both original compositions. The former is a poem of action, and its rhythm and its language are of a piece with its sanguinary theme. Sri Aurobindo will give us not a second’s respite, but fairly plunges – in medias res – into the heart of the bloody conflict. The first lines –

A noon of Deccan with its tyrant glare
Oppressed the earth; the hills stood deep in haze,
And sweltering athirst the fields glared up
Longing for water...¹

strike at once the key-note of the poem and one can already visualize – however dimly – the impending clash of arms and Baji’s splendid heroism and victory in death. The “tiger-throated gorge” is evoked arrestingly and the vicissitudes of the mighty conflict are described with an excruciating particularity. One almost hears, with a shudder, “blast on blast” volleying “death invisible... upon uncertain ranks”; one involuntarily holds up one’s breath as one reads the remorselessly vivid lines:

So was the fatal gorge
Filled with the clamour of the close-locked fight.
Sword rang on sword, the slogan shout, the cry
Of guns, the hiss of bullets filled the air,
And murderous strike heaped up the scanty space,

³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 133.

¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 101.

Rajput and strong Mahratta breathing hard
In desperate battle.²

The horror – and the pity – of it all! And so the narrative proceeds, with an inhuman, precipitancy, to the recordation of the deathless scene:

Quenched was the fiery gaze, nerveless the arm:
Baji lay dead in the unconquered gorge.³

In³³⁹ Sri Aurobindo, Baji Prabhou has found a minstrel worthy of his imperishable sacrifice: and the poem, written in vigorous blank verse and in words that unerringly and movingly evoke the shifting scenes of the battle, elects itself to an honourable place among the heroic poems in the English language.

Perseus the Deliverer is another triumph of Sri Aurobindo's art. A blank verse drama on a Hellenic theme is among the most difficult tasks that a modern English poet can set to himself; but Sri Aurobindo's play satisfies us as drama, as poetry, and also as an imaginative rendering of the ideas of evolution and progress. The dialogues are poetically intense and yet but rarely sound unnatural; the prose bits are full of pep and are not seldom drenched in indecorous gaiety; but Sri Aurobindo's art excels itself most in the great blank verse passages which accurately evoke either the terrible plight of an Andromeda chained to the cliff or the insane and inflated blood-lust of a Polydaon or yet the radiant serenity, the confident strength and the prophetic intensity of a Perseus. One cannot but respond with one's whole heart and soul as one hears Andromeda's piercing moans, as one watches her poisoning hope against bleak despair:

And thou, bright stranger, wert thou only a dream?
Wilt thou not come down glorious from thy sun,
And cleave my chains, and lift me in thy arms
To safety? I will not die! I am too young,
And life was recently so beautiful.¹

Polydaon is pictured as the personation of a vengeful destiny; he is an engine of evil, gloating over his mad thirst for blood and lust for power: he will revel in death and destruction; he will make crimson rivers irrigate Syria's gardens; he will fill them with heads instead of lilacs; his destiny is to will what he desires and to achieve what he wills:

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 108.

³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 114.

¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 274.

I am Poseidon

And I will walk in three tremendous paces
Climbing the mountains with my clamorous waters
And see my dogs eat up Andromeda,
My enemy, and laugh in my loud billows...
Sit'st thou, my elder brother, charioted
In clouds? Look down, O brother Zeus, and see
My actions! They merit thy immortal gaze.²

But³⁴⁰ Polydaon's brief hour of vengeful glory ends abruptly and even this "monarch of breast-hackers"—to quote his "Fellow-butcher", the loose-tongued Perissus—cannot choose but fall back dead. It is left to Perseus to emphasize the moral, not only of Polydaon's twisted career, but also of the many monumental conflicts between the Asuric and Divine forces in the universe:

But the blind nether forces still have power
And the ascent is slow and long is time.
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.¹

Perseus the Deliverer is thus no hothouse plant; notwithstanding its verse form—or, indeed, because of it—it has universality, it is for all time; and although its theme is but a variation of an ancient Hellenic myth, its interpretative power is unmistakable and it does offer a message of hope to this shaken and blood-boltered world.

X

Only Sri Aurobindo's lyrics—and especially the lyrics suffused with the religious spirit—now remain to be glanced at. At no period of his life has Sri Aurobindo been blind to the spiritual reality underlying the material universe. He has never countenanced either of the great negations, and the denial of the ascetic has ever appeared to him as one-sided as the denial of the full-blooded materialist. Through all

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 267.

¹ *Ibid.*, I, 306.

the bewildering vicissitudes of his life there runs nevertheless a strong, silken thread of aspiration to achieve an integral view of man, Nature and God. He could formulate, merely with the aid of his lucid and powerful intellect, a total world-view; but it will at best be just a tentative explanation. A satisfying world-view could be built up only on the sure foundations of mystical experience. Such experiences were indeed vouchsafed him in the Alipur jail. He experienced "It" during certain moments of utter felicity. But the experience proved to be – as all such experiences must inevitably prove to be – truly unwordable and ineffable. And yet Sri Aurobindo *would* attempt the impossible – as many mystics³⁴¹ have done before him. What he said – or was to say – in the celebrated Uttarpara speech, Sri Aurobindo also said – and said frequently – in the more fluid medium of verse. In "Invitation", for instance, which was actually composed in the Alipur jail, Sri Aurobindo suggests that the "It" comprehends winter and rough weather no less than sunshine and vernal showers; in "Epiphany" the meaning is more explicit:

The God of Wrath, the God of Love are one,
Nor least He loves when most He smites. Alone
Who rises above fear and plays with grief,
Defeat and death, inherits full relief
From blindness and beholds the single Form,
Love masking Terror, Peace supporting storm.¹

In "Who", again, the rushing anapaests are made to convey an idea of the One underlying the Many, the changeless Reality informing the ever-changing world of our immediate experience:

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone.²

There are many more lyrics and a couple of dialogues – "The Rishi" and "The Birth of Sin" – all of which are the characteristic products of Sri Aurobindo's preoccupations with the ultimate problems of existence. Some of them are only intellectually sustained and fail to acquire the piercing accents of poetry. Thus, for all its thought-content and mastery of phrase, one is not quite convinced that "To the Sea"

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¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 129.

² *Ibid.*, I, p. 123.

or “The Vedantin’s Prayer” evokes either the unique poetic word or employs the appropriate rhythm, divinely appointed as it were to communicate these mystic truths. One admires the general technique, but one realizes also that technique has not here been transfigured into the unmistakable utterance of pure poetry.

Sri Aurobindo is a thinker, a philosopher, but he has been also a poet all along. Poetry should give us, not a system of thought, but the poetry of thought, not philosophy, but the poetry of philosophy. Sri Aurobindo has frequently achieved this feat of transfiguration. The failures are unimportant, the successes alone should demand our attention and compel our admiration.³⁴² In the last two lines of “A Child’s Imagination”, Sri Aurobindo manages to convey a vast revelation:

God remembers in thy bosom
All the wonders that He wrought.¹

In “Rebirth”, again, rhythm and phrase fuse into a reality of poetic communication; and “The Mother of Dreams” rides triumphantly on the crest of a complicated rhythm and achieves a memorable articulation:

Thine is the shade in which visions are made; sped by thy hands from celestial
lands come the souls that rejoice for ever.
Into thy dream-worlds we pass or look in thy magic glass, then beyond thee we
climb out of Space and Time to the peak of divine endeavour.²

The pairs of interior double-rhymes and the impetuous anapaests give the lines a piquant rapidity of motion that is wholly appropriate to the theme. Likewise, some of the minor pieces also—notably, “Seasons”, “God”, and “An Image”—are at once elevating in theme, unblemished in their literary craftsmanship, and truly moving as poetry.

XI

Sri Aurobindo’s more recent poems—the revised version of “Ahana”, *Six Poems* (1934) and *Poems* (1941)—are in a category apart. Ahana is the “Dawn of God” and her advent is the occasion for universal rejoicings; the “Hunters of Joy” now sing a “Song of Honour” replete with innumerable evocations of sound and colour and inwrought with felicities of *dhwani* that tingle in the chambers of the subconscious for ever. Perhaps,

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¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 134.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 122.

the poem is just a little too long; the inspiration now and then flags and poetry gives place to padding—but that is, after all, inevitable in a long poem. And yet which modern poet has given us lines more nobly articulate than these:

Bliss is her goal, but her road is through whirlwind and death-blast and storm-race.
All is a wager and danger, all is a chase and a battle ..³
Memories linger, lines from the past like a half-faded tracing ..⁴
Fearless is there life's play; I shall sport with my dove from his highlands,
Drinking³⁴³ her laughter of bliss like a God in my Grecian islands.
Life in my limbs shall grow deathless, flesh with my God-glory tingle,
Lustre of Paradise, light of the earth-ways marry and mingle ...¹
Vision delightful alone on the peaks whom the silences cover,
Vision of bliss, stoop down to mortality, lean to thy lover.²

Truly can “Ahana” be described as one long fascination and thunder of music, irresistible, life-giving, and all but overpowering. As it stands, “Ahana” is a palimpsest, a necessary bridge linking up Sri Aurobindo’s earlier with his more recent poetry. Although parts of it are somewhat Swinburnian in movement and seeming thinness of content, the poem as a whole is among the most interesting and meritorious of Sri Aurobindo’s poetical achievements.

Sri Aurobindo’s recent poems are an attempt to achieve in English something equivalent to the *mantra*. Mystical experience, being by its very nature untranslatable in terms of logical categories, has perforce to borrow significance from the use of words and rhythms as symbols of, and as intimations from, something above and beyond ourselves. The great mystic poets of the world are thus inveterately “obscure”, trafficking in symbols that perplex all except the initiated or chosen few who are able or willing to catch the lucent rays that emanate from the supernal Light. Such poetry has but rarely been achieved in the past—especially in English; it is, however, Sri Aurobindo’s considered view that the future poetry—even in English—will more and more approximate to the *mantra*; it will minimise if not altogether eliminate the operations of meddling middle-men—the intellect, the senses, even the imagination—and it will effect in one swift, unflinching step the business of communication from the poet to the reader. As Sri Aurobindo has remarked, “the true creator (of poetry), the true hearer is the soul. The more rapidly and transparently the rest do their work of transmission, the less they make of their separate claims to satisfaction, the more

³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 152.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 154.

¹ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 160-1.

² *Ibid.*, II, p. 162.

directly the word reaches and sinks deep into the soul, the greater the poetry. Therefore poetry has not really done its work, at least its highest work, until it has raised the pleasure of the instrument and transmuted it into the deeper delight of the soul. A divine Ananda ... is that which the soul of the poet feels and which, when he can conquer the human difficulties of his task, he succeeds in pouring also into all those who ³⁴⁴are prepared to receive it.”¹ Sri Aurobindo would seem to have almost succeeded in conquering “the human difficulties of his task” and the dozen “futurist” poems that he has now given us constitute the culmination of his long and arduous poetic career.

Nevertheless, these recent poems have puzzled most readers, not only on account of their “obscurity”, but also because some of them handle unfamiliar metres—metres that seem to sway uncertainly between the rigid patterns of classical English prosody and the baffling vagaries of modern free verse. His illuminating essay on “Quantitative Metre” is, no doubt, a great help, but the poems are more—ininitely much more—than mere illustrations of a prosodist’s theories. Our doubts and difficulties, however, will tend to disappear if we approach the poems without preconceived notions of what poetry and metre should or should not be; in other words, if we read the poems to ourselves, slowly and deliberately, keeping our physical no less than our inward ear open, and sheathing for the nonce our intellect’s razor-edge. If one reads thus a poem like “The Bird of Fire”, one will learn to discover in its unmanageably long lines and their abundant load of polysyllables an approximation to the primordial music—

Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out.

One can then read the other poems, feel a quickening of one’s pulses, share with Sri Aurobindo the “vision splendid”, re-live his experience by proxy, and repeat to the darkness and the stars such potent *mantras* as—

My mind is awake in stirless trance,
Hushed my heart, a burden of delight ...²
My spirit sank drowned in the wonder surge ...³
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
My body is God’s happy living tool,

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¹ *Arya* (January 1918).

² *Collected Poems and Plays*, II, p. 280.

³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 284.

My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.⁴
Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here ...⁵

These lines, and indeed the poems in which they occur, are poetry *per se*; they all aspire (to quote M. Abbe Bremond, though³⁴⁵ written in a very different connection and perhaps, in a different sense as well), “each by the mediation of its proper magic, words, notes, colours, lines—they all aspire to joint prayer”.¹ It were sacrilege to analyse the literary art that has evolved, after a life-time of arduous metrical as well as spiritual discipline, such splendid poetic creations. One can attempt to scan the lines, enumerate the alliterative and other devices, explain an image here and a metaphor there,—but one is not nearer solving the eternal riddle that poetry is. When one reads a poem like “Rose of God”, one knows it has the form and voice of the truest and purest poetry, one knows that here rhythm and phrase and meaning have coalesced into an utter harmony; and even as one slowly reads it—for the tenth or for the hundredth time—one feels

The melting voice through mazes running;
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.

And so one’s enraptured ear demands that the strains be repeated again and again; and one is content to chant the poem as often as one likes and let its meaning sink deep into one’s soul’s recesses, there to abide for ever:

Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven,
Rose of Bliss, fire-sweet, seven-tinged with the ecstasies seven!
Leap up in our heart of humanhood, O miracle, O flame,
Passion-flower of the Nameless, bud of the mystical Name
Rose of God like a blush of rapture on Eternity’s face,
Rose of Love, ruby depth of all being, fire-passion of Grace!
Arise from the heart of the yearning that sobs in Nature’s abyss:
Make earth the home of the Wonderful and life Beatitude’s kiss ...²

Sri³⁴⁶ Aurobindo’s Synthesis of Idealism and Materialism

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 297.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 298.

¹ Quoted by Garrod, *The Profession of Poetry*, p. 39.

² *Collected Poems and Plays*, II, p. 302.

BY VASANTA K. DONDE

Matter is certainly as real as spirit. It has remained so inspite of Idealists, Western and Eastern, who denied nature as an illusion. And that is why atheism has done a greater service to the Divine than theism itself. For, to deny matter is to remain in a helpless illusion of the spirit, an irreconcilable solipsism, as unreal as the Monism of the materialists. It is, therefore, our purpose to try to reconcile the apparent contraries of matter and spirit in the highest or the best possible unification, the truth of unity and multiplicity.

Materialism at least has achieved one great purpose and that is to prove beyond doubt the Monism of Matter or in other words, Force. Today the trend of scientific discoveries in different branches is towards finding out the *one* principle of force or energy underlying the diversity of the material phenomena. The apparent numberless things in the universe are ultimately shown to be the forms of one thing or substance and that too is no other than movement or energy, blind in itself but working with certain mathematical laws. Matter is thus a formulation of an unknown force. But the unknown is not the unknowable, and hence there is no room for the pessimism of the Agnostics.

The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo promises to show in vivid terms this reconciliation of matter and spirit, the reality of both of them, in the cosmic consciousness. He has achieved the so far unattainable synthesis of materialism and idealism. Both materialism and idealism have to make a stand on Monism in order to be consistent with themselves. Dualism, either in Materialism or Idealism, contradicts itself and cannot be logical nor even supported by the discoveries of science. Thus each of them has to resort to monistic philosophy to attack the other. And in this both are similar, for they present us with a "Maya" to explain the phenomenon. The *māyā* of the materialists is the blind, unknown impulsion of material energy which deceives us with a brief delusion of life at the crest of its waves. The *māyā*³⁴⁷ of the spiritual idealists is practically the same kind of stuff, inexplicable in its origin as well as its workings, which is responsible for this mysterious phenomenon. Thus the problem of Reality remains unsolved but for this agency of *Māyā* or Blind Energy in both cases. It is therefore necessary that we go beyond this *māyā*, show beyond doubt that the world is not an illusion but a real entity, a form of the Being itself. The cosmic activity is not rejected by the Being as not its own. The Silence should not reject the Sound of the cosmos but, on the contrary, sustain it.

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There is no need for us to prove the Being, for we live in it. It is the Being which is the base of all cosmic activity. But the Being itself was born of Non-Being. Pure Being is the affirmation by the unknowable of itself as the base of all cosmic existence, and the Non-Being is that which is the contrary affirmation of its freedom from all cosmic existence. The Non-Being permits the Being. The Reality is, therefore, Eternal Silence and Eternal Activity, the two sides of the same Existence. And if there is Eternal Truth there is also Eternal Falsehood. If the world is a dream or an illusion and the Brahman the truth, it is a dream existing in Reality, not out of Reality in any case, and the stuff of which it is made is that Reality. Thus the world is as real as the Brahman. Brahman is the material of which this world is made; Brahman is the content of the same world. If the gold is real, says Sri Aurobindo, the vessel of gold is as real and can never be a mirage. Again, if the world is as much an illusion as what we get when we mistake a rope for a snake, we may argue that the illusion of a snake could exist because both the rope and snake were real entities. The mistake was possible because the snake was real sometime and somewhere before we had mistaken the rope for snake. The world, to be an illusion, must first be a real entity in order to be an illusion in a different form.

Thus there is an omnipresent Reality of which neither the Non-Being at the one end nor the universe at the other can be a negation. The materialist and the idealist are at the two poles of the same Reality, each stressing its own point of view and thus continuously playing a sea-saw in the field of philosophy. The Non-Being and the Universe are the two different states of the Reality, obverse and reverse affirmations. The highest experience of this Reality in the Universe shows it to be not only a conscious Existence, but a supreme Intelligence and Force and a self-existent Bliss.

If³⁴⁸ Brahman has entered into form and represented its being in material substance it can only be to enjoy self-manifestation in the figures of relative and phenomenal consciousness. The emergence of Life in the cosmic activity, the so-called evolution of Matter, is a self-representation, a self-discovery and a self enjoyment. And this is going on eternally on account of the Divine Will.

Such is the synthetical philosophy of Sri Aurobindo which, as we shall see in the following pages, dispels all the doubts raised both by the materialists and idealists in the minds of thoughtful persons. Today, as never before, materialism is at a great advantage owing to the scientific discoveries that are daily piling up. The old mysteries of life and cosmos are shrinking every day on account of the greater and greater macrocosmic and microcosmic inquiries into the nature of the Universe as a whole; and it is natural for the scientists to proclaim that the day will not be far when even the last mystery will be solved. Even then the doubting mind is not satisfied with the answers

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given by science. For, with the growth of scientific knowledge we are becoming aware more and more of the infiniteness of Existence and its solution or the last gate where we are to stop is withdrawing further and further like the mirage in a desert. Moreover, Matter, the prism of the cosmos according to the materialists is changing its colour with every new discovery. Matter is receding fast and its old qualities are giving way to not only new but quite revolutionary ones, which make a man suspect that the term "matter" in this case would be a misnomer. And it is not his fault if he thinks that "matter" has long changed to "spirit".

We turn to the theory of consciousness in order to acquaint ourselves with Sri Aurobindo's solution of the problem. For, it is the consciousness which is the point where philosophers parted ways, some to the path of Idealism, others to Materialism. Had it not been for this strange quality born out of cosmic activity, there would have been complete identity of views among all the thinkers of the world as to the nature of Reality.

Generally all our conscious experience is psychological. Also, whatever we experience unconsciously is physiological and in a way a mechanical movement of Matter. For example, the heart beating while a man is in a swoon is the latter kind of unconscious movement which can be compared with other mechanical movements of Matter like the electronic movement round the nucleus. On the contrary, whatever is done consciously by³⁴⁹ us is received through the agency of senses and translated into the terms of the sense-mind, the *Manas* as called by Indian philosophers. *Manas* or mind is the sixth sense, in as much as it is not an independent entity but dependent on something beyond for the realisation of true knowledge.

Even in its ordinary activity it assumes a double role. One may be called the objective and the other subjective. One is impure or mixed, the other pure and unmixed. In the former the mind is one with the external world through its sense-doors, while in the latter it is aware of itself, *e.g.*, when we are angry or are aware of our emotions. There are two kinds of identity. The experience which is always an activity of mind is in its nature knowledge by identity. It is said that it is really a habit that we can experience only so much of the true knowledge as the senses convey to us through sensations. As a matter of fact, we are identifying ourselves with the external world knowing it by an indirect method which brings in the agency of senses. There are limitations imposed upon us by evolution which has made mind accustomed to physiological functioning and their reactions whenever we enter into relation with the material universe. The mind can, as proved by hypnotism, take direct cognizance of the

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objects of senses without the aid of the senses themselves. For, in sleep the waking mind is liberated from the bondage of certain physiological limitations and works as a subliminal mind. The experience that is obtained by mind through the sense-doors can be gained by it also without their intrusion. These sense-doors become necessary to an ordinary human being because he is not so much evolved as not to require the help of the senses. The moment his mind becomes powerful enough to connect itself directly with the outside world it gets its knowledge by identity. This kind of identity is possible only because the same principle of consciousness which resides deep in the mind exists also in the outside world that human mind experiences. The only difference is that whereas the outside world has not awakened to consciousness but is a prey to blind movement of Matter, the human consciousness is not so. On the contrary, the more powerful it becomes the more able it is to know the world by identity and free to move in it at its will.

We know that the cessation of the mental states or, in other words, the functions of the mind does not mean the cessation of the principle of consciousness. Even mind itself is an outer aspect of the subliminal mind and so on till it is nothing but a surface³⁵⁰ ripple of "consciousness". This principle of consciousness is not restricted only to an organism; it can be present in the outside world, though it may not express itself outwardly in the form of mind. Mind in that respect is only an outer ring of human consciousness. It can never be absolute nor can it be treated exclusively. Compared to the field and the potentialities of consciousness, it is insignificant, and as such those philosophies which try to probe into Reality as an object of mental experience or knowledge, will never satisfy human aspirations.

Consciousness is therefore the more important principle to be dealt with by philosophers and the problem of consciousness in its relation to Matter is the only problem which demands to be solved first. The whole history of philosophy, whether Eastern or Western, is a history of struggle between Matter and Spirit, a struggle to determine their rival claims to priority. As far as science is concerned, it maintains, with the authority of the experiments so far made, that Matter preceded consciousness and that the latter arose in Matter in the course of evolution. To a materialist monist Brahman is Matter, while to a spiritualist monist of the type of the Indian philosopher "Matter also is Brahman".

The drive of science is also towards monism which can be made consistent with multiplicity or variety. And this idea is not at variance with the Vedic idea which describes things in the cosmos as one seed arranged by the universal energy in multitudinous forms.¹ Sri Aurobindo has given a very rationalistic explanation of the

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¹ Svetasvatara Upanishad, VI. 2.

Upanishadic philosophy while interpreting the same through the terminology of materialism. It neither supports the ascetic view-point of Shankara nor extreme materialism. It does not negate Matter and run to the pure conscient nor does it negate Spirit and run to stark matter. It admits both matter and consciousness and covers both to reach the synthesis of Divine Life.

With him Matter expresses itself eventually as a formulation of some unknown Force, and Life begins to reveal as an obscure energy of sensibility imprisoned in its material formulation. Life and Matter are therefore not dual entities as Joad wants us to believe but forms of the same principle of Pure Consciousness. The sense of gulf between Life and Matter is removed when Ignorance is dispelled, and Mind, Life and Matter³⁵¹ are then seen to be nothing else than Energy combined in a triple formulation, *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda*. And when we recognise the Energy as *Sat* (Truth), *Chit* (Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Bliss), we cannot admit the conception of a brutal material Force as the creator of Mind or Consciousness. The Energy that creates a world is naturally a Will which, in other words, is only consciousness applying itself to a work and a result. What is that work, asks Sri Aurobindo, if not a self-involution of Consciousness in form and self-evolution out of form so as to actualise some mighty possibility in the universe it has created?

To the materialists who refuse to be led further than what is received as experience by way of senses, he says that science itself is trying to remove the sensible physical means for the intermediate transmission of the physical force, *e.g.*, wireless telegraphy. The force is preserved at the points of impulsion and reception. And he promises that in future even these points will disappear when the laws of supra-physics are studied. The mind will then directly act on the physical energy and work on it to the required result.

This will be possible when we know how to communicate and be one with the cosmic consciousness which is the basis of all the Energy in the Cosmos. For this Energy is not blind and consequently brutal, but has an errand and has to achieve certain result. Beyond this cosmic consciousness there is, says Sri Aurobindo, yet more transcendent, – transcendent not only of the ego, but of the cosmos itself, against which the universe seems to stand out like a petty picture against an immeasurable background. Also, if materialism insists on Matter as reality on the support of logic or experience, spiritualism can meet the argument by an equally cogent logic and an equally valid experience of Yogins like Sri Aurobindo. The materialists try to convince us that the supra-sensible is not real because they are not able to perceive what is not given by the physical senses as it is not organised as gross matter. Even in the world of Matter there are truths which cannot be cognated by means of physical senses. This is

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being proved day after day by psychical researches; we have therefore to admit that there is an extensive field of the supra-sensible not yet traversed by human reason.

According to the claims of Indian philosophy there are supra-physical senses called "*Sookshma Indriya*" in "*Sookshma Deha*" (finer senses in finer body) with certain vision and experience beyond the visible and ordinary senses. These can take cognisance³⁵² of the Reality, including the material world, without the aid of our ordinary corporeal sense organs and thus bring us into identical contact with an organisation of conscious experiences that are dependent not on gross matter of which this cosmos is made, but on a different principle. The reason why the methods employed and the results obtained in the glimpse of supra-physical realities are in disrepute is that they are defective. Modern science, till very recently, would not even condescend to inquire into their validity. They were treated as heresy not deserving any sympathetic approach. Indeed the way leading to supra-physical experiences always passed through the mysterious domain of consciousness, because it was supposed that consciousness is the only underlying principle and the moment a communion is established with it all other doors would open automatically.

In fact consciousness is the eternal witness of the cosmic activity. The universe exists only in and for the consciousness that observes and has no independent Reality. As against this, we have the thesis of the materialists, especially dialectical materialists that Matter (material universe) is self-existent. Just as it was prior to the birth of life and mind, so also it will survive even after no trace of life is seen anywhere. This difference in the outlook is metaphysical. But it also affects the outlook on practical life. Sri Aurobindo thinks that if we push the materialist conclusions too far, we arrive at an insignificance and unreality in the life of the individual and the race, which leaves us, logically, the option between a feverish effort of the individual to snatch something from a transient existence and the self-less service of man and the race to which he may belong. Materialism, like Spiritual Monism, thus arrives at a *Māyā* that is and yet is not, – is, for it is present and compelling, is not, for it is phenomenal and transitory in the works. The *Māyā* of Spiritual Monism takes you by a different road to still more definite conclusions, *viz.*, the fictitious character of the individual ego, the unreality and the purposelessness of human existence, the return into the Non-Being or the relationless Absolute as the only escape from the vortex of a senseless life-activity.

Not only that the principle of consciousness is admitted but Sri Aurobindo goes further and maintains that the extension of our consciousness into the cosmic consciousness is a fact, and a possibility of a cosmic consciousness in humanity is being slowly admitted in modern psychology. This joining of the individual³⁵³ consciousness

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with the cosmic consciousness is achieved by the Yoga practices and is an ideal kept before their eyes by the Indian Sādhakas.

The Sādhaka, by virtue of thus entering into the cosmic consciousness, becomes aware of Matter as one and the multiplicity as being created out of that. Further, not only do we become conscious of this cosmic existence but also conscious in it, sensing the pulsation of the cosmos, becoming fully aware of the same. We live in the cosmic consciousness just as we live in our ego-consciousness. This is achieved solely because there is an identity between the individual and the cosmic consciousness. We become conscious of the minds and bodies of other organic bodies and the substance of the inorganic world just as we are conscious of the ego and its activities. Thus, we can rule over other bodies just as we can control our body, vibrate with other minds as if they are our own, and this is done in the most simple and direct manner. The curtain between ourselves and others is lifted completely.

But what is beyond this individual and cosmic consciousness? What is the nature of Reality and the relation of Matter to consciousness? These are the principal questions to be solved.

In the Taittiriya Upanishad (11.7) it is said that, "In the beginning all this was the Non-Being. It was then that the Being was born". This Non-Being is not the Nihil, because existence cannot come out of nothing, nor appearance nor illusion even. These will require some base in existence. What is this Non-Being then? We term it Non-Being because by this Nothing we only mean something beyond the last term to which we can reduce our purest conception and abstract or subtle experience. It lies beyond our positive conception. To explain it further we may say that the conception of Non-Being can be compared with that of Professor Einstein's "Finite but Unbound Universe". Just as Einstein maintains that the Universe is finite to the extent to which it is subject to mathematical measurements, but that does not mean that nothing lies beyond that. The Universe extends still beyond that and hence it is infinite though finite which can be reduced to the mathematical term. Similarly, Non-being lies beyond Being. Whereas Being is that portion of Non-Being which can come within the purview of the last term of Consciousness, Non-Being is that Infinity which lies beyond even the purest conception based on Consciousness. It is we who, being on this side of Being, term it as Non-Being ³⁵⁴for the sake of expressing an entity which is beyond any expression. And if we term it Non-Being it is due to our inability to express it in a better way. In any case, Non-Being cannot be Nihil.

When we say Being, says Sri Aurobindo, came out of Non-Being, we refer to the element of Time. It is a contrary affirmation of its freedom from all cosmic existence, as Being presupposes cosmic existence. The Non-Being permits the Being just as Silence permits Activity, or, in other words, it is the Silence which gives meaning to Activity. Without Silence Activity cannot exist. The Reality is thus made up of both. Non-Being and Being are the different states of Reality, obverse and reverse affirmations.

Time and Space are the two categories of our consciousness, conditions under which we arrange our perceptions of phenomena. So long as we remain on the pedestal of individual consciousness taking a limited view of Reality, the categories of Time and Space appear to us to be something objective as the phenomenon itself. For there is no doubt that the phenomenon is conditioned by Space and Time which are its qualities. They are not abstract conceptions as long as we are in the phenomenon. For Matter, to be real, is made up of "events" having both space and time simultaneously. But we get quite a different picture when we look at existence itself. Time and Space disappear in the infinite consciousness. The conception of nearness or distance disappears as also of past and future. For every thing is then near and far off, past and future. It is "this", or existence itself. If there is duration, it is not temporal but psychological. The extension and duration represent to the mind something not translatable into intellectual terms but merged into one eternity, an all-containing, all-pervading point without magnitude.

Space and Time are the two nodal points of Becoming. But the very conception of movement carries with it the idea of energy abstaining from action, an absolute not in action is purely and simply absolute existence. Also movement can be understood in relation to potentialities of repose. If the indefinable action alone is true without any repose it means we have the "Nihil" of the Buddhists who believed in the eternal wheel of action, of karma, of movement. It is comparable to a stair-case without a support in the void. And hence along with the pure existent, the becoming, the energy and movement are also a fact, a reality. We have thus the fact of Being and Becoming. Stability³⁵⁵ which is represented by Being, and movement which is represented by Becoming, are only psychological representations of the Absolute, and equally so are oneness and multitude. The Absolute is, however, beyond stability and movement, i.e., Being and Becoming, it takes its eternal poise in the one and the stable, and whirls round itself infinitely, inconceivably and securely.

And it is the Becoming that assumes a form in the shape of Matter and its Force. Mind and Matter are different grades of the same energy, different organisations of one conscious Force of Existence. Even if it is granted that consciousness has evolved out of Matter, nothing can so evolve which is not already involved in it. There is thus no reason for us to stop at life coming out of Matter. Even the development of recent

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research and thought points towards an obscure beginning of life and perhaps a sort of inner or suppressed consciousness in the metal and in the inanimate, perhaps the first beginning of the stuff of consciousness that is seen in us.

No doubt at this stage the word consciousness changes its meaning. It is no longer synonymous with mentality but indicates a self-aware force of existence of which mentality is only the middle term. Below this mentality the consciousness appears in the form of vital and material movements which are for us subconscious; above it rises into the supra-mental, which is for us the super-conscious. Anyway, the principle of consciousness remains the same throughout, organising itself differently. It is *Chit* as energy, creating the world. Here we arrive at that unity which materialistic science perceives from the other end, asserting that Mind cannot be a force other than Matter but must be merely a development and outcome of material energy. Indian thought at its deepest insight asserts, on the other hand, that Mind and Matter are different grades of the *same* energy, different organisations of one conscious Force of Existence.

But how can we give this attribute of “consciousness” to Force? For consciousness implies some kind of intelligence, purposefulness, self-knowledge even though in some cases these remain quite imperceptible to our ordinary senses. To this Sri Aurobindo replies that even in the inanimate operations there is a supreme hidden significance, “hidden in the modes of its own workings”. These operations which we consider wasteful and meaningless may be so from the human point of view which is very, very limited. The consciousness of man is nothing but a form of nature’s consciousness. It is there in other involved forms³⁵⁶ below mind; it emerges in mind; and it shall ascend into yet superior forms beyond mind. For the existence which manifests itself in them is conscious Being.

The fundamental difference between Matter and Spirit lies in the fact that matter is the culmination of the principle of ignorance, blindness and mechanical movement. Philosophers siding with materialism may ask how the Being changes into matter, or, in other words, how consciousness turns into Matter. The reply is that here consciousness has lost and forgotten itself in a form of its work, as a man might forget his very existence, his self-awareness, in extreme absorption, forget not only who he is but that he exists at all, and become for that moment the work itself and the force that does the work. Thus when consciousness develops in Matter, it is the Consciousness which had lost itself, returning again to itself, emerging out of its long forgetfulness slowly but surely as a Life which is first in the pre-sentient stage, then half sentient, sentient and finally struggling again to become directly self-conscious, free, infinite and immortal.

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The³⁵⁷ Ideal of the Jivanmukta

BY ANILBARAN ROY

Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the aeons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow.

— *Sri Aurobindo*.

The cessation of all kinds of misery for all time to come is part of Kaivalya or Nirvana or Moksha, which is regarded as the Parama Purushartha or the highest aim of all beings. All systems of Indian Philosophy and spiritual disciplines regard Ignorance as the root cause of all pain and Knowledge as the means of liberation. This knowledge is not something mental or intellectual, it implies a change of consciousness, a change of being. To attain this knowledge we have to grow out of our present mould of consciousness, and, as desire is the binding knot of present consciousness, it is by renouncing desire that we make ourselves fit for liberation. Giving up our preoccupation with the life of the senses we turn inward and find the silent, immutable, eternal Self within us, and by practising constant union with it we grow into the spiritual consciousness and accomplish our divorce from all contact of pain. That Self within us is the eternal Brahman, and seated in that Self we realise our unity with Brahman, and indeed become Brahman and enjoy the bliss of the Brahman consciousness. And all this we can accomplish in this life and in this material body. Thus the Brihadaranyaka and the Katha Upanishads say: “When all the desires that cling to the heart are loosed away from it, then the mortal becomes immortal, even here he possesses the Eternal.” (Bri. IV-4-47).

What is this Immortality spoken of by the Upanishad, and in what sense can it be attained in the material body? It seems to be the view of the Upanishads that one can have only a taste of Immortality in the material body, but in order to possess it fully one must leave this body and pass to a supercosmic existence. Thus the Chhandogya says: “The Brahman-knower becomes³⁵⁸ ready for liberation but has to wait for its full realisation until the fall of the body” (6/14). The Brihadaranyaka says, “This bodiless and immortal Life and Light is the Brahman” (IV. 4. & 7). “He (the Brahman-knower) becomes the Eternal and departs into the Eternal.” (IV. 4. 8). “Long and narrow is the ancient Path, — I have touched it, I have found it, — the Path by which the wise, knowers

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of the Eternal, attaining to salvation, depart hence to the high world of Paradise." (IV. 4. 8). The Upanishads are however clear that the knot of the Ignorance can be rent even in this body (Mundaka, II. 1. 10). The condition of a man who has cut the knot of Ignorance, but still has the body is known as *jivanmukti*. With the disappearance of Ignorance, such a man becomes freed from all suffering, and is not compelled to be born again as all his works fall away from him and perish (Mundaka, II. 2. 9); so he can be properly called *mukta* or the liberated man. How does such a liberated man live and act as long as he retains his body? This is a practical question, and was asked by Arjuna, the type of the pragmatic man. The Gita has given two types of the Jivanmukta, one lower and another higher. The Mundaka also makes a distinction among Brahman-knowers. As there is some difference of opinion about the real condition of the Jivanmukta, we shall briefly consider the subject in some detail. We shall leave aside the question as to what happens to the liberated man after he leaves the body, whether he loses his individuality and merges himself in the Eternal or whether he lives in some higher world in eternal ecstatic union with the Divine Beloved. We may note here in passing that all these different views are not really conflicting, they all express aspects of a Truth which is many-sided, and an integral knowledge will have to take into account all of them. Such an attempt at a synthesis was made in the Gita. "The liberation of the Gita" says Sri Aurobindo, "is not a self-oblivious abolition of the soul's personal being in the absorption of the One, *sayujya mukti*, it is all kinds of union at once. There is an entire unification with the supreme God-head in essence and intimacy of consciousness and identity of bliss, *sayujya*, for one object of this Yoga is to become Brahman, *Brahmabhuta*. There is an eternal ecstatic dwelling in the highest existence of the Supreme, *sālōkya*.—for it is said, "Thou shalt dwell in me," *nivasishyasi mayyeva*. There is an eternal love and adoration in a uniting nearness, there is an embrace of the liberated spirit by its divine Lover and the enveloping Self of its infinitudes, *samipyā*. There is³⁵⁹ an identity of the soul's liberated nature with the divine nature, *sadharmya mukti*,—for perfection of the free spirit is to become even as the Divine, *madbhāvam āgatah*. The orthodox Yoga of knowledge aims at a fathomless immergence in the one entire liberation. The Yoga of adoration envisages an eternal habitation or nearness as the greater release, *salokya*, *samipyā*. The Yoga of works leads to oneness in power of being and nature, *sadrishya*. But the Gita envelops them all into one greatest and richest divine freedom and perfection." (*Essays on the Gita*).

How far can this perfection be reached in this material body? Is the body an obstacle to the liberation, or can it be turned into a means and an instrument for the highest perfection and the most integral union with the Divine? Most spiritual disciplines regard the body as an obstacle; thus the Upanishadic text quoted above lays it down clearly that for the full realisation of the liberation one has to wait up to the dissolution of the body by death. But this was not the view taken in the Vedas. The

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Vedas speak of the life in higher worlds, but they believe in the possibility of bringing down the powers of those worlds for enriching the terrestrial life. "O Flame," says the Vedic Rishi, "thou foundest the mortal in a supreme immortality for increase of inspired Knowledge day by day; for the seer who has thirst for the dual birth, thou createst divine bliss and human joy." (Rig. Veda, I-31. 7). Though the Upanishads had a longing for the supracosmic existence, and that also must be a part of the integral spiritual experience, the Indian mind never altogether lost the ideal of a terrestrial divine life set before it by the Vedic Rishis, and it has asserted itself in diverse ways in spite of the great influence of the ascetic and world-shunning schools of thought and spiritual discipline. And we find this in the changes that have taken place in the ideal of the *jivanmukta* or the living liberated man.

The body, it is said, is created by our past *Karma*, it is there to give us the fruits of our good or bad actions done in the past. But if with the attainment of knowledge all our actions are burnt away, how is it that the body does not fall immediately? The Brahma Sutras found out an ingenious explanation for this for reconciling the apparently conflicting Sruti texts on this subject. The explanation of the Brahma Sutras amounts to this: "Three kinds of *karma* can be distinguished. *Karmas* gathered in past lives admit of two divisions, those³⁶⁰ that have borne their effects (*prārabdha karma*) and those that still lie accumulated (*sancita karma*). In addition to these two kinds, there are *karmas* which are being gathered here in this life (*sanciyamana*). Knowledge of reality destroys the second kind and prevents the third and thus makes rebirth impossible. But the first kind which has already borne effects cannot be prevented. Hence the present body, the effect of such *karma*, runs its natural course and ceases when the force of the *karma* causing it becomes automatically exhausted, just as the wheel of a potter which has been already turned comes to a stop only when the momentum imparted to it becomes exhausted. When the body, gross and subtle, perishes, the *jivan-mukta* is said to attain the disembodied state of liberation (*videha-mukti*)." (An Introduction to Indian Philosophy by S.C. Chatterji).

But this exception made in regard to *prārabdha karma* seems to be arbitrary, as the Sruti as well as the Gita clearly lay down that all actions, *sarva karmani*, are destroyed by knowledge. And the above classification of *karma* is also not found in the ancient Sritis; the Sankhya and the Yoga systems and also the Gita do not accept it. Perhaps it was due to Buddhistic influence that this explanation was adopted. But how otherwise to explain the persistence of the body even after the attainment of knowledge? The Yoga philosophy says that the body persists only if the liberated man wills to keep it for some purpose, and that purpose can only be to help other people towards the attainment of liberation. The Gita also seems to take the same view. Thus the Lord says: "It is an eternal portion of Me that becomes the Jiva in the world of

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living creatures and cultivates the subjective powers of *Prakṛti*³⁶¹, mind and the five senses. When the Lord takes up the body (he brings in with him the mind and the senses) and in his going forth too (casting away the body) he goes taking them as the wind takes the perfumes from a vase" (15/7, 8). Thus it is quite clear that the taking up of this material body by the soul is not a matter of compulsion by some beginningless *Karma*, as is supposed by the Buddhists, and its persistence does not depend on the blind force of past *karma*. The soul freely takes up its body and leaves it from birth to birth, and it being a portion of the Divine can do so only for fulfilling some divine purpose. And what can that purpose be but the manifestation of the Divine in and through many forms? So, though the Gita also speaks of the return of the soul ultimately to the supracosmic³⁶² existence, it gives the utmost importance to the life of the body as an instrument of fulfilling the divine will on the earth.

Thus the Gita's ideal of the *Jivanmukta* is essentially different from that of the Brahma Sutras. According to the latter, the life and activities of the liberated man are determined by his past *karma*; so they can be in no way different from that of an ordinary man who has not the knowledge of Reality. The outer personality goes on in the old way, only the liberated in his outward life, indulge in sinful activities, and they will do no harm to him. Indeed it has been said that the activities of a liberated man may outwardly be like those of a madman or even of a *pisācha*. This however the Brahma Sutras does not admit; it holds that the liberated man will act only according to the Scriptures. But this is a position which is not logically tenable. Shankara is more consistent when he says that works ordained by the Scriptures are incompatible with the life of a man who has attained knowledge; his works are confined only to the maintenance of the body, and that also is done by the mechanical impulses of Nature. So, according to Shankara, the only life possible for a liberated man is that of a *sannyāsi* who has renounced the world. Not only that, Shankara even goes so far that no one can attain true knowledge unless he has renounced the world and all its activities. The Brahma Sutras leans towards this view, but on account of its allegiance to the Srutis and its recognition of the demands of the active nature of man, it asserts that the liberated man who likes to do so can take up *sannyasa* or live a worldly life; but if he does the latter, he must act and live according to the Scriptures. But if in this way the liberated man chooses and determines his own actions, he is not really liberated, he is still bound to egoistic ignorance and to the *gunas* of Nature.

The ancient Upanishads however are quite definite that a liberated man does live in the world and follows the ordinary pursuits of men; only those acts do not create any bondage for him. Thus the Chhandogya says: "There he move about, laughing, sporting and rejoicing, be it with women, or conveyances, or relatives,—not minding

³⁶¹ In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

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the body in which he was born." (VIII. 12. 3). The Isha says: "Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years. Thus it is in thee and not otherwise than this; action cleaves not to a man." Against this recognition of the active and emotive side of ³⁶³man and the insistence on living one's life in full, there was the Buddhistic teaching of the vanity and the illusoriness of life, and we find already the influence of it in the interpretation of the Srutis given in the Brahma Sutras. It is interesting to note how the Brahma Sutras explains away the verse of the Isha Upanishad. It says that that injunction for doing work is a general remark, and does not mean that the Brahman-knower should do works. But as the context shows that the injunction refers to the enlightened, the next Sutra gives another explanation that it is meant only to glorify knowledge (B.S. III. 4. 13, 14). Shankara afterwards took up this ingenious method of explaining away the works of a liberated man. The Gita saw the danger of this tendency and sought to find a sound philosophical basis for the activities of a spiritual and liberated man, and that it found in its great conception of the Purushottama. The Gita showed that "in the spiritual domain there is possible not only the discovery of the self and spirit, but the discovery of the uplifting and guiding light of spiritual consciousness and the power of the spirit, a spiritual way of knowledge, a spiritual way of action." It is probable that this teaching of the Gita largely influenced Mahayanist Buddhism; previously the Buddhist ideal of a liberated man was a life like that of a rhinoceros wandering in the forest; under the influence of the Gita the ideal became that of compassionate action and social service. It was this ideal which was taken up later by the Christian missionaries who, in their turn, have greatly influenced modern India where an attempt has been made to combine spirituality with social service.

The period that followed in India after the promulgation of the teaching of the Gita was "the most splendid, sumptuous and imposing millennium of Indian culture." Kalidasa is the great representative poet of this age; his writings and those of his contemporaries give us the picture of "a high culture, a rich intellectuality, a great and ordered society with an opulent religious, aesthetic, ethical, economic, political and vital activity, a many-sided development, a plentiful life-movement." The followed a decline in the vitality of the Indian people, and the philosophical teaching of the Buddhists emphasising the illusoriness of the world began to tell on their minds. People were turning more and more to the life of the mendicant and the *sannyāsi*. A situation arose similar to that in which the Gita was written, and a similar attempt was made to meet the situation. We find an evidence of this in the voluminous philosophical³⁶⁴-poetical work, the Yogavasistha. As the Gita starts with the despondence of Arjuna, so the Yogavasistha imagines Ramchandra as a prince with ascetic tendencies and proceeds to

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reconcile him to a life of activity and worldly enjoyment. But there was an interval of many centuries between these two works and in the meantime the Indian mind had moved further away from the age of intuitive spiritual experience towards intellectuality. Arjuna was a man of action, but the Rama of Yogavasistha was a philosopher who turned away from life through philosophical reasoning about its emptiness and vanity. The Yogavasistha has not the depth and the spiritual power of the Gita; it accepts the Buddhist view that the world is an illusion and an utter unreality, but at the same time holds that this is also the teaching of the Vedanta, that the *Shunya* of the Buddhists and the Brahman of the Vedanta are identical. And as the world is unreal, what is the meaning in renouncing it? So act and live in the world, enjoy all that it can give, all the time remembering that all this is an illusion; then you will have eternal peace within, which is not disturbed by any outward activity. The Yogavasistha describes elaborately the condition of the *Jivanmukta* which has greatly influenced later Indian thought. Here are some of its descriptions of the living liberated man: "He regards his activities as a part of the Cosmic Movement, and performs them without any personal desire. He never hankers for the pleasures that are not in his hand, but enjoys all those he has. The idea of "I" and "mine", of something to be achieved and something to be avoided, has died within him. No purpose of the sage is served by any activity, nor by abstaining from activity. He therefore does as the occasion suits him. Even doing all sorts of actions, the liberated one is always in *samadhi*. He is a *mahā kartā* (great worker). He works without any anxiety, egoistic feeling, pride or impurity of heart. He is a *mahā bhoktā* (great enjoyer). He does not discard the pleasure that he has got, nor desires the pleasure that he has not got. He finds equal pleasure in old age, death, misery, poverty and in ruling over an empire. He eats with equal gusto the eatables of all tastes, of ordinary and superior quality. He does not paralyse any one of the natural functions of his body for want of proper exercise. His body is a kingdom unto him, over which he rules wisely and well. He keeps it healthy, and does not starve it of its appropriate requirements. So far as the external behaviour is concerned, there is no difference between the liberated and the ignorant. The difference, ³⁶⁵however, consists in the presence of desire in the case of the latter which is totally absent in the former. The life of a liberated sage is really the noblest and happiest life. From him goodness is scattered all around." (*The Yogavasistha* by B.L. Atreya).

Obviously the Yogavasistha, in formulating the ideal of the *Jivanmukta*, was influenced by the ancient Upanishads and the Gita; but it has neither the vision of the former nor the synthetic philosophy of the latter; so we find many incongruities in the ideal and the lack of a sufficient philosophical basis. Its conception of the ultimate Reality is of an eternally inactive and silent Brahman, in which somehow the illusion of the world has arisen. If one realises this truth and becomes free from all desire and

egoism, wherefrom will he get any motive force for action? Shankara saw this discrepancy, he accepted the philosophy of the Yogavasistha, turned it from a somewhat chaotic form of Advaita to a rigorously logical system, but he definitely rejected its ideal of the *Jivanmukta*. The Yogavasistha gives in poetical language a vivid picture of the sexual union of *Jivanmukta* men and women, and all this is shocking to Shankara. According to the latter, the body is full of pain and no wise man should ever have any bodily pleasure which is always bound up with pain. The saying of the Chhandogya that a liberated man sports with women is not taken seriously by Shankara: according to him this passage is an eulogy of the knowledge of the self; it only means that knowledge is so powerful that even if a *jnani* commits such a heinous act, he will not be affected. The passage must not be literally understood as allowing moral lapses in the case of the *jnanin*. Shankara knew human nature sufficiently well to see that an ideal like that propounded in the Yogavasistha was bound to lead to abuse; people would indulge in all sorts of sensual activities and cover them with a veneer of verbal spirituality. He knew that the greatest enemy of spiritual life was sensual desire, and that as long as a man lives in the body he can never be altogether safe from its attack. So he advocated the life of complete renunciation for the *sadhaka* as well as for the *siddha*. But that does not solve the problem of human life. If desires have such a strong hold on men, how are they to be rooted out or conquered? A few exceptional men may be able to do violence to their nature and tear themselves away from the life of the body, but what about the rest? And may it not be that behind this persistent desire of men there is some truth, in the discovery of which alone lies the true solution³⁶⁶ of the problem? The Tantrics even went so far as to say that the indulgence of these desires, which are regarded as the greatest obstacles to a higher life, may be turned into a powerful means for the attainment of that life. It is obvious, at any rate, that in order to find a true solution of the problem of life, we must have an integral knowledge of Reality and take into account all the sides of human nature. Though India remained satisfied for a long time with the spiritual ideal given by Shankara, there has again set in a reaction against the ideal of *sannyasa* and a strong move towards making the best use of the terrestrial life. And it is curious that many modern thinkers in India are turning to the ideal given by Yogavasistha. In philosophy they accept the Advaita of Shankara, but in practical life they want to follow the Western ideal of activism. The only truth in this attitude is that the external life of man must be based on spirituality; but for this the Advaita of Shankara does not furnish a sufficient basis. If we accept the view of Shankara that there is no dynamism in the ultimate Reality, no spiritual power which can be invoked to uplift the external life of man, then we must admit that life is not worth living; only ignorant men blindly attached to the life of the senses can remain satisfied with the present life of humanity which is so full of misery

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and frustration. All illumined souls would seek, like Shankara, an escape into the silence of the Eternal.

But the truth is that the silence of the Eternal is only one aspect of it; it has also a dynamic aspect, a power of the spiritual consciousness, and in that lies the hope of humanity. "Mind and life themselves," says Sri Aurobindo, "cannot grow into their fullness except by the opening up of the larger and greater consciousness to which mind only approaches. Such a larger and greater consciousness is the spiritual, for the spiritual consciousness is not only higher than the rest but more embracing. Universal as well as transcendent, it can take up mind and life into its light and give them the true and utmost realisation of all for which they are seeking; for it has a greater instrumentality of knowledge, a fountain of deeper power and will, an unlimited reach and intensity of love and joy and beauty. These are the things for which our mind, life and body are seeking, knowledge, power and joy, and to reject that by which all these arrive at their utmost plenitude is to shut them out from their own highest consummation. An opposite exaggeration demanding only some colourless purity of spiritual existence nullifies the creative action of spirit and excludes from us ³⁶⁷all that the Divine manifests in its being; it leaves room only for an evolution without sense or fulfilment, – for a cutting off of all that has been evolved is the sole culmination; it turns the process of our being into the meaningless curve of a plunge into Ignorance and return out of it or erects a wheel of cosmic Becoming with only an escape-issue." (The Life Divine, Vol. II, p. 586).

The Gita corrects the defect of materialism by showing that without union with the Spirit and the Divine, the life of man is bound to be full of misery and frustration, *anityam asukham lokam*; on the other hand, it corrects the defect of asceticism by showing that one can live a spiritual and divine life even in this material body. For this it is first necessary to find the eternal Self within us and secondly "to possess and govern from that inner eternity of being the course and process of the becoming." "These changes are possible only by a withdrawal from our absorbing material preoccupation, – that does not necessitate a rejection or neglect of life in the body, – and a constant living on the inner and higher planes of the mind and the spirit. For the heightening of our consciousness into its spiritual principle is effectuated by an ascent and a stepping back inward – both these movements are essential – out of our transient life from moment to moment into the eternal life of our immortal consciousness; but with it there comes also a widening of our range of consciousness and field of action in time and a taking up and a higher use of our mental, our vital, our corporeal existence. There arises a knowledge of our being, no longer as a consciousness dependent on the body, but as an eternal spirit which uses all the worlds and all lives for various self-experience: we see it to be a spiritual entity possessed of a continuous soul-life

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perpetually developing its activities through successive physical existence, a being determining its own becoming. In that knowledge, not ideative but felt in our very substance, it becomes possible to live, not as slaves of a blind Karmic impulsion, but as masters—subject only to the Divine within us—of our being and nature.” (The Life Divine, II-678).

That is essentially the ideal of the *Jivanmukta* as we find it presented in the Gita. The first stage of it is that of the *Gunātita*, when the sadhaka enters into the silence of the *Akshara*, the immutable Self within us. (14/22-25). He initiates no action but leaves all works to be done by the *gunas* of Nature. This is really the *Jivanmukta* as envisaged by the Brahma Sutras as well as by Shankara, though they do not follow the conception to all its³⁶⁸ logical consequences. As the liberated man does not associate with the *gunas*, which go on in their play by the force of the sanction given in the past, they will fall into rest by themselves after sometime. But the Gita does not stop there. One can become *Gunātita* also by adoring the Purushottama who is higher than even the immutable Self, who has both the immutable and the mutable, the silent and the active as two aspects. By union with the Purushottama the liberated man seated in the silence within makes his natural being a channel of the dynamism of the Purushottama. “There is a status then which is greater than the peace of the *Akshara* as it watches unmoved the strife of the *gunas*. There is a higher spiritual experience and foundation above the immutability of the Brahman. There is an eternal dharma greater than the *rajasic* impulsion to works, *pravrtti*, there is an absolute delight which is untouched by *rajasic* suffering and beyond the *sattwic* happiness, and these things are found and possessed by dwelling in the being and power of the Purusottama.” (Essays on the Gita).

That is the Gita’s ideal of the *Jivanmukta*. But though in order to attain it we need not do violence to our natural powers but have to turn them all in utter consecration to the Purusottama, it is nevertheless a very difficult ideal and very few can reach it. The Lord himself says in the Gita, “Among thousands of men one here and there strives after perfection, and of those who strive and attain perfection one here and there knows me in all the principles of my being.” (VII. 3). There may be a few *Jivanmuktas* in the world, but what about the rest of humanity? Are they to suffer innumerable miseries, as they are doing now, to the end of time? In that case, will it not be the greatest act of compassion to discourage the will-to-live in the race, so that it may soon end its miseries by ending itself? That has been virtually the main spiritual teaching in India for more than a thousand years, and the result has been catastrophic. But that is not the goal set before India by her ancient Rishis; the death of India will mean the end of all chance of the spiritual regeneration of humanity and the guiding Power of India, the Indian Shakti, can never allow that. So we find her to-day

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discovering her spiritual idea in a new light. This is the new light that "Earth-life is not a lapse into the mire of something undivine, vain and miserable, offered by some Power to itself as a spectacle or to the embodied soul as a thing to be suffered and then cast away from it; it is the scene of the evolutionary unfolding of the being which moves towards the revelation of a supreme ³⁶⁹spiritual light and power and joy and oneness, but includes in it also the manifold diversity of the self-achieving spirit. There is an all-seeing purpose in the terrestrial creation; a divine plan is working itself out through its contradictions and perplexities which are a sign of the many-sided achievement towards which are being led the soul's growth and the endeavour of Nature." (*The Life Divine*, 11. 588.)

Thus the Ignorance which is the source of all the miseries of mankind is only an intermediate stage in the evolution of the race towards an integral knowledge. Not only a few exceptional men, but the human race will in the course of evolution grow into a spiritual consciousness which will found "the mortal in a supreme immortality". "He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys immortality." (Isha 11). It is the business of the *Jivanmukta* to help mankind to attain this consummation on the earth:

Only to bring God's forces to waiting Nature,
To help with wide-winged Peace her tormented labour
And heal with joy her ancient sorrow,
Casting down light on the unconscious darkness,

He acts and lives. Vain things are mind's smaller motives
To one whose soul enjoys for its high possession
Infinity and the sempiternal
All is his guide and beloved and refuge.¹

Questions³⁷⁰ and Answers

BY A.B. PURANI

*"Questions and Answers" is a form as old perhaps
as human awakening to knowledge and even
to-day it has not outgrown its utility.*

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¹ Sri Aurobindo's Collected Poems and Plays, Vol. II, p. 286.

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[It is immaterial to ask who is the questioner, for even though the immediate person might be a certain individual, ultimately it is the unenlightened, eternal seeker in man, the ignorant human mind, that questions. And it is the illumined Teacher that answers. Questions are conditioned by the questioner, his mentality and his need, and the answers are relative to him and his condition, *i.e.*, they cannot be absolute and final].

Q. What is Nirvāna? Does it consist in the merging of the individual into the universal consciousness?

A. No. The word “Nirvāna” has been used and popularised by the Buddhists. Buddhism does not accept the existence either of the individual or the universal soul or consciousness. Buddha applied himself to the solution of the problem of suffering and came to the conclusion that suffering was due to Desire – Trishnā, as he calls it, – the human thirsts for the satisfaction of impulses. Man suffers because he seeks personal happiness, and because he is moved by his ego. To cure his suffering man must renounce this seeking; and the rejection of Desire to be thoroughly effective requires the complete cessation of the Ego.

Q. Buddhism then accepts the Ego-sense?

A. Yes. It accepts the ordinary machinery of human psychology without either trying to probe deep into its foundations, or inquiring as to its possible higher evolution or goal. That is why one does not find answers to questions regarding the origin and the ultimate aim of soul and cosmos in early Buddhism. It is primarily concerned with the psychological method or processes for the removal of suffering.

Q. Where, then, does Nirvāna come in the elimination of suffering?

A. “Nirvāna” literally means “windless state”. As the flame of³⁷¹ the lamp goes out for want of air, so does the human ego with its apparatus of Nature without support. Suffering ends because its cause, the ego, the natural personality, is blotted out entirely.

Q. What is the natural personality and how is it annihilated?

A. Man has within him the sense of Ego, the feeling of an “I” which is entirely a creation of nature. It is a constantly changing entity playing on the surface of consciousness. Buddhists realize its impermanence and reject it, *i.e.*, they refuse

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to identify themselves with thoughts and ideas of the mind, with feelings of grief and joy in the heart, with desires and passions of the *Prāna*.

Q. What happens then to Universal Nature that is outside him?

A. As the cognising Ego ceases within him, so Nature also ceases to exist for him. It is like the great *Pralaya*—the universal dissolution,—in which the whole outer world loses its reality entirely and utterly.

Q. What then? What is *after* Nirvāna? Cannot one get tired of mere Nirvāna?

A. After Nirvāna? Nothing. Your question reminds me of a friend of mine who used to ask me “who gets the experience of Nirvāna?” The question is irrelevant. Nobody has the experience of Nirvāna: nobody is there to get tired of Nirvāna. My friend seemed to think like you that he would be sitting somewhere safe in his mind and looking at Nirvāna and say to himself “Ah! this is Nirvāna”; as a matter of fact, so long as “you” are there, Nirvāna is impossible. Something in you drops off and Nirvāna takes its place. It is not, therefore, as if one gets Nirvāna—on the contrary, it demands the entire blotting out of all that one is in his ordinary nature.

Q. Has this negative state of Nirvāna any utility for the *sādhaka* of Integral Yoga?

A. Yes. Like all spiritual experiences this also has its utility for the *sādhaka* of Integral Yoga. It is one of the experiences that can come on his way. To attain Nirvāna one is required to get rid of all his attachments and all personality based on ignorant nature. The Integral Yoga also requires one first to get rid of, and then go beyond the ignorant nature and its personality.

Q. What is the difference between Buddhist Nirvāna and Vedāntic experience Nirvāna?

A. As we saw above, the Buddhists aimed at release from suffering³⁷². So, for them “putting out of lamp” for want of air or oil was quite enough. Thus their Nirvāna was rather negative in character and did not imply the attainment of a higher state or consciousness or enjoyment of delight. It does not contemplate any fulfilment or *siddhi*.

When the Vedanta accepted Nirvāna as an experience, they called it “Brahma-Nirvāna”—release into the Brahmic consciousness. This implies the

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attainment of a positive consciousness—after the release from the bondage of nature—and the enjoyment of liberation.

Q. Can action continue after Nirvāna?

A. The Buddhist does not seem to accept the possibility of action after the attainment of Nirvāna. Amitabha in his infinite mercy for suffering humanity refused to enter Nirvāna till the whole of mankind was released from suffering and so was ready for Nirvāna. This stage is recognized as that of the *Bodhi-sattwa*.

The Brahma-Nirvāna spoken of above aims at realising the Brahmic consciousness, *i.e.*, a consciousness higher than the mental consciousness of the ordinary intellectual mental being, man. Beginning from the material and physical consciousness upon the mental consciousness is the realm of Ignorance or Avidyā. Above are the realms of Truth and Light or Vidyā. According to this view, Nirvāna of the lower nature can be a stepping stone to the attainment of the higher Truth-Consciousness.

Taking the analogy of the lamp once more, we can say that the lamp can continue to burn and it can even burn brighter if the oil and air are supplied not from Ignorance below but from Truth and knowledge above. So Nirvāna need not involve annihilation of all activity.

Q. Does Nirvāna then mean the realization of the Non- Being?

A. Nirvāna can be the beginning of a negative path of which the Non-Being is the final stage. There are two ways of arriving at it: the path of the Buddhists and that of Tao. Nirvāna leads one to the experience of the *Shunyam* according to some Buddhists. Whereas Tao believes that believes that *Shunyam*, though it is not any particular thing, contains everything. It almost seems very near the Vedantic idea of the Brahman. But it is better to distinguish this Buddhistic Nirvāna from the Brahma Nirvāna, of which the Gita speaks.

*Q.*³⁷³ From where does one generally start towards the realisation of the Non-Being?

A. Generally one starts with the mind *i.e.*, not the ordinary intellectual but the spiritual mind and ascends towards it. The realisation of the Non-Being means the negation of all the terms formulated by the mind about Being. But really speaking, that is only a gate of entry into a certain aspect of the Absolute.

Q. If the Non-Being is beyond the mental consciousness, how is the Non-Being related to the planes of the Overmind, Supermind, Sachchidananda, etc.?

A. Ascending beyond the Mind one can follow either the negative path and reach the Non-Being aspect of the Divine, or take the affirmative way in which case one passes through the Overmind to the Supramental and to the Sachchidananda, which itself is, again, both static and dynamic at the same time. Going beyond it one arrives at what may be called the Great Non-Being—the aspect of the Absolute not turned towards manifestation. The Gita most probably calls this the *anirdesyam—Indeterminate*.

Q. Is there anything beyond this Non-Being?

A. Non-Being is only a term applied by the mind to express the Supreme Existence: in reality it is nothing else but an aspect of the Supreme Being.

Q. One of my friends used to put the position trenchantly thus: From the point of view of the Purusha there are three aspects of the Being: (1) Purusha or Self. (2) Ishwar or God. (3) Brahman, the Reality Omnipresent.

The Monists of Shankara's school relegate Ishwara to the background and insist on the unity of the Self and Brahman. The Buddhists negate the very existence of the Self and arrive at Non-Being, though, according to some schools of Buddhism, it is not mere negation.

A. Like all trenchant statements it has some truth. But it is the harmonious action of all the three aspects which, in reality, are one that is needed for an integral perfection. The three terms seem to be fundamental to any scheme of Divine Manifestation.

The³⁷⁴ Integral Vision of India

BY SISIRKUMAR MITRA

The past of India has yet to be properly appraised. The spiritual adventures that she has undertaken throughout the ages, especially in the early days of her history, cannot be said to have been studied in all their deeper implications, at least in their bearings on the destiny of this great country. It is therefore necessary to emphasise that an insight into, and a correct revisioning of, the cultural achievements of the race in their true perspective is indispensable to the future rebuilding of India, to the

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understanding of the forces that are to bring about a resurgence of her soul. It is said that India has a message for humanity. There is no doubt that she has. But scarcely has any attempt been made to have an exact idea of what the real character of that message might be. A spiritual message is a vague term. Such evangels about the ancient wisdom of India some of her great sons have already delivered to the world in her recent past. And India has, because of them, begun to figure more prominently before the seeing mind of humanity. But the inner India, her soul, has yet to say her last liberating Word, the Word that would bring into birth a new world and solve for ever the problems of mankind.

The story is indeed a romantic one of how India carried on her epic-quests into the profundities of life and God and every thing that inwardly or outwardly concerned the terrestrial existence of man. The fruits of her unique *tapasyā* for millenniums are treasured in her sacred literature and in other relics and antiquities; but they are reflected more unmistakably in the very life of the people, in the continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavours of their soul. Her earliest days, however, were the most glorious when she had the deepest of her spiritual experiences, when she saw the supreme Reality manifesting itself in every form of creation, when she saw in man his divinity, and proclaimed that man can become that divinity, become a god, become one with God, become the ineffable Brahman. But India's was not an exclusive spirituality. To her the powers of matter, life and mind were no less real³⁷⁵ than those of the Spirit; and in the search after their truth her seers discovered that in them is inherent the Spirit which is seeking to unfold itself in the earth-nature. Life, mind and body were therefore regarded as the condition for the Spirit to fulfil itself in the terrestrial existence of man. Thus did India make the first attempt to solve the most vital of problems, the problem of harmony between life and spirit, of which the vision came to her seers almost at the very dawn of her history. In what follows is given an outline of the story of how India tried through her creative activities to fulfil that integral ideal in the life of the race and of how thereby she has grown in her preparedness so that she is able today to revision that ideal in its deeper significance, to reaffirm it with greater precision and to show to humanity the path by which it will be led to the realisation of its highest spiritual destiny. This is the mission to discharge which India has stood through the ages "preserving the Knowledge that preserves the world"

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It cannot be said that Indian history so far has given due importance to its earliest period which, in Sri Aurobindo's revealing exegesis, is the most brilliant and creative in the world of the spirit. Indeed whatever efforts in the same sphere India

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made in the subsequent epochs have, every one of them, been inspired by the truths that came to the seeing intuition of her early seers. The beginning of this spiritual age in India is shrouded in the dim past. The date with which the Rig Veda Samhita is usually associated represents the close of a long period of vigorous and incomparable inward pursuits of which an idea may be had from the opulent imagery and mystic symbolism of the sublimest *mantrams*, seen by the Rishis and expressed in the *riks*. There is reason, however, to believe that greater ages of Intuition, of the luminous Dawns of the Forefathers, had preceded the Rig Vedic times, and that the entire secret of their esoteric teachings was not probably revealed even to the Rishis of the Rig Veda who were perhaps not ready for it. Yet the Rig Veda has every claim to be regarded as the most authentic document recording the Aryan Fathers' deepest experiences of the higher worlds, whose golden light came to their vision revealing to them the path of the gods. The end of human life was to these mystics a divine outflowering. "Life is therefore a movement³⁷⁶ from mortality to immortality, from mixed light and darkness to the splendour of a divine Truth whose home is above in the infinite but which can be built up here in man's soul and life, a battle between the children of Light and the sons of Night, a getting of treasure, of the wealth, the booty given by the gods to the human warrior, a journey and a sacrifice." If a state of permanent living in light, in truth, in bliss, in freedom and in immortality is his ultimate destiny, man will have to attain that in his life by overcoming the limitations imposed on him by his subjection to the forces of darkness, division and falsehood. The Vedic idea of sacrifice with the soul of man as the enjoyer of its fruits points to the path that leads to this conquest. Of all his gains and works, of all that he himself is and has, man must make an offering to the powers of the Godhead, the powers of Consciousness, the gods, who recognize in the soul of man their brother and ally and desire to help and increase him by themselves increasing in him so as to possess his world with their light, strength and beauty. It is not therefore that man only invokes the gods to descend into his world, into him in response to his sacrifice, the gods also have need of man to whose awakened soul they send their call to combine with them against the sons of Darkness and Division. And victory in this battle—an ultimate certainty—means a new birth for man, a divine becoming; for, liberated from his bondage to the lower nature, man becomes ready for a divine manifestation. The sacrifice is also a journey, an upward journey, which man undertakes in quest of his supreme goal, and as he does that, he grows from one state into a still higher one till he finds himself before the full Ray of the Light, and in possession of all the treasures of heaven. "Play, O Ray, and become towards us", was the constant prayer of the Vedic seekers. And sacrifice is the way by which the fruit, "the raining of the world of light", can be obtained. The ascent towards the light will fulfil its purpose only when the descent will take place bringing into the lower the pure experience of the higher. But the effective descent would mean a global widening, an increasing on every side into the wholeness of the world of light. This is the integral

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vision envisaged in the Veda. If by sacrifice the lower principles of man's earthly existence are conquered and made amenable to the influences of the Light which will take them up into itself, into their respective higher terms from which they originated, it is, again, by a similar act, but of vaster significance, that the Divine manifests³⁷⁷ in the human vehicle enlarging it into the infinity of his own being.

The Vedic seers discovered the essential nature of the terrestrial existence as Sachchidananda veiled in the phenomenal oppositions of matter, life and mind, but compelling in the earth-nature an effort to cleave through these contrary conditions and eventually arrive at its own unveiled Splendour, the Perfection implicit in it. These conditions are grown and developed in the earth to create in it the necessary field for a greater Manifestation. They are derived in the lower planes from their original principles in the higher hemisphere; Mind from the light of the Truth-Consciousness, Life from the energy of the Consciousness-Force, Matter from the substance of Existence. The mystics had the vision of the plane of the Truth-Consciousness whose power is as well inherent in the earth as the above principles but is not, unlike them, active in it, and whose descent into the earth would effectuate that Manifestation towards which it is labouring. It is this plane which is the link between the lower hemisphere and Sachchidananda. "Man ascending thither strives no longer as a thinker but is victoriously the seer; he is no longer this mental creature but a divine being. His will, life, thought, emotion, sense, act are all transformed into values of an all-puissant Truth and remain no longer an embarrassed or a helpless tangle of mixed truth and falsehood. He moves lamely no more in our narrow and grudging limits but ranges in the unobstructed Vast; toils and zigzags no longer amid these crookednesses, but follows a swift and conquering straightness; feeds no longer on broken fragments, but is suckled by the teats of the Infinity. Therefore he has to break through and out beyond these firmaments of earth and heaven; conquering firm possession of the solar worlds, entering on to his highest Height he has to learn how to dwell in the triple principle of Immortality." Thus in the psychological and therefore the real implication of the Vedic teaching life with all its powers is affirmed as a field for the gods' adventure, for a divine efflorescence. If man is of the earth, he is also of heaven; and his godhead will be reborn in him when "Heaven and Earth equalised join hands in the bliss of the Supreme."

With this integral vision of the Infinite and of an infinite existence for man as the perennial source of inspiration India started on her quest of that which would bring her its realisation in the life of the race. This movement from the Rig Vedic³⁷⁸ times traced not a straight line but a curve, luminous all through because of its origin being in the

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light to which it is naturally inclined to return, and it proceeded in a downward course with the purpose of illumining the different parts and planes of man's being so that he might be prepared for the perfection that is to come to him in the future. It is not that India could always hold fast to that ideal; but the great epochs of her history are those in which she turned her eyes towards it and strove with all her soul to actualise it in the life of the race, to give form to its truth in the varied expressions of her creative life. For, it is to this sublime seeing of the early fathers that the mind of India does rightly trace all its philosophy, religion and essential things of culture, all the beginnings of the future spirituality of her people. The curve of her destiny showed the first sign of its downward tendency when the Vedic age of Intuition was passing into the Upanishadic age of intuitive Thought in which the first glimmerings of the dawn of Reason were perceptible. In the Veda intuition had a more free play, since mind and life were then plastic enough to its influence. In the Upanishads mind being more active than life it absorbed whatever intuition had to offer for its as well as life's illumination. Nevertheless, there must have been a strong basis of life-force for the vigorous spiritual efforts that were made by the Vedantic mystics. People lived a rich and robust life and a harmony there surely was between it and the intense seeking after truth that was so much in evidence among the kings and nobles no less than among the sages and saints of the time. Royal courts and forest hermitages were humming with these activities; and such glowing examples were not solitary as those of the *Rājarshis* or sage-kings like Janaka ruling over a vast empire and at the same time living the unfettered, luminous life of the Spirit; and of the kings of sages like Yajnavalkya to whom truth was greater than anything, yet who accepted with both hands worldly possessions along with spiritual riches. But how did they discover this harmony? By knowledge, which to the Upanishadic seers was always the knowledge by identify with the object of knowledge in a higher than the mental plane of consciousness. It is while engaged in the pursuit of this truth of knowledge that the seers realised that the knowledge of self is the highest knowledge, and that "the self in man is one with the universal self of all things and that this self again is the same as God and Brahman, a transcendent Being or Existence, and they beheld, felt, lived in the inmost truth of all things in the universe and the³⁷⁹ inmost truth of man's inner and outer existence by the light of this one and unifying vision." Harmony among our parts of nature is emphasised in the Upanishads as a basic necessity in spiritual life. And this harmony may be brought about by inward concentration that will put us in touch with our psychic centre in the inner heart which is connected through a hundred channels with the lines of our individual consciousness. The psychic represents the Transcendent in the universal Nature and is intended on earth to manifest the Transcendent through its universalised individuality of mind, life and body. It is the 'golden' nucleus of our evolving personality. This is a distinctive contribution of Indian thought. The West could not go beyond the conception of the individual, mind being to her the highest power possible to man.

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Whereas in India the Spirit is held to be the highest truth of man, and through it was realised his infinite possibility. Integration of all his powers into the psychic, an aspect of the Spirit in man, would mean the building up of a perfect personality ready for ascension into higher heights of his being. As the seeker opens into the power of his psychic he becomes capable of drawing into himself from Nature such forces as may purify and exalt their lower counterparts in him. With this affinity established between his inner nature and the outer, the seeker rises into a higher consciousness and from there into the yet higher of the Transcendent which is the ultimate aim of the Upanishadic teaching. And to that end, all egoistic impulses, all sordid attachments must be completely eliminated from nature. "Life has to be transcended in order that it may be freely accepted; the works of the universe have to be overpassed in order that they may be divinely fulfilled." The whole view comprised by the oneness of life and spirit was there but the greater urge that characterised the period was always towards the realisation of the transcendent Truth, through which new riches of world-knowledge, God-knowledge and Self-knowledge did however come within the possession of the early mystics. If the Vedic basis was in the main psycho-physical in which life was not only recognised but emphasised as a condition of a greater life, the Upanishadic was fundamentally psycho-spiritual. Yet the latter was very little more than a restatement, in less symbolic but more intelligible terms, of the truths expressed in the former. "The Upanishads did not deny life, but held that the world is a manifestation of the Eternal, of Brahman, all here is Brahman, all is in the Spirit and the Spirit is³⁸⁰ in all, the self-existent Spirit has become all these things and creatures; life too is Brahman, the life-force is the very basis of our existence, the life-spirit *Vāyu* is the manifest and evident Eternal, *pratyaksham brahman*. But it affirmed that the present way of existence of man is not the highest or the whole; his outward mind and life are not all his being; to be fulfilled and perfect he has to grow out of his physical and mental ignorance into spiritual self-knowledge." The most inspiring record of revelatory knowledge, the Upanishads have throughout the ages exercised their profound influence over almost every sphere of man's spiritual, religious and cultural life both in India and abroad.

II

During the age of the Spirit, the Veda and the Vedanta affirmed the ideal giving to the Indian mind through the universality of their teachings that peculiar synthetic cast which became so clearly defined in its catholic outlook, especially on matters concerning the social and religious welfare of the people. The age of the Dharma that followed witnessed a comprehensive plan being worked out to bring about an integral development of man's individual and collective existence. It was marked by such constructive efforts as resulted in the fixing of the external forms of Indian life and

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culture in their broad and large lines. The Vedantic soul of India begins to take its body, but it is a body which is, or has always tended to be, one with its soul; because the body here has no meaning without its indwelling Spirit. It is this idea that governed every kind of social thinking in ancient India: law-makers and psychologists were ever alive to the fact that everything in life acquires its value only when it helps and converges on the attainment by man of his spiritual perfection. That is why recognising the complexity of human nature they tried to discover its right place in the cosmic movement and give its full legitimate value to each part of man's composite being and many-sided aspiration and find out the key of their unity. The result of this endeavour was the laying down of the four fundamental motives of human living, *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *moksha*, man's vital interests and needs, his desires, his ethical and religious seeking, his ultimate spiritual aim and destiny. The other institution evolved as a corollary to the above was that³⁸¹ of the four stages of life in which the first was the period of education and preparation based on this idea of life; the second, a period of normal living to satisfy human desires and interests under the moderating rule of the ethical and religious part in us; the third, a period of withdrawal and spiritual preparation; and the last, a period of renunciation of life and release into the Spirit. It is clear from the above two basic conceptions of the ancient Indian social theory, more so from the first, that it accepted, provided for a disciplined satisfaction of the claims of man's vital, physical and emotional being, since the ego-life of *kāma* and *artha*, desire and self-interest, must be lived and the forces it evolves brought to fullness, so that the eventual aim of a going beyond may be accomplished with less difficulty; the claims of his ethical and religious being governed by a knowledge of the law of God and Nature and man, because *dharma* is not merely a religious creed but a complete rule of ideal living by which life is to be guided to its fulfilment, each individual growing into his perfection, and to that end, developing his creative faculties, which will bring well-being not only to him but also to his society; the claims of his spiritual longing for liberation, for, the Law, Dharma, and its observance is neither the beginning nor the end of man; beyond it is the great spiritual freedom which man must claim as the ultimate end of his existence. An integration into this supreme goal of the whole tendency of man comprised by *kāma*, *artha* and *dharma*, seems to be the ideal emphasised by the social thinkers of India. This was, indeed, a very great attempt to build a synthesis, and although in later days an over-emphasis of the last aim and the consequent neglect of the others disturbed the social equilibrium for a while, it cannot however be denied that the steadfast following of all these aims by the people produced vast results, so brilliantly described in the great epics. In the Ramayana the ethical side of man's nature is given an extreme important and its fulfilment is sought through the sincere performance of the duties formulated by the ancients. It pictures an age of heroic action and of an early and finely moral civilisation; whereas the Mahabharata reflects a puissant intellectualism, the victorious and manifold mental activity of the age, which

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gives its character to the culture then prevalent in the country. Heroic action there was, but it had in it more of thought than in the Ramayana. There is no doubt that all the human activities depicted in these two grand expressions of the creative soul of India were inspired by the³⁸² ancient ideals, although a tendency toward external formation and construction both in the social and mental life, for which the periods mainly stood, detracted from their effort to revision the past in its pristine purity. Hence the curve of India's adventure went further down making an arc from where it had started and confined itself for a time to the region of the mind; but, we may repeat, the curve is a luminous one, and the mind of India is sustained by it in its innate spiritual inclination, of which an outstanding evidence in the latter period is the supreme truth revealed in the Gita, in which a harmony is built of the three great means and powers, Love, Knowledge and Works, the dynamic sublimations of the power of heart, of mind and of life, through which the soul of man can directly approach and cast itself into the Eternal. Here the harmony aimed at reaches its highest point when by a complete self-giving to the Godhead man becomes the fit instrument for a divine manifestation.

The essential idea in this age was to bring to bear upon the creative powers of mind and life the past spiritual experiences of the race. But the attempt was made, as naturally, through the exercise of the ethical and intellectual faculties both of which developed out of a deep understanding of man's interior profundities. But however high and pure their standards, they are born of the powers and impulses of the mind. Be they the four motives or the *āśramas*, they all of them belonged to the same category of human creation as the cultures characterised by them and embodied in the epics. So in those early days the mind of India went through its first round of experiences ample enough to enable it to be ready for the great classical age that came as a flowering of the intellectuality of the previous epochs into curiosity of detail in the refinements of scholarship, science, art, literature, politics, sociology, mundane life. The creative soul of India broke into a myriad forms of stupendous cultural activity almost unexampled in the history of human civilisation. But the source of it may be found not so much in Buddhism as in the recognition by the ancient psychologists of the varied motivations of human personality, and in the necessity of their proper fruition, also emphasised by them, for which systematic provision was made in the structure of the society. Buddhism came and by its liberal teaching helped to usher in an era of social regeneration in the country, and thereby created conditions favourable to the progress and advancement of culture. It, however, represents an³⁸³ important phase in the spiritual life of India. Of the two directions in which the mind of India seemed to be

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moving about the time when Buddhism, aiming at a kind of ethical ascension, started to be a force in the life of the people, the one is the expression of its creative genius and the other is the denying of life as being a bondage and an obstacle to spiritual pursuits. But the seeds of both of them had been already sown in the age of the Dharma; those of the former we have just noticed, those of the latter might be traced to the longing for release into the Spirit, the Beyond, from this mundane existence, so broadly indicated in the ideals of *moksha* and *sannyāsa*, which had not a little to do with Buddhistic conception of *Nirvāna*. When the true seeker found that religion was compromising with life, subjecting its high spirit to the satisfaction of the latter's unspiritual demands and was thereby deteriorating into soulless forms of mere externalia and priestly obscurantism, so much in evidence about the time of Buddha's advent, it was but natural that he should think of nothing else but an ascetic withdrawal from life in order to be able to live exclusively in the spirit, in the pure truth of religion, — an idea towards the growth of which there might possibly have been some contribution from the Upanishadic aspiration for Transcendence. But this attitude, as indisputable objective proofs testify, did not very much and materially affect the abundant vitality and creative energy that were so boldly exhibited by the race in its continuous cultural endeavours for centuries, all through sustained by its inborn spirituality, an echo of which is noticed in the ideal of universal fellowship, preached and practised by Asoka — the first internationalist of history — the deeper springs of whose love for humanity and interest in its religious welfare as were always behind those efforts of his, are to be found not so much in his adherence to the ethical conception of the *Dhamma* as in the natural spiritual disposition of the country to which he belonged. And the creative activities of the age almost everywhere in their wide range reflected this tendency. The light of the Spirit was touching mind and life and was also in some instances guiding their movements, but it did not rule them as a governing principle, perhaps because they were not ready and needed more experiences for their fuller expression in the Spirit. Perfection of man will be attainable to him only when he will accept in every member of his being the absolute rule of the Divine, for which he must acquire the necessary readiness.

III³⁸⁴

The classical was an age of scholars, legislators, dialecticians and philosophical formalisers. It witnessed the creative and aesthetic enthusiasm of the race pouring itself into things material, into the life of the senses, into the pride and beauty of life. The arts of painting, architecture, dance, drama, all that can administer to the wants of great and luxurious capitals, received a grand impetus which brought them to their highest technical perfection. It is indeed an age of life's many-sided blossoming into such activities as brought to it all the colour, richness and experience necessary to its preparation for the greater perfectibility in the future. And mind also was equally

vigorous in the externalisation of life's impulses having thereby its due share of growth and experience. It is in this great age—rightly called the first Indian renaissance—that classical sublimities found their splendid expression in the poetry and drama of its representative literary mouth-piece, Kalidasa, and in those of the galaxy of its poets and dramatists, that the recension of the epics was completed, most of the *Purānas* were written, the *Dharmasutras* were codified, the *Smritis* were given their present form, the Sankhya and Mimansa philosophies were systematised, the *Silpasastra* (Fine arts), the *Kāmasutra* (Eugenics, Erotics and allied subjects) and the *Sukraniti* (Polity) were written, the ancient Indian ideas on Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Medicine and Mineralogy were rendered into their respective treatises through which they are known today, the masterpieces of art at Ajanta, Bagh and Ellora etc. were produced, the famous figure of the Buddha was evolved along with the *sikhara* and other distinctive characteristics of India's temple, cave and secular architecture, the international centre of learning at Nalanda flourished. In such an age, when life seems to have been lived to its utmost, it is but natural that the curve of India's adventure should go further down in its circular movement reaching a region in which it found itself in touch with the material basis of life. Hence the mind of India was seeking to infuse its light of the Spirit into the materialised vitality of man, and was trying to have an insight into the truth of matter. Thus behind these activities of life, the old spirituality of the race reigned to keep burning the lamp of its soul. And the most vivid expression of it is found in the works of art of this period which exhibit a marvellous blending of³⁸⁵ the two main tendencies of the Indian mind, its love of life based on an understanding of its varied motivations, and its quest of God, the Spirit, the Self of things with life as the condition and instrument of its manifestation. The art-creations of this age are striking examples of the peculiar aesthetic bent of India defining itself in the effort of the artist to suggest through the form his inner experiences rather than any external idea of the things seen by him. The artists were to go through a course of spiritual discipline and were in many instances known as *silpi-yogins*. But they did not confine themselves to the depicting of the sacred subjects only. The secular scenes at Ajanta and Bagh, done by monk-artists, show the accuracy of their knowledge of earthly life; yet the figures of women in them in the peculiar *tribhanga* (the triple bend) pose indicate a wonderful harmony between such contrary feelings as nonchalance and voluptuousness, both losing themselves in an utter spirit of self-surrender that has surely about it something beyond the concerns of the earth. But the most remarkable are the figures of the *Bodhisattvas* and the Dhyāni Buddha. The former represent a marvellous blending of the feeling of detachment from the outer world and the feeling of an infinite compassion for suffering creatures; the latter symbolise the greatest ideal which Indian sculpture ever attempted to express, the conception, as intimated by the figure, being the communion of the individual with the Universal Soul in a mood of utter calm yet filled in the being with a power that is more than human.

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The spiritual seeking of India took a particular turn about the close of this period when a movement is perceived towards preparing the country for a greater age in which her gains through the cultivation and development of her moral, intellectual and material powers in the previous times would be all equally harmonised and made real in the world of the spirit. To all appearances Shankara did show the promise of being a precursor of that great age in India. But he had not the complete vision, the whole view, of the larger integral ideal of ancient India of which the supreme truth was a harmony between life and spirit, a mediation between earth and heaven. Shankara mistook the materialistic character of the culture of the period for a tendency toward deterioration; neither was he able to visualise the past history of India from a wider perspective. May be, disgusted with certain aberrations in the religious life of the people, he sought release into the realm of the Spirit, leaving the impure life bound to more impure matter to run for³⁸⁶ ever the vicious round of its earthly existence. He affirmed the impermanence of life, and tried to substantiate this pessimistic view in the light of his own one-sided interpretation of the ancient scriptures. *Moksha*, liberation from the bondage of life, he preached with all the vehemence he could command, and his success meant the failure of the country to grow in readiness for the greater future that had been the underlying intention of all its past endeavours. Though supreme in his own way, Shankara proved himself unequal to the task that was before him of furthering the cause of the country towards the fulfilment of its highest destiny. Rather, his negative philosophy contributed, however indirectly, to the strengthening of the forces of disintegration that had been at work in the country during the post-classical age and a foreign invasion destroyed whatever possibility there was of a new awakening. It must however be conceded to Shankara that his efforts were responsible for one and a great good. If his denunciation of life emasculated the manhood of the race, as before him the similar teaching of the Buddha had done, his emphasis, however exclusive, on the absolute aspect of the One Reality, helped to keep alive in the race its native impulse towards the heights of the Spirit.

IV

But these strivings and the consequent preparedness of the country for a new turn in its life did not all go in vain. Nurtured by the country's age-old spirituality they flowered into a vigorous revival of the self-same tendency that expressed itself so remarkably in the teachings of the mystics, in the Vaishnavite movements and in the cults of the Tantras. The medieval saints proclaimed that truth is greater than religion, of which the forms also are one in the very core of their teachings. They affirmed to the people, irrespective of caste, creed or race, that life was a necessary condition for man's growth into a greater life for which an absolute concordance between his inner and

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outer existence was indispensable. And mystical experience by living inwards and through the fervency of devotion was, according to them, the only way by which that harmony could be discovered. This as well as the Vaishnavic and the Tantric cults had all of them their roots in the past. The Upanishadic origin of Vaishnavism and Tantrikism is now established beyond doubt,³⁸⁷ though there is an opinion that their genesis may be traced to even earlier dates. Through its intimate contact with the forces of life during the classical age the country became conscious of newer possibilities that were considered realisable by man if he could accept the whole of himself including his vital and sensuous natures as the field of his spiritual pursuits. And both of these cults restarted in the post-classical age with this refreshing and wider outlook. Vaishnavism received a great impetus during the classical age, especially during the Gupta period when its main scriptures, the Bhagavata and the epics, underwent the redaction into their present forms. Through these powerful literary influences the Vaishnavism of the North spread to the South where it took a more intellectual form but was equally, if not more, productive in the cultural life of the people which expressed itself amazingly in a vast literature and in the arts, particularly in the gorgeous massiveness of its architecture in which the creative soul poured out the whole of its wealth, all inspired by and articulating an outburst of *bhakti*. The heyday of Vaishnavism, however, is witnessed in the life and teachings of Sri Chaitanya of Bengal. Here the aim was to sublimate the vital impulses of man through the intensity of devotion into an absolute adoration of the Divine. But it could not go beyond an inner psychic experience turned towards the inner Divine, and whenever a greater externalisation was attempted we know what happened, vitalistic deterioration, corruption and eventual decay. Besides, an entirely spiritual integration was not possible in Vaishnavism in which man sought an eternal nearness to the Divine in His world of Light and not an absolute immergence in Him which was a conception of later Vedanta. Nevertheless, it was the heart here that received the light and found its fruition; and the curve of India's destiny, though yet bound to the levels of the earth, had, it seems, begun to look towards heaven dreaming of the eternal Brindāvan and of its establishment in terrestrial life as the consummation of man's spiritual endeavour.

In a sense Tantrikism may be said to have made a nearer approach to the ideal towards which the soul of India has been moving throughout her history. It also is a remarkable flowering of the Indian spirit and another indication of the spiritual renaissance that was to have dawned as the crowning fruit of the creative efforts of India terminating with the classical age during which Tantrikism was another dominant cult, and many of its scriptures including the *Chandi*, the quintessence of Tantric thought,³⁸⁸ were written in Bengal. Tantrikism sought to raise the whole man into the

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divine perfectibility, as envisaged in the Veda. Regarding life as the cosmic play of the Divine, it posits that there is a purpose in the play which is possible of fulfilment only in man, who alone of creations has the unique privilege of awakening to the power of Consciousness latent in him as also in everything else which is precluded from that prerogative. Man is a microcosm by himself having in him all the forces which in their action and inter-action constitute the cosmic phenomenon. And when that potential power sleeping at the base of his physical system is roused, it proceeds upward through the centres or planes of the above forces rendering them dynamic with its own power, so much so that they converge in all their new-found strength on the realisation by him of a state in which he possesses and becomes possessed by a higher consciousness. This ascending urge in man represents his evolutionary possibility, the secret aspiration of his soul towards liberation into a greater life; and when stirred into activity by man becoming conscious of it and responding to its impulsion, it rises up and establishes a free contact between the lower and higher worlds, since the planes through which it passes govern all the centres of his being, physical, vital, emotional, mental and higher mental, and yet higher ones. The *sādhanā* here is more synthetic, but an absolute self-surrender to the Will of Mahamaya, the Shakti, is imperatively necessary. Like the Upanishads the Tantras also aim at Transcendence, although their idea of Shakti has been generally understood to mean *Prakriti*, the Will-in-Power executive in the universe, who instead of being a Power of Chit, Consciousness or *Purusha*, is herself the controller of Purusha or Shiva. Thus, it is a cosmic force whose invocation by the seeker for ascent into higher states usually results in a widening of his consciousness, in the rise in him of luminous powers, that are often the experiences in the intermediate stages, before the Transcendent is reached in which Purusha and Prakriti are one in the supreme Brahman. The Tantriks started with life and tried to delve deeper into its secret so as to find its unity with the Spirit. They had the vision of the Light but what they were able to bring down into life was not the creative light of the Consciousness-Force—the supreme dynamic source of harmony and perfection—but an aspect of it through the universal force of Nature, which illumined their being but did not, as indeed it could not, transform its parts. Hence their highest aim, except in rare instances, remained far from being completely realised.³⁸⁹ “And in the end, as is the general tendency of Prakriti, Tantric discipline lost its principle in its machinery and became a theme of formulae and occult mechanism still powerful when rightly used but fallen from the clarity of their original intention.” Nevertheless it is the most daring of spiritual experiments ever undertaken by mankind, and its practice produced a rich harvest of psychological experience about almost every part and plane of man’s being, so much so that a conception of their integrality and wholeness was felt to be a necessity in the later spiritual endeavours of the race.

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The spiritual mind of India derives not a little of its synthetic cast from the culture of the Tantras. Bengal, the earliest to take it up, developed it by going through every aspect of its discipline and achieved a success almost unique in her religious history. It contributed very largely to her remarkable creative activities in the realm of art and learning, which are witnessed more particularly during the Pala period when Mahayana Buddhism was prevailing in the country only as another name for Tantrikism. Throughout her history Bengal may be said to have grown in her consciousness of Shakti, which is believed to be a chief source of inspiration of many of her fruitful cultural efforts. And it would not be entirely incorrect to say that even in modern times the cultural and religious movements in Bengal have many of them had distinctive elements of Tantric idealism as their guiding motivation. It is in them as well as in what has been done before in the same direction that the meaning is to be sought of the tendencies of the race and of the possibilities of their fulfilment in the future. In the days of the decline when every thing seemed discouraging for a renewal of the country's destiny, it was the Tantric thought, no less than the practice of its cults, that kept alive the fire of the nation's soul, and when the opportune moment came we find it leaping up into a flaming aspiration towards the Light, as seen by the Ancient Fathers. At this momentous period the curve of India's destiny, for the first time since it began, shows signs of an upward movement. It seems to have caught a very faint glimpse of the same kind of light as it had started from, but it is now at an opposite direction towards which the curve is moving in a semi-circle. Tantrikism, combining as it does different means and methods of man's inner striving, re-kindled in the being of the race all its past seekings and helped to canalise them towards the fulfilment of its highest spiritual destiny. If it could not fulfil its great aim in the long period of its influence and³⁹⁰ popularity for reasons already stated, it must at least be given the credit of having conduced to a great degree the readiness of the country for the perfection that is to come to it in the future.

V

But the Tantras were not the only source from which the inspiration was drawn for the re-building of India in modern times. The earliest movement started in the last century looked to Vedanta and in the light of its teachings affirmed its ideal although its inaugurator, it may be noted, had himself Tantrik inclinations. This great soul was the first in modern India to have turned his eyes, as also the eyes of his countrymen, from the glamour of foreign ideals that were then slavishly imitated, towards all that was glorious in their own past. That he and those who followed him did have a glimpse of its truth is testified to in the attempts that one after another were made to recover the

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spirit of ancient India stripped of its old forms, so that the values of spirituality might once again unfold themselves to the people and pervade their life as they had done in the past. It is not difficult to recognise in this impulse, old but born anew, a definite urge to reassert that a spiritual living can only be the true foundation for the new life of the race. We find this renascent spirit defining itself in almost every form of the cultural and religious activity of the time in which the contribution of Vaishnavism is not negligible. Its literature, poetry and art reflected this new idealism. The political endeavours, too, of the period were not a little inspired by it, by the vision of India the Mother, and their inner motive was always to rehabilitate her intrinsic, therefore spiritual, greatness which, they believed, was possible only in an atmosphere of freedom. It is true that an ascetic tendency is perceptible in the aim of the more recent of the religious movements, but a deeper insight into the lives and teachings of the two great personalities, associated with it, reveals that they represented the resurgent soul of the race, that they were greater beyond measure than the work that stands in their names, and that behind every thing they did was the most stupendous of constructive work ever undertaken in India. A child of the Mother, Sri Rāmakrishna possessed 'a colossal spiritual capacity' by which he mastered in an incredibly short time the truths, himself having practised them, of³⁹¹ every religion and of every form of spiritual discipline, and 'drove straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence'. His was a finger of light that pointed India onward on the age-old path of the Spirit, by which only, as he and his great disciple repeated again and again, could she arrive at the goal assigned to her by the Dispenser of her destiny. But Sri Rāmakrishna's was an inner realisation of the inner Divine. And life was to him a necessary field for that; but his extreme emphasis on the Spirit focussed all attention on it with the result that the integral vision could not be always there and its fulfilment was still further away. Nevertheless Dakshineswar was the beginning of the Mother's work which Vivekānanda was commanded by his Master to accomplish, leaving aside his *samādhi* and trance. It was here that the past spiritual experiences of the race were re-lived and the initial lines of their application indicated so that the country by following them might grow in readiness for the completion of that work in the future.

Among the immediate forces that brought about the awaking in modern India one was largely due to the impact upon her of Western pragmatism that urged her, first, to have a clear understanding of the problem and then to find out whatever help the people were yet capable of rendering towards its solution. Religion was certainly an important element in her greatness in the past. And it was then a thing of experience. But being anchored on a fixed social system it could not grow with time so as to be able to satisfy the deepest Spiritual aspirations of man, and showed a tendency towards externalism which in the days of decline became so dominant that any enlarging of it or a revival of its true spirit seemed impossible. Religion in India more than in any other

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country tried to take hold of man's parts of life and draw them Godwards, and thereby to reconcile the spiritual Truth with the vital and material existence. But it could not keep to this high aim all through. Instead of making Earth obedient to Heaven, it had the opposite result of making Heaven a sanction for Earth's desires; for, continually the religious idea has been turned into an excuse for the worship and service of the human ego. Thus, leaving constantly its little shining core of spiritual experience Religion everywhere has lost itself in the obscure mass of its ever-extending ambiguous compromises with life. It has even gone so far as to divide the higher expressions of man, such as knowledge, works, art and even life itself into two opposite categories, spiritual and worldly,³⁹² religions and mundane, sacred and profane, proving thereby its inability to fulfil the need that is being felt today of a larger opening of the soul into the Light, an opening through which the expanding mind, life and heart of man can follow. This failure of religion to be of any real use to man in his spiritual seeking is today ground enough for him to depend on it no longer, and to seek the guidance elsewhere, in the very depth of his being. And as he grows in his quest, the problem becomes more and more clear to him that his life acquires its intrinsic meaning only when it finds its harmony with the Spirit, and it is in the Spirit alone that lies the secret of a spiritual dynamism that will take into itself every thing that life means and illumine it by the light of the Spirit. There is no gainsaying the fact that this is the dawn fire of a new age for mankind, an age of subjectivism, whose promise in India was shown by the efforts that began to be made about the close of the last century, indicating that the race is yet capable of giving a good account of its old capacity for inward pursuits which brought to it this much-needed experience. But the far deeper truth about it is the seeing today of the integral vision by the Master-Seer of the race who also shows the Path that would lead to its realisation in the collective life of humanity.

VI

What, then, is that vision? It is the vision of a dynamic divine Truth which is descending into the earth to create a new Truth Consciousness and by it to divinise life. The call of the Spirit was responded to in the past by going straight from the mind into the absolute Divine, regarding all dynamic existence as Ignorance, Illusion or *Lilā*. The fundamental error in it may be traced to the incompleteness of the vision which in the Vedanta was that of the Transcendence wherefrom was derived the partial conception of the colourless Spirit, barren of the creative force of Sachchidananda, and which in the Tantras, was that of a cosmic aspect of the supreme Shakti necessitating the modification of her light and power so that they may be received and assimilated by the inferior nature of mind, life and body. But these were no solution of the problem. If complete spiritualisation of life is the aim, these instruments also must undergo a total conversion for which the plenary power and light of the Parā-Prakriti, the Supernature,

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is necessary. Thus,³⁹³ while the Vedantin took his flight up into the regions of the Absolute, the Tantrik brought down whatever power he possessed in his ascent and used it to perfect his parts of nature, but the wholeness of the perfection did not come, because his realisation was not of the highest kind, which only could accomplish it. Yet in the Yoga of the Upanishads and to some extent in that of the Tantras, this ascension meant a definite widening of the consciousness, an enlarging of it into the higher reaches of truth, light and ānanda. But what was not there was the integration, the unification of all into a whole. The highest range of consciousness beyond mind, so far attained after the Upanishadic period, is the Overmind in which every power and aspect of the Divine Reality has its own independent action, its separate existence, so that a complete conception of them as integrally one in the indivisible all-comprehending Unity could not be had. There is in it the Light, but its diffused splendour dazzles the seeker so much that he feels contented with it; and the brilliant golden lid of its world veils the face of the greater Truth from his sight. There is also the Oneness, but it is in the background and when its vision is available it appears as that of a Oneness splitting into a teeming multiplicity of forms, and the seeker goes off to be absorbed in the One without caring to understand the truth of the Many. Tantrikism and Vaishnavism accepted the Many as the *Lilā* of the Divine, but it was to them the cosmic play and not the manifestation of the one Reality. The discovery of unity and harmony between these apparent irreconcilables has not therefore been practicable and remained for ever an object of striving for man throughout his history. The Vedic seers had a glimpse of it, as also the early Upanishadic mystics, but in the later ages when intuition gradually gave way to reason, the vision became dimmed, and whatever attempt was made by the mind proved unsuccessful. But the evolutionary Nature has all the time been active in preparing man for his ultimate destiny. In India, who is to be the leader of human evolution, this work takes a definite form, and an outline of it, traced above, may indicate the inherent trend of her endeavours towards the goal. Her recognition of the sovereignty of the Spirit above everything else has given India much of what she needs for her growth towards the Light. But she needs more. Perfect knowledge, or whole knowledge is not possible even in the Overmental consciousness. It has not that integrality which alone can explain creation, and being the first parent of the³⁹⁴ Ignorance, it is beyond it to bring about the perfection of the earthly existence.

What, then, is the solution? Is spiritual perfection of the race always to remain a chimera, a dream? and approaches to it, if ever possible, to be limited to individuals only attaining to particular ranges of consciousness, and the divine destiny of man to continue to remain unrealised as ever? Sri Aurobindo says that there *is* a solution, and

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that conditions in life and nature are not only pointing to but also pressing for it. To him has come the vision of that dynamic Truth of Divine Reality, called by him the Supermind, whose descent into the earth-nature is as inevitable, he says, as was the descent of mind and other powers before it. And the ascent too of the earth into this new power is equally a certainty. If the perfect unfolding of the Spirit is the hidden truth of man's manhood, then man the mental being, bound to the Ignorance and imperfection, cannot of course be the last word in the evolutionary endeavour of Nature. Evolution, says Sri Aurobindo, presupposes a process of involution. The Spirit descended into Matter and created in it the urge towards a great expression, and Life emerged, and in the same way did Mind. In man the urge becomes more insistent taking the form of a definitive aspiration for the spiritual living which only can liberate him from his bondage to the Ignorance and imperfection. But it is no amount of readiness on his part that can effect this change in him, though it is a necessary condition for it. The Supermind alone can do it. The evolution of man into the Light and Truth of this creative power of the Divine would mean its coming down into the earth consciousness and becoming dynamic in it by quickening its own Force involved in it, even as the powers of Life and Mind became active in the earth through their impact on their own principles involved in it. Evolution is not a mere ascent of a part of our being from one grade to a higher till the highest is reached, in which case the uplift of the whole being would never be possible. The spiritual growth of man stops short of its fundamental aim in that the higher light that his upward endeavour brings to him touches and sublimates that particular part of his being by which he makes that effort, as mind in the case of the Vedantin, heart in that of the Vaishnava, and the higher vital and the life-parts of nature in that of the Tantrik; but the *entire being* has never had the benefit of the light. Evolution, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not only an ascent but also a descent making for a transformation and integration of³⁹⁵ the whole nature, and evolution into the highest plane would mean the change and uplift of all the lower stages. The integrating ascent to the Supermind would therefore bring about a total conversion of the *whole being*, – the new Truth sending its light to the remotest corners of the being. "This illumination and change will take up and recreate the whole being, mind, life and body; it will be not only an inner experience of the Divinity, but a remoulding of both the inner and outer existence by its power." Not only this, but "it will take form not only in the life of the individual but as a collective life of gnostic being established as a highest power and form of the becoming of the Spirit in the earth nature". This is the integral vision towards the fulfilment of which in the life of the race India is to lead mankind, and discharge thereby the mission assigned to her by God. Every endeavour in the past was a preparation for it; and the time has now come for her to reveal this truth to humanity and show the way by which it can be realised. And when this integral evolution will be accomplished in the life of man, divinised and new-created by the dynamis of this new Light from heaven all the highest aspirations of the

race, its deepest strivings towards perfection will have been fulfilled; all its golden dreams of the kingdom of God on earth, its sublimest visions of the intrinsic divinity of man will have become a unique reality. And the curve of India's destiny, full of a colourful plethora of rich experiences gathered throughout the ages, finds itself terminated at the end of the semi-circle, the other end being at the Vedic age from where it started. And it becomes a complete circle, because the Seer of to-day meets the Seer of the Veda in the luminous world of the Supermind above. Thus does India deliver her message to humanity and fulfil the purpose of evolutionary Nature. But the Seer to-day is also the Leader of the Way. The call therefore goes forth from him re-echoing the ancient *rik*: —

“Arise. O Souls, arise! Strength has come,
Darkness has passed away — the Light is arriving!”

A full idea of the Supermind and of the consequences of its activation in the earth consciousness is not possible mentally to have, far less to express. And for whatever of it is available it is better that one should go to the Master himself who has given to it a magnificent expression in his recently published *magnum opus*,³⁹⁶ *The Life Divine*. The Supermind is a link between Sachchidananda and the lower hemisphere of creation. A creative consciousness with Unity as the constant basis, it creates, governs and upholds the worlds; and being the nature of Sachchidananda itself it creates nothing which is not in its own existence. Its truth is inherent in all cosmic force and manifestation. In it the Light is one with the Force; and being, consciousness and will are the three indivisible and harmonious aspects of a single movement. “To its self-awareness the whole existence is an equable extension, one in oneness, one in multiplicity, one in all conditions and everywhere. Here the All and the One are the same existence; the individual being does not and cannot lose the consciousness of its identity with all beings and with the One Being; for that identity is inherent in supramental cognition, a part of the supramental self-evidence.” The truth of Transcendence and the truth of Manifestation are one in it, and therefore also the truths of the Spirit, Life and Matter. In the Supermind exists the true principle of eternal harmony; and when man will be in possession of its Gnosis he will discover that harmony and find in it the permanent solution of all his problems. From his present subjection to the obscure workings of the Ignorance in nature he will then be liberated into the freedom of the Spirit, into the infinite light of the supreme Knowledge. He will then live and always in the supramental consciousness of the self-existent Truth, of its dynamic and creative power, the Conscious Force, which is the Parā Prakriti, the Supernature, of whose Will his life will be a perfect manifestation, of whose heavenly splendour the whole terrestrial existence will be a luminous revelation. It is to this Mahashakti, the Divine Mother, that man must open, and consecrate himself wholly

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and entirely so that by her Grace he might be made ready for the descent into him of her new Light from above; for the Supermind is her Light, her Force. "This supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and *tapasya* can alone rend³⁹⁷ the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda."^{*}

Sri³⁹⁸ Aurobindo and Absolutism

BY PROF. HARIDAS CHAUDHURI, M.A.

By Absolutism I mean the metaphysical theory which envisages reality as a unitary, self-coherent and all-comprehensive whole. The universe in its ultimate nature is conceived by Absolutism as an integrated unity which is all-containing and all-originating, and not as a mere conjunction of self-contained units nor as a concatenated series of both conjunctions and disjunctions or of continuities and discontinuities. In other words, ultimate reality is conceived here as an Absolute which embraces all relations within itself and yet completely transcends them, and not as a plurality of independent reals standing in diverse relations to one another.

Now, this Absolute may be conceived in various ways, — it may be conceived as a physical, a vital, a logical or a mystical or spiritual Absolute. Prof. Alexander in his "Space, Time and Deity" gives us an idea of the physical Absolute. The Universe in its simplest and original expression is, in his opinion, the all-encompassing Space-Time which is regarded as the matrix of all empirical existence and the nurse of all becoming. The process of evolution brings to birth a successive series of such empirical qualities as materiality, vitality, mentality etc., but all these qualities come to qualify only different

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* Based on Sri Aurobindo's writings and letters to his disciples including the following books and articles:—*Essays on the Gita, Isha Upanishad, Kalidasa, The Ideal of the Karmayogin, The Life Divine, The Mother, The Renaissance in India, The Riddle of this World, A Defence of Indian Culture, The Hymns of the Atris, The Secret of the Veda, The Synthesis of Yoga*. The last four are titles of articles that serially appeared in the "Arya" (now defunct). The quotations in the article are all of them from the above books and articles.

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configurations of Space-Time. Henri Bergson gives us a vital Absolute in his conception of the *élan vital* or the vital impetus which is an eternally creative principle continually leading to unique unforeseen and unforeseeable forms. Hegel elaborates the notion of a logical Absolute which is a self-distinguishing and self-objectifying principle of self-consciousness, the world of our experience being the fulfilment of the dialectical necessity of its nature. In the systems of Bradley and Sankara we have the vision of a mystical Absolute which is a supra-rational undifferentiated unity and which by its ineffable nature completely transcends the highest reach of the understanding. There is, without doubt, a very close affinity between Sri Aurobindo's position and this mystical type of Absolutism, but still, having regard to the immense difference that readily leaps to the eye, we³⁹⁹ cannot accept the expression as quite adequate for the purpose of characterisation. The Absolute or Brahman as conceived by Sri Aurobindo has undoubtedly a mystical side *i.e.*, a transcendental aspect of being in which It is wholly incomprehensible to all logical thinking and is thus, to borrow a phrase from Rudolf Otto, a "Numinous Entity". But then the transcendental aspect is only one of the different poises of being of the Absolute. In another poise of its being, the Absolute functions as the all-sustaining universal principle; and both these poises and aspects are equally real and eternal. The Absolute as the Universal principle is again manifested on different planes in different forms; on the physical plane Brahman is manifested as the universal spatio-temporal scheme or as Cosmic Matter, on the vital plane He is manifested as Cosmic Life-Force, and on the mental plane He is manifested as Cosmic Mind or as Absolute Idea. So we find that whatever elements of truth are there in the physical, vital, logical and mystical types of absolutism are accepted and harmoniously fitted together in the Synthetic or Integral Idealism of Sri Aurobindo.

Absolutism is perfectly right in regarding ultimate reality as one unitary, all-embracing whole and in tracing all the diversities of empirical existence to that absolute principle. But the formidable problem which every form of absolutism has got to face is the problem of determining the nature of the Absolute in a way which can best secure for Man and Nature their proper status and function in the structure of reality. We will consider here the view of Integral Idealism with regard to the nature of the Absolute, the significance of the World and the value of the Individual Self in the light of some representative theories concerning these ultimate issues.

THE NATURE OF THE ABSOLUTE

The very first question which often presents itself while discussing the nature of the Absolute is: Is not the Absolute after all a mere object of inference and, as such, a hypothetical entity? Is not the Infinite only a negative idea resulting from the incapacity of our mind to conceive of any definite limit to the spatio-temporal scheme to

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which we belong? The Unlimited appears indeed to be incapable of being supposed, by any stretch of imagination, to be an object of immediate experience of our finite mind. But this doubt concerning the reality of the Absolute cannot bear deeper reflection. The Infinite⁴⁰⁰ is in truth the very presupposition of our knowledge of the finite and the limited. We know the finite as finite only because we have in our mind a positive notion of the Infinite (to which the finite is relative), however vague and inarticulate that notion might be, just as we can know darkness as darkness only because we have positive experience of light. The Absolute is not indeed an idea which we manufacture with a view to imparting some additional dignity and glory to our knowledge and experience; it is rather organic to the very structure of our intelligence. We fail to understand the world of experience if we do not apply the notion of the Infinite. The relative world stands self-condemned and betrays internal self-discrepancies until it is exhibited as rooted in the Absolute and as a manifestation thereof. In our search after Truth we have to pass on from the world to God, from the finite to the Infinite, not because the former is, but because the former is not, *i.e.*, because the former cannot be comprehended except with reference to the latter. (See Pringle Pattison's 'Idea of God', p. 250).

But there are some philosophers who, having admitted that the notion of the Absolute is a positive notion and is the pre-supposition of our Knowledge of the relative world, declare that this Absolute is, at any rate, entirely unknown and unknowable. We are aware only of the "that" of the Absolute but not of its "what". We are constrained to believe that the Absolute exists, but we have no means at our disposal to know what its positive nature is. We obtain all our knowledge by means of comparison, assimilation and discrimination. Now these psychological processes when applied to the Infinite would at once reduce it into a finite and relative object, so that the process of knowing the Infinite may be said to involve a finitisation of the Infinite. Now, even though it may be admitted that there is an element of truth in Agnosticism, still it is absurd to suggest that the nature of the Absolute is a perfectly sealed book for us. The Absolute may be inexhaustible and unfathomable, but It is surely not completely inaccessible to our experience. Had the Absolute been really unknowable, it would have been a mere abstraction of our thought and not a concrete reality. We can affirm the reality of a thing only in so far as we have an inkling into its nature. "That" can hardly be separated from "what"; existence stripped of all positive content necessarily passes over into non-existence which, taken in an absolute sense, is a word without signification.

The⁴⁰¹ Agnostic's conception of the Absolute as an Unknown and Unknowable Power or as an indeterminate x which functions as the ground and source of all

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empirical existence is then a self-contradictory idea. So let us proceed to consider some representative theories which give us a more or less definite conception of the Absolute and make it continuous with human experience. In recent times Prof. Alexander has elaborated the notion of the physical Absolute. His Absolute is Space-Time conceived as an infinite and continuous whole of which Space may be described as the body and Time may be described as the soul and which is impregnated from the beginning with a creative *nisus*. Space and time are not the forms of any primordial stuff of existence such as matter; Space-Time is rather itself the fundamental stuff of all existence. Materiality, vitality, mentality, spirituality etc., are a series of unique and unforeseeable qualities which appear on the scene of empirical reality in the course of evolution and are stabilised as the properties of different complexes of motion which are differentiated within the one all-comprehensive system of motion that Space-Time is. When the elements of space-time attain to a certain degree of complexity of structure and function, the novel quality of materiality emerges into being, qualifies the spatio-temporal complexes and gives rise to what we call material objects. In a similar way, living beings, animals, men appear at later stages in the course of evolution with the emergence of the higher empirical qualities. The main difficulty confronting such a theory of emergent evolution is that it has to admit at every stage of evolution a complete miracle. If the Absolute be bare Space-Time empty of all the infinite wealth of content which belongs to our experience, what is the source of the qualities which we experience? Since the process of evolution prepares only the basis which is fit to bear some higher quality, whence do the higher qualities themselves come, if they are not somehow or other latent from the beginning in the Absolute?

The same criticism applies to Bergson's theory of Vital Absolute which is an inexhaustible principle of absolutely free creation. While Alexander starts with Space-Time conceived as an all-comprehensive system of motion, Bergson starts with pure Time freed from all spatial images and conceived as pure duration, pure change, pure evolution. While Alexander starts with a physical principle which leads to the birth of all empirical qualities such as matter, life, mind within itself, Bergson starts with a biological principle, a vital urge, and reduces static matter⁴⁰² to an illusion of the intellect and the intellect to a pragmatic function or an instrument of practical life. Space supplies whatever amount of stability, continuity, orderliness and determinateness is there in Alexander's Absolute, but Bergson's pure Time is absolutely free and undetermined—determined neither mechanistically nor teleologically, neither by the past nor by the future—in its continual act of bringing to birth ever unforeseen and unforeseeable forms. Bergson's *élan vital* is a richer principle than Alexander's Space-Time which is a greater abstraction, but still it is not rich enough to contain and create the higher forms which we know. The ultimate principle must be conceived at

least in terms of the highest that we experience, if not as ineffably higher than the highest. Both Alexander and Bergson believe in the emergence of the higher out of the lower, which is a manifest absurdity. Evolution of that which was non-existent before is as fantastic as the doctrine of creation out of nothing. Change, becoming, genuine development is indeed an indisputable fact of our experience, but then this is without doubt a fact *within* the universe, and not the supreme Fact of the universe,—evolution is only an aspect of reality and not the essence of reality. Permanence and change, stability and mobility, eternity and the temporal flux are both true aspects of the Real. Reality in itself is unchangeable and eternally accomplished; infinitely diverse changes are an expression of the overflowing joy of the eternally Perfect. The emergence of the qualitative differences which characterises the process of evolution is the manifestation of the highest in different conditions peculiar to the different levels of existence. The Absolute is neither Matter nor Life nor Mind; it transcends them all and at the same time contains within itself the truth and essence of them all; and it is also manifested at different levels as Matter, as Life, as Mind for the diversified expression of its infinite joy.

The physical and biological categories are then too inadequate and poor for the purpose of describing ultimate reality. They should be restricted in their application to circumscribed spheres of experience. But, what about the mental? Can Mind be equated with Reality? There are philosophers who have discovered their master-key in this or that element of the mind which is the highest power of consciousness hitherto manifested and overtly operative on earth. Schopenhauer fastens upon Will and erects it into the ultimate principle. The world is, in its essence, so thinks Schopenhauer, a vast omnipotent Will;⁴⁰³ it is at a much later stage that this Will in the course of its gradual self-objectification attains to reason or self-consciousness. Hegel, on the other hand, considers self-consciousness to be the highest category and holds that all other lower categories including matter, life, volition, emotion etc., are embraced and reconciled within the organic structure of the all-inclusive self-consciousness or Absolute Idea. The chief merit of Hegel's view lies in making reality a spiritual unity of the One and the Many,—a self-distinguishing principle of self-consciousness which by the dialectical necessity of its own nature manifests itself into the world of plurality. But Hegel's Absolute Idea is too much of an abstract logical scheme and as such it fails to satisfy the deepest craving of the human heart. Mystics therefore maintain that the highest reality is neither an omnipotent Will nor a self-differentiating Idea; it is absolute Love, pure, ineffable, indescribable Bliss. The philosophy which turns a blind eye to the mystical experience that discloses reality as pure love and unutterable joy in which all differentiation vanishes is, to say the least, one-sided and imperfect. But is not the mystical conception of reality as pure love another one-sided and imperfect position in philosophy?

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It is indeed wrong to equate reality with any particular factor of mental life, whether it be will or thought or emotion and to relegate others to a subordinate position. Attempts have therefore been made to envisage reality as a harmonious unity of all the elements of mentality. Josiah Royce holds that the Absolute is the absolute Unity of Experience, Thought and Will or Love. He defines reality as the immediate fulfilment of a system of ideas in a unique way. Reality is, first of all, absolute Thought or an absolute system of ideas; but it is also absolute Experience in so far as it is the immediate fulfilment of all its ideas and not a mere abstract conceptual structure; and further, reality is also Will or Love in so far as its ideas are fulfilled in a unique way in consequence of which its experience is incapable of multiple exemplification. The Absolute is not then, according to Royce, either Will or Thought or Feeling or Love, — it is not exclusively one of them erected into the ultimate; it is the absolute unity of all these factors harmoniously fitted together. The Absolute is an infinite unity in so far as it is an endlessly self-differentiating structure; individual selves are the images or representations of the Absolute which is a self-imaging or self-representative whole.

It is indeed an achievement to conceive of the Absolute as the⁴⁰⁴ self-coherent unity of all the factors of mental life, but both critical reflection and deep spiritual experience feel constrained to go Further beyond such a differentiated harmony. Bradley and Bosanquet contend that the Absolute can by no means be equated with an intelligible expression or an intellectual scheme of terms and relations. Every relational structure is, as they point out, shot through and through with internal logical contradictions and as such it must be an imperfect and self-contradictory manifestation of some inclusive non-relational experience. Thought, Feeling, Will, etc., are no doubt harmonised and unified in the Absolute, but in being so harmonised they must lose their distinctive character and along with other determinate contents of our experience must be transformed into one Supreme Immediacy. The Absolute cannot be the relational unity of differentiated elements, because whenever there is the relational way of thinking there is only appearance and unreality infected by a mass of self-discrepancies, relations being incapable of conferring genuine unity or of supplying any effective principle of togetherness. So Bradley describes the Absolute as the all-inclusive supra-relational Experience which embraces all the distinguishable factors of our knowledge and also transcends them, transfiguring them all into an incomprehensible synthesis by means of such transcendence. When Bradley describes the Absolute as Experience, he does not mean by the word our sentient experience or our immediate feeling though we have in the latter a close analogue to some important features of the Absolute. The Absolute is Experience in as much as it is one all-comprehensive supra-relational whole which is the immediate unity of all differences and the concrete synthesis of all distinctions. Both our infra-relational sentient

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experience and relational logical experience are forms of manifestation of Absolute Experience which represents the supreme consummation of all meditation of the immediate.

The views of Bradley and Bosanquet are perhaps the nearest Western approach to the position of such great Eastern mystics as Buddha and Sankara. Lord Buddha says that ultimate reality can best be described as absolute Naught or Silence or as Nirvāna. Now, these words signify not a mere void or an abyss of nothingness. Reality is Naught or Silence only in so far as it outsoars all logical conceptions and transcends the highest categories of finite thought. In truth, it is indescribable bliss and rich in inexhaustible positivity which bursts through all limitations of human speech and of the human understanding.⁴⁰⁵ Reality is Nirvāna in so far as it represents the extinction of all desires and the cessation of all painful existence born of blind attachment to the unreal. Sankara also considers the Absolute to be a supra-logical undifferentiated unity, the world of plurality being entirely relative to *Avidyā* or the logical way of thinking. Sankara differs from Buddha in describing Reality more positively in spiritual terms, though he is all the time aware that all such descriptions or characterisations, are in the last analysis hopelessly inadequate. Sankara's Brahman is Sat-chit-ānanda, i.e., the Unity of absolute Existence, absolute Knowledge and absolute Bliss. It is not the unity of an integrated whole having certain parts or certain attributes. Brahman is not that which *has* i.e., possesses, absolute existence and absolute consciousness and absolute bliss. Nor is Brahman pure existence plus pure consciousness plus pure bliss. Brahman is pure existence which is pure consciousness, and pure consciousness which is pure bliss. In Bradley's opinion, however, the distinctions of thought, will, love, personality, etc., are rooted in real differences in the life of the Absolute; they all enter into the Absolute as constitutive factors, though in coming together in that unitary self-coherent whole they are transformed beyond recognition into the indefinable and incomprehensible specific experience of the Absolute. According to Sankara, all distinctions including knowledge, will love, personality, etc., are only shadows or reflections which the unobjective light of self-luminous Brahman throws on the screen of *Avidyā* or Ignorance. So they cannot be said to contribute in any way to the life of the Absolute. While according to Bradley, the distinctions under consideration are the results of the activity of thought working on the basis of real differences present in non-relational experience, in the view of Sankara these distinctions are an illegitimate transference of Ignorance on the locus of the Spirit which is undifferentiated consciousness. For Bradley, thought which is the source of all distinctions is an organ of self-articulation or self-explication of the Absolute which is super-thought; but for Sankara, Ignorance which projects the distinctions is a logically indefinable power which is neither separate from Brahman, nor inseparable from Brahman nor both. Ignorance is not separate from Brahman because that would make an end of Monism

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and Absolutism: it is not inseparable from Brahman because that would abrogate the purity of the Absolute; it cannot be said to be both separate and inseparable, because that would be a violation of the law of contradiction. The⁴⁰⁶ principle of Ignorance is then entirely incomprehensible, but yet, without some comprehension of how it stands related to the Absolute, there is a strong suspicion that we have stopped short of an adequate and integral view of the Absolute. With regard to Bradley's position, it may be asked: What does start thought which is essentially a subdued factor in the life of the Absolute on its career of endlessly differentiating the undifferentiated? What, again, leads the Absolute to fall from its supra-logical height and appear as infra-logical immediate experience which serves as the basis of logical thinking? Without a satisfactory answer to these questions there seems to be no logical right to stick to that particular conception of the Absolute.

A comparative study of the views of Bradley and Śankara takes us straight to the position of Sri Aurobindo. Bradley maintains that the distinguishable elements of our mental life must correspond to certain differences in the structure of ultimate reality, though he does not throw any light on the nature of these differences. Sri Aurobindo holds that the mind with its characteristic functions is an inferior form of manifestation of the Supra-mental Gnosis of the Absolute. The mental functions of thought, will, feeling, sense-experience, etc., are expressions on a lower level of the supramental truth-consciousness, truth-creation, absolute love, absolute sense, etc., which are all embraced in the immediate unity of one vast indivisible Gnosis. Bradley is definitely mistaken in supposing that the Absolute would be indigent with any one of the appearances left out, and that all the distinctions of our life contribute to the perfection of the Absolute. Sri Aurobindo agrees with Śankara that the Absolute is eternally perfect in itself and does not depend for its perfection in any way on the creations of Ignorance or the cosmic Will. But while for Śankara Ignorance is a non-conscious principle of cosmic illusion having no value or significance from the standpoint of Brahman, Sri Aurobindo looks upon it as a certain expression—an exclusive self-concentration—of the consciousness-force of the Absolute or Saccidānanda.

For Śankara ultimate reality is a unity beyond all differences; for Hegel, it is a unity-in-differences; for Bradley, it is a non-relational whole which swallows up and transforms all differences into transfused elements. Sri Aurobindo envisages ultimate reality as an unfathomable mystery of which unity-beyond-diversity and unity-in-diversity, the non-relational purity and the relational playfulness are two equally real aspects or poises.⁴⁰⁷ The Absolute is surely in one of its aspects pure undifferentiated

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consciousness, *Nirguna Brahman*, but there is no reason why the Absolute should be limited to this aspect only and betray an incapacity for other forms of self-manifestation. While in one poise of being, the Absolute is *Nirguna Brahman*, devoid of all qualities, in another equally real poise, it is revealed as *Saguna Brahman*, possessed of infinite qualities, endlessly self-distinguishing and eternally creating. The Absolute or *Para brahman* is expressed in both these forms—*Nirguna Brahman* and *Saguna Brahman*, unity-beyond-diversity and unity-in-diversity—though it is not exhausted by them whether separately or collectively, and therefore transcends them both as an immeasurable and unfathomable mystery. This mystery is not a blank featureless unity indistinguishable from nothing, but rather an ineffable Plenum which contains an infinite richness of diversity “in a sort of mystical latency”. In this respect *Para brahman* bears a greater resemblance to Bradley’s Absolute than to Śankara’s. But even on this point there is also a tremendous difference. According to Bradley, all our variegated experiences enter into the life of the Absolute, vitally modify its experience and contribute to its harmony. The specific experience of the Absolute derives its peculiar *quale* from all our pleasures and pains, our happiness and misery, our frustrations and maladjustments as well as our successes and triumphs, though in coming together in the Absolute they are all necessarily submerged and fused into one unique transcendent experience. It follows from this that the joy which is in the Absolute is only a balance of pleasure over pain, the luminosity which is in the Absolute is a balance of knowledge over ignorance, and so on and so forth. But the *Para brahman* of Sri Aurobindo contains “in a sort of mystical latency” not all our impure countless experiences, but only the most transcendent powers and the highest forms, or, in other words, the absolutes of all that we experience. For example, *Para brahman* contains within itself absolute creative power, unobstructed dynamic truth-vision, infinite pure joy, absolute over-flowing love, etc. *Avidyā* which spreads its darkness over the entire field of our experience is derived from the divine creative power which is full of infinite potency and infinite knowledge. Our pleasures and pains are the distorted reflections of the divine infinite joy on the dark screen of *avidyā*, our strength and weakness are the imperfect expressions of the divine omnipotence, our truths and errors are the shadows, cast⁴⁰⁸ by *avidyā* on our plane, of the vast truth-consciousness of God, and our virtues and vices are the faint imitations of the self-realising dynamic Will of the eternally Perfect.

The *Para brahman* as experienced and conceived by Sri Aurobindo reconciles all partial views and overrides every species of one-sidedness. *Para brahman* is at once static and dynamic,—a vast silence and an eternal activity; it is at once impersonal and personal, formless and possessed of, infinite forms, transcendent and immanent. It is only from the standpoint of dividing mentality or of *avidyā* that these different aspects

of the one Reality appear to be irreconcilably opposed to each other. In truth, however, the absolute status of Brahman far from contradicting its creativity rather supports it and prevents it from self-dissipation or self-alienation. This is exemplified in our own experience when we find that the most potent activity or the most eloquent creative word proceeds from the depth of silence of the spirit. When we imagine that the Absolute cannot be both static and dynamic or transcendent and immanent we ignore the infinite capacity of the Absolute and attribute to it the impotence of our own logical way of thinking. Similarly, there is no real opposition between the formlessness of the Absolute and its infinitude of forms, because the Absolute is not formless in the sense of being incapable of assuming forms but rather in the sense that it can by no means be exhausted in any number of forms, however innumerable. The Absolute is both impersonal and personal in two senses. It is personal in so far as it is indivisibly present in every person, and it is impersonal in so far as it is not limited to any person or even to the whole collectivity of persons but rather shines as transcendent Consciousness. Secondly, the Absolute is personal in so far as it is experienced by us as a God having excellent spiritual attributes and ever eager to lift us through infinite mercy into His eternal fellowship or communion, and it is impersonal or rather supra-personal in so far as even the excellent spiritual attributes known to us are inadequate to express the infinite and ineffable essence of the Absolute. Finally, the Absolute is both transcendent and immanent; transcendent in so far as it transcends all creation and cosmic expression, and immanent in so far as it is manifested first as the inmost self of the universe, as its Creator, Governor and Destroyer, and secondly, as the inmost self or the *Antaryāmin* of the individual. This is why Sri Aurobindo is never tired of reminding us that the⁴⁰⁹ transcendent, the universal and the individual are three equally real and eternal terms of existence.

By borrowing a happy phrase of Hegel, we may say that *Parabrahman* is at once eternally self-realised and eternally self-realising. Hegel could not reconcile quite satisfactorily these two equally real aspects of the Absolute. He sought some sort of reconciliation in *Täuschung* or the principle of illusion and had thus to reduce to unreality the dynamic and self-realising aspect of the eternally perfect. It is, according to Hegel, an illusion that we consider Reality to be yet unaccomplished; it is an illusion to think that the absolutely good has to wait upon us and require our co-operation for its self-accomplishment; and it is upon an illusion that our active interest in the world-process reposes. "The consummation of the infinite End, therefore, consists merely in removing the illusion which makes it seem yet unaccomplished In the course of its process the Idea creates that illusion, by setting an antithesis to confront it; and its action consists in getting rid of the illusion which it has created." (The Logic of Hegel, Wallace's translation, pp. 351-52). This is not so much reconciliation as subordination of one term of the antithesis to the other. Sri Aurobindo holds that the Absolute is

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eternally self-realising in a far deeper sense of the expression, and that the process of eternal self-realisation is the spontaneous outpouring of the eternally self-realised essence of the Real. Brahman has a creative and dynamic aspect, not because He has in His nature any want to remove or any need to satisfy nor because He has any purpose to fulfil by way of attaining enrichment of being or self-completion. *Parabrahman* in His intrinsic nature is eternally perfect and self-realised, there is not the least doubt about that. But it is precisely because the Supreme is eternally self-realised that He is also eternally self-realising, for, the essence of His eternally self-realised being is infinite overflowing joy. Perfect and sufficient in Himself, He wills to express His infinite joy in infinite ways under infinitely diverse conditions. If we speak of any purpose of creation we should remember that it is not the purpose of self-enrichment, but the purpose of self-revelation,—it is the same as the rhythmic expression of exuberant joy. So it is no principle of illusion which we require to harmonise the static and the dynamic aspects of the Supreme; it is the principle of joy, the *Lila*, which provides the key to the highest riddle of existence.

Thus we see that the Absolute as experienced by Sri Aurobindo is⁴¹⁰ a unity having a rich diversity of aspects. Static and dynamic, impersonal and personal, undifferentiated and infinitely self-differentiating—these are the different forms of expression of the same all-embracing Spirit which does not yet get exhausted in these self-manifestations singly or collectively. It transcends all known aspects and is in itself the most ineffable Supreme which is completely beyond the reach of the logical understanding and which even though undifferentiated still contains in a sort of mystical latency an infinite richness of powers and qualities. The creative power of the Supreme which is one with and indistinguishable from the Supreme is what we may call the transcendental Divine Mother. The Supreme is eternally manifested in the transcendental Divine Mother as Saccidānanda or as the Spirit which is pure existence, pure consciousness, pure bliss (The Mother, p. 38). But besides pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss there is another constitutive principle of the Absolute which Sri Aurobindo has termed the Supramental Gnosis and which is the same as the vast Truth-consciousness, the *Satyam Ṛtam Vṛhat*⁴¹¹ of the Vedic Ṛsis⁴¹². This Supermind is the perfect identity of knowledge and will and as such functions as the medium of self-manifestation of Saccidānanda through which the latter descends into the diversified world of manifestation. The comprehending consciousness, the apprehending consciousness and the projecting consciousness are the three general poises or functions of the Supermind. The first is the equal self-extension of Saccidānanda which is free from individualisation and which founds the inalienable unity of things. The second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the

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Many in One and One in Many. It is the self-differentiating activity of Saccidānanda by which He realises Himself as the Universal Divine and the Individual Divine, the former knowing all soul-forms as itself, and the latter envisaging its existence as a soul-form and soul-movement of the One. The third poise further modifies the inalienable unity of things so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of Ignorance, becomes in us at a lower level the illusion of the separate ego. It produces a sort of fundamental dualism in unity—no longer unity qualified by a subordinate dualism—between the individual Divine and its universal source. (The Life Divine, Vol. I, Chap. XVI, pp. 224-5). The world of plurality to which we belong is enveloped by Ignorance or *Avidyā* which induces us to attribute separate and discontinuous existence to the self-differentiations of⁴¹³ the Absolute. This *Avidyā* is derived through an act of self-veiling from *Māyā* which is a principle of Knowledge-Ignorance and which functions as a transition-link or passage between the higher sphere of pure Knowledge and the lower sphere of Ignorance. *Māyā* in its turn is derived from the Supermind through an act of self-veiling of its projecting consciousness.

It is evident from the foregoing account of Sri Aurobindo's views about the nature of the Absolute and about the principles which lead to its cosmic self-manifestation, that they bear a striking resemblance to the account of ultimate principles as given in the Tantras. According to both the *Sāṃkhya*⁴¹⁴ and the Sankara-Vedānta, the primordial source and fundamental stuff of the universe is an intrinsically unconscious principle. It is the very opposite of the Chit or pure consciousness. Whatever consciousness we find in the highest modifications of *Prakṛti*⁴¹⁵ or *Māyā* such as the intellect and the mind is only a sort of reflected consciousness (*Chidābhāsa*) which is borrowed from the consciousness of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo agrees with the Tantra that the *materia prima* of the world is a form of Consciousness itself and that the creative power is the power of Consciousness. Consciousness at rest is *Chit-svarupa* and consciousness in action or in creative dynamism is *Chidrūpini Śakti*, and the two are essentially in undistinguishable union with each other (Sir John Woodroffe's *Shakti and Shakta*, pp. 175-6). According to the Tantra, *Māyā* is derived from the *Chit-Śakti* and the apparently unconscious *Prakṛti*⁴¹⁶ is derived from *Māyā* and her five *kanchukas* or offshoots such as *Kāla* (Time), *Niyati* (Order), *Vidyā* (Knowledge), *Rāga* (Interest), and *Kalā* (Power). Similarly, Sri Aurobindo holds that even the inconscient stuff and basis of the material world is not the complete negation of consciousness but is rather consciousness in a state of self-concealment. Inconscience is only consciousness fallen asleep. *Avidyā* or Ignorance is not, according to Sri Aurobindo, an objective falsehood

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incompatible with the essence of the Spirit; it is rather “a play of the spirit’s own self-manifesting Omniscience” (The Life Divine, Vol. II, p. 415); it is some self-absorbed concentration of Tapas, of Consciousness-Force in action on a separate movement of the Force (*Ibid*, p. 435). This Ignorance is derived through a purposeful act of self-veiling from *Māyā* which Sri Aurobindo calls the Overmind that “covers as with the wide wings of some creative Oversold this whole lower hemisphere of Knowledge-Ignorance, (and also) links it with the greater Truth-consciousness (of Saccidānanda)”. Between the Mind as we know it and the Overmind,⁴¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo recognises such higher gradations of mentality, as the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind and the Intuition which supply the unbroken thread of continuity.

The Absolute in its highest state has been designated by the Tantra *Parāsamvit*⁴¹⁸ or *Tattvātita*. This corresponds to the ineffable Supreme of Sri Aurobindo in its most transcendental aspect. In between *Māyā* and *Parāsamvit*, the Tantra admits the five suddhatattvas of Sivā-sakti, Sadasiva or Sadakhya, Iswara and Sadvidyā or Suddhavidyā (Shakti and Shākta, p. 150). Sivā-sakti corresponds to Sri Aurobindo’s Saccidānanda with His Saccidānandamayi Sakti and Sadāsiva, Iswara and Sadvidyā correspond to the triple status of the Supramental Gnosis of Saccidānanda such as the comprehending, the apprehending and the projecting consciousness. Siva and Sakti represent the subjective and the objective poles of consciousness, the *Aham* and the *Idam* in its subtle potentiality, the *Prakāśa* and the *Vimarsa* aspects of the supreme Experience or Āmarsha. Sadāsiva, Iswara and Suddhavidyā represent different stages in the increasing self-differentiation of Siva-sakti. In Sadāsiva there is the first incipency of the world-experience as the notion “I am this”, in which, as in other suddhatattvas, the “this” is experienced as part of the Self and not as separate from it. The emphasis at this stage is on the *Aham* to which the objective element is wholly subordinate. At the next stage, the *Idam* side becomes clear in the Iswaratattva in which the emphasis is said to fall on the “this” which the *Aham* subjectifies. The result again of this is the evolved consciousness of Suddhavidyā tattva in which the emphasis is equal on “I” and “This”. Consciousness is now in the state in which the two halves of experience are ready to be broken up and experienced separately as *Puruṣa*⁴¹⁹ and *Prakṛt*⁴²⁰. In Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy also we find that the comprehending, the apprehending and the projecting functions of the Supermind represent different stages in the increasing modification of the fundamental unity of things and the gradual emergence of the Many, even though there are also some important differences between the two views. Sadākhyā, Iswara and Sadvidyā are conceived by the Tantra as the emanations of Śiva through the activity of Śakti, whereas the Supermind is conceived

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by Sri Aurobindo as an aspect, power or principle of being of Saccidānanda, the three functions of the Supermind being three inseparable movements in the one indivisible movement of the Gnosis.

A more significant difference between Sri Aurobindo and the⁴²¹ Tantra concerns the relation between the highest Reality and its dynamic Power. We know that the Sankara Vedānta lays dominant stress upon the aspect of Being, the Purusa, with the result that the Śakti is reduced to a principle of cosmic illusion and is almost discarded in the ultimate context. The Tantra goes to the other extreme and lays the highest emphasis upon the Śakti, with the result that Śiva, even though accepted as the indispensable support of the Śakti in her eternal creations, is reduced to a mere *śava* or corpse having no will of his own and so being subject to the control of his Śakti. Sri Aurobindo maintains that the deepest truth about the matter is to be obtained by viewing Śivā and Śakti, the aspects of Being and Becoming, status and dynamis, in their proper relationship. The Śakti is not an unreal, or an existent-non-existent mysterious power, but enters into the life of the Absolute as an essential factor. Yet the Absolute can by no means be conceived as subject to the Śakti. The Śakti embarks on her career of creative playfulness always in implicit obedience to the Will of the Absolute, the will which is absolutely free either to manifest or not to manifest. "In a conscious existence", says Sri Aurobindo, "which is absolute, independent of its formations, not determined by its works, we must suppose an inherent freedom to manifest or not to manifest the potentiality of movement." (The Life Divine, Vol. I, p. 127). The Reality so conceived should be carefully distinguished from "the Cosmic God of the Tantriks and Māyāvādins who is subject to Śakti or *Māyā*, Purusa involved in *Māyā* or controlled by Śakti."

THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

If the Absolute is, as Sri Aurobindo holds, in the nature of Saccidānanda possessed of the creative Gnosis or the self-realising Idea and also of an absolutely free Will to self-manifestation, then it follows that in his view the world must be a real and significant expression of that sovereign Will. The world is neither an accident nor an illusion, it is rooted in the nature of ultimate reality; it is neither a foolish tale nor a dreadful dream but is rather fraught with very deep significance. Those who accept the world as a self-contained self-subsistent reality are persons who cannot look beyond their nose and are blind to the higher ranges of experience. Those, on the contrary, who look down upon the world as a self-negating appearance are too dizzy to look below from the height of their intellectual attainment or⁴²² spiritual realisation. There are also

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people who occupy the mid-region and consider the world to be the scene of an asymptotic approximation to an ever-receding Ideal. Privileged to have a look both at the height and at the bottom, they do not yet know how to link up the two, because they have not entered into the depth that synthesises. The truth is that the world is self-objection of the Absolute or Purusottama who realises Himself in the world at every moment and yet who ever proceeds to realise Himself in novel ways and in an increasingly fuller measure. There are indeed obvious difficulties in the way of such a view, but all such difficulties as obviously melt before the rising vision of the Truth.

We shall notice here two chief considerations which have prevented the world being regarded as the free self-manifestation of the Spirit. The one is the epistemological consideration, and the other, the consideration of the world's dark features and undivine elements. The result of epistemological self-examination was in the hands of Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher, simply disastrous for Metaphysics. Kant observes that there are certain universal and necessary factors such as space, time, substance, causality etc., which are involved in and presupposed by every piece of knowledge. Had these factors or ground-conceptions been received from without, they could not have been universal and necessary. So Kant argues that the forms of Knowledge must be the contributions of our own mind. The logical sequel to this is that the world we know is the creation of our own understanding and is phenomenal, and so incapable of being regarded as the manifestation or development of the transcendental reality which is a perfectly sealed book for our knowledge.

The master-thinkers who have come after Kant point out that Kant is led to regard reality and appearance, the noumenal and the phenomenal, as two unconnected and discontinuous hemispheres, because he starts with an unwarranted dualism of the sense and the understanding, of intuition and thought, of datum and interpretation. Even though, in our case, there is an appearance of dualism between the given factor and the interpreting act, they are, in ultimate analysis, two inseparable moments in the life of one all-inclusive Spirit. For Hegel, this Spirit is the self-distinguishing principle of self-consciousness, while for Bradley, it is an all-embracing non-relational Experience. Hegel looks upon the world as the immanent dialectical movement of the Absolute Idea. What appears to us⁴²³ as the datum is already penetrated by the light of the Universal Spirit. The categories by which we interpret our experience are also the categories according to which the Universal Spirit has thought out the external world. The knowledge which we acquire by the activity of our understanding is only a reduplication of the knowledge which is embodied or objectified in outward Nature. Our own individual self is only a finite reproduction of the Absolute Self. Now, the

cardinal defect of this view is that it makes the world vital to the Absolute which is the supreme principle of objective thinking, so that the Absolute is as much dependent on the world as the world on the Absolute. Moreover this view equates the temporal order entirely with the logical, there being left no room for genuine progress, development or historical unfolding. The whole process of evolution in Nature may be said to be reduced, in effect, to “the dull rattling off of a chain forged innumerable years ago.”

Bradley is opposed to the view of the world as the self-objectification of an eternal Thinker. Our knowledge can by no means be reduced to a mere re-thinking of that which is already thought out, – to a mere reduplication, an otiose contemplation of that which is already accomplished. The world which we know is the product of ideal construction; it is the result of the differentiating activity of our thought. Yet, though the world is the creation of our understanding, it does not belong like Kant’s phenomena to a sort of no-man’s land in between reality and thought. The world of appearance is, in the view of Bradley, not discontinuous with reality but rather an immanent development or self-articulation of the Absolute. This is because thought which is not identical with reality is not also separate from reality; it is an organ of self-articulation of reality. From this some important conclusions follow. The world as the product of thought is unreal in as much as it is riddled with self-discrepancies, because thought which works with the mechanism of terms and relations has no native principle of togetherness and cannot reconcile the elements of plurality into a genuine self-coherent unity. Yet reality appears through the appearances and the world may rightly be characterised as a kind of manifestation of the Absolute, however incomplete or inadequate this manifestation may be. Reality is manifested in varying measures in different appearances in proportion to their varying degrees of self-coherence and inclusiveness. Moreover, appearances are the very stuff of which⁴²⁴ reality is made, so that with a single appearance left out the Absolute would not be what it is and would suffer from lack of perfection, though in coming together in the reality the appearances must undergo varying measures of transmutation.

Bradley cannot tell us why reality appears through appearances, having regard to the fact that the latter only distort reality; nor can he tell us how the appearances are transformed in order to constitute reality. Yet Bradley is emphatic in his assertion that reality and appearance, the Absolute and the world, are mutually dependent, and in this he shows himself a true Hegelian. For him, the Absolute is the transmuted synthesis of the world, and the world is the self-contradictory manifestation of the Absolute. “Appearance without reality would be impossible, for what then could appear? And reality without appearance would be nothing, for there certainly is nothing outside appearances.” (Appearance and Reality, p. 487). Such a relativity of the Absolute and the world seems to run counter to the deepest spiritual experience and

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militates against the intrinsic self-sufficiency of the Absolute. In Sankara's Advaitavāda we have a conception of reality as absolute freedom. Sankara's Brahman is pure consciousness which does not depend upon the world either as the object of his consciousness or as the material of his experience. In Sankara's view, the world is simply unreal from the ultimate standpoint of Brahman, so that no question of his relation to the world can arise at all. Yet the world is not a mere void or nought; it is real from the empirical standpoint, it has a sort of conventional or pragmatic reality. The world then is *anirvacaniya* or indescribable, because it is neither real as it disappears from the standpoint of Brahman, nor unreal as it is true from the empirical standpoint, nor both real and unreal, as that would be a manifest self-contradiction.

Sankara is true to his spiritual realisation in showing forth Brahman as absolute freedom and as pure existence-consciousness-bliss. But in his view of the world he betrays his failure to reconcile the reality of the world with the freedom and self-sufficiency of the Absolute in the profoundest and all-affirming spiritual experience. Sankara's position is also quite unsatisfactory to the reason. He says that the world is real from the empirical standpoint and unreal from the ultimate standpoint. So far so quite good. But then the question would irresistably arise: What is the connection between these two standpoints? Either there is some connection and the empirical standpoint⁴²⁵ derives from the ultimate or there is no connection. In the former case, the world cannot be said to be wholly non-existent from the standpoint of Brahman and the necessity is imposed on us of showing how or why the world arises from Brahman and in what manner the empirical standpoint is derived from the ultimate standpoint. In the latter case, the ultimate and the empirical standpoints, Brahman and the world should both be accepted as equally real and as discontinuous spheres of experience. The same difficulty may be put in another way. What precise meaning is to be given to the statement that 'the world is false from the standpoint of Brahman'? Is the world false in the sense that it is non-existent in the absolute sense of the term and as such has no mode of being for the Brahman-consciousness? Or, is it false in the sense of having a mysterious real-unreal sort of existence? In the latter sense, there arises the necessity of showing the connection between Brahman and the world and the manner how or the reason why the world is derived from Brahman. In the former sense, absolute non-existence must be the very essence of the world, so that all talk of its reality from the empirical standpoint is only a sort of euphemism. This conclusion can be avoided only if the empirical standpoint is shown to be connected with the ultimate standpoint and to derive some reality and significance therefrom.

Sri Aurobindo would say that the empirical standpoint answers to a definite purpose or will of the Absolute, the will to self-manifestation in conditions provided by the Inconscience. We have already seen that according to Sri Aurobindo *Avidyā* or

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Ignorance which envelops our world of experience is not the negation of Brahman but a purposeful and practical self-oblivion of consciousness-force for a specific mode of divine self-manifestation. Sankara is perfectly right when he says that Brahman is absolute freedom and eternally self-sufficient, but he errs in limiting Brahman to one particular poise of its being. The Absolute is capable of existing simultaneously as the utterly formless and also as the creative principle of infinite forms, – as the static Silence and also as the dynamic Logos. Sri Aurobindo admits that the world as it exists is full of imperfections; it is the scene of such dualities as birth and death, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, virtue and vice, truth and error, ignorance and knowledge, etc. But Sri Aurobindo is emphatic in his view that Saccidānanda is present even in the midst of these dualities. For, birth and death are only limited⁴²⁶ expressions of the immortality of the Absolute; pleasure and pain are distorted reflections of his infinite joy; virtue and vice are inadequate manifestations of his perfection; truth and error or knowledge and ignorance are the imperfect shadow cast on the screen of *avidyā* by the self-shining consciousness of the Absolute. The secret purpose which controls the world-process is eventual transformation of these dualities into their ultimate essence and the establishment of the kingdom of Truth and Immortality in the world of matter, life and mind. Sri Aurobindo believes that body, life and mind can all be purged of their present limitations and impurities and converted into perfect channels of expression of Saccidānanda. This is possible because the material body is essentially the lower form of manifestation of the pure substantiality of Saccidānanda, the life, of his infinite power or consciousness-force, and the mind, of his vast truth-consciousness. The world then is derived from Brahman, is the abode of Brahman and is constantly striving to be the manifestation of the glories of Brahman.

THE NATURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF

The problem of individuality constitutes perhaps the greatest stumbling block in the way of mental or spiritual Absolutism. If the whole of existence be embraced in one all-inclusive Absolute Spirit possessed of sovereign reality and over-ruling power, what room is there for the individual self having independent existence and freedom of will? Should not individuality be rather treated as a vanishing quantity, and a “formal distinctness” which is entirely relative to the “impotence” of our thought? If ultimate reality be an Absolute in the true sense of the term, you should reduce the individual, either, like Spinoza, to a mode of consciousness of the one infinite substance which the Absolute is, or, like Bradley, to a mere appearance which is bound to be “lost” and “dissipated” in the life of the Absolute. This modal or adjectival theory of the individual seems to be a necessary consequence of the absoluteness of reality. Sankara goes a step even further. He says that individuality is neither a mode of the Absolute nor an appearance which qualifies the Absolute after having undergone the necessary

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amount of transformation, but is a mere illusion created by Avidyā. It completely disappears when Brahman is realised. The self in the individual is non-different from Brahman and is as such eternally free and never gets bound. The⁴²⁷ appearance of assuming individuality and undergoing the miseries of bondage is entirely relative to Ignorance.

If, however, you refuse to shut your eye to the reality and significance of individuation, you may be driven, if not sufficiently cautious, to the opposite extreme of atomism, separatism or pluralism. You may, like Leibnitz, look upon the individual as a spiritual atom or monad living out with perfect independence an insular existence of its own, so that God is only a *primus inter pares*, an “each among eaches”, the Monad of all monads. You may again, like McTaggart, exalt the individual selves to the rank of eternally perfect and self-subsistent spirits and reduce ultimate reality to an impersonal unity of these spirits having no centralised consciousness of its own. But such pluralism runs counter to the demands of speculative thought and the revelations of spiritual experience alike. The atomic theory of the individual is as one-sided and imperfect as the adjectival theory; both these are reactionary extremes which are repugnant to thought and intuition.

Some honest attempts have, however, been made to reconcile the absoluteness of the Supreme and the reality of the individual. There is very wide authoritative backing for what is known as *Visistādvaitavāda* which looks upon the individual as an attribute or differentiation of the Absolute. Rāmānuja says that the individual self is assuredly real and not a mere appearance, but then it is ontologically inseparable from the Absolute and is wholly dependent upon the latter just as an attribute depends upon the substance, or a part depends upon the whole or a body depends upon the soul. Hegel holds that the individual selves enjoy a relative measure of independence and reality as factors in the life of the Absolute Self and as such should not be regarded as unsubstantial modes of an infinite substance. This gives us what has been called Panentheism as distinguished from Pantheism. Royce says that individual selves are the self-imagings or self-representations of the Absolute which is a self-representative system. The uniqueness of every individual is derived from the fact that it is the fulfilment of a certain purpose which belongs to the Will of God. Pringle Pattison maintains that the individual is a standing differentiation of the Absolute and a focalised expression of the universe. It does indeed pass our comprehension how the individual which is inseparable from, and entirely dependent upon, the Absolute, can yet enjoy substantive reality and a relative measure of freedom. But Pringle Pattison points out that we should still accept⁴²⁸ the fact of individuation as the standing miracle

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of the universe, a comprehension of which would require the transcending of our very conditions of individuality. Individuation is not only real but is also highly significant. The typical business of the universe lies in shaping, moulding, and developing perfect individuals, so that the world may be characterised as a “vale of soul-making” in the deepest sense of the expression. (Pringle Pattison’s *Idea of God*, p. 260).

Sri Aurobindo agrees that individuality is not a mere appearance or a vanishing quantity, or an illusory product of Ignorance,—it rather belongs to the fundamental structure of ultimate reality. The true individuality of the self persists even after one secures spiritual liberation from entanglement in the lower nature or *aparā prakṛti*⁴²⁹. What disappears or is dissipated after such liberation is the false individuality of the ego which is a product of Ignorance or a formation of lower Nature. While the ego is entrenched in a sense of separation from the rest of the universe, the true individual participates in the life of the cosmic Self and is also aware of itself as inseparable from the supra-cosmic transcendent Divine. Sri Aurobindo is thus in agreement with *Visistādvaitavāda* in holding that true individuality is an eternal portion of God or a standing differentiation of ultimate reality. But still in his view with regard to the essence of the individual self, he is more at one with *Advaitavāda* than with *Visistādvaitavāda*. The individual self is in being and essence identical with God and God is indivisibly present in every individual. It is therefore eternally perfect and free from all limitations; it is not subject to birth, growth and decay but is rather placed above the flux of becoming. The Individual Self is God himself in a certain poise of His being, and may be said to differ from God as one among His many poises or modes of being. Being identical with God in being and essence, it differs only in respect of form and function. Every individual self is a centre of action of the Divine, and functions as the medium of His self-manifestation.

The highest goal of the individual Self lies not simply in attaining liberation or perfection, because it is eternally free and perfect and one with the Divine. It is a mistake to suppose that the Individual grows and develops with the process of evolution, because the true Individual is above the process of evolution. Royce and Pringle Pattison consider true individuality to be the product of evolution, because in their view the essence of individuality lies in a unique organisation of growing experiences. But,⁴³⁰ in truth, the Individual Self only supports and presides from above the process of evolution over a certain unique organisation of experience. That which is present in the heart of every empirical evolving individual and itself also grows with the growth of that individual is what Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic being, the “*Chaitya Puruṣa*”⁴³¹ of the Upanishads, This psychic being is a spark of the Divine

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involved in the empirical individual and it controls the evolution of the physico-vital-mental being as the highest representative of the supra-temporal Individual Self within the temporal flux. The psychic being may also be described as a certain emanation which proceeds from the Individual Self and gets involved in the process of evolution in order to guide it steadily towards the fulfilment of divine purpose. On the attainment of fullness of experience and spiritual realisation, the psychic being is reunited with the Individual Self.

From what has been said above it is evident that there is some truth in the view that the typical business of the universe is “soul-making” or the moulding and developing of perfect individuals. But in what sense is this true? Are we to understand by perfect individuals simply morally perfect souls with extremely limited powers of body, life and mind? Sri Aurobindo says that perfect Individuals such as are intended to be the crowning consummation of the process of terrestrial evolution will be spiritually perfect beings or supermen who will be above the dualities of vice and virtue, bad and good error and truth, etc., and who will participate in the infinite power, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss and immortality of God. They will not be disembodied spirits or spirits imprisoned in an imperfect physical-vital-mental vehicle, but will completely divinise their lower nature and transform their body, life and mind into perfect instruments for manifesting the glories of Saccidānanda on Earth. The possibility of such a consummation is rooted in the fact that the true Self of the individual is eternally free and perfect and essentially identical with the Divine. The body, the life and the mind which belong to the empirical individual over the evolution of which the Individual Self presides, are capable of being thoroughly divinised through spiritual sādhanā and of thus revealing the perfection of the Spirit, because they are, in ultimate analysis, lower forms of manifestation of the constitutive elements of Saccidānanda. The typical business of the universe appears then to be invested with a very deep significance indeed. The centre of interest is shifted⁴³² from the individual to the Divine, from the unique organisation or focalisation of experience to the objective self-manifestation of the Supreme Spirit. Individuality is essentially a function or form of being of the supra-individual Spirit. Individualisation or unique organisation of experience in a finite centre on which Pringle Pattison, Royce and others lay so much emphasis, does not constitute the essence of the Individual Self, nor has it any value on its own account; it derives its value from the fact that it is instrumental to the objective manifestation of the Supreme Divine through the Individual Self. Individuality essentially exists in God, by God and for God, so that the deepest truth about evolution is the self-manifestation of the Supreme Divine with the Individual Selves as the centres of action and with the world as the field of divine manifestation. The universe is “a vale

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of soul-making”, and aims at the development of perfect embodied individuals, only because the latter will be the best medium of self-manifestation of God in the world, or of the Spirit in matter.

Sri⁴³³ Aurobindo and the Isha Upanishad

BY C.C. DUTT

It is necessary to state at the outset that our intention in this essay is not to institute a comparison between the teachings of the Master and the philosophy of the Upanishads. Such a comparison would be futile and entirely out of our scope, believing as we do that our Master is that which he has himself described as the inner Guide, the World Teacher, the Jagat Guru, secret in the hearts of all. He has been that always, from the earliest dawn of man’s life on this planet, effectively presiding over every stage of the evolution of human thought and human culture. To each age has he spoken in the language of that age, and unfolded to such as listened the Supreme Truth underlying the phenomenal life of the world. That Truth is ever the same, though translated into the language of the hearer from age to age it has appeared different. Now today, the Moment has arrived; and the Master has proclaimed before a sad and mad and bewildered world his Integral Yoga, the completest harmony of all the Yogas that have gone before. For, the time has definitely come for man to take the next step in evolution, the bold leap into the luminous world of the Supermind, where he is destined to realise the Truth of truths,—that this world, diverse and manifold though it appears, is one and indivisible in the Brahman—that He is everywhere, always, enthroned in the hearts of all beings and all things. Integral Yoga, like every other Yoga, has its philosophy, and that philosophy has been elucidated by the Master in his Life Divine and his Synthesis of Yoga. One who is initiated into this Yoga cannot accept exclusively any narrow school of philosophy, nor can he follow exclusively any one of the various paths of Yoga. He has no deity, no cult, no method that he can call his own to the exclusion of other deities, other cults, other methods. He cannot say, this is my chosen deity, these are my Scriptures, this is my Guru,—not those that others revere. In him, the paths of knowledge, love and works have become one and indistinguishable. Such is the simple philosophy of our beloved Master.

In the long history of the evolution of spiritual culture in India,⁴³⁴ the philosophy of the Upanishads occupies a unique place. It is not, however, a philosophy in the ordinary sense of the word, for all the later schools have accepted the Upanishads along with the Veda as revealed Scripture, and as such have commented on them, each in its own way. Sri Aurobindo has not written at length on the Upanishadic literature

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generally, as he has done in the case of the Veda. He has however translated and commented on two short but remarkable of the Upanishads, the Isha and the Kena. We shall reserve the latter for presentation on a future occasion and shall here restrict ourselves principally to what the Master has said in his brilliant commentary on the Isha Upanishad. Before doing so, however, let us see where exactly in reference to the Veda should we place the Upanishads—at least the twelve principal ones, for there are Upanishads and Upanishads, and some undoubtedly belong to a much later period.

Vedanta in a narrow sense is one of the six well-known schools of Hindu philosophy, the Uttara-Mimansa. But the word has also a much wider sense, and in this sense the principal Upanishads form part of it. Sri Aurobindo finds the Isha to be one of the more ancient Vedantic writings in style, substance and versification, the most antique of the extant metrical Upanishads. He places it in the earlier of the two great periods of Upanishadic thought. The writings of that period still kept close to the Vedic roots and preserved the spiritual pragmatism of the Vedic Rishis. In the next period the Upanishads entered ascetic and anti-pragmatic phase. Human life and activity began to be stigmatised as false and illusory, definitely hurtful to man's spiritual interest.

Already in the earlier period the two view-points had come to a clash and the Isha had to face the problem of harmonising Karma in the world with the asceticism of the Monist. The method it has followed right through is "the uncompromising reconciliation of uncompromising extremes". It has given no quarter to extreme illusionism, and that in a language which the later Monists found difficult to explain away. Further on, we shall see how the great Shankara attempted to do this specially in his commentary on the second verse, and what Sri Aurobindo has to say about it.

Let us go back to the spirit of the Veda, for it is necessary to know what the Veda was before we can really grasp the Vedantic standpoint. The general Western view that the hymns of the Rig Veda were songs composed by the virile and sturdy peasants⁴³⁵ of primitive India in praise of the powers of Nature need not be seriously considered. At any rate, this is hardly the place to discuss the point. Our purpose will be served by giving two short extracts from Sri Aurobindo's "Secret of the Veda" —

"Veda is the creation of the age anterior to our intellectual philosophies."

"Thought proceeded by other methods than those of our logical reasoning.... The wisest then depended on inner experience and the suggestions of the intuitive mind for all knowledge that ranged beyond mankind's ordinary perceptions and daily activities. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner."

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Drishti and Sruti, sight and hearing, themselves Vedic expressions, signify revelatory knowledge and the contents of inspiration. There is nowhere in the Veda any suggestion of the miraculous or the supernatural. Vedic Sādhanā is an onward and upward march of the human soul on the path of Truth. As it goes forward, “new vistas of power and light open to its aspiration.” The Rishis of the hymns were entirely indifferent to any striving for poetical originality or to any attempt at novelty of thought. There is a striking sameness visible in the hymns, same notion, same terms and figures, often the same phrases. Yet, their finished metrical forms, skill in technique and great variations of style preclude the possibility of their being the work of a rude primitive people. Sri Aurobindo calls the hymns “the living breath of a supreme and conscious Art”. And yet, to the seers their art was only a means, not an end. Their end was pragmatic and utilitarian in the highest sense of the words. The aim of the Rishi was spiritual progress—his own and that of others. Of the Vedic hymn generally Sri Aurobindo says “it rose out of the soul, it became the power of the mind, it was the vehicle of the self-expression in some important moment of the life’s inner history. It helped him to express the god in him, to destroy the devourer, the expresser of evil.”

From internal evidence Sri Aurobindo has come to the conclusion that the Veda as we have it marks the close of a period. It may even be that some of the hymns had an earlier lyric form. Or it may be that the Veda, as it stands, is only a selection compiled out of a much vaster body of hymns,—“a more richly vocal Aryan past”. The traditional compiler, Vyasa, Krishna⁴³⁶ of the Isle, had his face towards the obscurity of the coming Kali Yuga, the iron age, which was soon to overtake the glorious Age of Intuition that had gone before. He compiled the Veda for a race already turning towards darkness and decadence, already looking for “the easy and secure gains of the physical life and of the intellect and the logical reasoning”.

Decadence had well set in before the Vedantic seer stepped in with the object of recovering what he could of the ancient light. But wherefore this obscuration of the Vedic lore? Sri Aurobindo says, it was inevitable. Firstly, there is a law of the human cycle, a law which governs the evolution of man’s thought and culture. Secondly, because the whole system was such as could not endure long. The experiences on which the Vedic seer depended were difficult to the ordinary mortal, the faculties which aided the Rishi in his search after Truth were crude and imperfect in other men. Once the first intensity had passed, “periods of fatigue and relaxation were bound to intervene”. The hymns as they stood, deliberately ambiguous in their language, were no longer understood. Even the priests, the custodians of the Veda, who conducted the rituals, did not comprehend the meaning of the texts. In the old days texts and rituals

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had gone together. The same person was priest, teacher and seer. But when obscurity set in, even expert priests who performed these sacrifices did not quite realise the power or import of the sacred words they recited. The power disappeared, the light departed, what was left was but a mass of myth and ritual.

This state of things could not last long, and a powerful revival set in, which is represented in our sacred literature by the Brāhmanas and the Upanishads. The former had for their end mainly the conservation of the forms, while the latter aimed at revealing the soul of the Veda. With the Brāhmanas we are not concerned in this essay. Their authors proceeded in their own way to fix and preserve the details of Vedic rites and rituals. The Upanishads followed another method. Their composers “sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience”. The text of the Mantra became to them a starting point, a prop or a seed of thought. The sacrifice, to them, became more and more a useless and meaningless survival. They concentrated themselves on the search after the Supreme Truth by meditation. No doubt they recovered the old truths, but they put them invariably in new forms. Even the mode of expression changed. The old symbolic language,⁴³⁷ so characteristic of the Vedic mystic, was dropped in favour of a more philosophical style. The old “veil of concrete myth and poetic figure” was cast away. As Sri Aurobindo observes, their real work was to found Vedanta more than to interpret Veda. In time the Vedic text became as obsolete as Vedic ritual to the new thinker of the Upanishadic period. The Master sums up his account of the period of transition by saying—“the Ages of Intuition were passing away into the first dawn of the Age of Reason.”

“Upanishads, increasingly clear and direct in their language, became the fountain-head of the highest Indian thought.”

But all this took time to accomplish itself. Buddhism had to come and declare an open revolt against the Vedic sacrifices. Rational philosophy had to crystallise itself into various schools of thought, which acknowledged the old scriptures in theory but brought in startling innovations by interpreting them freely on the basis of reason. Asceticism and renunciation got final hold of the Hindu imagination. Last came the Puranic revival. Language was still further simplified, new forms of religion arose to suit the new environments. As intuition had given place to rationalism, so in time rationalism gave place to conventionalism.

To go back specifically to the Isha Upanishad, the subject of our essay, we have seen that it belongs to the earlier period of the Upanishadic Age, and is therefore to a large extent in touch with the outlook of the Vedic sage. In other words, though a Book of Knowledge, it is familiar with the time-honoured Book of Works. The last verse is

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taken directly from the Rig Veda and is an invocation to the Vedic God, Agni, expressing the seekers' aspiration towards the supreme felicity. Not only Agni, but Sūrya and Mātariśwan of the Veda find prominent mention in this little book of eighteen verses. The Rishi takes for his key-note the fundamental unity of all beings and things, and deals with the whole problem of man's life and work in relation to the Universe and to the Lord of the Universe.

Certain things have, however, to be remembered about a book of this type. It was composed not to be read but heard, and heard only by people who had a general familiarity with the tenor of thought of the Rishis, and had even some personal spiritual experience. The ideas behind each verse are implicit rather than explicit. What reasoning there is, is suggested more than conveyed expressly by words. The Upanishad being a vehicle of illumination and not of instruction, the hearer proceeded from light to light, "confirming his intuitions and verifying⁴³⁸ by his experience". There is very little room in it for logic as we know it, and what logic there is, is that which Sri Aurobindo calls elsewhere the logic of the Infinite.

The commentary of the Master is couched in a language and style comprehensible to the modern mind. His object is avowedly "to present the ideas of the Upanishad in their completeness, underline the suggestions, supply the necessary transitions and bring out the suppressed but always implicit reasoning".

In the short space at our disposal the best way for us is to proceed verse by verse and indicate the manner in which Sri Aurobindo has brought out the hidden meaning of each independently of all commentaries that have gone before. The first verse is –

("Hindi passage omitted here")

All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universe of motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy; lust not after any man's possession. (1)

Right at the start, God and the World are brought face to face and their relations fixed. The whole universe and each object in it are mutable and transient. The Lord of the movement alone is immutable, stable and eternal. Each separate object is in truth the whole Universe, though in the movement they are contained and continent – Jagatyām⁴³⁹ Jagat, movement in movement, world in world. The Lord, one and indivisible, abides in the sum and in the part. He is, in the language of the Gita, ("Hindi passage omitted here"), – ever undivided, yet ever appearing to be divided. The whole

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of Him is as completely present in the minutest speck of dust as in the vast Himalayan range. Who and what then is the individual? Sri Aurobindo says, he “partakes of the nature of the universal, refers back to it for its source of activity, is subject to its laws and part of cosmic Nature”.

Yet man, essentially divine, perfect and free, seems to be imperfect, limited, and enslaved to Nature. He wants to possess and enjoy the world, but cannot because of his Ignorance and Egoism. He is blind and does not see that each object, separate though⁴⁴⁰ it appears, is only a frontal appearance of the Universe, only a wave of the one undivided ocean,—yet a wave that is the whole ocean. He does not see that he is one with all beings and all things, and is unable to enter into harmony with the universal. He desires to possess and enjoy, but as a separate being. This desire enslaves him and is the cause of all disharmony and dissatisfaction, pain and suffering. If he could but realise the one Divine in him he would not lust or desire, but inalienably contain, possess and enjoy. Hence it is that in the second line the injunction of the Sage is. “By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy”. Renunciation is the absolute condition of free enjoyment. But what is this renunciation? The Master warns us that it is not “a moral constraint of self-denial or a physical rejection”. It implies that the individual should realise absolute unity and not look upon any thing as an object of physical possession. Nothing should be looked upon as in the possession of another. There is no room for greed in this attitude. Realising the One Self in him, the individual possesses the world in the cosmic consciousness. He has no need for physical possession. In an infinite free delight in all things, desire vanishes. Desire and greed cannot stay where Ānanda, the Bliss of the One, has entered.

Man becomes free in his soul and yet lives in the world. Does this freedom imply abstaining from works? On the contrary the second verse enjoins,—

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

Doing verily works in this world one should wish to live a hundred years.
Thus it is in thee and not otherwise than this; action cleaves not to a man.

(2)

The word “*Eva*”, “verily”, in the first line is to be noted as laying stress on a life of action. The meaning is clearly “doing works indeed and not refraining from them.” Shankara reads “works” in the first line to mean Vedic sacrifices, but “action” in the second line to mean “evil action”. The whole verse is explained away as a concession to the ignorant, and it is stressed that the wise abstain from action and renounce the world. This rendering is obviously forced and unnatural, Sri Aurobindo says.

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To⁴⁴¹ understand the true meaning we have to realise Brahman in his two aspects, the inactive Soul and the active Soul. The first verse has enjoined a realisation of oneness with the Lord within. Here the Sage goes farther and says that in order to be free in your soul and yet live in the world you have to be one with the Active Brahman. The Lord expresses Himself in the movement, and not merely to the Inactive Soul who is the silent witness and enjoyer. In the Gita the Lord says, (“Hindi passage omitted here”), that is, He fulfils himself in the world by works, and conveys to Arjuna that he also is in the body for self-fulfilment by action. In fact, man in the body cannot abstain from action, for he has to keep up his body. Moreover, even his inertia produces reactions in the universal movement. The idea that refraining from action brings about liberation of the soul is illusory.

Action is shunned because it is feared that man becomes thereby a slave to desire, and to the energy behind the action. But if you see the Brahman within every object you cannot get entangled in desire. For then, you seek a delight in the Lord within and not in the thing which is but the outer husk. Likewise, by getting behind the apparent world to the Soul hidden behind it you act with the freedom of that Soul. Brahman is the Lord of the energy behind every action, and by realising unity with him, the energy cannot entangle you, your personal responsibility is at an end. Therefore, says the Sage, identify yourself with the Lord of the movement and not with the movement, and you are free from bondage. Action cleaves not to you.

If you do not realise this, and in your ignorance interfere with the play of the One in the Many by abstaining from action, you go counter to the law of His manifestation. You become the slayer of the soul, and when you pass away from this world you enter into a state of blind darkness. This is what the Rishi says in the third verse –

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

Sunless are those worlds and enveloped in blind gloom whereto all they
in their passing hence resort who are slayers of their souls. (3)

By death one does not go out of the movement but passes into⁴⁴² a state of consciousness other than that of this earth. This state may be dark or bright. The slayer of the soul enters the dark Sunless plane, while he that identifies himself with the

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Active Soul behind all things and all actions enters into the worlds of light and bliss. The idea of Sunless obscure planes and Sun-lit luminous planes is carried on, as we shall find, in some of the later verses. The Sun here is the Vedic god *Surya* who represents in the Veda the Divine illumination, the self-luminous Truth underlying all things.

The next two verses (4-5) develop the idea of the first verse. The essential unity of the unmoving Lord and the moving Creation is amplified. Both are the one Brahman.

("Hindi passage omitted here")

One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters. (4)

That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That is outside all this. (5)

The first point that strikes one here is that the Isha Upanishad is opposed to Illusionism or exclusive Monism. The One is real, but so are the Many—the One pervades the Many. In the fourth verse here Brahman is the One unmoving. In the fifth It is that which moves and that which moves not. The meaning is clear; the Lord and the world are essentially one Brahman though they appear to be distinct. The Lord is the one Reality, stable and eternal; stable because He is beyond Time and Space, eternal because He is ever in possession of all that was, is and will be. He transcends all causality and relativity, and is immutable. The stable one is swifter than mind and the gods cannot reach it. The world is a movement of the Divine Consciousness in Space and Time. Something much more puissant, swift and free than the mental consciousness creates⁴⁴³ it. The gods are but cosmic powers that uphold the laws governing the creation. These laws as well as these gods endure only as long as the world endures. They control the progressive movement in Space and Time, in fact they keep it up. Therefore it is that the Sage describes them as running in their course. But they cannot touch the Lord who is completely unaffected by his own movement, who is both Absolute and Infinite. The gods run towards an imagined goal, but when they reach it they find that they have to go forward to a further realisation. And so on and on. They can never get to the Unknowable.

The "others" in the fourth verse are all becomings in the world, *Sarva-bhutani*. They are in reality the One Brahman representing Itself in the separate Many. Their

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running in the course of Nature is merely a working out in time and space of something that Brahman already possesses. Hence it is said, – standing, It passes beyond others as they run. As Sri Aurobindo observes, “Everything is already realised by It as the Lord before it can be accomplished by the separate personalities in the movement.”

In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters. *Mātari-swan* is the Vedic god *Vāyu*, the Divine principle of Life which extends itself in Matter. *Apas* was explained formerly as works, but Sri Aurobindo does not accept that explanation. As accented in the text, it can only mean waters. In the Veda *Apas* has a very definite meaning; it signifies the sevenfold state of consciousness—Divine Being, Divine Conscious-Power or Will, Divine Bliss, Divine Truth, Mind, Life and Matter. This septuple principle is also called the seven streams flowing into or out of the *Hṛdya*⁴⁴⁴ *Samudra*, the general Sea of Consciousness in man.

Brahman the Self-existent, the conscious and the blissful descends in his involution down into Matter, by way of Truth-Consciousness, Mind and Life. Into Brahman involved in Matter universal Life-Power pours itself as dynamic energy, and the ascent commences. This is the nature of the created world. The Seven Cosmic principles are co-existent in it eternally. The involution of the One in the Many and the evolution of the Many in the One make up the law of the cosmic Cycle. We thus see Brahman in all beings and things in the created universe as well as beyond it. It is individual, universal and transcendental. It is the Continent and the Indwelling Spirit of everything that we know of, small and great. It is near and yet far. To realise it is to become perfect and immortal.

The⁴⁴⁵ next two verses relate to self-realisation—the Self in all, all in the Self, the Self that becomes all.

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught. (6)

He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect Knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief who sees everywhere oneness? (7)

All things in this world, animate and inanimate, are unstable and transient. But fundamentally and essentially they are the Self, Ātman, Stable and Eternal.

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Phenomenally they appear many but really they are the one Self. Ātman dwells in each of them and they are all in the Ātman. When man realises the truth of this unity he shakes off the bonds of ignorance and egoism, he transcends the dualities.

All *Jugupsā*, all shrinking, disappears as the Vision of all in the Self and the Self in all intensifies. Shrinking, like dislike, fear and hatred arises from division, from personal opposition to other beings. When these perversions of feeling cease to exist, perfect equality of the soul is realised. This is the import of the sixth verse. It should be noted, however, that all personal recoil must be got over, attraction as well as repulsion. If hatred and shrinking have to go, attachment and desire have to go as well; for, these are all reactions of our limited self-formation. When we awaken to our true nature, and the Self in us goes out to embrace all creatures, there is complete harmony established, the human view gives place to the Divine view. But for this culmination it is not enough to have an intellectual vision only. One must become what one sees. And the whole inner life must be changed, all parts must consent to this realisation. To the awakened Ātman self-delusion cannot come. To one dwelling in the Ānanda of the Lord sorrow is an impossibility. This is the⁴⁴⁶ meaning of the seventh verse. The synthetic ideal of this Upanishad, to embrace at one and the same time Vidya and Avidya, Birth and Non-Birth is implicit here in these two verses. The supreme realisation of the Rishi expressed in the ecstatic exclamation "I am He" in the sixteenth verse is likewise foreshadowed here.

Under these verses, Sri Aurobindo has elucidated in brief the principal ideas of the Upanishads generally. But in the short space at our command we can barely refer to the main points of this elucidation. It is necessary, however, that we should do at least that much to enable the reader to understand the full import of the next verse and those that follow.

("Hindi passage omitted here")

It is He that has gone abroad – That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews pure and unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal. (8)

Brahman is one, one without a second – indeed, all is Brahman – It is identical not single, not numerically one.

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Oneness is the eternal truth, diversity is but a play of this oneness. In creating, the Lord does not make something out of nothing, or one thing out of another. Creating is not a making at all but a becoming – a going abroad, a self-projection of Brahman.

Numerically, the One and the Many are equally true of Brahman. The Many are representations in Chit, various and innumerable, of the Absolute. What the Absolute regards it becomes. Each individual is but Brahman himself in various forms taking part in the infinite play of the Divine Consciousness. To realise this is the aim of every seeker after the Truth. Realisation is immortality.

The individual may identify himself entirely with the One, or he may regard himself eternally different from the One or he may look upon himself as one with it and yet different for ever. The reader will recognise in these three attitudes the basis⁴⁴⁷ of the three systems, Monism, Dualism and qualified Monism. They appear contradictory, but are really co-existent, and can be realised by an individual rising to Brahman consciousness.

Our own mental consciousness cannot grasp the Absolute. The mind tries to realise It by the negative process of *Neti, Neti*. But the Brahman is not a void. It is very real and positive – real both as the One and as the Many. Still, “of all relations oneness is the secret base, not multiplicity. Oneness constitutes and upholds the multiplicity, multiplicity does not constitute and uphold the oneness.”

Brahman representing Itself in the Cosmos as the Stable is *Purusha*, representing Itself as the Motional is *Prakriti*. Cosmic life is the play of this *Purusha* and this *Prakriti*, *Prakriti* is the power of the *Purusha*. She is *Shakti*, the Divine Māya, as conceived in the Upanishads. The lower or *Aparā Prakriti – Māyā* in the sense of magic or illusion – is a later conception.

We have seen that our true self is Brahman – free, luminous, blissful, beyond time and space. The Ātman represents itself in the creative consciousness in three states depending on the relations between God and Nature, – *Akshara* or the unmoving immutable, *Kshara* or the moving mutable and the Supreme or the *Purushottama*. The first reflects the changes and movements of Nature, the third stands back from these changes and movements, calm and pure, a witness. The *Kshara* enjoys the changes and divisions and duality and seems to be controlled by them. But in truth He is not so controlled. *Akshara* is His hidden freedom. The Supreme *Purushottama* contains and enjoys both Stability and Motion, both Unity and Diversity, but is not limited by either of them. It is this Supreme Self, *Paramātmān*, that the seeker has to realise in both *Isha* and *Jagat*.

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In the sevenfold movement of Nature, the Self represents itself in seven different ways. In the physical consciousness, the material being. In the vital consciousness, the vital being. In the mental consciousness, the mental being. In the supramental consciousness, the supramental being.

In the consciousness proper to the Divine Beatitude, the all-blissful being. In the self-aware consciousness, the all-conscious Soul, the all-powerful Will, the source and lord of the universe. In the consciousness of the *Sat* or the pure Existent, the pure divine Self. Man can live in any of these states, can be anything he wills from inert Matter to the pure Existent.

In⁴⁴⁸ the Vedanta the three lower planes are the *A parārdha*, the three highest are the *Parārdha*, and in between them there is the plane dominated by the Divine Truth. The Nature of the upper half is the *Parā Prakriti*, that of the lower is *A parā Prakriti*. Immortality characterises the higher, while death characterises the lower half.

When Man in the lower half realises Sachchidānanda his mind is converted into supermind, Truth or *Vijnāna*, his life into self-aware conscious Power, his body into the pure essence of *Sat*. If this cannot be done perfectly here on earth, the soul realises the truth in some other world, Sunlit and luminous, but has to return to the earthly body to complete the evolution. The Kena says in a famous verse (“Hindi passage omitted here”). Sri Aurobindo is explicit on the point,—“a progressively perfect realisation in the body is the aim of human evolution.”

Ātman may remain self-contained apart from Its creation or It may embrace or possess it as its Lord. From the eighth verse it would appear that It does both these things at one and the same time. Ātman is supramental but is reflected in the human mind. If the mind is pure, the reflection is clear and bright. But if it is impure and troubled, the reflection is obscure and distorted. On a disturbed surface pure Knowledge is reflected as the dualities of truth and error—pure Will as sin and virtue—pure Beatitude as pleasure and pain. Egoism and Ignorance create all this distortion, the *Kshara Purusha* identifying himself with division, limitation and change. But with the vision of the One, distortion disappears, Knowledge, Will and Beatitude are reflected perfectly and Divine Truth lights up the semi-obscure mind.

We have already under verses 6 and 7 traced the stages by which the seeker realises the perfect Beatitude, active and dynamic but delivered from the dualities of mortal existence.

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Now coming to the eighth verse we find that it opens with the phrase, He went abroad. Obviously then, the Upanishads do not teach us that the true Self is an impersonal and inactive Brahman only. In these scriptures Brahman is referred to as both It and He – as both Impersonal and Personal. In a general comprehensive way the Rishis often call the Brahman, That. But even then they mean and include the Lord of the world who creates, governs and destroys. Numerous instances can be found of this. The Upanishads, however, prefer to describe the Lord of creation as *Isha*, *Deva* and *Purusha*. The Lord who inhabits all mutable forms and who at the same time holds⁴⁴⁹ them in his immutable Self is He that went abroad. He is the all-pervading *Purusha* whom the Sage sees in the sixteenth verse, and cries out “the *Purusha* there and there, He am I”. He is the Being that has become all Becomings. But what is the manner and nature of this becoming? The Rishi proceeds to unfold it.

The Isha of the Vedanta is not a Personal God in the ordinary sense – a glorified human being. He is Sachchidānanda – the Pure Existent, Self-aware and All-Blissful – in His Self-delight becoming the universe. His Consciousness turns into Knowledge and Force, His Delight into Love. His awareness and His delight, when intensive, is proper to the Silent Brahman; when diffusive, to the active Lord. Thus it is clear that it is Brahman that becomes, and what He becomes is also the Brahman. (“Hindi passage omitted here”) and (“Hindi passage omitted here”): are ever the same.

He that went abroad means He that extended himself in the Universe. In this extension we have therefore two aspects, one of immutability, and another of mutability in time and space. The two aspects are different and yet mutually complementary.

The Upanishad uses a string of neuter adjectives to express the Immutable Absolute, – “Bright, bodiless, without scar, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil.” To express the same Absolute in relation to the created world it uses four masculine names, – “The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere the Self-becoming.” The pure unmoving is the basis of the play of movement. He projects his immutable Self into the play.

The Brahman is “bright” as a pure luminosity, unbroken by refractions, unmanifested in forms. The Force of the Brahman (*Tapas*) is contained and inactive. It is “bodiless”, that is, formless, undivided, equal in all things. It is “without scar”, that is, perfect and flawless, untouched by the changes and movements of creation, Itself motionless, sempiternal. It is “without sinews” that is without nerves of force. It does not pour itself out in the dynamism of life. It is “pure, unpierced by evil”. By its equality, by its inaction, the Soul remains ever free and ever pure. Sin and evil can find

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no place in Its eternal harmony. It is a witness of the play of Nature but takes no part in it.

Ignorance separates the human mind, life and body from the light of Sachchidānanda, and exposes man to sin and evil. But all the same, these forms of mind, life and body veiled in egoism are His, used by Him for His self-becoming. Essentially the⁴⁵⁰ human soul is one with the Lord. In its completeness it knows this. But it assumes the lower term with its incompleteness and brings on itself pain and evil, suffering and death. Man's inner self is untouched by all these trials which only affect the surface. When he realises the Truth in him and recovers his freedom, he can take his part in the movements of nature and yet not soil himself or suffer from the results of his acts. This is the meaning of ("Hindi passage omitted here") in the second verse. He must visualise the calm and silent Self within him. "Tranquility for the soul, activity for the energy, is the balance of the divine rhythm in man."

Let us now examine the second line of the verse. Therein in some ten words the Rishi has compressed his whole conception of creation. Creation is the becoming of the Lord, as we have seen. The totality of objects is that becoming. It is the Lord who has ordered them perfectly according to their own nature. But the Lord himself is his creation. Therefore it follows that each object in creation carries in itself the Law of its own being eternally.

All objective existence is *Purushottama*, the Self-existent, the Self-becoming, becoming by the force of the Real-Idea, the *Vijnāna* within Him. Form and action correspond to this Idea. What He visualises as the *Kavi*, what He conceives as the *Manishi*, that He becomes as the *Paribhu*. Thus, in innumerable forms in Time and Space, the Lord projects Himself as the all-pervading *Paribhu* or *Virāt*. These three operations are one, though in the relative they appear consecutive. Every form or object holds in itself the law of its own being eternally. All relations in the totality are determined by the Lord, the Inhabitant of this Jagat. Let us understand this process of self-projection clearly again. We begin with the One, unmoving and immutable. As the Kavi or God in the Real-Idea, He visualises the Truth in its essence, possibility and actuality. As the Manishi or God in the Mind, He conceives, He takes his stand on possibilities. A state of plasticity, of the inter-action of the forces, intervenes. But this is only seemingly so; for, behind the Thinker stands ever the Seer with his Divine vision. The conception of the Manishi eventuates in the formal becoming of the *Paribhu*. *Vidya*, the Knowledge of the One is lost in the knowledge of the Many, and the rule of *Avidya* is established. Separate Ego-sense becomes the order. From above, all this is

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seen in the full light of Sachchidānanda. But from below, man sees around him the rule of Ignorance in force, and perceives⁴⁵¹ the three principles of the process separately, not comprehensively. In the evolution of Nature man is the first creature who is equipped to climb consciously and deliberately the arduous heights to the pure radiant *Sat*. But he must know that he has to start from the very bottom, from *Avidya* and division and death, and climb up to *Vidya*, unity and immortality. In Sri Aurobindo's beautiful words,—“He is the ego in the cosmos vindicating himself as the All and the Transcendent”, This brings us to the next three verses relating to Knowledge and Ignorance.

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone. (9)

Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Knowledge, other that which comes by Ignorance; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding. (10)

He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality. (11)

We have not much to say on *Vidya* and *Avidya*, as most of the ground has been covered already. The *Manishi* accepted *Avidya* “in order to develop individual relations to their utmost and then through these individual relations come back individually to the knowledge of the One in all.” Man is not to accept exclusively either *Vidya* or *Avidya*, either the One or the⁴⁵² Many. In him the Seer of the Real-Idea is standing back, and the Thinker separated from the Seer has to set about as best he can in his semi-obscurity to regain his freedom. He must first look within and face the Divine Inhabitant who is ever seated behind the outward appearance of all things, and there in His effulgent light recover by the Knowledge of the One in the many the state of Immortality. This is man's *Sādhanā*. His bondage does not lie in living and acting in

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his human body, but in his persistent sense of egoistic separation. His shackles are of the mind, not of the body. His aim is to supersede the mind by the Supermind and not eschew action in the body.

Purushottama is the Lord of both Vidya and Avidya, the twin powers of His Chit-Tapas, the two aspects of His Mayā. Man, when he realises the one in all, the all in one, the all as the Becomings of the One, is no longer subject to Avidya because he has recovered his freedom in the Vidya. He has to achieve the supreme accord between Knowledge and Ignorance. The purpose of the Lord in him cannot be fulfilled by following either path exclusively. This harmony he would achieve if he knows all in order to transcend all. By taking to the path of Vidya alone, he is likely to enter into some special state and accept it for the whole, mistaking isolation for transcendence. If the ordinary man is ignorant by compulsion, the exclusive follower of Vidya remains ignorant by choice. He gets into a blind lane from which it is difficult to emerge. Therefore it is that the Rishi consigns him to a blinder darkness than the exclusive pursuer of the path of Avidya. For, though the latter enters into a state of greater and greater separation, a state of chaos, still for him there is reconstitution always possible, while from the attachment to Asat it is much more difficult to return to fulfilment.

In either path, however, there are special gains. By Vidya one may attain to the state of the inactive Purusha who looks on but does not participate in the manifestation. This state may bring the seeker a calm plenitude and freedom from the dualities of life. But that is not the highest goal of man. His end is not to abide in the Silent one, but in the Supreme Purusha,—He who went abroad and upholds both the stable and the unstable as two modes of His Being.

The pursuer of Avidya may attain to the status of a Titan or that of a god, say, Indra, the performer of a hundred sacrifices. Here, the individual is constantly enriched by all that the Universe⁴⁵³ can give him, he enlarges his self far beyond that of man, but this also is not the goal of man. For though he has transcended human limits, no divine transcendence has come to such a man. For, be it remembered, the seeker has to transcend all limitations. It is not enough to transcend sorrow if he is still subject to joy. It is not enough to transcend the lower Prakriti but not the higher. Such a person will have to descend again to all that he had rejected and learn to make the right use of the trials and tribulations of human life. He who perceives the Lord in His integrality cannot be more attached to Vidya than to Avidya. This is the lore received from the ancients, as the Rishi says in the Tenth Verse.

Man can then attain his goal only by the complete path, that is, by accepting both Vidya and Avidya at the same time by realising that they are both necessary in the

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process of things. Neither could exist without the other; Avidya subsists because Vidya supports and embraces it; Knowledge depends upon Ignorance for the preparation of the human soul and for its progress towards the ultimate unity. The office of Knowledge is not to destroy Ignorance as something that ought never to have been, but rather to uphold it, draw it towards itself and help it to deliver itself progressively. The second line of the Eleventh Verse says that the seeker crosses beyond death by the Ignorance and by the Knowledge enjoys immortality, in other words "by Avidya fulfilled man passes beyond death, by Vidya accepting Avidya into itself he enjoys immortality". This line will be better understood when we have gone over the next three verses relating to Birth and Non-Birth. It need only be mentioned here that immortality does not mean survival of the ego after the dissolution of the body. The ego can certainly continue thereafter. The self which is unborn and undying, undoubtedly exists after the body goes, just as it had existed before the body was born. Immortality, then, means the consciousness that transcends birth and death, that is beyond all bondage and limitation, is free and blissful.

Even when this immortality has been achieved, however, the work of the individual is not over. He has yet to fulfil the Lord's work in creation. What he has realised himself he has to help others to realise. He could of course do this from some other plane, but, as Sri Aurobindo says, "Birth in the body is the most close, divine and effective form of help which the liberated can give to those ... still ... bound."

The⁴⁵⁴ next three verses relate to Birth and Non-Birth.

("Hindi passage omitted here")

("Hindi passage omitted here")

("Hindi passage omitted here")

Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Non-Birth, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Birth alone. (12)

Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the Birth, other that which comes by the Non-Birth; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding. (13)

He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth, by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality. (14)

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The Illusionist would say that, Birth is a play of ignorance and that it cannot subsist along with entire Knowledge. In the above verses the Upanishad flatly contradicts this. He who follows Non-Birth exclusively is destined to pass into blind gloom, but into a still greater gloom will he pass who follows Birth alone. Either path could be followed with some advantage but cannot bring fulfilment to the human being. The complete path is that of him who accepts birth and dissolution at one and the same time.

Exclusive attachment to Non-Birth leads to a dissolution, into chaos or into the Void. This state is not one of transcendence, but one of annulment. From existence to non-existence—a state of ignorance, and not of release.

Exclusive attachment to Birth in the body implies an unending round of births in the lower forms of egoism, without issue, without release—an undoubtedly worse state than the former.

Still⁴⁵⁵ there is some good in these extreme paths. Man can follow Non-Birth as the goal of Birth and a higher existence, and enter into the Silent Brahman or into the freedom of the Non-Being. Likewise he can pursue Birth as a means of progress and self-enlargement, and enter into a fuller life which may prove to be a stepping-stone to the final goal.

But neither is man's true goal. Neither can bring him the perfect good unless it is completed by the other. Brahman is both Birth and Non-Birth just as It is both Vidya and Avidya. If the Soul is to be freed from its absorption in Nature, man must participate in the pure Unity of the God behind. So freed, the Soul then identifies itself with the Supreme Purusha, and the necessity for birth ceases. The attachment to Birth is at an end, but the freedom of becoming remains.

Thus is ego dissolved. There is no attachment to birth and the soul crosses beyond death. Released from attachment it accepts becoming in the Lord's way and enjoys immortality.

The Sage thus reiterates the injunction of the second verse. Liberated from all egoism, man accepts the world as the manifestation of the Ātman and engages in Karma as He Himself has done. Man then realises how the Lord has gone abroad and unrolled this great and intricate world as the Kavi, the Manishi, and the Paribhu, how the Swayambhu has determined eternally all things in their own nature. This determination works through His double aspects of Vidya and Avidya, of Birth and

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Non-Birth. The human soul develops in the multiplicity, in the play of the ignorance, and then returns to the Knowledge and by that Knowledge enjoys immortality, in this life, *Ihaiva*.

As Sri Aurobindo says, “this immortality is gained by the dissolution of the limited ego and its chain of births into the consciousness of the unborn and undying, the Eternal, the Lord, the ever-free. In short, man has to accept life in order to transcend it. The soul is really not in bondage, though in Nature it appears to be so. But it is not aware of this in its egoistic obscurity. It has to be truly conscious to realise that it is eternally free. By this consciousness, by this Light, does it cross beyond death and enjoy immortality.

The next two verses come under the heading of the Worlds – Sūrya –

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

(“Hindi⁴⁵⁶ passage omitted here”)

The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight. (15)

O Fosterer, O Sole Seer, O Ordainer, O illumining Sun, O power of the Father of Creatures, marshal thy rays, draw together thy light; the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold. The Purusha there and there, He am I. (16)

Two questions that arise here are whether there are other worlds after death and whether a man after dissolution of the body is reborn, here or elsewhere. In the third verse the Rishi has spoken of dark worlds into which the slayers of the soul pass. Likewise, verses 9 and 12 speak of worlds of blind gloom and of even greater gloom. Sri Aurobindo says that it makes no difference whether the Upanishad refers to dark worlds or dark states of consciousness. We have already seen that in the Upanishadic conception a world is only a condition of conscious being. The individual soul after death must either disappear into Nature, merge itself in the Creator or continue to exist in an organisation of consciousness other than that of this earth, other than those which are proper to embodied life. These are the other worlds, the worlds after death.

After the dissolution of the body the soul can be born in another body on earth, can survive in other states, or enter into immortality beyond birth and death. Here a clear distinction is indicated. As Sri Aurobindo points out, “the two former conditions

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appertain to becoming; Immortality stands in the Self, in the Non-Birth, and enjoys the Becoming". Rebirth in a terrestrial body is not explicitly mentioned in the Upanishad but is implied, specially in the seventeenth verse.

Re-birth in a better life here is not, however, offered to the seeker by the Upanishad. To be bound to birth and death is a sign that the mental being is dwelling in Avidya. But it is earthly life itself that offers the means of liberation from bondage⁴⁵⁷ by one-ness with the Ātman. When that one-ness has been realised, the free soul may return to birth, not for its own sake but for that of the Lord of the World.

Likewise, the Upanishad does not hold forth any reward of beatitude in a heaven above. There is no doubt an interval between death and re-birth. During this period the soul dwells in states or worlds above, favourable or unfavourable to its further development. These worlds are either sunlit or sunless, either bright or gloomy. The one favours self-enlargement, the other self-distortion. This is the Vedantic conception of Heaven and Hell. It should be remembered, however, that life in heaven or in hell is, like the life on earth, a means and not an end. They facilitate or retard the soul's progress towards realisation. This realisation or transcendence is the true goal. But, it should be understood, transcendence does not mean rejection of that which is transcended. Self-extinction can never be the aim of a true seeker. This is where the Upanishad is near its Vedic roots. Early Vedic thought believed all life, all birth and death, all the worlds, to be here in the embodied human being. This thought, the Master remarks, has never quite passed out of Indian philosophy. But later thought has laid greater and greater stress on asceticism and renunciation.

The Rishi now proceeds to indicate the two lines of knowledge and action which lead to the supreme vision (Driṣṭayē⁴⁵⁸ in verse 15) and the divine felicity (Rāyē in verse 18) in the form of invocations to Sūrya and Agni, the two gods of the Veda representing Divine Truth and Divine Will respectively.

It is necessary to go over the Vedic conception of the seven worlds again in order to understand fully the place and function of Sūrya.

Spirit is Sat-chit-ananda i.e., pure Existence, pure in Self-awareness and pure in Self-delight. The terms are three in one. Sat is Chit, and Chit is Ananda. This Spirit is one, but is capable of infinite becoming by His Chit-Tapas—His conscious Force, His Will. The becoming of the Spirit is a septuple range, a sevenfold scale—three upper worlds, three lower worlds and one in between. The upper are the worlds of the Spirit—Satyaloka where Tapas energy dwells on Sat, Tapoloka where Tapas dwells in

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⁴⁵⁸ In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

Chit and Janaloka where it dwells on Ananda. In these Lokas unity and multiplicity have not been separated. All is in all, each in all and all in each, inherently – whole consciousness is self-luminous. The light of Sūrya is lost in the radiant⁴⁵⁹ one-ness of the Lord. This luminous oneness is Sūrya’s most blessed form of all (“Hindi passage omitted here”)

The lower half consists of three worlds dominated by the three principles of Matter, Life and Mind. Bhurloka the world of formal becoming, Bhuvanloka that of free vital becoming and Swarloka that of free mental becoming. Here the Sun’s rays are imprisoned in the night of inconscience or broken up, reflected from or received in limited centres.

Between the Upper and Lower halves is the intermediate world of Divine Truth—called Maharloka or the world of large consciousness. It is founded on infinite Truth. Here the multiplicity of the lower worlds always refers back to the essential unity of the worlds of the Spirit. Its principle is Vijnāna or Real-Idea. It sees at one and the same time the form as well as the being behind the form, and “therefore carries with it always the knowledge of the Truth behind the form”. Its nature is *Driṣṭi*⁴⁶⁰—the supra-mental vision. This Gnosis is the Vedic Truth, the self-vision and all-vision of Sūrya.

The face of this radiant Truth is covered with a golden lid, at least so it appears to the human mind. Man is a mental being, and his sight is made up of his mental concepts and percepts. The mind sees only the outer form of a thing, not the Dweller in the form.

The concepts of the mind are brilliant enough, but till they are replaced by the self-vision of Sūrya man cannot arrive at the true Truth. That is why the Rishi is calling upon the Sun to remove the lid, golden though it be, and disclose the Law of the Truth.

Man carries in his mind, limited and semi-obscure as it is, the seed of the supreme Truth which inspite of so many obstacles, inspite of all the differentiation and division, is ever leading him slowly along the path to realisation. The Sage wishes to hasten the pace and invokes the intervention of Sūrya.

He meditates on the Sun in his many aspects and prays to him to marshal his rays and to draw together his light. Sūrya is Pūshan, the fosterer who enlarges man’s

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limited being into an Infinite Consciousness. He is the sole Seer who sees oneness in multiplicity and who gives man his own Self-vision, All-vision. He is Yama the ordainer who governs man's actions by the Law of the Truth. He is Prajāpati, the Lord who is the Being behind all becomings and who at the same time far exceeds his own becoming.

The⁴⁶¹ radiant vision opens the seer's eyes. The rays of the Sun distorted, broken, and disordered in the divided mind are cast in the right order and relation and drawn together to disclose the Supreme Truth. The seer sees the Purushottama in all beings and in ecstasy, cries out. "The Purusha there and there. He am I". He has seen the One who is All and who transcends the All.

But in Immortality both consciousness and life are included. Knowledge is incomplete without action—Chit without Tapas, By the door of the Sun. Sūryadvāreṇa⁴⁶², the Sage has reached full consciousness. He now invokes Agni, the Force or Will of the Divine.

("Hindi passage omitted here")

("Hindi passage omitted here")

The Breath of Things is the immortal Life, but of the body ashes are the end. Om! O Will, remember, that which was done remember? O Will, remember, that which was done remember. (17)

O god Agni, knowing all things that are manifested, lead us by the good path to the felicity; remove from us the devious attraction of Sin. To thee completest speech of submission we would dispose. (18)

Man's mind being cramped and narrow, his action is, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "crooked, many-branching, hesitating and fluctuating in its impulsion and direction". But as his mind is not wholly dark, and as there is in him always a seed of truth, he stumbles, gropes and beats about among untruths in search of truth, puts the fragments of his conceptions and perceptions together to form some kind of totality to guide him in his action. As he is constituted, he is unable to walk by himself on the straight path to felicity.

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⁴⁶² In this word not found in Book Antiqua font so we have inserted from Tahoma

When by the door of the Sun the Sage has had a vision of the Truth, he refuses to be tossed about any longer by sin and error⁴⁶³, suffering and falsehood. He calls on the Divine Will for guidance—the Will that knows all. He prays to Agni “Thou knowest all, lead me by the straight path to felicity. Show me the crookedness of the path of sin”.

By the light of Sūrya, he has learnt to discriminate between his life and his body. He affirms boldly that the body is subject to dissolution, ashes are its end, but the breath of Life is immortal. This Life-principle is Vāyu or Mātariswan of the Veda who has already been visualised in verse 4. He it is who calls down the Divine Will from the upper regions into the realm of mind, life and body. The body is but an outer tool. Immortal man must not identify himself with it. Birth and death are powers of the body, not of life. Mātariswan runs through our successive bodily existences like a thread, and maintains our action from life to life. But the presiding deity is not Mātariswan, but Agni—not Life-principle, but Will. This Will is Kratu of the seventeenth verse, the power behind the act. It is the energy of consciousness. Man, owing to his limitations, uses but imperfectly his consciousness. He lives from hour to hour, aided by his imperfect faculty of memory. The Upanishad solemnly invokes the Will to remember the thing done, so as to be conscious of the mystery of becoming, and thus guide what he calls his destiny. Man will then no longer be like a rudderless boat tossed about by currents and winds, but will be able to guide effectively his future course. His mental Will, Kratu, will then become the Will of the Divine, Agni.

For this he has to submit unreservedly to the Divine Will and make a complete surrender to it. This the Sage does by the closing phrase, (“Hindi passage omitted here”)

Knowledge of the Supreme Lord and submission to Him are the two golden keys that open the shining gates of Immortality. The gates are now open. The Seer, released from bondage by the radiant rays of the Sun, guided by the divine Fire, is able to reach the summit of his evolution, and to fulfil the Lord in his now divinised mind, life and body. Realisation is complete. A divine centre has been created.

Such is the Siddhi of the Sage of the Upanishad. Today the cycle is complete, and we know that what the Seer realised will now in a new age be realised by the whole of humanity awakened to the realisation of Supreme Unity.

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— EVOLUTION OF WORDS AND MANTRA —

BY BIRENDRAKISHORE ROY CHOWDHURY

MEN express their thoughts and experiences through speech. So the words and speech of men are usually regarded as an easy means of communication. But what is expressed in speech or writing is only the gross practical part of the word. The form of the word that we see ordinarily is only its most external form. There are hidden in the world, behind this gross external form, many great truths, and they can only be discovered by deep *sādhana*. In all the great spiritual disciplines of the world there is, in some form or other, a hint about the mystery of *Vāk* or *Shabda* (sound). In India the original power of *Shabda* was discovered in Mantravidyā or Science of Mantra. Indian Mantravidyā is like a vast ocean. We shall deal with the subject here briefly and simply and shall also try to understand in what light Sri Aurobindo has seen the Science of Mantra.

In spite of all its efforts, history has not yet been able to ascertain definitely how language appeared in the history of mankind. Scientists are of opinion that when man from the barbarous and animal condition first saw the light of civilisation, the words used by him were very few in number. When man was little more than an animal in human form, he could, like other animals, utter only a very few sounds, and could not speak any other word. Often at that time he made efforts to express himself through gestures. At first the names only of a few things were created, and the use of particular sounds to denote particular objects began. Slowly the number of these sounds increased and language began to be created.

We find a tradition in the Bible and a few other Scriptures that in the beginning mankind had only one language. But Science⁴⁶⁵ does not find any evidence that at the beginning human civilisation originated in one place. Probably fifteen thousand years ago there was the evidence of the existence of man all over the globe. At that time men lived in different parts of the earth and evolved different characteristics. Certain general characteristics of men also appeared at that time. On account of differences in country, climate and surroundings men of white, black, brown and other complexions also appeared at the same time. Either in some one place the original ancestors of all mankind first appeared, and then their increasing progeny spreading over different countries acquired different forms in different climes; or, at the very beginning, different types of men appeared in different parts of the earth; scientists have not yet

* For the first part of the article on this subject see pp. 72-88 of the previous volume.

arrived at any definite conclusion in this respect. If it be a fact that mankind had its origin in one particular place on the earth and one race had first evolved one language, then only the pre-historic existence of a universal language spoken of in the Bible can be accepted. But scientific investigation has not yet found any specific evidence of this.

It is probable that the centres of human habitation were at first only in two or three mainlands; there arose two or three original languages. Two or three main strains of the original human race spread into different countries, and their progeny living in many centres developed many languages. But among all these many languages we can find the stuff of two or three original ones,—each original language has influenced the development of its own branches. Of course, this conclusion of scientific investigators may not be true in all respects, because we are still in the primary stage of the science of language; it has not yet gone beyond its infancy like other branches of physical science.

Investigation into the gradual development of different ancient civilisations reveals also the line which the development of language has followed. Some races like the Chinese did not at all feel the necessity of an alphabet in the use of words and sounds. Most other peoples have made use of the alphabet. In the development of writing the contribution of Sumerian and Egyptian civilisation is not inconsiderable. If we look at the development of the Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Mongolian and various modern languages, beginning from the most ancient languages of the Aryans. Sumerians, Egyptians and other ancient races, we can discover the conditions and the law of the development of language. It does not require much effort to see that word-sounds have not been formed haphazardly by the imagination⁴⁶⁶ of men—there is a natural organic law and system in their development.

Thus Sri Aurobindo wrote in *The Secret of the Vedas*, which appeared serially in the Arya: “My researches first convinced me that words, like plants, like animals are in no sense artificial products, but growths—living growths of sound with certain seed-sounds as their basis.” (Chapter V). In another place he writes: “Whatever may be the deeper nature of speech, in its outward manifestation as human language, it is an organism, a growth, a terrestrial evolution” (*ibid.*). Words are a part of the natural development of human nature. In the use of words we find an indication of the formation of a man’s mind; but man’s mentality also is a part of Nature. As all things in Nature are subject to the laws of uniformity and causation, so man’s mind also is shaped according to the law of causality; the psychology of man does not follow his caprice or any mental rules framed by him; like the bodily formation of man, his mental formation is also determined according to a natural law and develops gradually. It is not true that the mass of words and sounds constituting a language have been invented by the imagination of men or that men have by mutual consultation determined words

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and their significances for the convenience of communication. There is a natural evolution of sounds and words. We find that the voice of a particular species of animal is uniform in all the members of the species—it is the natural utterance of that kind of animal and that depends on the vocal system of that species. There are also sounds naturally uttered by the human throat—with the development of the mentality, these natural sounds also develop and become clearer; with the many-sided development of the mind these sounds develop into words, sentences and language. In this way men brought up in different climates and countries naturally develop different kinds of language. So it is said that the original condition of all languages was natural and spontaneous.

Sri Aurobindo has said: “It (speech) contains indeed a constant psychological element and is therefore more free, flexible, consciously self-adaptive than purely physical organisms.... But law and process exist in mental, no less than in material phenomena in spite of their more volatile and variable appearances. Law and process must have governed the origins and developments of language.” (*Ibid*, Chap. V). It is true that the development of the mind does not follow a fixed and a too rigid law like the body, still there is a law of the subtler and conscious development⁴⁶⁷ of the mind, and that law also is natural. The mental processes of man are also formed out of Nature, and words have naturally come into existence and developed as a medium of the expression of those processes. For example, when the human infant cries as soon as it is born, the *dhvani* (sound) that comes out of its throat is always of the same kind. Moreover, every child calls its mother by the sound “Ma”, it rises spontaneously from its throat. The relation of the child with its mother is naturally expressed by the sound “Ma”. The child recognises its mother first of all; then the more it makes its acquaintance with the world and with other people, the more it tries to express it in various sounds. A little close observation shows that there is a general uniformity in the natural utterances of infants. As infants grow into adults in the course of natural development, so also primitive peoples have turned into cultured humanity following a natural course of development. The evolution of the human languages is only a history of the evolution of the racial mind and its nature. An investigation into this history shows that the mind of man was at first bound to the external senses and sense-experiences. The centre of the sense-experiences of man lies in his brain and the nervous system; so the main functions of the primitive mind were to have external experiences and to respond to them. The original language of man was nothing more than a natural by-product of the actions and reactions of his nervous system. The late Sir John Woodroffe observed in his book, *The Garland of Letters*: “Physiologically each single vibration acting on the ear, nerves and brain centres, produces a single pulse of agitation, a single nerve-shock, just as a single tap on the door produces a single shock and this again a single sound. This single pulse of brain excitement ought to produce a

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single pulse of feeling, a feeling stem or feeling element." ... (Chapter IX). It is obvious that this feeling element of the primitive man is confined within his nervous system. So Sri Aurobindo also has said: "...The factor which presided over the development of language was the association by the nervous-mind of the primitive man of certain general significances.... The process of the association was also in no sense artificial but natural, governed by simple and definite psychological laws."¹

Thus the natural language of man originated from his primitive nature; that was the language of the natural reactions rising⁴⁶⁸ from the external touches of Nature. *Varnamāla* or the letters of the alphabet and what Sri Aurobindo has called the "seed-sounds" or *Vija Shabda* were born in this way. The letters of the alphabet are the original stuff of all the sound-symbols in the Tantric *sāadhanā*; but the importance of the alphabet as the original stuff of language also has been recognised by most peoples. The alphabet arose from the different places and movements of vocal utterance. The guttural, labial, dental and other original sounds associated with particular places formed the alphabet. Sir John Woodroffe observes: "This subject of the *Varnas* occupies an important place in the Tantra-Shastras in which it is sought to give a practical application to the very ancient doctrine concerning *Shabda*. The letters are classified according to their places of pronunciation such as gutturals, labials, dentals and so forth. The lips, mouth and throat form a pipe or musical instrument which being formed in various ways and by the aid of the circumbient air produces the various sounds which are the letters of the Alphabet.... The vowels are continuous sounds formed by varying the size of the mouth cavity." (*The Garland of Letters*, Chapter VI).

When the child calls its parents as "Ma" or "Baba" it pronounces spontaneously the different letters of the alphabet; the primitive men also in their attempt to communicate different kinds of nervous experiences created unknowingly many letters of the alphabet. From these arose the seed-sounds or *Vija Shabdas*. The original seed-roots developed out of those seed-sounds. The meaning of these root-words was not limited to any particular objects, they signified particular movements of Nature, particular qualities or classes. Of course these primary root-words were very few in number, and they gave expression to the primary nervous experiences of men. Sri Aurobindo has dealt with this subject comprehensively in *The Secret of the Vedas*: "Out of these seed-sounds develop a small number of primitive root-words ... they were rather the vocal equivalents of certain general sensations and emotion-values. It was the nerve and not the intellect which created speech... in consequence, the word generally was not fixed to any precise idea. It had a general character or quality

¹ The Secret of the Vedas, Chapter V.

(*guṇa*⁴⁶⁹) which was capable of a great number of applications ... And this *guṇa*⁴⁷⁰ and its result it shared with many kindred sounds.” (Chapter V.)

At the first stage of evolution the mind of man was limited to the physical and vital experiences and needs. All the experiences of the body and the life were centred in the actions of⁴⁷¹ the nervous system. Only when men rose to the second stage of evolution they began to cultivate properly their intellectual faculties. Then men learned to understand every thing by throwing the light of the intellect on his senses, on all his experiences and surroundings, and then the specific form of every object became clear to his mind. It is through the dispensation of Nature that the primitive men, immersed in the sense-life, awoke into mental intelligence and learned to comprehend the laws of the mutual relations of the senses and their objects. He gradually came to understand the class to which any particular object belonged and also the specific characteristics of different classes. It was at that time that the words of mankind increased in number and its language was created. A study of the evolution of the Sanskrit language shows that in primitive times men used root-words similar in quality but having many significances; but as intellectual discrimination developed, the use of words also changed with it and they became fixed, well-defined and clear in significance. Man thus awakened the intellectual mind out of the physical and the vital mind—the primitive language, born out of nervous vibrations was chastened and reformed in the light of intellectual discrimination and thus was created the “Sanskrit” language. The term “Sanskrita” means reformed and chastened—it is a natural “*Samskāra*” born out of intelligence and genius. That is why Sri Aurobindo observed: “The intellectual use of language has developed by a natural law out of the sensational and emotional.” (*The Secret of the Vedas*, Chapter V.) Of course this reformation was at one time carried out in all civilised tongues—Greek, Latin and other ideal languages are instances of this; but the evolution and the gradual reformation of words has nowhere been so clearly evident as in the Indian Aryan Sanskrit language. But taking a broad view, we can see the same law operating in all languages of all civilisations. In the languages which are predominantly intellectual, the thoughts of men express themselves through description, analysis, classification, judgment and such other mental activities. Often thoughts instead of arising simultaneously with the perception of objects arise as after-construction as a memory of the objects; it is then that thought and language are created. In the creation of language men use natural names and sounds as well as artificial and imaginative ones. In the naming of natural things and qualities primitive natural names are found in all languages—all these words are class-names; but when

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men give particular names to the individuals belonging to a⁴⁷² class, these become imaginative and artificial. Thus *Mānusha* or “Man” signifies the human race. It agrees with the primitive word; but such names as Rāma, Jadu, Bepin refer to particular individuals belonging to the human race—these names are artificial and imaginative. As many, such individual names are found in the language which are shaped by the intellect, so new compound words are also continually formed out of particular primitive words—in all languages the creation and assumption of new words is accomplished with the help of the intellect. In this way thoughts are given form with the help of natural and artificial words and names in every language. It is the aim of all human thought to describe things and to determine their qualities and mutual relations—languages are the mediums of this thought. The creations of the thought-world lead to the evolution of language. And it is only when thought develops in the human mind that man rises from the state of involution in nervous physical and vital experiences and grows into thoughtful and cultured beings regulated by the mind and the reason. The mass of words spoken and written by such men are known as language. But this evolution of human words and language has not stopped with thought, it has gone far beyond thought. It is rather surprising that at the very first stage of history men suddenly discovered a higher evolution of words. When on one side uncultured men were trying to give expression to their natural and physical experiences through words, at that very time on another side the ancient Rishis or illumined seers of the world received supernatural divine truths and truth-experiences and gave rhythmic expression to them through divine *Mantras*. These truths are unthinkable, they are far above thought, imagination and mental intelligence. The ancients experienced these truths with the help of supra-intellectual intuition. They gave form to intuition with the help of the Mantra. The Mantras are the language above thought and above mental intelligence.

The ancients said that these Mantras were not composed by any one—they had only been discovered through spiritual experience; they even said that the creation of the world became possible from these impersonal Mantras.

How can the creation of the world proceed from words? To physical science such statements are a riddle. But if we look at the matter without any bias, we can see the underlying truth. Science has shown that the world of sense-experience is born out of ether. Ether is full of the vibrations of an unseen Energy, it⁴⁷³ is this Energy that through different vibrations has resulted in this world. But where there is Energy and the movement of Energy, sound also must be there. A motionless thing is silent, but as soon as there is movement there inevitably comes in the quality of sound. As we cannot

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see the form of this unseen Cosmic Force with our gross eyes, so we cannot hear the sound of the movement of this Energy with our gross ears; but there can be no reasonable doubt that the movement of sound accompanies this movement of energy. There cannot but be sound vibrations in all creation and creative movement in the universe. It is for this reason that the ancient Greeks said that there was a music going on in the movement of the stars and planets – this they called the Music of the Spheres.

Though we cannot hear these *dhvanis* or sounds by our physical ears, they can be heard by the subtle ear in Yogic experience. Science, engaged in the search for all facts and principles of the universe with the help of instruments and logical reasoning, has arrived today at the limit of its investigations; it is realising that perceptual experience cannot give any inmost truth. Thus a time is coming when Science, realising its limitations, will have to approach the Yogis for the direct experience of truth.

Though the Rishis and seers of ancient times made no extensive investigations of the physical world and had no elaborate instruments for that purpose, they perceived many subtle truths through Yogic experience. They had this direct realisation of truth through intuition gained by Yoga. It was as a result of this kind of realisation that they said that the world was created from the Word, from the Mantra. That there can be a sound or *dhvani* of the vibration of the unseen power creating the world, we can easily understand – but what has that got to do with the Mantra? This aspect of the matter requires some consideration.

It is laid down in the Scriptures that Brahmā created the world from the Veda – the ordinary man will understand this to mean that at one time the great-grand father Brahmā recited the Vedic Mantras and immediately the world was created from top to bottom. Such stories may delight children; so Western scholars regard this account as old superstition or fanciful imagination of the ancients to entertain the minds of the illiterate rustic people. But instead of taking this conception only at its face value, its easy outward sense, we should find out the real truth at which it aims. Somebody created the world by repeating⁴⁷⁴ the Vedic Mantras or the Mantras resounding by themselves gave birth to the earth and the heavens – such statements of the matter would indeed appear like Puranic fables. But from the philosophical point of view this conception is not so facile or ridiculous.

Many systems of Indian Philosophy have held the view that the Veda was born at the beginning of creation and that the Veda consists of impersonal Mantras. The production of sound simultaneously with the movement of the creative energy is natural; but this movement is conscious, and the sound produced by this movement is associated with meaning and conception. These impersonal conceptual sounds were

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naturally born simultaneously with the movement of creation; afterwards objects were produced. Veda is conceptual word, and things are the *Artha* (objects) of that word or *Shabda*. It is from this point of view that it is said that the universe originated from the Veda. We shall further understand the real meaning of this statement if we give attention to the word "Veda". "Veda" means knowledge. The knowledge of the world and the transcendent is Veda. In the Veda all knowledge had been given through the natural seed-names of the known objects. Physical science cannot see any knowledge or conscious action behind the whole universe—the scientists think that at first an inconscient force created the material world; afterwards came vague feelings of pleasure and pain in plants, sense-experience in animals and finally mind, intellect, discernment and knowledge in men. In matter, first, the vibration of life appeared in plants and animals; afterwards, mind and mental reasoning appeared in man—this is the account of the evolution of knowledge given by Western Physical Science. But the ancient seers and philosophers have held that consciousness did not appear only in the course of world evolution in men, there is a great conscient state behind the unseen Power that has originated this world. Thus the Samkhya put the *Mahat Tattwa* or the Universal Consciousness at the very beginning of its account of the creation of the world.

If the entire Universal Force be driven by consciousness and if there be a conscient universal Being somewhere, then it must be admitted that the universe has been created by the universal force from the universal consciousness of that Being. The Ancients said that God is that Being. His universal consciousness is the ultimate source of the universal creation and *Vāk*, Mantra or Veda is the form of that consciousness, as *Shabda*, conception⁴⁷⁵, *Artha*, all these principles are inherent in His consciousness.

In describing how the Father of this universe created the universe, not only Indians but prophets, seers and philosophers of other countries also have in many cases said that God first expresses His conception of the universe in *Shabda* or Word. The world has been created simultaneously with the creation of the Word. The Hindus call this conceptual Word, *Vāk* or Veda; other races have also spoken of the Word in other languages. Sir John Woodroffe made a comparative study of this subject from which we briefly quote the following:

"This notion of the Word is very ancient. God speaks the Word and the things appear. Thus the Hebrew word for light is "Aur". Genesis says: 'God said, Let there be (Aur) light, and there was light (Aur)'. The Divine Word is conceived of in the Hebrew Scriptures as having creative power. A further stage of thought presents to us the concept of an aspect of the Supreme Person who creates. Thus we have the Supreme and the Logos, Brahman and Shabdabrahman. In Greek, Logos means

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thought and the word which denotes the object of thought. To Heraclitus, Logos was the principle underlying the universe ... According to Plato, the Logoi were supersensual primal images or patterns (*jāti*) of visible things... According to Philo Ideas moulded matters. God first produced the intelligible world of Ideas which are types of the physical world. Though in itself nothing but Logos, the latter is the author of the ideal world. The Author of the Fourth Gospel took up these ideas but gave them expression in such a way as to serve Christian theological needs... The Fourth Gospel opens grandly – ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.’ – These are the very words of Veda: *Prajāpatir vai idamāsīt*. In the beginning was Brahman – *Tasya vāg dvitīyā āsīt*, with whom was Vak or the Word.” (*The Garland of Letters*, Chapter I.)

We find in the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad:
sa tayā vācā tena ātmanā idam sarvam **asṛjata**⁴⁷⁶.

God created all this universe by that Vāk and by that Self. The Taittiriya Brahmana says: Immutable Vāk, the first-born of the Truth, is the nave of Immortality. (T.B. 2. 8. 8. 5.) In the Shatapatha Brahmana Vāk has been called the eternal and universal worker and the source of all creatures – *vāg vai ajo vaco*⁴⁷⁷ *prajā visvakarmā*. It is stated in the Shaiva Agama that Pashupati Mahādeva created the universe by the Vākropini Shakti (Muir’s Original Sanskrit Texts, Verse 39.)

This Vāk at the source of God’s conceptive creation – this is the Veda, the Shabda-Brahman. But the Vedic mantras we utter by the mouth – did God create the universe uttering these very mantras exactly as they are? Though many ignorant Pandits of this country hold this view, the matter is not so unscientific and crude. Moreover, people of other countries may legitimately regard it as unbelievable that God created this world uttering the Vedic mantras of the Aryan land. So the surface meaning of the saying that the world was created from the Veda cannot be accepted. We have to find out its inner philosophical truth. That is why the Tantric Scriptures elucidating the mystery of the Mantra, have clearly explained in all detail the origin of Shabda-Brahman or Vāk. The Tantra says that the word we utter by the mouth is called the *Vaikhari*. That word is the external utterance of the *Shabda* which is associated with our thought or imagination. All our mental states are given outer expression by *Vaikhari Shabda* (spoken speech); but the Shabda with the help of which the mind carries on its thoughts, that mentally uttered Shabda is called Madhyamā. Common people understand only these two manifestations of Madhyamā and Vaikhari sounds. But besides being the medium of practical thoughts, Madhyamā sounds have also inward movements.

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The ordinary thoughts of men are grouped around ordinary external objects, and mental movements are carried on with the help of sounds connected with external objects. But when men give up all thoughts of external objects and turn inward, then internal subtle *tattwas* are revealed to their vision. Behind the gross world made up of the gross earth, air, water, fire and ether, there exist subtle principles which are seen by Yogis. Besides the words we use in connection with the gross world, there are many sounds arising from the experiences of the subtle world; they are not exactly the words of practical use. That is why when a man tries to utter by the mouth the sounds heard in subtle experience during deep meditation, these cannot be exactly like those subtle sounds, they are bound to be like the gross speech of his practical use. So when a person expresses any subtle *tattwa* by the mouth in some *shabda* or *mantra*, it must be understood that that *shabda* or *mantra* is only somewhat similar to the *shabda* that was heard internally. The Tantra has many *Vija-mantras*, they are all gross sounds somewhat similar to sounds⁴⁷⁸ heard in the subtle world. Gross and subtle sounds can never be altogether the same. The same subtle sounds can be expressed in two ways, in two different kinds of words by men belonging to two different countries according to the difference in their *samskāra* or tradition. That is why different kinds of mantras are in vogue in different countries. But that does not matter; it is the clearness of the experience that is to be appreciated. All these subtle sounds also are included in the *Madhyamā* sounds spoken of by the Tantra; when the experience of these sounds becomes concentrated and continuous, the *sādhaka* can hear the *Anāhata Dhvani* in his inmost heart. It is from *Anāhata Shabda* that all other subtle sounds have been created. Again, above the subtle world there is the *kāraṇa jagat*, the causal world, out of which all the subtle and gross things in existence, immovable and movable, have been created. The *sādhaka* entering into the causal world can see clearly the process of the origination of the world. That is a *jnānamaya jagat*, a world of Knowledge. That world has its own words of Knowledge. With the advent of knowledge, the sounds revealing that knowledge are also heard. These sounds are called *Pashyanti Shabda* by the Tantra. *Pashyanti Shabda* is above *Madhyamā Shabda*. The Vedas, the store of knowledge, suggest the *Pashyanti Shabda*. About the Tantric conception of the development of *Pashyanti*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikhari* sounds Sri Aurobindo thus writes in *Future Poetry*: "It is this force, this *Shakti*, to which the old Vedic thinkers gave the name of *Vāk*, the goddess of creative speech, and the Tantric psychists supposed that this power acts in us through different subtle nervous centres on higher and higher levels of its force, and that thus the word has a gradation of its expressive powers of Truth and Vision. One may accept as a clue of great utility this idea of different degrees of the force of speech, each separately characteristic and distinguishable, and recognise one of the grades of the Tantric classification, *Pashyanti*, the seeing word." (*The Future Poetry*, Chap. "The Word and the Spirit").

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The Tantras teach the method of uplifting *Prakṛtī*⁴⁷⁹ or Nature. *Kundalini Shakti* is *Prakṛtī*⁴⁸⁰. The *kundalini* has to be raised from the bottom to the top through the different nervous centres in the human body; for this purpose Tantric sādhas often do mantra *japa* (repetition) and mantra *dhyāna* (meditation). As a result of meditation on different nervous centres, *kundalini* residing in different centres, the *japa* of the *mantra* also becomes different. The gross uttered *mantra* is called⁴⁸¹ *vaikhari*; the subtle *mantra* is called *madhyamā*; and above that the luminous *mantra* as *vāk*, is called *pashyanti*. It goes without saying that the real sound-form of the subtle *mantra* and the *pashyanti vāk* can never be uttered by us by the mouth; but the *mantra* uttered by the mouth can be shaped in the mould of subtle experience and truth-experience. As some natural words are formed by the vibrations of our external sense experience so also as a natural reaction of inner experience some *vaikhari mantras* of a somewhat similar kind are created in different languages in different countries; and these are called *mantras*. The *mantras* of the Veda and the Tantra were all created in this way. The *vāk* or *mantra* experienced in higher planes is not a creation of the mind of man; that is a natural manifestation of truth; that is why it is called impersonal; and when a mantra corresponding to that experience is created by the mind or mouth of man, that is accepted as impersonal *mantra* as it depends on impersonal experience even though it has been mixed up with the personal effort of man. Here the word impersonal is used in a relative sense. It is thus that we find the philosophical basis of *Apaurashayavād*. Sri Aurobindo has said: "The Rishi was not the individual composer of the hymn but the seer of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge. The language of Veda itself is *sruti*—a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge." (The *Secret of the Vedas*, Chapter II).

When impersonal knowledge of truth becomes revealed to direct divine vision, when divine sounds expressing that knowledge are heard (*sruta*), these sounds constitute what is called the *Sruti*. So by *pashyanti vāk* we understand divine *sruti*. But in the Vedic age the *srutis* were addressed to the gods worshipped in sacrificial ceremonies. As these divine *srutis* were expressed in *Vaikhari* speech so spiritual truths also were expressed in the terms of sacrifice that were in vogue at that time, as in that age sacrifice occupied a pre-eminent place in the practical religion of man. The entire Vedic civilisation centred round the *yajna* or the sacrifice. Thus the spiritual truths of the *sruti* were expressed in the terms of the Vedic gods and the Vedic rites. We have already said that the language of man at that time had a many-sided significance. Words and language were then created not to denote particular objects or particular

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principles, but sameness or similarity in quality. It is this creation that was⁴⁸² called the natural creation of words. Things or principles which possess the common quality inherent in particular activities were denoted by one word. For instance, the word “*Agni*” signifies external fire as well as the fire of internal *tapasyā*. The term *Agni* was the natural word for all things which gave to men the feeling of heat. We have also said that the language of that time was based not so much on thought as on experience; so all objects or principles which gave the experience of a particular quality were known by the same word. As a result of this, there was in the Vedic language on one side a description of the natural gods connected with sacrifice, on the other hand there was another significance containing the secret of the Veda—an exposition of the spiritual principles which have the same attributes as those of the natural gods. So Sri Aurobindo says: “The Vedic hymns were concerned and constituted on these principles. Their formulas of ceremonies are, overtly, the details of an outward ritual devised for the Pantheistic Nature-worship which was the common religion, covertly, the sacred words, the effective symbols of a spiritual experience and knowledge.... In sober truth, the Vedanta, Purana, Tantra, the philosophical schools and the great Indian religions do go back in their source to Vedic origin.” (*The Secret of the Vedas*, Chapter I). The same word or name then signified a natural god and a spiritual principle; again the performance of sacrificial ceremonies and the search for spiritual truths were at that time carried on simultaneously. There was a natural harmony between Vedic sacrifice and Vedic Yoga.

When Tantric *sādhana* was shaped by Tantric scriptures in Sanskrit, Tantric *Vija mantras* also were used at that time. In that age the language of men was not merely based on experience, it had become intellectual; that was contemporaneous with the age of philosophy. The Science of Grammar also had reached a high level at that time. That is why the *mantras* of the Tantra were formed on the basis of language as determined by Grammar. The Tantric *sādhaka* learnt by experience that the sounds that are heard when one meditates on the essential condition of all worldly and subtle *tattwas* have a similarity with the letters of the alphabet. So the Tantric *sādhakas* began to express all worldly and transcendent principles and truths with the help of the letters of the alphabet. These were called by them the *Vija mantras*. They advanced in *sādhana* as well as in spiritual knowledge with the help of these *mantras* which are⁴⁸³ as living and full of creative power as the Vedic mantras. Such alphabetical seed-symbols (*Vija-mantras*) were in vogue also among other races.

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The origin of the Tantric as well as the Vedic *mantra*, however, is to be found in one and the same *mantra*. Both these systems accepted the *Om* as the source and beginning of all *mantras*. This *Om* is the centre of all *Pashyanti Shabd*s. This is the *Kāraṇa Shabda* or the causal sound. It is called the cause of all as it comes first of all. The state from which the gross and the subtle worlds have arisen is the causal state, and that is a state full of consciousness and knowledge. The power of this knowledge is the fundamental source of the universal creation. As this power is full of knowledge, it is the *Pashyanti Shakti*, and the vibrational sound of this Shakti is the “*Om*”. However the *Om* that we utter by the mouth or think with the mind is not the real sound of *Om*. The real *Om* is the *dhvani* or sound belonging properly to the causal world; that cannot be heard unless one reaches that region, and that cannot be uttered by the mouth. That can be heard by the divine ear and its light can be seen by the divine vision.

But the *pashyanti* is not the ultimate; the Tantra speaks of an utterly supreme state of *shabda* which is the first movement of Brahman—Tantra calls that the *parā*. *Parā vāk* is at the root of all creation; wherever it is said that God created by the *vāk*, it is to be understood as the *parā vāk*. The Tantra, the Upanishad, the Veda, the Bible and all other *Srutis* have eulogised this *vāk* as the direct manifestation of God. *Parā vāk* is the original source of all *Srutis*. If we call the *pashyanti shabda* the *jnānamaya* or seeing word, of the causal world, then *parā vāk* has to be called the great cause or the *vijnāna*. It is not difficult to understand that there is some sound in every movement; soundless movement or vibration is an impossibility. So when at the time of the direct manifestation of God there is a first movement of his creative power, at that very time a natural sound of *vijnāna* or *vijnānamayi shakti* arises, and that is the *Parā vāk*. *Parā vāk* is the vibration sound of *parā prakṛtī*⁴⁸⁴ or *Ishvara-Shakti*. This *parā vāk* or the supreme *shabda* has been called the *Mahānāda* in the Tantra. In Tantric terminology *shaktipāta* or causal stress also refers to this. *Mahānāda* as the first movement of Shakti is the first manifestation of God and from that is born *Parābindu*. *Parābindu* is a concentrated and more developed state of *Mahānāda*; and it is from *Parābindu* that⁴⁸⁵ the *Om* is born, so says the Tantra. These things have been clearly explained in the *Sharada-Tilak Tantra*:

(“Hindi passage omitted here”)

The *Vija mantra Om* is the sound symbol of the universal creation. In the course of analysing this, the Tantra has revealed the mystery of creation. Sachchidānanda Parameshvara first manifests himself as *Parānāda* through his *Shakti*. It is *Parānāda* which being concentrated turns into *Parābindu*. *Parābindu* becomes threefold and gives rise to *Bindunāda* and *Vijātmaka Pranava* or the *OM*: all *Srutis* follow the *Om*. Here *Parānāda* and *Parābindu* really signify *Parā Vāk*. Again, the *Om* rising out of

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Parābindu manifests the *Pashyanti Vāk*. It goes without saying that all this is an attempt to describe through sound-symbols the process of the gradual manifestation of a Truth which is beyond mind and speech. So we have to look at the truth underlying the symbols. It is not sufficient to look at the gross *mantra*. The Veda also says that the word has four status, three of which are hidden behind, only the fourth one is spoken by man (Rig Veda, I. 164). *Parā vāk* is beyond the mind and the intelligence; it is unthinkable, supramental; *Pashyanti* is above the mind and the intelligence, so we can call it the Overmind. Sri Aurobindo has described supramental knowledge as the direct manifestation of Truth and *Ishvara Shakti*; the Overmental is the second stage of the creative drive of Shakti after this first moving forth; it is out of this stage that the knower, the knowledge and the known and all other things in the world have been created. The working of knowledge is associated with sound; so all sound symbols and sound concepts rise from the Overmind, then they are manifested in the language formed by the mind and the intellect, and lastly in uttered speech.

All unmanifest, unthinkable, spiritual, illumined *shabdās* are changed in the mental mould when they are expressed in uttered speech. Those who can bring the unmanifest divine word⁴⁸⁶ into uttered speech are the Rishis. Seated in the higher consciousness, they see divine truths through Revelation; they hear the *dhvani* of divine truths through inspiration, and they express these as *mantras* through the uttered speech of the illumined mind and intelligence. About this mantra Sri Aurobindo says: "There is also a speech, a supramental word, in which the higher knowledge, vision or thought can clothe itself within us for expression." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, Chapter LXX).

Though all *mantras* of all Rishis may not be expressive of the highest truth, in the *mantras* of many Rishis in the world there are expressions of intuitions and intuitive experiences which are below the Supermind and the Overmind. So Sri Aurobindo writes in Future Poetry: "The inspired word comes, as said of the old Vedic seers, from the home of truth, *sadanātr̥tasya*⁴⁸⁷. The word comes secretly from above the mind but it is plunged first into our intuitive depths and emerges imperfectly to be shaped by the poetic feeling and intelligence.... the more we can bring in of its direct power of vision the more intuitive and illumined becomes the word of our utterance." (*The Future Poetry*, chap. "The Word and the Spirit"). The sound form of the higher truth has to be received without allowing it to be deformed or distorted by the mental intellect or lower experiences, the mind and the vital have to be opened as pure and transparent channels for the expression of the truth; only then we can find a pure speech-form of the truth even in the gross word. The more a man approaches the Intuition, the more illumined vision and poetic quality appear in his speech and writing; for, in the

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language of the Vedas, the seer of the mantra, the Rishi, is the poet. No doubt the age of the practical use of the Sanskrit language is past; but today the truth has to be expressed in the various current languages. The Hindus in ancient times did not set any limits to seerhood. They have set forth even the mantras of the Koran in the Allah Upanishad. Rishis were born in all countries. *Mantras* also have been uttered in all languages. Today also the time has come for invoking the mantrashakti in the various current languages of the world. The modern age is rationalistic, so the language of this age has the definitiveness and clearness characteristic of intellectual discernment and reasoning. So the modern languages are not suitable for the sound-symbols like the Vedas or for the *Vija* mantras like the Tantra; still mantras can be expressed in intellectual languages as we find in the Upanishads, the Gita and the Chandi. The intellectual language of man such as English can⁴⁸⁸ be reformed, improved upon and turned into a language shaped in the light of the truth. Sri Aurobindo himself is the greatest example of this. All his compositions have the character of the mantra, they are luminous and throb with *mantrashakti*. All hearers and readers of his mantras cannot but render the highest homage of their heart to his Ishvari Gita, *The Mother*, which is the highest manifestation of the mantra. The last chapter of *The Mother* is *the* mantra of mantras, the mystery of mysteries,—for the seeker of knowledge it is the divine *Gāyatri* of *Parā Vidyā*, for the worker it is the resplendent stair-case of truth, for the devotee it is the immortal message of divine love.

Sri⁴⁸⁹ Aurobindo the Modern Messiah

BY DR SUSHIL CHANDRA MITTER, M.A., D.Litt.

Our age undoubtedly needs an Avatār, for it markedly exhibits the characteristics, the decline of *dharma* and the rise of *adharma*, given by the Gita of an age when the Divine finds it necessary to incarnate Himself. How far the rationalist would believe in the fact of such an incarnation in a particular age when the given characteristics are prominent enough, and therefore the need for the incarnation not questioned, is a matter for controversy, which we shall avoid; but the Light towards which the afflicted humanity must turn for guidance and solace is and must be self-revealing at source and is destined eventually to overcome the scepticism that may obstruct its self-propagation. While that seems yet to be a question of some time, it may nevertheless be pointed out in the meantime that it is precisely such a role that Sri Aurobindo's writings, and more specially his intensive *sādhana*, are to play in the drama of self-destruction that is unfolding before the humanity of to-day, and of reconstruction that is to unfold before the humanity of to-morrow.

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What is most significant in this connection is that Sri Aurobindo is himself above the struggle in which the world is involved to-day. In serene detachment he is witnessing all the grim tragedies that are being enacted; in infinite compassion he is emitting rays of light on the enveloping gloom; with an unerring vision of the Truth he is arraying the forces of Knowledge against the forces of Ignorance. This is the crying need of the hour; and our salutations to him who fulfils this need.

One of man's outstanding achievements in the development of his intellectual life has perhaps been to have hit upon one master idea, the idea of Evolution which has given him a clue to the Truth that is manifesting in him. Although incorporated in the body of human thought centuries ago, this idea has been employed with some degree of thoroughness only recently when all forms of life and existence so far manifested on earth have been comprehended in a continuous unity of development. Of this idea, Sri Aurobindo has brought out the implications in a manner that is at once a marvel and a solace; for here lies dormant⁴⁹⁰ the brightest hope for humanity, not merely the possibility but the inevitability of its salvation. In the continuous process of development of the different forms of existence, Nature has. it has been shown to us, successively and progressively overcome in the higher forms the limitations to which the lower forms had been subject. And so in the onward march of evolution, the limitations to which human life and consciousness are now subject are to be progressively and ultimately overcome. A divine life is promised to man here on earth, not in a world hereafter. The kingdom of Heaven on earth of which Christ spoke two milleniums ago is now held out not merely as the future hope but as the inevitable destiny of mankind. Sri Aurobindo has thus heralded the dawn of a new era of illumination that is to come upon humanity.

Nevertheless, torn as we are for the present by communal, national and international feuds, we may and do naturally expect of the modern Messiah to give us such light as would show us the way out of the hopeless mess that we have made of our life. A precise principle, a definite line of action to tide over the present crisis is what is immediately demanded. This is not the time, many of us may and do think, to indulge in metaphysical diatribes on the materialistic outlook on life and its excessive pre-occupation with things temporal and impermanent. We have now to reckon with forces that threaten to destroy our very existence on earth. Not to the philosopher, nor to the prophet, but to the general who can lead a victorious army across the battlefield must we now turn as our possible Saviour.

There is an element of truth in this line of thought, and we may continue to think like this for some time in future; but such truth as is herein contained belongs to a lower level of consciousness out of which humanity is now struggling to rise into a higher

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level where it would no longer have any application. It is time that we ponder deeply and more deeply and yet more deeply on an old problem that has acquired such an immense complexity as to present entirely new features. Our battlefields have now extended so immeasurably beyond their original proportions that the general to lead a victorious army across them has made himself scarce. Everywhere, in every column from the first to the fourth, there is lurking the fifth. Over against the problem of the war-weary war-lord: how to win and what peace terms to dictate to the vanquished, has been posed the problem of the war-weary pacifist: how to yield and what peace terms⁴⁹¹ to dictate to the victor! In fact, while tanks devastate and bombs rain death and destruction, between victory and defeat the line of demarcation seems to be fast fading. If we are really to come to an end of our struggle, we have to revise fundamentally many of our old notions, discard old values and rise to an entirely higher level of consciousness.

Not to the general, therefore, who can only achieve dubious and short-lived victories, but to the poet, the philosopher, the prophet who can educate us to the new values that are emerging out of the present world-wide conflict, must we turn for guidance and sustenance. We need the imagination of the poet and the artist to weave a cosmos out of the chaos of materials that are being heaped upon us by the increasing contact between nations. We need the speculative insight of the philosopher to formulate ideals to press upon facts, to dynamise the truths yielded by Nature to the questionings of Science. And last but not the least, we need the prophet, not the foresight of the statesman and the diplomat who oftner than not miscalculates, the truth being to him only a secondary consideration, but the sweeping and unerring vision of the prophet to interpret to us the new tendencies that may be manifesting and to measure, direct and control the new forces that may be operating. And above all, in the midst of all the confusion created by the deafening clang and clatter of clashing arms, while we need, by all means, to resist aggression by armed force, we need even more to prevent it by spreading the light and the wisdom of the Yogin, by the gradual working of supramental gnosis descending upon our earth-consciousness. To whom, therefore, at this hour of crisis, can we turn but to the Saint of Pondicherry who combines all these roles in a marvellous synthesis?

Ever since he went into voluntary retirement, his one endeavour has been that mankind should awake to the latent possibilities in him and steadily develop forces to realise them. The Yogin of all yogins, his one aim has been not merely *his own* individual perfection and liberation, to that he certainly attaches great value as the necessary first step to the attainment of his nobler divine purpose, – but also the lifting up of the *entire* human race to the higher level of life and consciousness which is open to it. To this end has been directed his entire *sādhana*, his *karma* and his *jnanam*, his

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will-force and his knowledge-force in a single-pointed integrality. An idealist, every inch of his being, he is yet not a visionary idealist, but the keenest and the most acute observer of men and things. A dreamer, and a colossal⁴⁹² dreamer at that, he dreams and visualises with a clarity and a precision that are only his, and are yet to dawn upon others of the human race. So it is that he is imperceptibly but steadily marshalling the forces which are to bring down and establish on earth the harmony needed for the adjustment of the vast changes wrought by science in man's outer life to the life of his inner being. Indeed we may say with confidence and certitude that there has been no field of human endeavour but has been illuminated by his revealing analysis. If during this hour of peril and crisis, he continues to give us metaphysical dissertations, it is because he is the modern representative of that genius of India to whose perspective of eternity metaphysics could never be a merely intellectual pastime but always and inevitably an intensely practical necessity. With his thorough assimilation of the European culture which provided him the basis of his early education, he is the chosen instrument of God in this age to reveal to man His secret intention behind such a great impact as that between the continents of Europe and Asia. To the West which has today seized the material power for good or for evil, he is not merely interpreting the wisdom of the East, but presenting it in a new, living and dynamic form charged with all the forces of a great creation, greater than any that has so far been attempted. Through him to-day, India offers to the world a richer and a deeper synthesis of the material and the spiritual problems than has ever before been presented in history.

It is indeed idle and irrational to expect in any particular age that one who is believed to be an incarnation of the Godhead should prove that fact by miraculous feats. Incarnations have appeared on earth from age to age, but not until their missions have been fulfilled has the fact of their incarnation been clear to the minds of any but the few contemplative men. The Messiah will not, in a moment by a fiat of his will, destroy the evil forces of Darkness and Ignorance and establish forthwith the reign of Light and Truth on earth. That has never happened in history, just because the Divine Will cannot submit to and work under the direction of the human will, however noble, magnanimous and philanthropic. Whatever is happening in the world, it must be noted, is and has been willed by God, is part of Nature's evolutionary programme in a scheme definitely decreed, though with infinite freedom and possibilities of variation.

The present crisis has no doubt been precipitated by the failure⁴⁹³ of man to envisage and define clearly an ideal form of unity for the expression of the collective life

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of diverse and heterogenous groups of men who had developed in their own way their own culture and civilisation and have now come closer in a world rendered more compact by modern Science. Such an ideal has indeed, emerged vaguely into consciousness as a result of the pressure of circumstances, but it is high time that a sincere and strenuous, even if fruitless, effort be made to achieve the extremely difficult final harmony between the individual at one end and the highest aggregate, the totality of mankind at the other. Such a final harmony can only be achieved through a series of intermediate adjustments between the individual and a number of lesser aggregates which intervene as necessary stages of a progressive human culture. In his book "The Ideal of Human Unity", Sri Aurobindo takes great pains to examine the progress so far made, and indicate lines of possible further advance. Long experiments with mechanical administrative devices, he tells us, have so far resulted in the evolution of the Nation-unit as humanity's halting place in its progressive approach towards universality through larger and larger aggregates. A supra-national unit evolving out of the impact between European and Asiatic cultures might possibly have been the next step in this progressive aggregation, as demonstrated by the creation of new habits of mental attitude and common life, the practical possibility of unifying the whole human race in a single family; but such a possibility has now been definitely excluded by the folly of statesmen, the formidable passion of the masses and the obstinate self-interest of established egoisms. New attempts at unification of large groups of men by political and administrative means after the manner of ancient Rome *cannot* in the modern conditions succeed. Their only possible result has been what we are witnessing to-day, the world-wide conflagration.

Not a world-state, therefore, but a free world-union founded on the principle of freedom and variation, is to be the ultimate basis of the final harmony to evolve between the individual and the collective life of humanity. How soon such a world-union would emerge depends upon various factors, the most important being the radical transformation of the Nation-Idea, engendered by a total spiritual transformation of the individual, such as would enable him both as an individual and as a member of a spiritualised community to live in the Spirit rather than in his individual or group-egoism, yet losing none of his individual or group⁴⁹⁴-power to express in his own way, the divinity in him. Unfortunately, in the present state of man's mental and spiritual development, while he yet lives in the Ignorance, he lacks that unifying and harmonising knowledge which alone can reconcile the conflicting half-truths represented by individualism and communism. "That knowledge", Sri Aurobindo tells us, "belongs to a deeper principle of our being to which oneness and integrality are native. It is only by finding that in ourselves that we can solve the problem of our existence and with it the problem of the true way of individual and communal living." (The Life Divine, Vol. II, p. 1152).

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In his numerous works, Sri Aurobindo throws light from diverse angles, such as may open the vision of persons belonging to various stadia of culture and development, on the path long and arduous to the finding of this deeper principle of our being which alone has this saving knowledge. Can we not, therefore, demand with faith and confidence that while wars are being fought and empires are tumbling, while statesmanship and military strategy are running headlong into bankruptcy, it is only meet and proper that we turn for light and guidance to this conscious embodiment of the Divine "Seer-Will" who reveals to humanity the significance behind its half-blind endeavours? As Sri Aurobindo himself puts it, "The Messiah or *Avatār* is nothing but this, the divine Seer-Will descending upon the human consciousness to reveal to it the divine meaning behind our half-blind action and to give along with the vision the exalted will that is faithful and performs and the ideal force that executes according to the vision". (Ideal and Progress, pp. 14-15).

With my salutation to this divine Seer-Will on the occasion of his seventy-first birthday, my one prayer to God is that humanity may hearken to His voice now articulate in His messenger while there is yet time.

Parā⁴⁹⁵ Prakṛtir Jivabhūtā

(A criticism examined*)

BY T.V. KAPALI SASTRI

Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita contain an early adumbration of the philosophy which is so magnificently expounded in The Life Divine. But the Essays were not written in the traditional spirit of orthodox exponents of systems, to win support for their teachings by proving their conformity to the accepted authorities. He saw that his own realisations bore testimony to the truths embodied in the teachings of the Gita and expounded it in the light of his wisdom for the benefit of those who are prepared to go from the letter of the scripture to the spirit beyond it. His unique contribution to the understanding of the Gita lies in his interpretation of the Purushottama doctrine – the three Purushas and the two Prakṛtis. A pregnant phrase in the Gita is "*parā Prakṛtir jivabhūtā*" which Sri Aurobindo explains as meaning "the Parā Prakṛti has become the Jīva". Objection is taken to this interpretation and it has been argued with a certain amount of plausibility that the compound *jivabhūtā* according to the canons of Grammar cannot mean "become the Jīva", and to express this latter

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* *Vide* Modern Review, August 1942, page 177.

meaning we need the compound *jīvībhūtā* and that is why Achārya Shankara has rightly taken it to mean “Jīva Itself”. To persons not conversant with Sanskrit grammar, this argument presented with a show of learning may become a stumbling-block to the acceptance of Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation, but a careful study of the relevant rules of Grammar will show convincingly that not only does Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation do no violence to the language, but that in the context it is the right interpretation, the only interpretation possible. We are not concerned here to examine the general philosophic position of Shankara or to expound that of Sri Aurobindo, nor even to show that the latter conforms to the spirit of the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita. We confine ourselves to this one point in Grammar and show that far from twisting⁴⁹⁶ the text to fit it to his own system, Sri Aurobindo explains the phrase naturally and in strict accordance with the precepts of grammar.

It has been urged that *jīvabhūtā* means *jīva* itself (the same as *jīva*) and that it can never mean what has become the *jīva*, and that for the latter sense the expression must be *jīvībhūtā*. We shall presently see that the latter compound should not be used in all cases of “becoming” and it can be used only under certain conditions, and where such conditions are not present we have to use the first compound to convey the sense of “becoming” and that Āchārya Shankara himself and others following him have done so.

Let us then study the import of the *taddhita* affix *cvī*, by which compounds like *jīvībhūtā* are formed, and understand where it could be used and where it should not, so that we can show that *bhū* in the sense of “become” can be and is used even when it is not preceded by *cvī*. The Sutra is “*kr̥-bhū’ astiyoge sampadya-kartari cvīḥ*”. “*Abhūta-tad-bhāve*” is the Vārtika on this Sutra of Pāṇini, V. 4. 50. The Vārtika is very important, so important that the Kāśikā reads it in the Sutra itself. “When the word expresses the new state attained by the agent and the verbs *kr̥*, *bhū*, and *as* are joined to it, the affix *cvī* comes after that word”. The case of a thing arriving at a state of being what it was not is called “*abhūta-tad-bhāva*”. That is to say, when something has become that which it was not previously, this affix *cvī* is added to the stem. Let us pause here and note the implication of the Vārtika. The *cvī* affix is added only when the agent completely changes and arrives at the modified state, “*yatra prakṛti-svarūpam eva vikāra-rūpatām āpadyamānam vivakṣyate*”. Thus when we say “*paṭaḥ śuklī-bhavati*” the cloth has become white, we mean that the whole cloth has become white. If we mean a partial whitening, we have to say so expressly ‘*ekadeśena*’. Pāṇini, V. 4. 52 gives optionally the affix *sāti* as a substitute for *cvī* to convey the sense of total change. *Cvī* by itself is used

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to convey the sense of total change. This will be obvious from Bhaṭṭojī's vṛtti on Pāṇini sutras, V. 4–50, 52, 53 in his Kaumudi.

Therefore, wherever the affix *cvi* does not apply, we use simply *bhūta* and form the compound “*sup supā*” (noun joined to a noun) in the sense of “become”, for the root *bhū* means “to be” as well as “to become” as we shall see presently. Here the Gita rightly avoids the *cvi* as it does not mean that the Supreme Nature in its totality has become the *jīva*. Sri Aurobindo has⁴⁹⁷ made it abundantly clear in the Essays that this Supreme Nature is not identical with the *jīva* in the sense “that there is nothing else or that it is only nature of becoming and not at all of being; that could not be the supreme Nature of the Spirit... Even in time it is something more”.

Now that we have shown why *bhūta* without a *cvi* is used in the sense of becoming, we shall proceed to point out that Āchārya Shankara and others following him have interpreted the compounds ending in *bhūta* as in Brahmabhūta, Jīvabhūta in the sense of becoming or attaining the state of Brahman, assuming the form of Jīva, as the case may be. Shankarananda is considered to be the most famous among the Advaitic commentators on the Gita. He says—*Jīvabhūtaḥ* “*nāma-rūpavyākaraṇāya kṣetrajñatām gataḥ pramāta bhūtvā tiṣṭhati*” (the eternal portion, *sanātana amśa* having attained or assumed the condition of *kṣetrajña*, the Knower of the field, for the purpose of manifesting or developing Name and Form, has become the cogniser). Note that *gataḥ* and *bhūtvā* connote respectively the senses of attaining a state and becoming. This Advaitin is no mean authority. Is he wrong in having rendered in this way *mamaiva amśaḥ sanātano jīvabhūtaḥ*? In unmistakable terms he has taken the compound to mean that the eternal portion of the Supreme has attained the state of *kṣetrajña* and has become the Cogniser (of course phenomenally, to meet the requirements of the doctrine of Māyā). Again, Shankara himself in his commentary on this verse is confronted with the question of the Partless *niramśa* having a part *amśa*. He explains *amśa jīvabhūta* (portion as *jīva*) to mean that the *jīva* is formed (apparently or illusorily) as a portion of Myself! (*sa ca jīvo mad-amśatvena kalpitaḥ*). These two instances are enough to show how *jīvabhūta* is construed by Shankara and another of the same school. Shankara himself earlier in the commentary rightly takes *amśa* as the *uddeśya* and *jīva* as the *vidheya*; that means that *amśa* or portion is the subject and *jīvatva* or the state of *jīva* is predicated of it. He could have straightly said *amśaḥ jīvatvena kalpitaḥ*. For the purpose of his philosophy he makes the *jīva* appear as formed into the *amśa* of the Supreme. Be it as it may; what matters is that the act of

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Parā Prakṛtir Jīvabhūta

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forming or attaining or becoming is implicit in these renderings of jīvabhūta and Shankarananda quoted above makes it quite explicit.

Let us take another example of a compound ending in *bhūta* and show from Shankara's commentary on the Gita that becoming⁴⁹⁸ or attaining is implicit in the sense of the compound. "*brahma-bhūtaḥ*" Ch. XVIII. 54. Shankara says "*brahma prāptaḥ*"; that is—one who has attained the Brahman. He does not say that it is the same as Brahman or Brahman itself, as the critic holds. According to the critic, the compound here must be rendered as 'the same as Brahman', 'Brahman Itself', but Shankara holds differently. Why does he use the verb *pra-āp* in explaining *brahma-bhūta* as *brahma prāptaḥ*? Here it is necessary to consider the Sanskrit verbs that are commonly used to denote 'becoming'. Pāṇini uses the verb *sam-pad* as in *sampadya-kartari* V. 4. 50, *abhividhau sampadā* V. 4. 53. The act of attaining the state of something or somebody is the meaning of the verb; and because this *sampatti* is the same as *prāpti* (attainment), Shankara has rendered *brahma-bhūtaḥ* into *brahma prāptaḥ* (one who has attained the state of Brahman). Here he has rightly taken the verb *bhū* to mean 'to become', *sam pad*; only he has used the transitive verb *pra-āp*.

Bhū is often used in the sense of becoming; forms derived from it are often so used. We shall again quote Shankara from his commentary on the Gita, Ch. XIII. 30. *Brahma sampādyate, brahmaiva bhavati* ('he attains Brahman' means 'he becomes Brahman'). The Tikākāra Ānandagiri gives a note on this, '*brahma-sampattir nāma pūrṇatvena abhivyakti-hetoḥ sarvasya ātma-sātkrtatvāt ca, brahmaiveti*'—*brahma-sampatti* means "becoming Brahman or being Brahman itself", because of the manifestation in fullness and of all being the Self". Again Ch. XVIII. 54,—"*brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*"—*brahma-bhavanāya samartho bhavati*. On this Ānandagiri says, *brahmaṇo bhavanam, anusandhāna-paripāka-paryantam sākṣāt karaṇam*. (Calm continuous search or enquiry ripens into realisation—this is called attaining the state of Brahman or becoming Brahman).

Thus it will be seen that the verbs *bhū* and *sam-pad* are used in the sense of becoming. We have given instances mainly from the Gita and its Advaitic commentators. But if we turn to the Upanishads, we can better appreciate the phrases of the Gita. *bhūta-bhāvana, bhūtabhāvōdbhavakara, madhāvabhāvita, brahmabhūya, brahmabhūta, jīvabhūta*, etc. The Advaitin Nilakanṭha, the commentator on the Mahābhārata in explaining the verse XV. 7. quotes the Taittiriya Upanishad II. 6. (*Tat sṛṣṭvā tadevānuprāviśat... satyam abhavaḥ*) to show that it is Brahman that has become

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everything, *abhavat*. The conception of becoming is essential, indispensable for a proper understanding of⁴⁹⁹ the Gita and the Upanishads. The root *bhū* served the purpose of the ancient seers and thinkers to denote becoming or manifestation which was also their conception—or, shall we say, perception—of the truth of Creation. We may note, for instance, that *bhava* means birth which is manifestation and does not mean existence for which the root *as* is used,—sat, existence. But this distinction is not always made in common usage. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to ignore the radical significance of these words in the ancient texts. And it is because the commentators were aware of the sense of becoming attached to *bhū* that they have rendered the term *jīvabhūta* in the way that we have shown from their writings.

Thus far we have made mention of the Advaitic commentaries on the Gita and cited instances of the usage of *bhūta* in the sense of ‘attained the state of’ or ‘become’. It is superfluous to multiply citations from the vast field of Sanskrit literature in general; nevertheless, it would be profitable to go straight to the source-books on Sanskrit grammar and consult standard authorities on the point at issue. When we do so and examine passages that are relevant for our enquiry, we find that the great grammarians have settled the question and decisively put a final seal on the derivative significance of *bhūta* at the end of compounds such as *pramāṇa-bhūta*, *jīva-bhūta*, etc. In the *Mahābhāṣya*, the monumental gloss of Patañjali on Pāṇini’s sutras, we meet with the phrase *pramāṇa-bhūta ācāryaḥ* under the *Vṛddhi-saṁjñā-sūtra*. Kaiyaṭa’s note on it reads, “*prāmānyam prāpta ity’arthaḥ*”, meaning “the *ācārya* who has attained (the position of) authority”. He further elucidates the phrase *pramāṇa-bhūta* by deriving *bhūta* from *bhū prāptau*, a root of the tenth conjugation. Here arises a doubt; if *bhū* is taken as a tenth conjugational root and the past participle *ta* is suffixed to it, the result would be *bhāvita* and not *bhūta*. But it is cleared thus: there is a group of fifty roots including the root *bhū prāptau* in the tenth conjugation which optionally drop the tenth conjugational sign *ṇic* (aya) (*A dhṛśād vā; vibhāshita-nickāh*); so much so that the third person present singular is *bhāvayate* or *bhavate* and the past part, is *bhāvita*, or *bhūta*, which means *prāpta*, as Kaiyaṭa has explained. Commenting on this passage of Kaiyaṭa, Nāgeśa in his *Uddyota* explains the necessity of deriving *bhūta* from *bhū* of the tenth conj. which means ‘to attain’ or ‘to obtain’. He says that as *bhū* of the 1st conj. means ‘to be’ or ‘to be born’, there will have to be *cvī* before it, thereby conveying the sense of a total change of the agent⁵⁰⁰—which in the example is *ācārya*—into the thing denoted by the

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word (*pramāṇa*) preceding *bhūta*. In that case it would be *pramāṇībhūta*. As that is not the sense meant to be conveyed, that is to say, as what is meant is not that the *acārya* has completely changed into *pramāṇa*, we avoid the *cvi* and mean by the phrase *pramāṇa-bhūta ācāryaḥ* 'the *ācārya*, who has *modally* become the authority' *pramāṇam ācāryaḥ prakārantareṇa bhūtaḥ*.

This is interesting and precisely applicable to the case of '*parā prakṛtir jivabhūtā*'. By adapting Nagesha's language, we may say, '*parā prakṛtir jivabhūtā*' means '*jivaḥ parā prakṛtiḥ prakāntarēṇa bhūtā*', the Supreme Nature has modally attained the state of Jīva. Again, it would be instructive to note what the Chāyā, Vaidyanātha's annotation on Nagesha, says in this connection. It puts the pertinent question: "if *pramāṇa-bhūta* means the same as *pramāṇa*, then *pramāṇam* alone would do; why should there be *bhūta* added to it?" The answer is that *pramāṇa-bhūta* is not the same as *pramāṇa*; it means *pramāṇa bhāvita* which is the same as *pramāṇyam prāpta*. From the foregoing brief discussion it would be clear that *pramāṇam* is not the same as *pramāṇī-bhūta* or *pramāṇa-bhūta*; these three expressions differ in their significances and are not interchangeable.*

Now let us take the present case of *parā prakṛtir jivabhūtā*. If it be meant that the Supreme Nature is the same as Jīva or the Jīva Itself, then the expression would be '*parā prakṛtir Jivaḥ*'; if it were intended to convey the sense that *parā prakṛti*, the Supreme Nature has *completely* changed and become in its totality the Jīva, then *parā prakṛtir Jivībhūtā* would be the phrasing; but when it is not meant that the Supreme Nature has absolutely changed into and therefore in that sense become the Jīva or that it is itself the Jīva or the same as Jīva, but meant that the Supreme Nature is the Jīva in some way or mode, *prakāra*, to use the word of the grammarian quoted already, or in some aspect or part, *aṃśa*, as the Gita reminds⁵⁰¹ us, then the correct expression is none other than the one that we have discussed, *parā prakṛtirss Jivabhūtā*.

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* When earlier in the Mahābhāṣya Kaiyaṭa explains '*sāmānya-bhūtam*' as '*sāmānyam iva*', the Uddyota dissents from the view that the word *bhūta* can be treated as *upamā-vācaka*; but it has been the convention to resolve the compounds, such as *pitṛ-bhūta* into *pitṛ tulyaḥ* or *samaḥ*. 'like a father' This is indeed loosely done; but it is taken to be equivalent to *pitṛtvam prāptaḥ* 'attained the position of a father' which is the same as 'become a father *in a way*' *prakārantareṇa pitā bhūtaḥ*. The same applies to *panya-bhūtam śarīram*, the body has attained the state of an article of merchandise, which is the same as saying loosely that the body is an article of merchandise; the same is the case with other expressions such as *aṅgabhūta* or *aṃśabhūta*, 'has attained the status of or *become* a limb or a part'.

And this is precisely the construction put upon the phrase in Sri Aurobindo's exposition of the Gita: for in unequivocal terms he has reiterated the idea that the Supreme Nature is the nature of the One Supreme Spirit which is higher than its manifestation as Jīva, that it is not in its essence the Jīva, Jīvātmikā, but it is Jīvabhūtā, has formulated itself as Jīva providing a spiritual basis for the manifold becoming in the cosmos. Tested and thus dissolved, the difficulty of grammar that ushered in the objection turns helpful, leaving us to appreciate better the interpretation of the great phrase rich with profound thought—an interpretation which, as has been shown, is in perfect accord with the usage and strictly conforms to the canons of Sanskrit grammar.

Sri Aurobindo:
The Silent Yogi⁵⁰²

SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

INDIA of late has drawn the attention of the world to her achievements in more than one field of human endeavour. Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sir C.V. Raman and Sir Radhakrishnan are well-known in the world of politics, literature, science and philosophy. These men are the forerunners of that day when the possibilities latent in the unfathomable sources of Indian culture will be realized and India will rise again to her ancient stature.

Another remarkable figure of present-day India whose life affords an interesting contrast to the lives of these public men is Sri Aurobindo Ghose. Three decades ago Sri Aurobindo was one of the foremost figures in Indian political and educational movements. At present he is living in seclusion under a vow of silence and communicates with the world only through his letters and published writings. These writings are attracting the attention of serious thinkers and philosophers in India and elsewhere. Tagore, after a visit to Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry, wrote a poem beginning, "Oh Aurobindo! Accept the salutation of Rabindra." Sir Radhakrishnan writes: "Among the present-day Indian thinkers, Sri Aurobindo Ghose is perhaps the most accomplished. His firm grasp of the fundamentals of true philosophy, his earnest attempt at the cultivation of the inner life and his abundant love for humanity and its future, give to his writings a depth and comprehensiveness which are rarely to be met with." Romain Rolland welcomes him as "the completest synthesis that has been realized to this day of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe."

It cannot be said that the writings of Sri Aurobindo are widely read even in India, and he is less wellknown in the West. His name seldom appears in the press. Yet

three times a year, on February 21, August 15 and November 24, hundreds of his admirers make a pilgrimage to his *ashrama* at Pondicherry to receive his silent blessings. Among, them are found Hindus⁵⁰³ and Muslims, Chinese⁵⁰⁴ and Japanese, Europeans and Americans. The Hindus believe that a spiritual man radiates more power in silence than by words and that merely to see such a person is a great stimulus to one's spiritual unfoldment.

Aurobindo Ghose was born in 1872. It was a period when the western culture of the nineteenth century cast a hypnotic spell on the educated gentry of Bengal and made them scoff at their ancient religion and civilization. Therefore Aurobindo, at the age of seven, with two elder brothers, was sent to England to be brought up and trained according to strict occidental tradition. He lived at first with an English family at Manchester and later went to St. Paul's School in London. In due course he entered King's College, Cambridge, with a senior scholarship and passed the Tripos in the first division. He learned to speak French as a child, became a brilliant student of Greek and Latin in college and acquired enough knowledge of German and Italian to read Goethe and Dante in the original. He passed the Indian Civil Service Examination with credit but he was disqualified because he failed to appear for the riding test.

Aurobindo Ghose returned to India in 1893 and served under the Gaekwar of Baroda until 1906. He worked in the secretariat and the revenue department and also as professor of English and vice principal of Baroda College. In England he had been cut off from knowledge of Indian languages and culture, but at Baroda he devoted himself to the study of Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages. With his keen intellect he quickly assimilated the spirit of Indian civilization.

II

At the dawn of the present century Indians realized for the first time the deadening influence of foreign rule. The Boer war in South Africa, the Russo-Japanese War and the struggle of the Russian masses against their all-powerful Czar for bread and liberty and had serious repercussions in India. Political unrest became articulate in Bengal, and Lord Curzon, in order to nip it in the bud, ordered dismemberment of the province in 1905. This was the signal for intense political agitation in Bengal.

Aurobindo Ghose kept in touch with the political leaders but could not join them actively at first because he was still serving the Gaekwar of Baroda. When in 1906 a national college was founded in Bengal to train the Hindus in true Indian culture and

⁵⁰³ The original editor inserted notes at the bottom of the page read "to them are found" by hand

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also to give them facilities in western sciences⁵⁰⁵, he gave up his position at Baroda and became its first principal. Soon he was drawn into the vortex of the struggle. He and other leaders of radical views started the *Swadeshi* movement (the Indian *Sinn Fein*) and later formed a new political party which insisted on the culture of self-help, instead of dependence upon the government, and made plans for the effective organization of the national forces. In contrast with the old mediant policy of the Indian National Congress of that day, their programme emphasized non-co-operation with the British government, boycotted of British Law-courts, organization of arbitration courts, boycott of government universities and colleges, the establishment of national universities, the formation of societies of young men for police duty and defence work and the conversion of the Congress into an informal state within the state.

At the instance of Aurobindo Ghose, the new party accepted B.G. Tilak, the scholar-statesman of Maharashtra, as its leader, formulated a definite and challenging programme for the Congress and set out to capture it and the country from the moderate leaders. In 1906, Aurobindo Ghose was the first to declare *Swaraj* (complete independence) to be the goal of India's political struggle. Thus within the Congress were formed two parties, one consisting of the older leaders and the titled nobility who believed in constitutional agitation for the colonial status for India under British rule, and the other of younger men who hurled defiance at the British. The Congress, at that time, was an oligarchic organization; the masses of India were allowed to attend its sessions only as sightseers. The two parties were labelled the moderates and the extremists, and it was then uncertain which would capture the leadership of the country.

In 1907, the Congress met at Surat and broke up before the President, Sir Rash Behary Ghosh, could deliver his address, on account of the clash of ideals between the extremists and the moderates. The extremists organized a national conference and elected Aurobindo as its president.

In the meantime he had become the Editor of a weekly paper entitled *Bande Mataram*, "Hail the Mother" – a phrase which became the slogan of the nationalists. Through the medium of this paper, Aurobindo sought to spread the policy of extreme nationalism. Its influence was soon felt throughout India, and its editor, who had always been shy, reserved and taciturn, was recognized⁵⁰⁶ as the leader of the new Indian nationalism. But every now and then Aurobindo was depressed by the thought that the country was not yet ready for his gospel of national emancipation. About 1905, the British government had started on a policy of stern repressive measures to crush the

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new nationalist party and, as a result, many of its leaders were imprisoned and exiled. Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907 but he was acquitted. After his release he became the leader of the extremists and had to appear in the role of a public speaker. Soon he was arrested again, accused of taking part in the activities of a very revolutionary group of young men of Bengal. This latter movement had begun underground as a result of the repressive measures of the English. The members of the group had deliberately adopted the instrumentality of bomb and revolver, and the first explosion had taken place in 1907. Barindra, the younger brother and leader of the group, and his associates were arrested as anarchists and the second arrest of Aurobindo followed in May, 1908.

He was detained in jail for one year as an “under trial” prisoner and was ultimately released for want of evidence. This was a momentous period for him, since in the jail he had his first inner revelations and became aware of his future mission. Coming out of jail, he found his party completely shattered, the leaders imprisoned or exiled. For a time he vainly tried to revive the party, publishing two papers to stimulate the nationalist movement. But again he had the poignant conviction that the country was not yet ready for his programme and that he was not the destined leader of his people in the political struggle. Finally, in 1910, he resolved to withdraw from politics, at least for the time being, and develop his inner life. For this purpose he went to Chandernagore, the French possession near Calcutta, where he lived in seclusion for a few months. In April, 1910, he sailed for Pondicherry, French India. At the same moment a third trial for sedition was launched against him, but he was now outside the reach of British law.

Aurobindo did not at first give up altogether the idea of joining the political movement again. But gradually he discovered that the field of his future work lay far from the political arena. Repeatedly he refused the invitation of his country to be president of the Indian National Congress. A new vista opened before him, and he devoted himself to the life of the spirit. In 1914 he started⁵⁰⁷ a monthly paper, the *Arya*, exclusively concerned with philosophical subjects practical suggestions for spiritual life born out of his own experience and articles on the fundamentals of Indian culture and civilization. Many of these articles are now published in book form. Through this Magazine he again came in touch with the outside world, not as a writer of a political gospel but as a master *Yogi* who spoke with authority. The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after an uninterrupted appearance of six and half years.

III

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Aurobindo had, at first, four or five disciples with him at Pondicherry. In time a large number of serious students accepted discipleship under him and renounced all earthly possessions in search of a higher life. Thus an ashrama, or hermitage, has gradually grown up around him, the present number of its inmates being about one hundred and seventy five. Devotees and admirers of Sri Aurobindo contribute money for defraying the expenses of the ashrama. At the Ashrama all connections with politics and other forms of propaganda are eschewed. The inmates lead a quiet life of inner discipline. No one knows when, or if at all Sri Aurobindo will, again appear in public. It is said that he is guided in all his activities by the Divine Power.

How was it that Aurobindo, the firebrand political between 1905 and 1910, became a yogi with a spiritual mission for the world? He must have been a born mystic, but his spiritual tendencies did not find expression during his younger days because of his western education and upbringing. Although at Baroda he was initiated in yoga, it was in jail that his first real illumination took place. There a tremendous light burst upon him. The full contents of his inner experience will never be revealed, but in a speech delivered after his release from jail he told something of his spiritual rebirth. When he was first placed behind the prison bars, he cried in protest to his God for thus forcibly taking him away from the cherished field of activities. He was depressed to think that in his absence and that of his comrades the movement for the political freedom of India would receive a serious setback.

While he was passing through the suffering of *Gethsemane* a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* was placed in his hand. From this book he learned that he who aspires to do God's work must be free from repulsion and desire, work for him without demanding the fruits, renounce⁵⁰⁸ self will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands. Describing the momentous experience in jail, Aurobindo said: "I looked at the jail that secluded me from men, and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva (an epithet of Sri Krishna worshipped by the Hindus as the Godhead) who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of a tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva whom I saw standing there and holding over me His shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Vasudeva who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Vasudeva around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover."

The rest of his year in jail he spent in a life of yoga and intense self-discipline, losing all interest in the accusations against him and feeling secure in the hands of God. During that time he received two messages from God. By the first message he came to know that he would be released. The second had a deep significance for him and

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directed the future course of his life. God revealed to him the real meaning of India's national reawakening as the Vindication of the *Sanatana Dharma*, the Eternal Religion of the Hindus. He realized that a free India would serve humanity by preaching to it the great heritage of her spiritual culture. India must be great to demonstrate that spirituality is the pivot of human activities and their goal is the Divine. But the religion of the Hindus must not be confused with its dogmas and creeds. Its significance lies in its universal message. It is not a religion of mere faith and profession; it touches and illumines life at all points. It impresses on man the closeness of God and embraces in its compass all the possible means by which man can approach his ideal.

Thus in prison Aurobindo discovered that the true purpose of India's awakening is not the mere political revolt, of a dependent nation against its powerful alien ruler. India has always existed for humanity and not for herself, and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great. Coming into her own, she will not trample the weak under her feet. When she is strong she will not exploit her neighbours. While India must assimilate for her growth many ideas of the West, yet, when awakened and free, she must shed the eternal light entrusted to her over the world⁵⁰⁹. Therefore Aurobindo decided to prepare himself for this spiritual mission of India.

It is interesting to see that what had appeared to Sri Aurobindo in 1910 as an inner revelation was also grasped a decade later by Gandhi as the goal of the Indian struggle for freedom. Even the programme of non-co-operation adopted by Aurobindo and the extremists in 1907 is not essentially different from that followed later by Gandhi. Individuals in all nations have followed the path of love and truth for the attainment of their salvation, but no Christian patriot has ever dreamed of freeing his country from foreign rule by following the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. No Christian ruler has ever tried the method of the New Testament in the government of his subjects. Only in Indian history has a King Asoka applied the rule of Dharma to the everyday administration of his empire. In our own time a yogi, like Sri Aurobindo, has dreamed of applying spiritual methods to the struggle of emancipation of a whole nation, and Gandhi, informed by the spirit of love, has led his people in political action.

IV

In keeping with the Indian tradition, which does not divorce philosophical inquiry from religious experiences, Sri Aurobindo is both a philosopher and a mystic. He knows how far reason helps in the search for truth and when it becomes an obstacle. Again he is both a metaphysician and yogi; as the former, he finds adequate explanation of the seen in the unseen and, as the latter, he relies upon the proof of direct experience for his assertions. He is perhaps the most accomplished of the thinkers of

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today who have synthesized the fundamentals of Indian and western thought. His wide knowledge of western culture and philosophy has enabled him to recognize their value in the solution of human problems.

The left-wingers in the eastern and western systems of thought have made an unwarranted chasm between Spirit and Matter. The Reality is a stupendous whole which contains and harmonizes both. Sri Aurobindo discards the radical doctrine of some Hindu philosophers that ultimate salvation lies in wholly rejecting life as an illusion. He seems to be equally convinced that material life, unillumined by the radiance of spirit, can never be the goal of human evolution. Yoga, he believes, shows us the way to ascend to the Spirit; and then we redescend to matter with the power of Spirit to divinize matter and every function of life. Behind the⁵¹⁰ appearance of the manifold there is the Reality of one, of the nature of Bliss and Consciousness. But it is hidden from us by the separative veil of ignorance, with the inconscient as its base. But even in this self-forgetfulness of man there is the ever-throb- being presence of Divine Awareness. It is possible, by the disciplines of yoga, to destroy this sense of separation from the divine and realize our true Self as the Self of all.

Through evolution the inner divinity of man finds release and liberation. One of the most arresting discoveries of the nineteenth century in Europe was the law of evolution, which was revolutionized, in many ways, the political, social, economic and religious concepts of the Europeans. Western scientists explained this law in terms of mechanism, envisaging the world process as without a purpose. But Patanjali, the great Hindu yogi, anticipated Darwinism long before the birth of Darwin. Broadly accepting the wisdom of the Hindu psychologists, Sri Aurobindo also declares that through evolution the Divinity involved in man and matter finds its release and liberation. Evolution in nature is neither a mechanical thing nor a process without a purpose. It is in the unfoldment of God involved in matter. Man is not a mere accidental product in the course of evolution. God is his potential possibility.

The first step in the evolution is life and the second mind. The last step will be the manifestation of the super-mind through which the involved Spirit will manifest its divine perfection. In the first step nature acts by instinct and is not conscious of its goal. In the second step, it becomes aware of its destiny, which is to transcend itself in a higher fulfilment. But mind, unaided, cannot proceed far in this direction. After reaching a certain point mind moves in a circle. At this point there is a descent of the Divine which accepts the mind as an instrument for the complete divinization of man. Sri Aurobindo says that, through the practice of yoga, all parts of our being can be made fit for the descent of the superconscious. This is called the conversion or transformation of the lower nature. The liberated spirit does not take refuge in heaven nor does it

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shoot up into the realm of void, but applies itself to transforming every part and function of the lower nature to the end that the earth itself may become completely divine. After reaching the second step of evolution, man with the help of yoga attains to the goal of evolution.

V

Sri⁵¹¹ Aurobindo's most important work is his "*Essays on the Gita*," which embody his lucid and thoughtful interpretation of this immortal scripture of the Hindus. According to Sri Aurobindo, the *Gita* contains historical fact, whereas interpreters like Gandhi look upon its contents as a symbolic battle between the powers of good and evil, light and darkness. Sri Aurobindo claims that the solution is not in an escape from nature but in understanding nature and its consequent transformation. It is revealed to Arjuna, in the eleventh chapter of the *Gita*, that the whole world with its pairs of opposites is related and unified in the God-head. Sri Aurobindo explains this vision as "the One in the many and the many in the One—and all are One." Through this vision one lays "the shining axe of God at the root of all doubts and perplexities and annihilates all denials and oppositions."

The central light of the *Gita* and its essential message is the perception of God in the world- process and the reconciliation of matter and Spirit in the *Purushottoma*, the transcendental aspect of the God-head, which pervades all. The difference between orthodox commentators on the *Gita*, like Shankara, and Aurobindo seems to lie in the fact that according to the former the relative world, though possessing an empirical reality, is transcended in the higher consciousness of the Absolute, whereas according to Aurobindo it is not necessary to liquidate the world-process as an illusion. Even after the transcendental realization, the seer finds the world in all respects as the manifestation of the Divine. Aurobindo says that to embrace the world after transcending its limitations is the last divine sacrifice. God or Reality is not an empty abstraction or a mere featureless trinity, but may be compared to an eternal child playing an eternal game in an eternal garden.

In these "*Essays on the Gita*" Sri Aurobindo reconciles the paths of knowledge, work and devotion, showing that they are not parallel lines but meet at many points. All his ideas are explicit or implicit in the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads. In Indian tradition, the seers of the Upanishads are not the creator of truths but their revealers. The subsequent philosophers rediscovered these truths by their inner experience and presented them according to the exigencies of time. A prophet both abrogates what has been rendered useless by the *Zeitgeist* and fulfils what is essential and permanent.

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The⁵¹² presentation of the ancient wisdom of India to the world is a cosmic demand. And perhaps no one among the living thinkers of India is better equipped for the purpose than the Silent Yogi of Pondicherry. He fulfils the demand of the West by insisting, to a certain extent, on the scientific method, and he is in harmony with the eastern ideal by his insistence that experience is more potent than speculation or imagination. The synthesis of the East and the West is the arresting feature of his philosophy.

Many in the West do not comprehend how a silent teacher can impart knowledge to the seekers. To the spoken word is attached an exaggerated value. The secret of silence has been zealously cherished in the East. Silence is the precursor of almighty creation. It has been noticed again and again in Indian history that ideas and ideals first gather force in silence, like water behind a dam, and then break forth with the force of an avalanche and inundate society with their mighty power. In the silence, more than through words or even personal example such teachers as Sri Aurobindo transmit light to the disciples from the fullness of the heart. Sri Aurobindo is a recluse. The public, even the inmates of the ashrama, cannot see him except on the three occasions in the year when he comes out to give his unspoken blessing to the visitors. They salute him and place before him flowers and fruit, the usual offering to holy men in India. His contact with his disciples is through his letters and silent influence.

An ancient Hindu text, describing an ideal assembly of students with the teacher in their midst, says: "Silently under a banyan tree, like figures on a canvas, sits a young teacher surrounded by his old disciples. The teacher explains the life of Spirit in silence; the doubts of the students are set at naught in silence."

Asia.

A well-meaning contemporary wants to know if clever women are good mothers. The answer is that clever women are not mothers—if they are clever enough.

WE suppose it's all right, but Adam the father of the human race, was a bachelor.

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