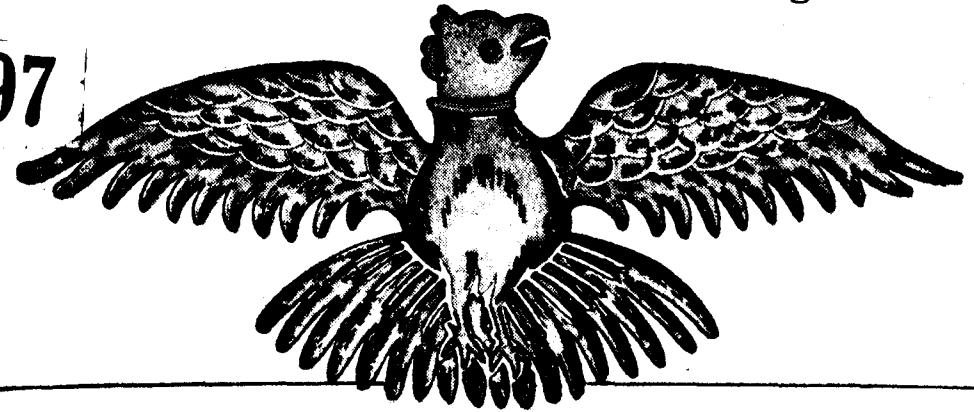


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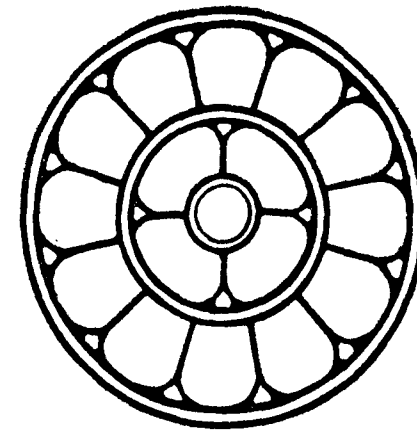
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The **ADVENT**

*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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THE ADVENT

*A Quarterly
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Editor
R. VAIDYANATHASWAMY, D.SC.

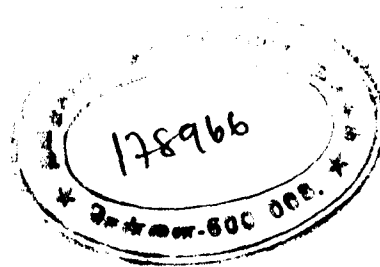
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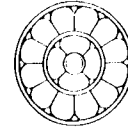
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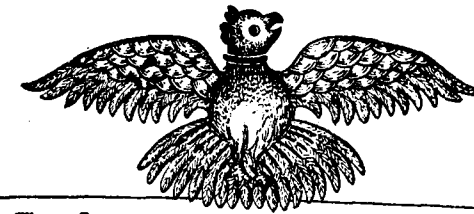
*Le succès est une épreuve
plus difficile à traverser
que l'infortune.*

*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



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.

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 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

very 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 eternalize 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 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 physi-

cian, but 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

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

slogan 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 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 pro-

cess. 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 uneducated and unilluminated 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 process 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 NUMBER 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.

What 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,

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 tu yācyate na tu
manardīnīya dīyate*

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

The lead Sri Aurobindo 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 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.

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

cause) 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—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

recognised 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.

PRAYERS OF THE MOTHER

I

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 being 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

everything to the consciousness of Thy love which animates all.

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")

THY 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

THE ADVENT

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.

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 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 Aurebindo's "The Future Poetry")

YOGIC 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 *laissez-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, 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

1. Mundaka 3-2-4; 2. Svetaswatara 6-22; 3. Katha 2-23.

that 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: 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

may 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: "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

1. Brihadaranyaka IV, 2, 23.

body 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" (*anahatavani*) 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."

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 basest 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 indications¹ 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 omnipotency 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

end 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.

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.

Nalinikanta Gupta.

1. Brihadaranyaka 4-4-13

LETTERS 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, occupa-

tions, 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

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

their 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 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)

The difficulties you have mentioned in the way of your seeing eye-to-eye with Sri 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 neo-realism. 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

are 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, of these powers, but the real and final miracle to work on Nature is what Sri 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 Sri Aurobindo's 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

this 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 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 childbirth, 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? 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 Hegel 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 in-

tuition, 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

gem of our secret *elân* 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.

—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 said 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*")

THE 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 run-away 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

man. 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 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*".)

QUESTIONS 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

of 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 *रसा वै सः*—"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. Brahmana 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. J. 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. The 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. J. 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

between 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, too, experienced the feeling of inspiration 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 Dhyana 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

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while 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")

SRI 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 *maya-vada*. 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 *Saccidananda* though it is aware of all of them. Prof. Malkani considers that this is fraught with difficulty. The infinite possibilities in the *Saccidananda* 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

Leibnitz 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 conceptu-

alise 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 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 cer-

tainly 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. *Lila* 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 *asatkūrya-vāda*, 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 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-kūrya-vāda* means in *Sāṃkya* and *Viśiṣṭādvaita* 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 *sūkṣma* 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, 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 *satīra* 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 *satīrī* 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 tadū naijati taddūre tadvantike

Tadantarasya sarvasya tadū sarvasyāsya bāhyatah

Isa. 5

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 sīsvatībhyah 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 *Saccidānanda* 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 *purnatva* in its perfection; and the delight of becoming is a variation of the *purnatva* 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.

Pūnamadah pūnamidam pūnāt pūnamudacyate—

Sri Ramanuja's theory however does not involve this explanation

because 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 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 Rāmānuja clearly initiates this catharsis in his Yoga called Mahāyoga. But it is precisely this Mahāyoga that has to culminate in the Pūrnayoga. It is in this sense that Advaita of Māyāvāda

gives 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* and *mokṣa* are sought to be explained as not merely negative but positively as bliss by certain modern interpreters of Buddhist thought, it is what it denotes but negatively. The passage from the impersonal of *nirvāṇa* to the supra-personal 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 postu-

lates 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")

REVIEWS

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 beyond 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 theopathic 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—Yajñavalkya, 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.

In 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 appositeness; and the whole two-volume treatise has in result the look of a restrained and unbiased 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 ano-

ther. It would not follow that the marks of deity are equally plain in every corner of the universe, any more 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 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 ether, 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 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 countrymen 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 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 patri-

tism. 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 stunted 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 to 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 Benares 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—"Hara" is an oft-cited example of this. These are all instances of a 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 religions 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

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Mr. Datta 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 as 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 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 belittle 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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