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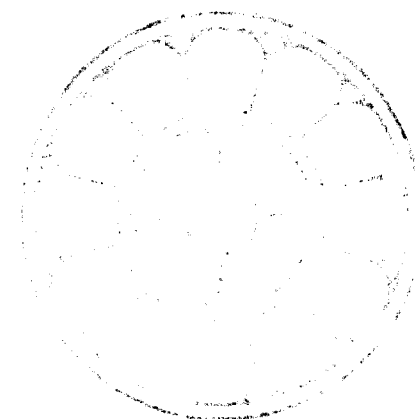
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February 1945



The ADVENT

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



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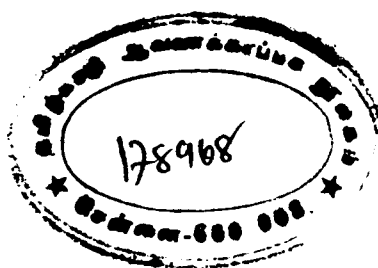
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Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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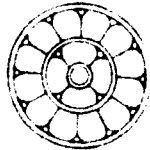


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Prayer for 1945

The earth will enjoy a lasting and living peace only when men understand that they must be truthful and sincere even in their international dealings.

For the Governments honesty lies not only in saying what they are doing but also in doing what they say.



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.

HERE OR OTHERWISE

A question is often asked of us whether it is possible to do Yoga while remaining in the world. Some declare outright that it is not possible: world and Yoga are, like oil and water, absolutely different things, they do not go together. World means, to put it plainly, earning money and raising family. Well, these two are the very opposite of Yoga, for they involve, at their best, desire and attachment and, at their worst, dishonesty and deceit, lust and libertinage. There is the other school, on the contrary, who pronounce that a Yogic life must be lived in the world if it is not our intention to leave the world altogether and seek and merge in the Beyond, the elsewhere, the immutable transcendent Brah-

man. It is quite possible for one to be in the very midst of the worldly forces and yet remain unshaken by them. Therefore it has been said:

When the causes of disturbances are there and still the mind is not disturbed—that indeed is the sign of a wise steadiness.

It can however be asked, what then is meant by being in the world? If it means merely sitting quiet, suffering and observing non-chalantly the impacts of the world—something in the manner described by Mathew Arnold in his famous lines on the East—, well, that stoic way, the way of indifference is a way of being in the world which is not very much unlike not being in the world; for it means simply erecting a wall of

separation or isolation within one's consciousness without moving away physically. It is a psychological escapism. But if by living in the world we should mean participating in the movements of the world—not only being but becoming, not merely standing as a witness but moving out as a doer—then the problem becomes different. For the question we have to ask in that case is what happens to our duties—life in the world being a series of duties, duty to oneself (self-preservation), duty to the family (race preservation), duty to the country, to humanity and, finally, duty to God (which last belongs properly to the life in Yoga). Now, can all these duties dwell and flourish together? The Christ is categorical on the point. He says, in effect, Leave aside all else and follow Me and look not back. Christ's God seems to be a jealous God who does not tolerate any other god to share in his sovereign exclusiveness. You have to give up, if you wish to gain. They who lose life shall find it and they who stick to life shall as surely lose it.

But is not Gita's solution somewhat different? Sri Krishna urges Arjuna to be in the very thick of a deadly fight, not a theoretical or abstract combat, but take a hand in the direst man-

slaughter, to "do the deed" (even like Macbeth) but Yogically. Yes, Gita's position seems to be that—to accept all life integrally, to undertake all necessary work (kartavyam karma) and turn them Godward. Gita seeks to do it in its own way which consists of two major principles: (1) to do the work, whatever it may be, unattached—without any desire for the fruit, simply as a thing that has to be done, and (2) to do it as a sacrifice, as an offering to the supreme Master of works.

The question naturally turns upon the nature and the kind of work, whether there is a choice and selection in it. Gita speaks indeed of all works, *kritsna-karmakrit*, but does that really mean any and every work that an ignorant man, an ordinary man steeped in the three Gunas does or can do? It cannot be so. For, although all activity, all energy has its source and impetus in the higher consciousness of the Divine, it assumes on the lower ranges indirect, diverted or even perverted formulations and expressions, not because, indeed, of the inherent falsity of these so-called inferior strata, the instruments, but because of their temporary impurity and obscurity. There are evidently activities and impulses born exclusively of desire, of attachment and egoism. There

are habits of the body, urges of the vital, notions of the mind, there are individual and social functions that have no place in the spiritual scheme, they have to be rigorously eschewed and eliminated. Has not the Gita said, this is desire, this is passion born of the quality of Rajas . . . ? There is not much meaning in trying to do these works unattached or to turn them towards the Divine. When you are unattached, when you turn to the Divine, these simply drop away of themselves. Yes, there are social duties and activities and relations that inevitably dissolve and disappear as you move into the life divine. Some are perhaps tolerated for a

period, some are occasions for the consciousness to battle and surmount, grow strong and pass beyond. You have to learn to go beyond and new create your environment.

It was Danton who said, one carries not his country with him at the sole of his shoe. Even so you cannot hope to shift bodily your present social ensemble, place it wholesale in the divine life on the plea that it will be purified and transformed in the process. Purification is there indeed, but one must remember purification literally means burning and not a little of the past and present has to be burnt down to ashes.

THE SUNLIT PATH

Sri Aurobindo speaks of the sunlit path in Yoga. It is the path of happy progress where dangers and difficulties, violent ups and downs are reduced to a minimum, if not altogether obviated. In ideal conditions it is as it were a smooth and fair-weather sailing, as much of course as it is humanly possible. What are then these conditions? It is when the sadhaka keeps touch with his inmost being, his psychic consciousness, when this inner Guide and Helmsman is given the charge; for then he will be able to pass

sovereignly by all shoals and rocks and storm-racks, through all vicissitudes gliding on—slow or swift as needed—inevitably towards the goal. A doubting mind, an impetuous vital urge, an inert physical consciousness, though they may be there in any strength, cannot disturb or upset the even tenor of the forward march. Even outward circumstances bow down to the pressure of the psychic temperament and bring to it their happy collaboration.

This may not always mean that all is easy and difficulty is simply

not, once the psychic is there. It becomes so when the psychic is there fully in front; even otherwise when the inner being is in the background, still sensed and, on the whole, obeyed, although there are battles, hard battles to be fought and won, then even a little of this Consciousness saves from a great fear. For then, in all circumstances, you will have found a secret joy and cheer and strength that buoy you up and carry you through.

Like the individual, nations too have their sunlit path and the path of the doldrum as well. So long as a nation keeps to the truth of its inner being, follows its natural line of development, remains faithful to its secret god-head, it will have chosen that good part which will bring it divine blessings and fulfilment. But sometimes a nation has the stupidity to deny its self, to run after a *ignis fatuus*, a *mayamriga*, then grief and sorrow and frustration lie ahead. We are afraid India did take such a wrong step when she refused to see the great purpose behind the present war and tried to avoid contributing her mite to the evolutionary Force at work. On the other hand, Britain, in a moment of supreme crisis, that meant literally life or death, not only to herself or to other nations, but to humanity itself, had the

good fortune to be led by the right Inspiration, the whole nation rose as one man and swore allegiance to the cause of humanity and the gods. That was how she was saved and that was how she acquired a new merit and a fresh lease of life. Unlike Britain, France bowed down and accepted what should not have been accepted and cut herself adrift from its inner life and truth, the result was five years of hell. Fortunately, the hell, in the end, proved to be a purgatory, but what a purgatory! For there were souls who were willing to pay the price and did pay it to the full cash and nett. So France has been given the chance again to turn round and take up the thread of its life where it snapped.

Once more another crisis seems to be looming before the nations, once more the choice has to be made and acted upon. In our weakness it is natural and easy to invoke God, to feel the presence of a higher Guidance, to trust in a heavenly light; but it is in our strength that we must know whose strength it is, and in whose strength it is that we conquer.

If the present war has any meaning, as we all declare it has, then we must never lose sight of that meaning. And our true victory will come only in the pro-

cess of the realisation of that meaning. That is the sunlit path we refer to here which the nations have to follow in their mutual dealings. It is the path of the evolutionary call to which we say we have responded and to which we must remain loyal and faithful

in thought, in speech and in deed. If we see dark and ominous clouds gathering round us, dangers and difficulties suddenly raising their heads, then we must look about and try honestly to find out whether we have not strayed away from the sunlit path.

THE WAR—PEOPLES' OR IMPERIALISTS'?

The familiar catch phrase in India is even now often repeated, this is not a peoples' war, it is an imperialistic war. But one would like to fling back the question, what if? Even supposing it is a war between two camps of blood-thirsty Imperialists, does it not affect us in any way? Should we sit idle with folded arms and simply look at the fun? Well, that is a counsel of perfection *à la ostrich*. The problem, however, is so simple, and perhaps because of the very simplicity, it did not present itself as such to the complicated brains of our leaders. We have only to ask if Imperialist Britain lost the war, if Imperialist Japan or Germany won the war, what would have happened to India. Some bluntly answer, in a spirit of pique and bravado, that it did not matter in the least who won, for instead of one master we would have another, a slave need not be too squeamish about the kind of master he has.

Yes, it is a slave mentality, a mentality steeped in ignorance and despair that can have this outlook and this accent, although it may sound cogent and plausible—*prjnāvādānscha bhāshase*, as the Gita says. But this piece of specious reasoning is simple in its absurdity. Even if we consent to be a slave, there is and can be a choice of masters. Well, the frogs of Aesop's Fables wanted a change of masters and instead of King Log they gave themselves up to King Stork (—the old fabulist is such a storehouse of wisdom and worldly wisdom!). The choice, as we all know, was not happy. Even so Imperialist Japan or Germany (or for the matter of that perhaps Communist Russia too) would make a master that would mean the end of India. Imperialist Britain leaves some loophole, some breathing space in and through its imprisoning meshes, but the other type is a horror chamber of the kind

depicted by Edgar Allan Poe in his famous story. That is why Sri Aurobindo says—and it bears repetition a hundred times :

“ Even if I knew that the Allies would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities open to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate things could not be one-hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open—to keep them open is what matters.”

Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinite is native to it. India saw from the beginning, — and even in her ages of reason and her age of increasing ignorance, she never lost hold of the insight,— that life cannot be rightly seen in the sole light, cannot be perfectly lived in the sole power of its externalities. She was alive to the greatness of material laws and forces; she had a keen eye for the importance of the physical sciences, she knew how to organise the arts of ordinary life. But she saw that the physical does not get its full sense until it stands in right relation to the supraphysical; she saw that the complexity of the universe could not be explained in the present terms of man or seen by his superficial

light, that there were other powers behind, other powers within man himself of which he is normally unaware, that he is conscious only of a small part of himself, that the invisible always surrounds the visible, the suprasensible the sensible, even as infinity always surrounds the finite. * * * Then with that calm audacity of her intuition which knew no fear or littleness and shrank from no act of spiritual or intellectual, ethical or vital courage, she declared that there was none of these things which man could not attain if he trained his will and knowledge; he could conquer these ranges of mind, become the spirit, become a god, become one with God, become the ineffable Brahman.

—(*The Renaissance in India*—Sri Aurobindo).

VIRGIN GRACE

I bow to thee, O Mother, at whose feet pure-white
The deeps in adoration sing blue songs of light :
For whom the myriad-rhythmed breakers heave and surge
Dissolving in surrender, driven by the urge
Of passionate winds—offering thee in irised foams
Sun's magic moods : O Haven, where nomad spirit homes !

My beauty-hungry eyes are thrilled by the vast sweep
Of thy kingdom from the frozen heights to liquid sleep.
In a phantom world it was thy race of seers bold
Built colonies with pantheons—mystic, manifold—
Of human wisdom conquering trackless peaks of vision :
O Nurse of prophets who derided God-derision !

Radiance is atremble from thy high, sublime
Diamond summits down to holy shrines that Time
Has feared to ravage, O Priestess of resistless spell,
Whom forests hymn with lilt of musk and bloom and bell !
Thou wearest bonds to charm away our destiny
Of shadowy doom with wands of Immortality.

The regal Sun greets thee from oceans in the east
And in the west again where sinks thy loyal Priest,
From dawn to dusk the sky serves thee for canopy
Kindling at night thy star-bulbs of Eternity.
O thou who broodest over mountains, plains and seas
Fulfilling earth with what the heavens crave : Love—Peace !

—Dilip Kumar Roy.

A LETTER

All the phases of human history may be regarded as a working out of the earth-consciousness in which each phase has its place and significance, so this materialistic intellectual phase had to come and has had, no doubt, its purpose and significance. One may also hold that one of its issues was as an experiment to see how far and whither the human consciousness would go through an intellectual and external control of Nature with physical and intellectual means only and without the intervention of any higher consciousness and knowledge—or that it may help by resistance to draw the spiritual consciousness that is growing behind all vicissitudes to attempt the control of Matter and turn it towards the Divine, as the Tantriks and Vaishnavas tried to do with the emotional and lower vital nature, not contenting themselves with the Vedantic turning of the mind towards the Supreme. But it is difficult to go farther than that or to hold that this materialism is itself a spiritual thing or that the dark confused and violent state of contemporary Europe was an indispensable preparation for the descent of the Spirit. This darkness and violence

which seems bent on destroying such light of mental idealism and desire of harmony as had succeeded in establishing itself in the mind of humanity, is obviously due to a descent of fierce and dark vital Powers which seek to possess the human world for their own, not for a spiritual purpose. It is true that such a precipitation of Asuric forces from the darker vital worlds has been predicted by some occultists as one first result of the pressure of the Divine descent on their vital domain, but it was regarded as a circumstance of the battle, not as something helping towards the Divine Victory. The churning of Matter by the attempt of human intellect to conquer material Nature and use it for its purpose may break something in the passivity and inertia, but it is done for material ends, in a rajasic spirit, with a denial of spirituality as its mental basis. Such an attempt may end, seems to be ending indeed in chaos and disintegration, while the new attempts at creation and reintegration seem to combine the obscure rigidity of material Nature with a resurgence of the barbaric brutality and violence of a half-animal vital Nature. How

are the spiritual Forces to deal with all that or make use of such a churning of the energies of the material universe? The way of the Spirit is the way of peace and light and harmony; if it has to battle it is precisely because of the presence of such forces which seek either to extinguish or to prevent the spiritual light. In the spiritual change inertia has to be replaced by the divine peace and calm, the rajasic troubled energy by a tranquil and potent, pure and liberated dynamis, while the mind must be kept plastic for the workings of a higher Light of knowledge. How will the activity of Materialism lend itself to that change?

Materialism can hardly be spiritual in its basis because its basic method is just the opposite of the spiritual way of doing things. The spiritual works from within outward, the way of materialism is to work from out inwards. It

makes the inner a result of the outer, fundamentally a phenomenon of Matter and it works upon that view of things. It seeks to "perfect" humanity by outward means and one of its main efforts is to construct a perfect social machine which will train and oblige men to be what they ought to be. The loss of the ego in the Divine is the spiritual ideal; here it is replaced by the immolation of the individual to the military and industrial State. Where is there any spirituality in all that? Spirituality can only come by opening of the mind, vital and physical to the inmost soul, to the higher Self, to the Divine, and their subordination to the spiritual forces and instrumentation as channels of the inner Light, the higher Knowledge and Power. Other things, mental, aesthetic, vital, are often misnamed spirituality, but they lack the essential character without which the word loses its true significance.

30. 6. 37.

—Sri Aurobindo.

THOUGHTS ON CURRENT EVENTS

CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

"India need not starve" is the title of a new book by Mr. Michael Brown, a well-known publicist, who was deputed by the Editor of the Times of India to make a close study of the famine conditions in Bengal. Sir Purushottomdas Thakurdas has written a Foreword to that book. The author shows, with a great command of facts and figures, that the disaster in Bengal would not have happened if there had been any sort of organised life in the villages. Tracing the history of the shortage conditions, he shows that the present-day food crisis in India is not entirely a wartime affair and that its removal depends upon the success or failure of plans to reconstitute rural India. It is more or less a long story of under-nutrition. Since 1920-21 we have heard much about the "Constructive Programme" for village uplift, but the utter lifelessness, lethargy and disorganised condition of the villages throughout India shows conclusively that that Programme has constructed nothing. It was bound to fail as it had no true vision behind it and it never touched the root of the problem. As a matter of fact, the so-called constructive programme is nothing more than a long list of works—cottage industries, sanitation, education, communal unity, temperance, removal of untouchability and so forth. These are all excellent things and have to be done, but who is going to do them and how? Go to any village and the villagers will invariably tell you: "Our village is the worst place

on the earth, the people here are so worthless; we are so helpless, we cannot do anything, let the Government do things, let the leaders come here more frequently and do things for us." What is the use of placing a long list of works to be done before persons who seem determined not to bestir themselves? As a matter of fact, the villagers do not believe that their condition can improve and they cannot combine or act together for a common cause. Sheer hunger compels them to do some work, but if they can somehow get one meal a day, they would not work for a second meal. The inertia of our villagers is stupendous, and those who think that students going on lecturing in villages and explaining to them the whole gamut of the constructive programme will be able to organise the villages have no sense of reality. The villagers have the lower passions of greed, lust, anger, jealousy, hatred, revenge and other criminal propensities, and by an appeal to these dark and dangerous elements they can be temporarily roused to a mass movement, and that can create great havoc, but nothing constructive or permanent can come out of such blind movements and in reaction they fall into deeper despondence and lifelessness. In that way lies destruction.

Indeed the work of village reconstruction is very very hard, it is almost like an attempt to bring a dead person back to life. Those workers who have infinite patience and perseverance and

are determined not to be discouraged by any difficulty, delay or obstacles should go to villages and live and work with the villagers as one of them. It was altogether a wrong policy that the villagers could be quickly prepared through constructive work for the fight for political freedom. Political work or fight stands altogether on a different plane and the two should never be mixed together. Constructive work must be done for its own sake, education for the sake of education and not for recruiting political volunteers, economic organisation for the sake of improving the economic condition of the villagers and not for preparing them for a mass movement or moulding their minds for an utopia of "plain living and high thinking."

In countries like Russia and China, young men and women went to live and work in the villages as doctors, teachers, nurses, midwives, carpenters, masons, cultivators and so forth and gradually taught the villagers to combine and work unitedly for the improvement of the condition of all. When the villagers are so awakened they will themselves form their own plans and programme of work suitable to their local conditions and needs. The main thing is to bring a new life into them, to inspire faith in their own powers and create in them the habit of co-operative work and effort. If a plan or programme of work is to be given as a guide or model, it can be stated in some such simple formula that there shall be in the village no man without food, no diseased person without medical treatment and no child without education. An attempt to implement this plan will draw out all the latent energies of the villagers; as Hindus and Muslims will have to work together for

achieving this goal, a firm foundation of communal unity will be laid; as the depressed classes are the worst sufferers, any genuine village up-lift work will tend to remove the ban of untouchability. When through such a work the villages become organised units, they will not only be able to tackle all their local problems but will also come forward to take an effective share in the larger life of the country and in higher national and spiritual movements.

As a means of teaching the villagers to work unitedly for the good of all, the co-operative movement seems to have proved very successful in all economically prosperous countries; and if it has not met with much success in our country, it is chiefly because the energy of our public men and workers has turned mostly to the political movement, and constructive work has not been attempted on realistic lines. Whatever co-operative organisation there is in the country mostly consists of credit societies, and these alone cannot solve the economic difficulties of the villagers. We must remember that the co-operative movement began its historic career a century ago as a small shop in Rochdale supplying its members with the essential necessities of life on a basis not of profit but of service to the members. So a village co-operative bank should have a sale and purchase department attached to it; the bank will lend money to the villagers for all sorts of productive work and also keep deposits of their savings; the sale-purchase department will buy up all the village products and sell them in suitable markets and also supply all the requirements of the villagers at a whole-sale rate. The bank ought also to take charge of other financial affairs of the individual villagers, paying their

rent to the Zemindars, settling their old debts thus eliminating the exploitation of the ignorant villagers by the creditors, the Zemindar's officials and the shop-keepers. Mr. J. N. Mandal, Minister-in-charge, Co-operative Credit and Rural indebtedness in Bengal recently observed: "Bengal stands in need of the co-operative movement today to combat the economic ills that sit astride on her bosom like an incubus. . . . The potentialities of co-ope-

ration are infinite and if we are wise we should harness it to our use in the fullest extent. I call upon you, co-operators of the Province, to come together and reiterate your faith, once more in the creed of co-operation—a creed of unity, fraternity and freedom to work with renewed energy and determination for the regeneration of the co-operative movement. Let our past failures be the pillars of our future success."

A TESTAMENT OF FAITH

There are people who, whenever anything is said to them about Nazi atrocities, at once blurt out, "That is propaganda." They have allowed their minds to be so biased that they cannot believe in anything that is said against the Germans. When the news of the liberation of Paris came to Calcutta, somebody at once remarked, "That is all British propaganda." Now there is, no doubt, such a thing as propaganda, but it may be true or false; and if people use their discretion and judge any piece of news on its merits considering the source and probability, that would certainly be doing the right thing. But the people to whom we are referring here do not want to use their discretion or power of judgment; anything said against the Germans is at once taken by them as propaganda and false propaganda. Sometime ago the Archbishop of Greece, a venerable personality, gave an account of the harrowing atrocities committed by Nazi soldiers on innocent and helpless Greek women and children. Are we to dismiss this simply as propaganda? Is the Mein Kampf, the Bible of Nazi barbarism, a piece of British propaganda? The Germans themselves announce the

murder of hostages, sometimes the shooting of 50 innocent Frenchmen or Greeks as a reprisal against the murder of one German soldier. Hitler boasted more than once in his broadcast speeches from Berlin that he would exterminate all the Jews in Europe. If in this background of indisputable facts we hear a news that Jewish men, women and children are being mass murdered by poison gas, should we dismiss that as propaganda? Imagine what would be the effect of such attitude on our part on the unfortunate persons who are the victims of Nazi oppression. If only we sympathetically listen to the awful tales of their suffering and condemn the Nazis unequivocally, even if we cannot give any material help, the victims could still hope that some day their liberation might come.

Here is an account published in an Underground Paper in Poland, reproduced in Polish News, November, 1944. Zosya had not shed a tear when a few months ago she was notified of the death of her only brother in the concentration camp. Her husband is in the Polish Army; no news are coming. Her children are starving, she has no means to give them what they need. . .

Her nerves can no longer take it. And now this bombardment of Warsaw. . . Her friend, an underground worker comes. They talk. Suddenly, after a moment of silence, Zosya bursts out: "I don't believe in anything any more. Human laws, eternal justice, human goodness, everything fails. Evil rules the world, betrayal and hate. Yes, EVIL. We are alone, in all our deepest misery we are alone. Do you know what it means? Human iniquity has no bounds. For almost five years we have been dying in concentration camps and labour settlements. They are killing us on the thresholds of our cottages, hanging us on the gallows, our children are sold in the market place like cattle and does any one put a good word for us?"

Only a good word they ask for in their protracted unbearable sufferings, and if even that is not forthcoming, if instead of that people go on talking about the God-given mission of Hitler and his Nazi gang, one begins to lose faith in humanity and curse and that can bring a terrible retribution.

But there are people who would not lose heart under any circumstance and it is with these heroic souls that the hope of the world lies. The other woman, the friend of Zosya, the underground worker speaks: "It is not a question of being alone, but of keeping your faith in the ULTIMATE VICTORY of GOOD which is as ETERNAL as evil is powerful today."

—Critic

Spirituality does not flourish on earth in the void, even as our mountain tops do not rise like those of an enchantment of dream out of the clouds without a base. When we look at the past of India, what strikes us is her stupendous vitality, her inexhaustible power of life and joy of life, her almost unimaginably prolific creativeness. For three thousand years at least,—it is indeed much longer—she has been creating abundantly and incessantly, lavishly with an inexhaustible manysidedness, republics and kingdoms and empires, philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences and creeds and arts and poems and all kinds of monuments, palaces and temples and public works, communities and societies and religious orders, laws and codes and rituals, physical sciences, psychic sciences, systems of yoga, systems of politics and admin-

istration, arts spiritual, arts wordly, trades, industries, fine crafts,—the list is endless and in each item there is almost a plethora of activity. She creates and creates and is not satisfied and is not tired; * * * Everywhere, as on her soil so in her works, there is the teeming of a superabundant energy of life. European critics complain that in her ancient architecture, sculpture and art there is no reticence, no holding back of riches, no blank spaces, that she labours to fill every rift with ore, occupy every inch with plenty. That is the necessity of her superabundance of life, of the teeming of the infinite within her. She lavishes her riches because she must, as the infinite fills every inch of space with the stirring of life and energy because it is the Infinite.

—(The Renaissance in India—Sri Aurobindo)

THE CHARKA CULT

It is curious that the so-called constructive programme for village uplift has laid the main stress on handicrafts and cottage industries instead of concentrating on agriculture, the staple industry in the villages. Of late agriculture has also been included in the long list of work but as an after-thought, and it has been given a place quite subordinate to cottage industries, and specially to the charka which is regarded as "the sun of the solar system of village reconstruction." Experts have given the opinion that agricultural produce in India can be doubled in 5 or 7 years if improved scientific methods are adopted by the villagers. Thus Sir M. Visvesvaraya presiding over the Bengal Provincial Indigenous Manufacturers' Conference recently observed that attempts should be made to increase the production year to year so that in 5 years' time the value of production in agricultural industries might be doubled. Increase of production would lead to increase of occupation. That would lead to the increase of per capita income and improvement of standard of living in rural areas, and that by increasing the purchasing power of the villagers would contribute to the general industrial progress in the country. Why not concentrate on that as a five-year plan as Sir Visvesvaraya himself suggested?

Science has made immense improvement possible in agriculture, but our villagers are still clinging to obsolete methods and wasting their energy—not too plentiful—in fruitless labour. Whenever any suggestion is made about the

application of Science to agriculture, at once the objection is raised that our villagers are poor and illiterate and our agricultural lands are divided piecemeal and that such machinery as tractors etc. are not suitable to the conditions in India. If tractors etc. really increase food production to a considerable extent, all obstacles to their use can and must be removed, but scientific agriculture does not consist solely in the use of complicated machinery, it is the application of advanced knowledge about soil and manure and crops, and there should not be much difficulty in bringing this knowledge to our village agriculturists. That would bring a substantial addition to the income of the villagers; on the other hand, the income from spinning on which so much stress is being laid is practically negligible. Statistics show that spinners get on the average a few odd annas (less than eight annas) per month and even that insignificant addition to the income is possible only because there is an All-India organisation, run at a great cost, to supply cotton to the spinners and arrange for the sale of their produce and also because there are still some people in the country who, induced by propaganda, are buying khaddar at a price much dearer than mill cloth. Thus it ought to be clear to everybody that khaddar is not at all a sound economic programme. Indeed this is now admitted by the protagonists of khaddar themselves. In a recent meeting of the trustees of the A. I. S. A. it was admitted that the A. I. S. A. with its

limited capital (!) could not compete with the mills and the view was expressed that some khadi workers had affected or hampered khadi principles by caring more for the business side, rather than propagating the charka cult which is the emblem of non-violence.

So khadi is to be propagated as a cult, as a new religion, whether it be economically a sound proposition or not. And what is this cult, this new religion? Non-violence is certainly a high moral ideal—though we do not see how it can be accepted as a creed in a world where resolute attempts are still made to bring back barbaric condition of things by sheer brute force, as evidenced in the outburst of Nazism—but what has charka got to do with non-violence? Mankind on the whole has become less violent and more peace-loving since the charka was replaced by the mill, that is, since the industrial revolution, which took place at the end of the eighteenth century. Up to that time, the methods of industrial production were largely what they had been from the earliest days of civilization. The history of mankind during that period is chiefly a history of bloody battles between peoples and nations. It is the international relations fostered by the revolution in the transport system and communication which emphasised the need of peace and non-violence so that the whole of mankind might live as one vast family.

The cult of charka is really a cult of poverty, it is a definite revolt against machinery and industrialisation which alone can permanently abolish poverty and enable all human beings to live in plenty and peace. Thus it is stated authoritatively: "There are two schools of thought current in the world. One wants to divide the world into

cities and the other into villages. The village civilisation and the city civilisation are totally different things. One depended on the machinery and industrialisation, the other rested on handicraft. We give preference to the latter." This view that the nature of a civilization depends on the methods of production is very superficial, though the whole theory of Marx is based on it; the nature of a civilization depends ultimately on the view taken about God, man and the world and the place of man in the world, his ultimate aim in life. From this standpoint there are really two civilisations, materialistic and spiritual, corresponding roughly to the Western and the Eastern civilizations and cultures. The opposition between rural and urban civilisations is quite arbitrary, as since the beginning of human civilisation mankind has built up towns and cities for the advantages of concentration, although the majority of the population lived scattered in villages. Where would have been Greek or Roman cultures if there had been no Athens or Rome? In ancient India also we had Ayodhya, Mathura and Hastinapur, and a record of the gorgeous lives of our ancient cities is still preserved in our literature. Indeed "Collective life diffusing itself in too vast spaces seems to lose intensity and productiveness....In this organisation of nations and kingdoms those which have had the most vigorous life have gained it by a sort of artificial concentration of the vitality into some head, centre or capital, London, Paris, Rome. By this device Nature, while acquiring the benefits of a larger organisation and more perfect unity, preserves to some extent that equally precious power of fruitful concentration in a small space and into a closely packed activity which

she had possessed in her more primitive system of the city state or petty kingdom." (*The Ideal of Human Unity*). The rate at which a dense population is growing, as it is in India, makes it imperative that we should organise centres of concentration. Cities will grow even if industrial centres are separated from them, and wherever large masses of people live in groups amenities become necessities and only an industrialised country can properly supply them. Even then there will be innumerable villages and Science must be brought in to improve the condition of the villages and remove their utter poverty and bareness. Cottage industries must be there but they must be suitable to modern conditions. The All-India Manufacturers' Organisation has given a list of such suitable cottage industries, and spinning is not one of them. A revolt against machinery and industrialisation is really a retrograde policy which cannot and ought not to succeed.

It is not a fact that in ancient times village civilisation was based on handicrafts: the villagers lived mainly on the soil by agriculture and it was in towns and cities that handicrafts flourished. "In the past the great mass of the poor had been the serfs in the country and the lower-grade artisans in the town." Modern industrialisation aims at the complete abolition of poverty and the bringing of a rich and prosperous life to all; it does not really propose to divide the country into cities. The Bengal conference recommended the adoption of practical and comprehensive measures to reconstruct and reorganise Bengal's cottage industries as well as to develop small capital mechanised industries on modern co-operative principles of production and marketing.

In the ancient village system there was not only a vast waste of human labour but also of material resources. Science has devised means for the best utilisation of wood and coal and water power and is even planning to harness the rays of the sun for generating power; in this way by well-planned industrialisation the life of the people can be immensely enriched. So the opposition to industrialisation is really an opposition to the enrichment of life and it proceeds from the wrong idea that poverty and bareness is essential for the spiritual growth of man. This ideal of poverty, now preached in India with charka as its slogan, was chiefly propagated by Christianity; poverty was never accepted as a national ideal in India. We have only to read our great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, and the works of our great poets like Kalidasa to be convinced that the Indian ideal has always been of a rich and prosperous life satisfying to the full all the legitimate needs and desires of man, *artha* and *kama*. In ancient times it was the Europeans who lived a hard life of poverty and bareness; whatever luxuries there were were importations from the East for the use of the wealthy few. In India the ideal was of a rich, prosperous, beautiful and even luxurious life, and the arts, industries and commerce were vigorously pursued for a practical realisation of that ideal. It was indeed the fabulous wealth of India that attracted her invaders.

India, in spite of her essentially spiritual civilization, has always been a worshipper of Mahalakshmi, the goddess of riches and beauty. It was only an extreme development of her spirituality that enjoined utter poverty on the sadhaks, but that was meant only for

the world-shunning saint or sannyasin and not for the house-holder. For the latter, the ideal has been given once for all in Sri Krishna's last injunction to Arjuna in the Gita: "Therefore arise, get thee glory, conquer thy enemies and enjoy an opulent kingdom." (11/33). Sri Aurobindo thus writes in *The Mother*: "Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life.....Some even put a ban on money and riches and proclaim poverty and bareness of life as the only spiritual condition. But this is an error; it leaves the power in the hands of the hostile forces. To reconquer it for the Divine to whom it belongs and use it divinely for the divine life is the supramental way for the Sadhaks."

Indeed if the deep poverty of the Indian masses is not removed by some such plan as has been devised by the All India Manufacturers' Organisation, the Indians will fail in the struggle for existence and will be exterminated with all their culture and spiritual ideals. Thus the cult of the charka is really a cult of decay and death. Consider, for instance, the ravages done by Malaria; in Bengal alone it is causing the death of about 7 lacs of people every year, not to take account of the many more lacs that it is disabling. To eradicate this pest vast sums of money have to be spent and that cannot come from the meagre income of handicrafts. Industrialisation is not the creation of some mental theorist, it has come in the natural and inevitable process of evolution for the progress of mankind. As there was the seed of capitalism in the ancient domestic system—spinners got their cotton from importers who were

generally town capitalists, so the machine also had its beginning in the handicraft. "The inventors were generally skilled artisans or scientific experimenters whose work was in no sense entirely new. . . . The first of the inventions was Kay's 'flying shuttle' which enabled a weaver to jerk the shuttle back and forth by means of a handle, thus increasing the speed of operation. This, by making possible more rapid weaving, stimulated a demand for more thread, and led to the invention (1765), by a clever weaver named James Hargreaves, of a spinning-machine known as the 'spinning jenny'. This was soon improved so that a child turning the wheel did the work of twenty persons. One invention stimulated another, and at present a spinning machine runs as many as one thousand spindles, each turning at the rate of ten thousand revolutions a minute; and it needs only one man and two boys to tend two thousand spindles." (Modern and Contemporary Europe by J. S. Schapiro). Thus machine and industrialisation have come in the inevitable and natural course of evolution and it is absurd to think that mankind can or will go back to the state of the handicraft. The latter did not yield ground without a struggle when many persons were thrown out of employment. "A series of riots broke out against the 'iron man'; many machines were destroyed by mobs, and Hargreaves himself was attacked by the rioters. But it was all in vain. The artists were soon forced to give up their hopeless struggle against machinery and to find places in the factories."

The advantages of industrialisation are so obvious to-day that it would not have been necessary to recount them here if the ghost of the past age on

handicraft had not been haunting the minds of some of our foremost men. In the past, when labour was performed by slaves or serfs, leisure was enjoyed only by the very few wealthy persons. But now that machinery is superseding human labour, it has become possible for millions to enjoy a certain degree of leisure. The work day is gradually being shortened to eight hours (and even less), holidays are more frequent, and vacations more general. This gives opportunities for recreation and culture to many who, in the past, were sunk in misery and ignorance.

Industrialisation has not only given an increasing mastery over external Nature, it has contributed to human progress in many other directions. "The welding together of different parts of a country by the railway, steam-boat, and telegraph deepened the sense of national unity...Old nations like France and England lost their provincial differences in customs, habits, laws and speech. Common economic interests at last gave a solid foundation to the national aspirations of both Germans and Italians, who had remained divided for so many centuries, and led them to unite, each into a common fatherland." If India, in spite of her basic unity in culture and civilisation created since the Vedic times, could not achieve political and national unity, it was chiefly due to the primitive methods of transports and communication. Now that railway and telegraph have removed these obstacles, would it not be the utmost folly to try to take India back to the days of the charka and the bullock-cart?

As we have already said, industrialism has not only intensified nationalism, it has at the same time furthered internationalism. "The new means of trans-

portation carried not only goods, but also people and ideas. This has inevitably led to a better understanding among the nations of the world of one another's ideas and institutions." Again, the philosophers of this new order preached the ideal of "Individualism." They became staunch advocates of freedom of speech, equality of all classes before the law, religious toleration, and extension of the suffrage. We are not at all blind to the evils that came on the wake of the Industrial Revolution. But the 19th century has been a history of steady combat against these evils, and industrially advanced countries have already found a remedy for many of them. India will solve the evils in her own spiritual way, but unless she enters into it how will she get a chance of solving those evils? The main source of the evils of industrialism has been the greed for large profits which caused many capitalists to exploit their labourers mercilessly; but now labour organisations have advanced so far that they can compel the capitalists to give the workers a fair share in the wealth to the production of which they contribute by their labour. But the root of the evil, the inordinate greed of man, has been there even before the advent of industrialism and led to the merciless exploitation of the weak and the poor and also to continuous wars. That root must be struck out, if humanity is to find a really new order of living and lasting peace, and that can be done only through spirituality which alone can bring about a radical change in human nature. It is absurd to think that spinning would revolutionise human psychology. The looters who raided India again and again and caused wide-spread havoc and destruction were all dressed in

pure home-spun khadi, as there were no mills or mill clothes at that time. When men will cease to be greedy and avaricious through spiritual discipline, wars will be permanently abolished and the immense wealth that would be created through scientific means can be utilised in creations of things of Art as well as all-round nation-building activities and that would give the joy of work to all men according to their nature and capacity.

The spiritual growth of man can come only by inner Yogic discipline; neither handicraft nor machinery can change the inner man. Even non-violence, of which the charka is curiously regarded as an emblem and symbol, is not spirituality but a mental and moral rule which can serve as a preparation. It is a wrong idea of spirituality to regard non-violence as an aim to be pursued for its own sake. The Patanjali system of Raja Yoga was a sort of synthesis of all systems of Yoga practised in ancient India; it has eight graded steps leading ultimately to the spiritual goal, and there *ahimsā* or non-violence is put as the first item in the first step, *yama*, the other items being truth, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possession. These were regarded as the first moral discipline which would prepare the sadhaka for higher spiritual efforts; even this discipline was not considered indispensable if one could put himself entirely into the hands of a higher divine power. The core of the spiritual effort was concentration and meditation by which one found within himself the soul or spirit which was different from and above the body, life and mind. When one finds the inner spirit, lives in it and moulds his outer life and action in the light of the spirit, only then can he be said to be on the

true spiritual path. One great defect of industrialism, indeed of physical science, is that it has so much mechanised the human intellect "that it is likely to attempt the revolution it is beginning to envisage principally or solely through mechanical means, through social and political adjustments. Now it is not by social and political devices, or at any rate by these chiefly or only, that the unity of the human race can be enduringly or fruitfully accomplished." (*The Ideal of Human Unity*). Only when man realises that in his spirit he is one with God and with all other human beings and lives and acts in that realisation that a true basis of human unity and a really happier and better world will be found.

In Sri Aurobindo's vision of the spiritual age of mankind, "the aim of its economics would be not to create a huge engine of production, whether of the competitive or the co-operative kind, but to give men—not only some but all men—the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all." (*The Psychology of Social Development*). It is obvious that this aim cannot be fulfilled by going back to the age of handicraft nor by abolishing handicrafts altogether and doing all things and all works by machines. For one thing, the problem of mass unemployment has not yet been solved in the industrially advanced countries. Recently an exhibition of handicrafts was held in Calcutta showing how destitute women have been trained to make useful and beautiful things by the hand; such things have a market and this should be encouraged. Then things of Art cannot be done by machinery; in ancient India a great number of men found employ-

ment in building temples and other great works of Art which have won the admiration of the world. Emphasising the enormous value of Art to human evolution, Sri Aurobindo thus wrote in the *Karmayogin*: "It is necessary that those who create, whether in great things or small, whether in the unusual master-pieces of art and genius or in the small common things of use that surround a man's daily life, should be habituated to expect the beautiful in preference to the ugly, the noble in preference to the vulgar, the fine in preference to the crude, the harmonious in preference to the gaudy. A nation surrounded daily by the beautiful, noble, fine and harmonious becomes that which it is habituated to contemplate and realise the fullness of the expanding Spirit in itself." (The national Value of Art.).

Large scale production by machinery

has led to a commercialism which is inimical to spiritual life. Money is being used to produce money, to bring large profits and interests, and that is an abuse of the money power. A scramble for markets is leading to all sorts of conflicts and ultimately to war. The proper use of money is not to use it for the sake of profits, but to find out the most interesting, effective, useful application of money. A man with spiritual life would deal with money in the same manner as he deals with other forces and other works. He is guided by intuition, by divine knowledge and divine impulse. In order to get the right intuition one must have the right attitude, that is, not to be influenced by a consideration of consequences, not to be moved by personal impulses, but always to seek to be guided by the divine impulse.

—Anilbaran Roy.

The whole difference between man and the animal is that the animal mind, as we know it, cannot get for one moment away from its origins, cannot break out from the covering, the close chrysalis which bodily life has spun round the soul, and become something greater than its present self, a more free, magnificent and noble being; but in man mind reveals itself as a greater energy escaping from the restrictions of

the vital and physical formula of being. But even this is not all that man is or can be: he has in him the power to evolve and release a still greater ideal energy which in its turn escapes out of the restrictions of the mental formula of his nature and discloses the supramental form, the ideal power of a spiritual being.

—The Synthesis of Yoga—Sri Aurobindo.

INDIA IS ONE

IV

The rise of Buddhism was an event of great importance to the social and political life in ancient India. Its permanent contribution however was more cultural than religious, although for a long time it figured as a popular form of religious idealism. The abundant creative energy, released largely by the regenerating influence of Buddhism, especially when its Mahayana school arose accepting the Yoga and Bhakti cults of Hinduism, broke into a myriad expressions in art, literature and philosophy; and there emerged a new order of religious communism, conceived after the pattern of the republican institutions of the Hindus. But the yet greater service Buddhism rendered to the cause of Indian unity was that it broke down the racial barriers that still existed in the country and cleared the spiritual atmosphere of all kinds of superstition and priestly obscurantism and bound together in close ties of sympathy the whole political organisation of the Aryan pale and by all these helped to lay the foundations of the great empire of the Mauryas. The Maurya empire constituted the first systematic attempt to unify India politically into a single state with a central government. But the authority of Chandragupta Maurya, whose empire extended over almost the whole of India, does not appear to have been everywhere exercised in the same manner or in the same measure. True to their love of freedom, the Indian conquerors do not for the most part

displace the rulers whom they subdue. The empire of Chandragupta included feudatory kingdoms, and there were instances of independent rule too. The old form of local self-government continued in the villages; and all these, despite the injunction, given in his *Arthashastra* by Chandragupta's Prime Minister, Kautilya, that powers of all kingdoms or bodies included in the state should be reduced to a minimum. Chandragupta's was an efficient rule though there was an element of autocracy in it. To him however goes the credit of being the first to build a great all-India empire. But an unification of it as a political necessity was not there.

Conditions with regard to this particular problem were no more favourable during the reign of Asoka who followed neither the Dharma of the Aryans strictly, nor a policy of high statesmanship like Chandragupta. The religious idealism that inspired him gave him a great vision but he had not that political wisdom and far-sightedness which were necessary for an emperor who aspired for universal sovereignty, *chakravartin raja*. The signs of disintegration that were seen in his empire—greater in extent than that of Chandragupta's—were not a little due to his pacific attitude that began to guide the imperial policy after the Kalinga war. His declaration of repentance for the sanguinary massacre he committed in that war as well as the change of his royal policy of conquest



by military force to that by the Dharma of the Buddha does no doubt raise him in the estimation of the world as one of the greatest benefactors of mankind, but in the world of politics they are more or less acts of tactlessness, if not of blunders that led to political stagnation and gradually to the decline of the empire. If Chandragupta depended more on state-craft than on Dharma (as defined by the ancient Indo-Aryans), Asoka depended more on Dharma (which was a kind of ethical idealism emphasised in Buddhism) than on state-craft. Neither could discharge the duty of a king which, according to Hindu polity, is a combination of them. Chandragupta did build a strong central government but he could not gather into it all threads of its constituent parts; whereas Asoka by propagating noble ideals was able to bring about some kind of unity in his empire founded in justice and righteousness, but he failed to develop a supreme power at the centre so as to utilise that unity for the purpose of practical politics. Hence the Empire of the Mauryas, which indicated great possibilities, began to be dismembered soon after the death of Asoka, and its vastness was not possible for any emperor of India to recover for nearly the next two thousand years.

But if the Mauryas, owing to conditions over which they had no complete control were unable to effectively unify their vast empire, they must however be acknowledged as having helped not only to keep up but also to give a fresh strength to the social and cultural solidarity that had been already there among the people belonging to various sects and clans and tribes, a fact which is attested by the vivid picture of the India of the time left by Megasthenes.

"The Greek Ambassador observed with admiration the absence of slavery in India, the chastity of the women and the courage of the men. In valour they excelled all other Asiatics; they required no locks to their doors: above all, no Indian was ever known to tell a lie. Sober and industrious, good farmers and skilled artisans, they scarcely ever had recourse to a law-suit and lived peaceably under their native chiefs. The kingly government is portrayed almost as described in Manu." There is no doubt that this high and unique moral tone of the general character of the people is an expression of their ingrained spiritual nature for the development of which necessary facilities were provided by the administration under the chiefs, which was conducted according to the traditional injunctions of the Dharma-Shastras. Politically, the largeness and extent of the empire did not last long, but culturally, the reality of its oneness,—the oneness of the whole of India, so to say,—was a growing phenomenon which seems to have been accentuated rather than disturbed by the onslaughts that fell upon the country from outside not once but many times in her history.

With the break-up of the Maurya empire followed a period when small independent states rose again but they had no friendly political relations with one another so as to enable them to combine against the irruption of the barbarians which began and continued for a long time. Incidentally, many of these nomadic tribes accepted Buddhism as their faith and were later absorbed into the social fold of Hinduism. There were converts also from among the Greeks who came with and in the wake of Alexander. A notable example is Heliodoros, a Greek

student in the University of Taxila, who in the sixth century B. C. dedicated to his Lord Sri Krishna a *garuda-dhvaja*, a stone votive offering with an inscription (Besnagar column) in which he calls himself a worshipper of Vishnu. In the culture of the Hindus influences of these peoples including the Persians are traceable. But the invasions did not, because they could not, affect the basic cultural unity of the people, though they made the problem of political unity a little more difficult of solution. The next great empire was that of the Kushana king Kanishka extending over the whole of the northern India in the first century of the present era, but it is not known how far its oneness as a political entity was achieved.

In the fourth and fifth centuries the Gupta emperors appeared strong enough to consolidate their empire under their paramount authority. They possessed grit and a kind of robust optimism about the success of their mission to revive the traditions of the Indo-Aryans in every sphere of the national life. Inheritors of a great past, they conjured up a vision of the glorious days of old and strove to bring them back by encouraging all kinds of creative activities in the country with the result that India attained during this period to the highest degree of her excellence in the realm of arts and letters. Hindu culture was again in the ascendance and took its classical turn, though there was no dearth of Buddhist learning. The administration was marked by tolerance and efficiency. Buddhists and Hindus lived together without any feeling of animosity. A remarkable instance of Hindu-Buddhist friendship is furnished by the great Gupta emperor Samudragupta receiving Vasubandhu, the Buddhist

author and patriarch, at court either as a minister or as an intimate councillor. Although a Brahminical Hindu, Samudragupta studied Buddhism in his youth with 'interest and partiality.' The essential feature of the movement ushered in by the Gupta era was a re-assertion of Aryan intellectual and political supremacy. The military achievements and wise statesmanship of Samudragupta as also of his son Vikramaditya who succeeded him strengthened the integrity of the empire, a picture of which is given by the great poet Kalidasa in his *Meghadutam* in which he describes the oneness of India in vivid terms. A remnant of this political unity in the Gupta empire even after its destruction by the White Huns, is seen in the confederacy,—perhaps the first of its kind that we come across in the historic period,—which was constituted by the rulers of some of the small kingdoms under the leadership of Balaristha, the king of Magadha, to drive away the Hun king Mihirkula.

Harshavardhana, who early in the seventh century became the lord paramount of the north, showed a remarkable combination of attributes that go to make a true sovereign. By his victorious campaigns and his strong arm of authority Harsha was able to bring about a working compactness of his empire, but it is difficult to agree with some writers that his empire was firmly consolidated. Had it been so, it would not have broken up soon after his death. It must however be said to his credit that after Asoka he is the only emperor who helped in strengthening the foundation of his empire on the basis of religion and righteousness by convoking the great Assembly or Congress at Prayag every five years to which the whole country, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, was invited

to perform their respective religious rites for which every facility was provided by the king. Like Asoka Harsha also was generous to a fault. He used to empty the royal treasury every five years by lavishly distributing gifts and alms in the Assembly. It was not certainly a wise policy on the part of a king. Of particular interest however was the eclectic religious life of the people of this period. Harsha himself was a worshipper of the Buddha and the Hindu gods Shiva and Surya. During the Gupta era the Buddha had entered the religious consciousness of the Hindus and had been accepted as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. Huien-Tsang testified that during this period all religious communities lived in peace and amity and the country was everywhere prosperous, and that the moral standard of the people was high. Harsha's reign witnessed the university of Nalanda at the pinnacle of its greatness.

Harsha's death was quickly followed by the disruption of the empire and the rise of numerous independent states always at war with one another. The narrative of their internal dissensions—evidence of political weakness—does not throw much light on the greater problems of Indian history. They however point to the fact that the country was divided against itself and was rendered open to foreign aggression. The Rajput kingdoms in the northern India deserve mention. The Rajputs were the Hinduised Hunas, Sakas and Pallavas, merged in the older population. About this period the Chalukyas flourished in the Deccan, and long after them the Cholas ruled over practically the whole of southern India; but it was not exactly a big empire that they were able to build; or perhaps it was not within

their ambition: whereas the definite aim of the emperors in the north, noticed above, had been to extend their suzerainty over a vast dominion and be its paramount lord. Early in the eighth century when the descendants of the Rajputs, called the Gurjara-Pratiharas, were ruling in the eastern Rajputana and Malwa, an important event took place in the coming of the Arabs into India with which began the play of new forces in the social, cultural and political life of the country. The conditions that were indirectly the cause of this foreign invasion proved more favourable than they had been before when mainly the absence of political unity among the different states was taken advantage of by the aggressors. But on the eve of the Muslim conquest India was not only more weakened than before by disunity and discord among the small states, but also she lacked social cohesion and solidarity.

The rise to power of the Rajputs in the north where Muslim invaders had their first footing gave impetus to the orthodox forms of Hinduism. The Brahmin came into the scene, with his hold on the society considerably strengthened by the connivance of the powers that be. The result was that the system of caste which had been elastic and in places in abeyance under the impact of Buddhism, began to be rigid again and large numbers of people, whose problems the society did not care to solve, were condemned to a life of indignity; and the process which also was started by Buddhism of assimilating to the social fold many tribes and peoples of mixed race-origins could not make any progress owing to deliberate opposition by the so-called custodians of the society. This policy of obscurantism was responsible for a social disintegration and for the creation of a class of people who

were in perpetual revolt against the society. It is these disaffected peoples who supported Muslim invasion. The Jats and the agricultural classes who helped Muhammad bin Qasim in invading Sindh did so not out of any love for the conqueror but to wreak vengeance on the Brahmins, whose tyranny they could not forget, and especially on king Dahir, the Brahmin usurper of Sindh of which the previous king was a Buddhist. The antagonism between the Brahmins and the Buddhists added no less to the social demoralisation. Besides, Buddhism by its huge monastic organisation helped to emasculate the manhood of India. The conquest of Sindh by the Arabs was made easy by the fact that thousands of the male population had adopted the yellow robe for the sake of the easy life of the monastery. The unity of India in the world of culture was of a too subjective nature to be a strong enough safeguard against any political onslaught from outside. It was there no doubt, as it is even today, but since the whole country was politically in a state of decline, it could not prove as a source of strength, for which a sound external life, the objective expression of unity, was necessary.

But India began to enter into a state of decadence not only because she was weak in her political and social life but also because the integral spiritual ideal which in the days of her glory guided every activity of her life to the health and puissance of an intrinsically powerful race, was beginning to be dimmed in her consciousness and in its place merely ethical ideals were given prominence. Indeed, nothing retarded the progress of the country so much as the acceptance of the ideals of monasticism and other-worldliness, which were emphasised in Buddhism. Political changes

affect more or less the surface life of the country; they do not, because they cannot, touch its inner life, though under favourable social conditions man can express himself more freely. But there is no worse calamity for a nation than when it deviates from the ideal which it is its destiny to fulfil. Shankara did indeed have a vision of the Spirit of India; but in his effort to hold it before the country and to counteract the evil effects of the degenerated forms of Buddhism he also stressed the evanescence of life, and could not, in spite of the deep spiritual character of his teachings, reveal to the country its real soul. He was not able to discover that harmony of spirit and life by which alone the problem of India, nay all human problems, can be solved. The Brahminical revival, of which Shankara was the greatest exponent, could not go beyond giving a reorientation to the religious consciousness of the Hindus: it had not in it the power to rekindle the ancient lamp which only can beckon India to her goal. It was a period when the body-politic of the country was showing signs of exhaustion and when even the greatest thinker of the time was found unequal to the task of reconstructing her life on the basis of the true truth of the integral Ideal for which India has stood through the ages. Nevertheless, whatever its ultimate effect, the *digvijaya* of Shankara brought together the four corners of the country into the impulse of a new awakening, and the artistic and literary activities of the people continued without being very much affected by the conditions in their external life which were not however wholly favourable to them. It is these creative efforts of the race that kept alive the soul of India, her inner unity, her cultural oneness.

—Sisirkumar Mitra

AUROBINDONIAN VIEWPOINTS

(A LETTER)

II

It is a pity a genuine traveller like you of the *via mystica* does not follow to the full the finger of light Sri Aurobindo points ahead of us. Will you pardon my daring to suspect that the "critical intellect" which keeps you dissatisfied and which, you believe, should be kept in action omits to criticise certain magnificent spiritual philosophies of the past enough and to interpret Sri Aurobindo with sufficient piercing through from words to their meaning? How else am I to understand the overweight you give to pronouncements of long ago which come from realisations apt once but not necessarily for all time and "the hurdle of anti-mentalism" you encounter in the Aurobindonian world-view with which you are in sympathy in several respects? I have touched already on past spiritual system. I should like now to figure out clearly what your "hurdle" consists in. You urge that metaphysical idealism has been held by a number of leaders in the mystical field and that not merely through intellectual activity but also through mystical experience. Your faith in it seems to be strengthened by Sir James Jeans's exposition of modern physics in his lately published book *Physics and Philosophy*. You find my statement that the drift of Science is away from Berkeley incorrect: according to you, Berkeley's view of mentalism was a limited and imperfect one, only a beginning in fact, but a beginning in right direction,

which agrees with the trend of present day physics.

When you ascribe anti-mentalism to Sri Aurobindo you are at once right and wrong. Right if you mean that he does not accept the mental consciousness in any form as the world-creator. Wrong if you mean that he does not accept consciousness at all as the creator of the world. Mind, to Sri Aurobindo, is not a synonym of consciousness: it is just one degree. Are you ascribing anti-mentalism to him by yourself employing the word "mind" broadly to signify consciousness and thinking he assumes for matter an existence outside consciousness altogether? I can quote you passages galore from *The Life Divine* to demonstrate that when a broad sense is read into the word "mind" Sri Aurobindo is not anti-mental in the least. Here is one: "The world is real **precisely** because it exists only in **consciousness**: for it is a Conscious Energy one with Being that creates it. It is the existence of material form in its own right apart from the self-illuminated energy which assumes the form, that would be a contradiction of the truth of things, a phantasmagoria, a nightmare, an impossible falsehood." Sri Aurobindo is anti-mental only when the sense is narrowed. Correctly, the sense should be narrowed: else we confuse the issue at stake. I for one play the anti-mental with the narrow sense in view, and when I aver that the drift of

Science is away from Berkeley I must be taken to mean not that modern physics thinks matter contains its own explanation but that, in the first place, it does not agree to Berkeley's foundational premiss—"matter exists wholly as a percept of our consciousness"—and that in the second place, the term "mentalism" or "idealism" is *mal à propos* in science as in philosophy. On page 203 of *Physics and Philosophy*, which is the most admirable of all his publications, Jeans says that before mentalism "can be seriously considered some answer must be found to the problem of how objects can continue to exist when they are not being perceived in any human mind." Is it not evident that Berkeley's foundational premiss is negated by Jeans? And once it is negated, what remains of Berkeley? You will argue that Berkeley postulates the mind of God as that in which objects when unperceived in any human mind exist. But this is an arbitrary step on the Bishop's part. If our percepts are sufficient, God's mind is not required; if they are not, why choose God's mind rather than matter's independent externality? Berkeley's final conclusion flatly contradicts his initial premiss. Logically the conclusion should be solipsism: as Hume reasoned, we have no right even to speak of many human minds, we must reduce other human beings to the same status as objects and they must be deemed a percept in the experiencing mind: I who perceive am the sole mind, everything I perceive—person or object—is my idea! Surely, Science, assuming both the plurality of scientific observers and the common field in which they work, cannot hold any truck with Berkeley's foundational premiss: it cannot be dubbed Berkeleyan in its

tendencies. Can it be dubbed mentalist or idealist at all, even though in an un-Berkeleyan way? In my opinion, whatever holds matter's explanation cannot be described as "mentality" or "ideas" if by these things we mean, as we strictly should, either the contents of our own small consciousness or anything akin to their peculiarity on a large scale. I therefore maintain further that for Science no mind of any sort can be the *fons et origo* of the universe. Science may be drifting away from materialism and it may be legitimately doing so, though the legitimacy is not granted by all scientists; none-the-less, Jeans is not justified in his mentalist inferences. Perhaps I am puzzling you by blowing hot and cold. Let me state my view in some detail, also glancing *en passant* at the exact philosophical position today in physics, the position which Jeans's latest book, despite its being more cautious and subtle than his earlier publications, does not impartially convey.

According to *Physics and Philosophy*, in order to explain what happens in space and time to the world of "matter and radiation" that we know, we have to construct mathematical formulas which are such that they imply a substratum to which our perceptual experience of matter and radiation in space and time do not apply at all. What kind of substratum is this? Jeans argues that since all mechanical models of it based on perceptual experience fail us and since the new mathematics is the only representation we can make and since this mathematics is mental, the universe's substratum is likely to be one of thought in a universal mind existing free of the phenomenal world but acting as the origin of it. To such an argument certain scientists offer a

retort expressible under five heads. First, they ask us to understand that the new mathematics is purely a conceptual scheme by which we connect phenomena and to speak of its corresponding to any substratum-reality existing as a universal mind, an abstract device within our own minds, correlating phenomena, is all that we can regard as existing besides those phenomena themselves with their queer character. Second, the varied queer aspects of modern physics baffling our visual imagination and rendering a mechanical model of them impossible are no positive indication that matter and radiation cannot themselves in their ultimate state act queerly enough to puzzle a model-making engineer and that we are actually dealing with something beyond spatio-temporal phenomena. Third, the cutting out of space and time is a weakness in the conceptual scheme, for it puts the hypothesis of that scheme outside the range of direct verification, real or ideal: the only verification the scheme's hypothesis can have is an indirect one—namely, that without it phenomena remain unconnected and uncorrelated to our minds: direct verification would be there if our scheme brought us to any experimental knowledge of that which is out of space and time and unlike the world of perception in general. Fourth, a hypothesis not directly verifiable under any real or ideal scientific conditions creates in Science the presumption that it is the result of inappropriate concepts: with the advent of appropriate ones it will be discarded in favour of another hypothesis not leading to the present paradoxes. Fifth, the fact that at the moment we have not hit upon another hypothesis or conceptual scheme proves nothing final, especially in a

domain where alterations have frequently occurred: as Jeans himself admits in *The Mysterious Universe*, "perhaps science should leave off making pronouncements—the river of knowledge has too often turned back on itself." The fivefold retort shows that for certain scientists the likelihood of Jeans's conclusion does not arise. I mention the retort to suggest that anti-materialism is not doomed philosophically acceptable by all: at least the scientists of Soviet Russia—and they are some of the best in the field—cannot be imagined as subscribing to it. I personally do not want to cast my vote for or against the retort. My own point in the discussion is that, even if our present mathematics and the hypothesis underlying it are correct and serve as a sign towards an originaive reality immaterial and free of the phenomenal world, it is hopelessly inadequate to consider it a universal mind instead of a consciousness higher than the mind. The universe's substratum must be such as would be able to produce the world of phenomena which we name physical, it must be able to hold the origin of matter and radiation in space and time. Jeans seems to think a universal mind fulfils this condition. You agree with him. Of course I must not forget you have mentioned not only Jeans but also mystics as bearing you out. Mystical evidence is certainly to be given importance. Yet I make bold to submit that if mystics have spoken of a universal mind as holding in its mental stuff a full and final origin of matter and radiation they have ill-chosen their language as much as Jeans has done. A simple consideration will elucidate my point.

Mentalism can describe a universal mind only by analogy from the nature

of mind known to us. What is that nature? A universal mind would differ in many respects from the individual mind. Suppose we grant that, unlike the individual mentality, it does not labour under the defect of perceiving in matter and radiation an objectivity beyond itself, an objectivity which cannot be equated with its own perceiving. Would it even then be adequate? If it is still to be a mind and not a higher form of consciousness it must have some characteristic affinity to our mode of being, to something in our awareness of the subjective world if not of the objective. The utmost we can do is to concede the universal mind an experience of the so-called objective world as though that world were subjective to it, so that it knows objects as its own stuff put out for play. In that case, as long as its stuff is mental, it must hold physical objects in the way we hold what we name our mind's subjective contents. As we evolve and arrange and order our conceptions and feel them to be emanations of our own self, the universal or cosmic mind would deal with matter and radiation. But just as we are aware of a background of which our self appears to be a projection and our thoughts a semi-mysterious substance which we do not feel to be entirely controlled by us as our own, so too the cosmic mind would be conscious of a secret background and the physical objects which are its substance would be a half-mystery which it cannot master and shape to integral perfection. The cosmic mind would not escape the dim sense that it is working out what it receives from it-knows-not-where and that, while its working out is as if it were acting in itself and by its own rights it is being used by some power vaguely present behind it. Its own triumph of unity

would be a harmony of arranged accords and discords—it would have an organised equilibrium haunted by an internal incapacity for a perfect ordering and outflowing of things. As we individuals are conscious of depths unplumbed within us, of a check upon our subjective life from backgrounds unknown, as a limited sway over our own thoughts, of a bound to our creativity and our will, even so the cosmic mind must feel in its consciousness of matter and radiation as its own mental stuff an inherent absence of fullness and finality.

If we assert that there is no such absence we are talking of a status of consciousness to which it is illicit to apply the name "mind". An infinite consciousness, omniscient and omnipotent, limiting itself freely and without the least ignorance or incapacity may be spoken of as mind in the broadest of senses, but then the term we employ loses all meaning. It becomes a synonym of consciousness in any and every degree. In the West the tendency to "mentalise" everything is habitual. But when we cast about to examine consciousness in the world around, we discern several degrees. The animal's is one degree, the plant's is another, the metal's as shown by Bose's detection of a power of response to stimuli is a third. We may generalise beyond the metal and say that a hidden consciousness resides in the atom itself. But it would not be proper to class all these degrees as mental: they are obviously sub-mental. On our own level we may conceive an extension, a universality. We may go on conceiving diminution of many defects, but we cannot blot out every resemblance to the ideative stuff and self that is mind as experienced by us. Remove every shade of likeness and you will have only consciousness in common and nothing mental.

Indeed we may aver that the sub-mental is really the mental concealed or involved, but when we reach the mental stage and widen and intensify it to the furthest, do we come to the ultimate? Are we not obliged to overpass the mental frontier if we speak of an omniscient and omnipotent consciousness? Are we not compelled to speak of mind at even its widest and intensest as the Beyond—mind concealed or involved? I think we are, unless both psychology and language are to be amorphous and inaccurate. No mind, universal or cosmic though it may be, can possess the essentials of being the first and last reality. It must always be an intermediate light. No doubt, a universal mind exists and mystics have experienced it, but if they have not experienced a greater reality which puts it forth as an instrument, they have not found an all-containing, all-constituting, all-penetrating, all-creating consciousness. Neither by physics, metaphysics, nor mysticism can we ever hope to make mentalism adequate to a consciousness absolutely and ultimately originative of spatio-temporal phenomena from a poise free of space and time.

The cosmic mind can only be a particular mode of action adopted by a far superior consciousness which is spiritual and not mental. The principle of all mind is endlessly to divide and endlessly to aggregate: to measure off, limit and depiece, then put the piece together and keep adding up to arrive at a whole. Evidently such a principle must be there for the Spirit to originate the physical universe of divisibility into infinitesimal units and of diverse heaping up of those units to make objects. Evidently such a principle is also responsible for the ignorance which shuts us off from the Spirit's light, for

ignorance means the fragmentation of the Infinite, in which the fragments stand apart, forgetting the Infinite that makes them one and striving to reach it by being added up. Division and fragmentation, however, do not *per se* cause ignorance. At their root, they are just the Spirit's selfplay of multiplicity. As long as the basic unity is not lost, there is no lapse from knowledge. The dividing and fragmenting mind, therefore, is in essence a movement of the Spirit: the creative Gnosis, following its one-yet-multiple trend, brings about the divine archetype of mentality. In that archetype there is no ignorance, since the mind movement is fully aware, of itself as formulated by the Spirit and undivided from the Spirit. This mind-movement is not self-sufficient as would be by definition the universal mind which mentalism supposes to be final: it is part and parcel of a supra-mental reality. A new projection of the archetypal mind which is in union with the supra-mental blaze of knowledge is needed to render ignorance possible. That projection is the cosmic or universal mind-mentality unliaisoned with the omniscient and omnipotent Spirit. The lack of liaison does not affect the archetype with ignorance, it affects only the projection. Ignorance occurs when, though the archetype is aware of the mental cosmicity it has formulated as an instrument, the instrument becomes oblivious of the power formulating it, even as one side of a man's personality sometimes forgets the many-sided whole of which it is a portion and becomes exclusively concentrated in itself.

The ignorance that is ours would not be there without the cosmic mind becoming ignorant. Of course the cosmic mind is not completely ignorant, the complete ignorance takes place when a total plunge is made by the

Spirit into a self-formulation at the opposite pole of its supreme knowledge. We physical beings are evolutes out of that total plunge: we rise, as the Vedic hymn of creation has it, out of a darkness, that is wrapped in darkness, we are emergents from a sea of the "unconscious", a formidable abyss of black self-loss. So our ignorance is a special one. Behind our individual mentality there is a purer individualisation which is less ignorant, a standpoint of the cosmic mind. Experiencing that standpoint and breaking from it into the cosmic mentality we reduce our ignorance as much as we can without exceeding the mind-formula divided from the Beyond-mind. Yet the true knowledge is not there until the division between us and the Spirit is destroyed. The integral destroying is in the Sun of consciousness which is the Vedic and Upanishadic description of the Gnosis. There are lower grades of mystical experience in which, despite the division not being there, the dynamic use of the Spirit's knowledge is less intense, less luminous, less effective. It is these grades that mystics mostly attain, grades from the Overmind downwards to the frontier where the cosmic ignorance starts on that *descensus Averno* ending in the terrible catastrophe of the "unconscious" from which our world evolves. At even the lowest grade above that frontier something more intense, more luminous, more effective than any universal mind is attained. The first country of the cosmic ignorance is the universal mind in itself, cut off as it is from its spiritual and supra-mental source. Consequently, I rate mentalism as an error for its failure to look further than this mind and to discern as inevitable to this mind the vague feeling, of a profundity and a puissance hidden behind and above.

I may, in justice to Jeans, remark that he uses the terms "mind" and "mentalism" about the universe's substratum when what he actually intends is, as he phrases it in one place, "a consciousness superior to our own." So my quarrel with him resolves at bottom to one of terminology. My quarrel would be of more than terminology if he were a Berkeleian, which he surely is not in his present book, believing as he does that things in the universe "cannot be mere constructs of our individual minds and must have existences of their own." He differs from the materialists inasmuch as he opines that the way we can best understand in physics the course of events creates the likelihood of a universal substratum analogous in character to mathematical knowledge—that is, a substratum of consciousness. His argument may be right or wrong; but I agree with his central thesis about consciousness and differ only from his use of the word "mind" to cover "spirit".

I think my quarrel as an Aurobindonian with you is also due to the same reason. If you drop "mind" and "mentalism" and urge that the Physical world has no reality independent of and outside a basic consciousness, Sri Aurobindo will shake hands with you and say "Right-O!" According to him, it is a spiritual and supra-mental Gnostic consciousness that has originally emanated the physical world as one particular infinity of its multi-infinity substance and force, knows it with complete identity both static and dynamic and is working out divine possibilities in what it has emanated as apparently the very opposite of all that is divine.

—K. D. Sethna.

GRACE IN THE EARLIER UPANISHADS

1

It has been maintained by some scholars whose general outlook towards our culture is mainly influenced by the western scholars that the conception of Grace is foreign to the Upanishads in general and to the earlier Upanishads in particular. This particular theory of theirs is, in reality, only a minor corollary of the more general attitude and approach to Indian culture. According to it the Vedas must be primitive because theory requires humanity at the time of their supposed compilation to be primitive and barbaric. If the Upanishads contain profound philosophical Truths clothed in inspired language, replete with religious fervour they cannot be the natural culmination and result of the Vedic culture but must represent a revolt against Vedic ritualism. Grace cannot figure in the earlier Upanishads because forsooth the idea of a personal God is unknown to them and emerges only later culminating at last in the Vaishnavite cult of Krishna which lays stress on Grace as the exclusive method of attaining salvation.

It is high time that those who adopt this one-sided method of studying ancient Indian texts should realise its cramming limitations. It is like the man cutting up the human body to find the eluding soul. Thus, the question whether Grace figures in the earlier Upanishads or not is linked up with the larger question of interpretation of ancient Indian works. It is a subject too vast for the scope of an article.

But one fails to understand why Grace should be foreign to the earlier Upanishads when the Rig-Veda which is the acknowledged fountainhead of all Indian culture and of the Upanishads mentions so many Gods and is itself a collection of hymns addressed to them! The Vedic seers in fact, pray for many "benefits" and "favours", knowing full well that the God whom they pray has power to grant their prayer. It would be therefore natural to expect the seers of the Upanishads to know about Grace, the favour bestowed by God.

The very name "Upanishad" implies an esoteric and mystic knowledge which can be gained under the guidance of a competent Guru or a guide. Knowledge in this truer and deeper sense is always distinguished from mere intellectual knowledge in India. What the disciple, in the Upanishads, seeks from the Guru is not verbal explanation or textual interpretation, or even intellectual clarification, but practical guidance in attaining Brahman or Self—Knowledge which was open only to the select few, because the methods of self-attainment were kept secret in those days.

We have to remember this very practical purpose—Prayojana—of the Upanishads when we try to interpret them, for very often by losing sight of it we lend ourselves to a total misunderstanding of their contents. For instance, the Upanishads have been regarded by some as metaphysical statements, by others as philosophical

speculations, by yet others as books of religious doctrine. These studies mostly have an air of unreality and poverty of significance which the common man transfers to the magnificent originals. It is not surprising that the results of such efforts are poor because where the seer of the Upanishad speaks of "Light" he refers to a spiritual experience in which the Light is actually seen, the mere student of philosophy takes it at most as a brilliant poetical image.

Grace is said to be unknown to the earlier Upanishads because it is maintained that they advocate the doctrine of self-reliance and personal effort. But as already mentioned above the question is: Do the Upanishads advocate any doctrine at all? Any one with a casual acquaintance with them can say that they are not metaphysical works. Their aim is to lead the aspirant from experience to wider and greater experience without caring much for intellectual consistency. In their way of teaching they follow one method at one time and in one case and another,—sometimes diametrically opposite—at another. Their replies to various questions are often cryptic and their explanations vary according to the nature and the need of the questioner. Even when they speak of different and contrary aspects of the Reality they do not imply sharp intellectual distinctions and oppositions; e. g. to the ordinary intellect Personal and Impersonal are irreconcilable whereas to the seers of the Upanishads they do not seem to exclude or eliminate each other. The seer rather seems to hold them together in a reconciling experience which integrates such intellectually contrary aspects of the Reality. Thus, the Upanishads are not rational or intellectual but intuitive and inspired or

revelatory utterances of Truth-experience leading the seeker to the attainment of the Brahman. We miss the central core of their teaching if we take them as mere intellectual expressions.

There may be, and in fact there are, metaphysical and doctrinal principles implied or certain philosophical propositions may emerge from, and sometimes even overtly expressed in the Upanishads but that does not make them either philosophical or doctrinal works. So, if a certain idea does not find place in them it cannot be assured that it was totally unknown to the seers. Grace may not be mentioned by a distinct word but that does not prove that the experience or the spiritual fact of Grace was unknown to them.

Various texts are cited in support of the contention that self-reliance and personal effort is the dominant note of the earlier Upanishads as opposed to grace as a method of attainment. The fact that even the famous verse of Katha is yoked in to support personal effort,—a verse which openly and clearly speaks of grace,—shows to what extent intellect can go to twist language:

"He whom the self chooses to him it reveals its own body." (I. 2. 22.) Other passages from Manduk; (3. 2. 4); (3. 2. 3) and Katha (2. 3. 14) & (2. 3. 15) are cited in support of the same argument. Whatever may be the interpretation of such passages the main question is: Do the earlier Upanishads consider personal effort adequate for self-realisation or for liberation? The "snapping of the chords of the heart" and "attainment of purity, continence" and "askesis" no doubt indicate the necessity of personal effort in spiritual advancement, but they seem to be

preparatory conditions to be fulfilled for self-realisation and are not considered sufficient for the attainment of the Highest. At least a Guru is always considered indispensable to cut asunder the final knot of ignorance. One may have the equipment like the "purity of Sattwa" and so on but one may not arrive at Salvation or attain the Brahman. Even Katha says he who would attain must "hear it from another". "The man who has the guide attains the self."

A passage from Chhandogya, an admittedly earlier Upanishad, clearly mentions the need of Grace for final attainment: It says "By purity in diet comes the purification of the elements of the being, by that one attains constant remembrance or intuition (of the self), by it are all the knots resolved; to such a one who has his stains wiped away the Lord Sanat Kumar shows the other shore of darkness." VII. 26. 2.

This passage clearly shows that purification and snapping of the knots is only a preparatory condition. The final release comes through the help of Sanat-kumar.

If it is still maintained that self-effort is the major or sole note of the earlier Upanishads what would one make of the verse of the Isha—certainly an earlier Upanishad, "The face of Truth is covered with golden lid; that do thou remove, O Pushan!" (15)? Why does the aspirant pray to Pushan to fling open the closed door? Was he incapable of doing it himself? And what about: "O Fire! lead us by the good path to the felicity" (18)? Could not the seeker lead himself, i.e. by his own effort, to the Rayi? or was he afraid and diffident that it may not be the "good" and comfortable, path? Divine help and guidance are definitely expressed in

these invocations. Later on when even the Gita speaks of "raising the self by the Self"—one has to read it in relation to "abandoning all Dharmas take refuge in Me alone."

The fact seems to be that there is something outside the realm of the intensest personal effort, without which one cannot reach the goal. That something, the transcendent element, is the final means, the supreme help which is either plainly stated or hinted at, or is implicit in the instructions recorded in the Upanishads. Each Upanishad has its own way: the Isha may call for the help of the Gods Agni, Vayu, and Surya,—powers and personalities of the one Divine,—the Kena may point to the Supreme guidance of Uma,—the Golden Goddess,—Katha and Mundaka may refer to the Self's gracious revealing of the body of Itself, the Prasna may refer the seeker to the teacher who would help him to realise the Self by putting the necessary spiritual influence into him. The difference in the sources of help advised in the Upanishads is warranted by the difference in their themes, in their way of approach, in the attitude they take. The passage cited already from Chandogya shows that even when sattwa-suddhi is attained and all the knots are broken, Sanat-kumar has to come to lead the seeker across the ocean of ignorance.

It may be said that the help of the Guru or a God is not the same thing as grace of the Divine. But still the various helps and means are devices of the Divine to dispense His grace of which the Guru is one of the most potent. For the Guru is not one who gives the mere word, but the real initiation through opening up the inner being to the Higher Consciousness by his own spiritual influence. The Guru

is said to be "Para Brahman Himself" because he is the living symbol of the highest. The Guru embodies the realisation the disciple is seeking. That is why the Gita speaks of the Jnani as the Lord Himself. Sri Krishna also says there that the "Jnanis will give you the Upadesh of knowledge."

Another argument advanced on the basis of what Sri Aurobindo calls, "misleading European parallel" is that theistic systems and the idea of a personal God came later on and that therefore grace cannot legitimately find a place in the earlier Upanishads. This is reading our own mind into ancient works, and introducing sharp intellectual distinctions and oppositions in place of an integrating intuition or synthetic experience. The quotation from Swt IV. 18 "Shivah Kevala" is taken by some to imply the beginning of Saivism but it means the Transcendent, "the God one alone", and has nothing to do with Saivism. The "Shiva" spoken of here is the Divine in the aspect of his beneficence—and is not the Shiva of the later sects which took hold of these references in the ancient texts and tried to read in them the supremacy of their only Ishta Devata—the chosen Deity. Though the Upanishads do not speak of Shiva, Vishnu, Rudra etc. in the sectarian sense it would be a mistake to suppose that they did not know the aspect of the Divine as a Person. Thus the Katha speaks of "That, the Supreme status of Vishnu" I.3.9. It also speaks of "Isha" the Lord, the ruler, and "Vashi" the controller. All

these refer to the one Divine Person in several of his aspects. Ishopanishad as its name implies speaks of the Lord immanent in all. Such quotations can be multiplied. The fact is that the Upanishads speak, frequently and in different ways, of the essential Unity of the Divine Consciousness. This essential Divine Consciousness is spoken of as identical with the Absolute,—unconnected with the world; they also speak of it as the Governing Power or Transcendent Divine Personality,—which later became known as Purushottama. Again, they equate it to the Universal or Cosmic Consciousness, or to immanent Divine, and they identify it equally with the Self of the individual. Thus, we have the Self, Cosmic Consciousness,—the Brahman, the immanent Divine, Lord,—the Absolute. At different times stress is laid on one or the other aspect. It is the later intellectual Vedantins who emphasised the aspect of the Absolute, unconnected with the manifestations of the world as the most important one and tried to relegate Ishwara to a comparatively secondary status. Some of them even put Ishwara into the Great illusion! If we look at the text straight and ask who is this Ishwara we find that it is one with the Self in essence. The "Angushtha matra Purusha" "the self no bigger than the thumb" that is man (Ishanobhuta Bhavasya Sarva Bhutan-taratma) "the ruler of what has been and what shall be, the inmost Self of All". So that there is no doubt at all about the theistic position of the Upanishads.

II

The question is often asked: what should be the right spirit in which one should approach these ancient works?

It is not possible, of course, to develop a detailed method here, nor is it desirable. But it is plain that danger to

a true approach comes from two opposite directions: the orthodox school that would bind these holy texts to traditional and ritualistic sense and the European school which tries to seek in them justification of its own pet theories,—of comparative religion, comparative mythology, historical evolution etc.

However, certain main points which emerge from the quotations cited here from Sri Aurobindo may suggest an alternative approach. To the question: what was the living core of these ancient compositions, these quotations furnish a revealing reply.

"The Veda is the creation of an early intuitive and symbolic mentality to which the later mind of man strongly intellectualised and governed on one side by reasoning idea and abstract conception, on the other hand by the facts of life and matter accepted as they present themselves to the senses and positive intelligence without seeking in them for any divine or Psychic significance—indulging the imagination as a play of the aesthetic fancy rather than as an opener of the doors of truth and only trusting to its suggestions when they are confirmed by the logical reason or by physical experience, has grown a total stranger." (The Defence of Indian Culture).

"Veda was to these early seers the Word discovering the Truth and clothing in image and symbol the mystic significance of life. It was a divine discovery and unveiling of the potencies of the word, of its mysterious revealing and creative capacity, not the word of the logical and reasoning or aesthetic intelligence, but the intuitive and inspired and rhythmic utterance,

the Mantra." (The Defence of Indian Culture).

"The Western school chooses to imagine that these successors of the Vedic Rishis—the thinkers of the Upanishads—were in error, that, except for some later hymns they put a false and non-existent meaning into the old verses and that they themselves divided from the Rishis not only by ages of time but by many gulfs and separating seas of an intellectualised mentality know infinitely better." (The Defence of Indian Culture).

"The poets of the Veda had another mentality than ours, their use of their images is of a peculiar kind and an antique cast of vision gives a strange outline to their substance." (The Defence of Indian Culture).

"The Western critic sneers at the bold and reckless, and to him monstrous image in which Indra son of earth and heaven is said to create his own father and mother; but if we remember that Indra is the supreme Spirit in one of its eternal and constant aspects, creator of earth and heaven, born as a cosmic godhead between the mental and physical worlds and recreating their powers in man, we shall see that the image is not only a powerful but in fact a true and revealing figure, and in the Vedic technique it does not matter that it outrages the physical imagination since it expresses a greater actuality as no other figure could have done with the same awakening aptness and vivid poetical force. The bull and cow of the Veda, the shining herds of the Sun living hidden in the cave are strange enough creatures to the physical mind, but they do not belong to the earth and

in their own plane they are at once images and actual things and full of life and significance. It is in this way that throughout we must interpret and receive the Vedic poetry according to its own spirit and vision and the physically natural, even if to us strange and supernatural, truth of its ideas and figures" (Defence of Indian Culture).

"Veda thus understood stands out, apart from its interest as the world's first yet extant scripture, its earliest interpretation of man and the Divine and the universe, as a remarkable, a sublime and powerful poetic creation. It is in its form and speech no barbaric production. The Vedic poets are master of a consummate technique their rhythms are carved like chariots of the gods and borne on divine and ample wings of sound, and are at once concentrated and widewayed, great in movement and subtle in modulation, their speech lyric by intensity and epic by elevation an utterance of great power pure bold and grand in outline, a speech direct and brief in impact, full to overflowing in sense and suggestion so that each verse exists at once as a strong and sufficient thing in itself and takes its place as a large step between what came before and what comes after."

Thus the Veda is really the fountain head of Indian Culture.

The Upanishads are "not a revolutionary departure from the Vedic mind and its temperament and fundamental ideas, but a continuation and development and to a certain extent an enlarging transformation in the sense of bringing out into open expression all that was held covered in the symbolic

Vedic speech as a mystery and a secret."

"The imagery of the Upanishads is in large part developed from the type of imagery of the Veda".

"The Upanishads are the supreme work of the Indian mind, and that it should be so, that the highest self-expression of its genius, its sublimest poetry its greatest creation of the thought and word should be not a literary or poetical masterpiece of the ordinary kind, but a large flood of spiritual revelation of the direct and profound character, is a significant fact, evidence of a unique mentality and unusual turn of spirit. The Upanishads are at once profound religious scriptures,—for they are records of the deepest spiritual experiences,—documents of revelatory and intuitive philosophy of an inexhaustible light, power and largeness and, whether written in verse or cadenced prose, spiritual poems of an absolute, an unfailing inspiration inevitable in phrase, wonderful in rhythm and expression. It is the expression of a mind in which philosophy and religion and poetry are made one, because this religion does not end with a cult nor is limited to a religio-ethical aspiration, but rises to an infinite discovery of God, of Self, of our highest and whole reality of spirit and being and speaks out an ecstasy of luminous knowledge and an ecstasy of moved and fulfilled experience, this philosophy is not an abstract intellectual speculation about Truth or a structure of the logical intelligence, but Truth seen, felt, lived, held by the inmost mind and soul in the joy of utterance of an assured discovery and possession, and this poetry is the work of

the aesthetic mind lifted up beyond its ordinary field to express the wonder and beauty of the rarest spiritual self-vision and the profoundest illumined truth of self and God and universe. Here the intuitive mind and intimate psychological experience of the Vedic seers passes into a supreme culmination in which the Spirit, as is said in a phrase of the Katha Upanishad, discloses its own very body, reveals the very word of its self-expression and discovers to the mind the vibration of rhythms which repeating themselves within in the spiritual hearing seem to build up the soul and set it satisfied and complete on the heights of self-knowledge."

"This character of the Upanishads needs to be insisted upon with a strong emphasis, because it is ignored by foreign translators who seek to bring out the intellectual sense without feeling the life of thought vision and the ecstasy of spiritual experience which made the ancient verses appear then and still make them to those who can enter into the element in which these utterances move, a revelation not to the intellect alone, but to the soul and the whole being, make of them in the old expressive word not intellectual thought and phrase, but Sruti, spiritual audience, an inspired Scripture".

"And yet these works are not philosophical speculations of the intellectual

kind, a metaphysical analysis which labours to define notions, to select ideas and discriminate those that are true, to logicise truth or else to support the mind in its intellectual preferences by dialectical reasoning and is content to put forward an exclusive solution of existence in the light of this or that idea of the reason and see all things from that viewpoint in that focus and determining perspective."

"The Upanishads are Vedanta, a book of knowledge in a higher degree even than the Vedas, but knowledge in a profounder Indian sense of the word, Jnana. Not a mere thinking and considering by the intelligence, the pursuit and grasping of a mental form of truth by the intellectual mind, but a seeing of it with the soul and a total living in it with the power of the inner being, a spiritual seizing by a kind of identification with the object of knowledge is Jnana."

"The Upanishads are epic hymns of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and God-knowledge."

"The Upanishads are the creation of a revelatory and intuitive mind and its illumined experience, and all their substance, structure; phrase, imagery, movement are determined by and stamped with this original character."

READINGS FROM THE UPANISHADS

"THEY CALL HIM SKANDA"

The short paragraph at the end of the seventh chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad closes with this statement—"The blessed Sanatkumāra shows the shore beyond darkness, and him they call Skanda, yea, they call him Skanda." Or, in Sanskrit

"tamasah pāram darsayati Bhagavān Sanatkumārah, tam Skanda ity' ācakshate, tam Skanda ity' ācakshate".

Here some questions arise from the equation that is affirmed of Sanatkumāra with Skanda and, indeed, from the very mention of the two names for the first time to which no reference is made elsewhere in this or any other early Upanishad. What is the occasion for this statement? What are the implications? Let us first state the purport of the passage with reference to the context and then proceed to consider the relevancy of these concluding lines of this section, so that we could make an effective attempt to appreciate the text in the light of the lines of thought adopted in the teachings of Sri Aurobindo.

Nārada, learned in the vedic lore, well-versed in all the sciences of the age, approaches Sanatkumāra for a higher knowledge. However thorough his learning be, he finds something still

wanting, feels the need for that knowledge by which he could cross over to the other side of "Sorrow". Sanatkumāra grants the request of Nārada and we have here a vivid description of the Indescribable, the Vast, *Bhumā*, the One, the self, the seer of which sees neither death, nor disease nor sorrow. At the close, the Upanishad declares that the One Self, the Vast, becomes the multiple soul, *ekadhā tridhā bahudhā bhavati*.

And we come to the concluding passage with which we are at present concerned. Here the Upanishad throws out hints on certain ideas pertaining to the means and the end, *sadhana* and *siddhi* and each of these ideas rests upon many others familiar to those to whom were intended these Upanishads which in effect, purpose and content were a kind of Manuals of Sadhana. Here is an English rendering of the passage: "In the purity of nourishment, *Ahara*, lies the purity of the stuff of being, *Sattwa*; *Sattwa* being pure, the immediate remembrance becomes constant and fixed; by this remembrance, there is release from the knots. To such a one, stainless, the Blessed Sanatkumāra shows the shore beyond darkness; they call him Skanda, yea, they call him Skanda."

¹ आहारशुद्धौ सत्त्वशुद्धिः सत्त्वशुद्धौ ध्रुवा स्मृतिः स्मृतिलम्भे सर्वग्रन्थीनां विप्रमोक्षः। तस्मै मृदितकषायाय तमसः पारं दर्शयति भगवान् सनत्कुमारः तं स्कन्द इत्याचक्षते तं स्कन्द इत्याचक्षते ॥

To get at the purport of the sentence, we must first determine the sense and fix in our minds the exact connotation of the sanskrit words *āhāra*, *sattwa* and *smṛiti*. For there is no surer way to miss the significance of the whole passage than to rely upon any translation or lexicon, for these terms are significant and team with a number of suggestions arising from the whole body of the teachings of this Upanishad. We must also bear in mind that the Chhandogya is one of the few earlier and authentic Upanishads which form part of the Brāhmanas, where we hear of the many Vidyas, the spiritual disciplines—sādhana, by which the initiate sets out to realise and live the Truth as envisaged and propagated to him by the seer, his teacher, the Acharya.

From the point of view of these Vidyas, the Chhandogya is the one Upanishad that is most consulted by the author of the Brahma sutras where reference is made to the Chhandogya texts for ten Vidyas out of a dozen or more from all the major Upanishads that are taken up for clarification. Any attempt to understand the exact method of these sādhana is bound to meet with a very partial success at best, as the actual method is not recorded anywhere in detail. We can from the data available in the texts guess that the teacher who was always a seer admitted the disciple for initiation on being convinced of his fitness for receiving the Vidya. He trained him for the life, put into him necessary seed of realisation, allowed it to grow and bear fruit in the right season. Thus these Brahma-vidyas were communicated in silence through the influence and example of the Guru, rather than through precept which occupied a

brief and formal place in the scheme of the spiritual culture of these ancients. We learn from the Taittiriya that Bhrigu, Varuni was asked first to realise that Matter was Brahman and through successive stages by Tapas in the intervals between one stage and another he realised Brahman ultimately as Ananda. This is called *Bhṛigavi Varuni Vidyā*.

This is just an instance to illustrate that these vidyas are summarily noticed and simply named after the teacher or the pupil who practised the particular vidya with success. There are other vidyas which are named after the character or the central aspect of the vidya, e.g. *Udgitha vidya*, *Samvarga vidya*, or after the most suitable form that is the nearest approach to the Truth, as in the case of *Bhuma vidya* or *Daharā vidyā*.

It is the mention of such names of vidyas and one or two broad hints that are all that we find recorded as the Acharya's precepts to the initiate. It is against this background, we have to search for and discover the sense of the passage that we have taken up for discussion. These concluding lines give us an idea of the sādhana that helps one to realise the *Bhumā*, the Vast Self which is the All and includes the All—the Immortal which seen, dispels all darkness and sorrow, sickness and death. We get an idea of the *Bhumā* from what has been stated earlier in the section. One can understand, mentally appreciate and in a way assimilate the concept of *Bhumā*, even allow it to dominate or recast the texture of one's mind. That has a great value for him, the mental being; for it infuses a settled illumined faith in the mind. But still that is no realisation; a brilliant concept in itself does not go far for a living

experience of the truth that is conceived, however cherished it may be in the mind.

Let us then take up the first two terms *Āhāra shuddhi* and *Sattwa shuddhi*. *Shuddhi* is purity. At the outset we are confronted with a difficulty. How is one to determine what is pure and what is not? If *Āhāra* means food, as is commonly understood, and some commentators have done so, then have we to leave the question of purity in food to be decided by reference to our sentiments and prejudices or to the 'religion of the kitchen'? *Āhāra* means derivatively whatever is brought near and has come to mean food because it is taken in. *Āhāra* according to Acharya Shankara, means knowledge of sense objects *śabdādivishaya-vijnānam*. If in sense contacts one is careful and free from desire and disgust and passion, the inner instrument *Antah Karana*, called *Sattwa* here becomes pure. Shankara has solved the problem of purity by relying on the derivative significance of *Āhāra* and taking *Sattwa* to mean *Antah Karana* as is done in the later works and the Gita and is perfectly intelligible. Our difficulty then comes to this. Does the text mean by *Āhāra*, food or sense-mind or can it be both? Does the text mean by *Sattwa*, the inner instrument or something else which may include it? To find an answer to this question, we have fortunately clues given in the Upanishad itself.

In the previous chapter, the Upanishad has spoken of three elements *dhātus* in all food called *Tejas*, *Ap*, *Anna* (Fire, Water and Earth), yielding their essential principles *Vak*, *Prana*, *Manas* (Speech or Voice, Life and Mind) respectively. To understand

what precisely is meant by this three-fold division of elements and principles, we must have a general idea of the setting of the Upanishad. Living at this distance of time, it is not easy for us to appreciate the symbolism of ceremonial rites that this Upanishad frequently resorts to in declaring the value and importance of certain religious practices of the time. Besides, it has no theories to propound; it takes up things as they present themselves to our common experience, treats men as they understand themselves to be, and direct them to courses of rites and disciplines acting to a sense of what they owe to themselves and their fellow beings as well as to the Gods. For the Vedic Gods are not entirely forgotten. As Cosmic Beings and Powers they carry on their functions within us and in the universe, have their full sway over men and things.

The Sun and Moon and Earth, the Wind, the Fire, the Waters, what to us appear as inanimate, all these are animated, directed, and controlled and presided over by the Gods. They are their concrete figures and living symbols through which approach was made to the One-without-second, to the God of gods, to the Self of selves. Such an understanding faith was common and current in the times of these Upanishads.

This Upanishad, then, through various *upāsana*s gradually infuses an unfailing spirit in the seeker to build a deeper and inner life fit to realise the One, the Immortal. It speaks of three elements and not five as the comparatively later Taittiriya does. Everywhere mostly, it makes a threefold division *Trivrit-karana* and not *Panchi-karana*. The three essential elements in all food are *Tejas*, *Ap*, *Anna*, Fire

Water and Earth. This is the creative Trinity that forms into the outer stuff of our inner being and sustains the material body which it churns, as it were, causes to yield and evolve *Vak*, *Prana* and *Manas*, Voice, Life and Mind. It may seem queer to the mentality of our age to be told that mind is grosser than life and life than voice or speech, and that voice is the subtlest of the three elements or *Dhatu*s that make up the subtle substance of our being. But by voice, *Vak*, is meant the power of expression; it is in its source the creative Word proceeding from the *Tapas*, the Divine incubation. Hence *Tejas* is said to be the principle of *Vak*. There may not be difficulty in understanding Water, the fluidic force, to be the principle of life. But mind? Certainly it is the grossest in this scheme because it is swallowed up by the gross objects it rises from and runs after.

Thus we see that in the scheme of this Upanishad, it is these *Dhatu*s or elements *Vak*, *Prana* and *Manas* that are the component parts of the subtle stuff of being, *Sattwa*, the purity of which is affirmed to result from purity of food *Āhāra shuddhi*. We can better appreciate *Sattwa* in this sense of *Dhatu*, when we remember the expression *Dhātu-prasāda* occurring in a latter Upanishad.¹ We have seen that *Sattwa* is not mind alone, but mind, life and power of expression. It is this that sustains the embodied existence here and is the vehicle of the soul in its journey to the other worlds and rebirth.

¹*Dhātu-prasāda* in Katha II.20, is the same as *Sattwa Shuddhi* according to Shankara; he states clearly that *Dhatu* means mind and other instruments "Mana adini karanani dhātavaḥ"; he means *Antah karana* which indeed is generally understood to be the sense of *Sattwa* in later writings. But *dhātu* connotes something connected with the physical organisation also. In rendering into English *dhātu* in *dhātu-prasāda* in the Katha text, Sri Aurobindo has used a word which conveys the sense of all that the Sanskrit word connotes. "Temperament"—a happy expression which at once refers to the physical and psychological elements.

As for *prasāda*, it is of course, purification, *shuddhi*, according to Sri Aurobindo as well as to Shankara.

Now, how is the purity to be got? In a still earlier chapter, the fifth, the Upanishad speaks of *Prāna-Agnihotra*, the mystical oblation to the *Vaishvānara*, the Universal Person, in which the food that is taken in (or offered to others) is offered to the Universal in the form of the Vital Fire in one's own being. That the food is offered to the Divine being within us and that it must be so felt is the central idea of this *Agnihotra*. Hence runs the saying that one must eat in silence, *mounena bhoktavyam*. Whoever knows how to perform this rite, this offering of food to the Divine Being within us, eats purity itself, takes in strength itself. The Upanishad says that all the sins of such a one are burnt to ashes just as the fibrous tuft of a reed thrown into fire.

This is the purity of food that the text speaks of, and it gives in its turn purity of *Sattwa* the character of which we have already dealt with at some length.

Now we shall take up the question of *Smṛiti-lambha*, the acquiring of *Smṛiti*. By *Smṛiti* is meant an immediate awareness of what one is seeking, an intuitive reference to the constant presence of the subject meditated upon or the object sought after. In the context, it is the idea of the *Bhuma Atman* the Vast Self that fills or presses upon the mind opening it to the intuition of the presence of the *Bhuma*; it is this intuition that is acquired by an exalted and purified understanding illumining the

whole *Sattwa* which, in the language of later scriptures can very well include *swabhava*, nature, or temperament and qualities and the mind-stuff as well. To extend the connotation of *Smṛiti* to intuition may not be acceptable to modern scholarship. But some considerations warrant us to fix the sense of the word this wise. Firstly, *Shruti* and *Smṛiti* are Vedic terms, the former denotes the inspirational, spiritual audience, the latter intuitive discovery of what has been heard by the mystical subtle hearing. That is why *Smṛiti* or *Dharma shastra* is supposed to be a discovery of the sense of the *Shruti* which was lost to the direct hearing. Secondly, any other sense will not fit in with the context. A mere remembrance of the traditional doctrine or of the sense of a textual passage does not require such a strong and pure *Sattwa*. Nor can a mere memory of that character dispel the many phases of ignorance that the embodied soul is beset with. And when the Upanishad speaks of the *knots*, the knots are not a product of poetic fancy or a philosophic concept in the sphere of Metaphysics. They are entanglements of subtle nerve-force lodged in a frame of psycho-physical structure which acts on and reacts to the functionings of the nervous system that links the subtler levels and conditions of being to the grosser material body. The *Smṛiti*, then, is not a mere memory, but an intuition that carries with it a certain dynamism that cuts asunder these knots of ignorance.

The Upanishad proceeds to say that when this intuitive grasp of *Bhuma* becomes firm and constant *dhrūva*, there is a release from all the knots, *granthinām vipramokṣah*. What are those knots? They represent the desires, passions, attachments and a host of

other binding factors by which the embodied being feels chained to the body, life and mind, feels them to be itself and mistakes for its own being the ego, a posing figure of the true Self. These knots form a protective envelope for the radical knot of the ego, covering the true soul, the *Purusha*. The text says in effect that the acquiring of the constant *Smṛiti* is an effective means by which these knots of ignorance are loosened and untied leaving the radical ego-knot to be treated by a special means, a means other than the constant and fixed *smṛiti*, the intuition, which is not sufficient to cut off the knot in the heart, *hridaya granthi*. For as is elsewhere in the Upanishads stated, the knot in the heart is cut off only by the direct perception of the Supreme, *tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parātpare*. How is this Supreme Perception possible—this realisation and consummation? Now, this question is answered in the latter part of the sentence "To such a one Bhagavan Sanatkumāra shows the shore beyond Ignorance." Let us pause and consider the implication of this statement, and then proceed to discover clues, if any, that could help us to appreciate the mention of Sanatkumāra as the deliverer, who is also called Skanda in this connection.

Here is an implicit declaration that however arduous the *vidya* or spiritual discipline that one adopts and follows to a successful end, it cannot of itself bring the realisation of the ultimate Truth. One can achieve the purification of the inner instrumental substance, through the offering of consecrated food to the Agni, *Vaishvanara*, the Universal *Purusha* within us and train himself and learn to feel that it is the Divine Being within that accepts the food

as oblation and eats and causes to eat, *Bhokta Bhojayita cha Bhagavān*, as the early Vedantic sadhaka did; one can purify the inner instrument, *Antah Karana* by the later Vedantic methods of training the sense-contacts to be free from greed, desire, disgust and a host of other disturbing forces of life, as are so impressively discoursed upon in the Gita. By that purity gained, one can open himself to an intuition in a mind calm or in the high altitudes of exalted thought; by the intuition one can have a constant remembrance of the Most High, the *Paramam*, the *Pienum Bhūmā*, the Self, *Atman*. Without effort, so spontaneously can one hold the Idea in his mind that it would be impossible for him to be without it even for a moment. These are no mean successes in the *sādhana*; and they yield notable results too; they dissolve all the elements of bondage, all factors that branch out of the original ignorance, *moola avidya*, rooted in the heart.

But Purity, an intuitive grasp, a fixed and constant memory with all their good results, can go far, but not far enough; they stop short of the highest reach; all the personal exertions in the *sādhana* with their fruits, do not arrive at the core of realisation, or soar to the highest summit. One can go, with the means at his disposal won by *sādhana*, deep within towards the inner-

most apartment of the Self, and knock and knock, but the door of the chamber is still closed; he has to wait and watch until the door opens at the will and pleasure of the *Atman* who is the revealer. Nowhere in the Upanishads where instructions of the *Sādhana*s are given, we find that the realisation is the fruit of the personal effort alone. These disciplines and methods of approach prepare the journey towards the goal and make him fit for the consummation. Even when an exclusive choice is made for realising the Self, it is the Self that reveals its own body to the seeker, *tasya esha Atmā vivrinute tanum Svām*, and not that the seeker storms the gate and discovers the Self by the merit of his own *sādhana*.¹

Therefore to one well-equipped with the riches of the *sādhana*, strong and steady, prepared in the manner mentioned above or in a like manner for the supreme event, the Deliverer comes with his gift, carries him safe across the ocean of darkness to the other side where reigns the Supreme Effulgence. He comes from beyond the range of the personal self; for his helping hand comes stretching from outside into the sphere of personal exertion in the *sādhana* to crown it ultimately with success, *Siddhi*.

This question remains—why is the Deliverer named *Sanat-kumāra*? There will be no difficulty in understanding

¹ The reference is to Katha Upanishad II-2-23; the same is found in Mundaka III-2-3. The verse is interpreted in two ways; a thorough discussion of the sense of the verse and the construction of the passage would involve a space beyond the limit we have set for ourselves here, nor is it quite necessary for our purpose. To show the marked contrast between the two interpretations, we shall give the substance.

"He chooses the Self who is chosen by the Self. "The Self here is the Supreme Self, *Parama Atman* or God. This interpretation is Sri Aurobindo's. And this is Shankara's: "To him who makes an exclusive choice of the Self, the Self reveals its own body (its own truth)." What is important for us to note here is that even according to Shankara the act of revealing belongs to the self.

In this connection it will be interesting to note a passage from Shankara in his commentary on the 16th verse of ISHA, a rather inconvenient Upanishad. "By the grace of Thy Self, I see (at most auspicious form)" *tava ātmanah prasādāt pashyāmi*.

the Deliverer to be the Supreme Self *Parama Atman*, or God *Isha*, or *Brahman*; but instead of any of these being mentioned, a new name—new to these scriptures—is sprung upon us, quite abruptly. Added to this interesting name, surprisingly comes Skanda, affirmed to be identical with it. We cannot escape the difficulty by explaining, as the scholiasts have done, that this part of the sentence refers to the fact of the story that it was *Sanat-kumāra* who taught *Nārada* and showed him the shore beyond darkness. "To such a one he shows *tasmai darśayati*" clearly points out that it is the general function of *Sanat-kumāra*; nor can we dismiss the problem holding, as modern scholarship in the West with its Indian following has done, that Skanda *Sanat-kumāra* is a later addition to the text. The *Chhandogya Brāhmaṇa* of which this Upanishad forms a part is still chanted by the priests of the *Sama Veda* branch and this passage is included in the chanting; the commentators do mention the passage; these two factors are enough for us to assume that it forms part of the genuine text as handed down by teacher to pupil since the days of the *Brāhmaṇa*.

We shall keep aside the question of Skanda for the moment and make an attempt to know of *Sanat-kumāra*. The commentaries on the text are not in any way helpful to let us know the relevancy of introducing *Sanat-kumāra* at the close of the *sādhana* which, as we have seen, is compressed in the brief passage we have taken up for clarification. But we are not utterly helpless in the matter. Shankara, in

the introduction to his commentary on *Sanatsujātiya* announces that *Sanat-kumāra* of the *Chhandogya Upanishad* is the same as *Sanatsujāta*, the Divine sage. In his discourse on spiritual truths addressed to *Dhritarāshtra*, *Vidura* comes to a stage when he invokes, by Yoga power, the presence of *Sanat-kumāra* and implores him to give the necessary instruction. *Yoga-balena ahuya*" is a significant phrase; for it shows that *Sanat-kumāra* the Divine sage has his abode elsewhere and is not a terrestrial Being. Where is his abode? What precisely is the sense of the word *Sanatsujāta*? Let us hear what the commentary says:¹ "Sanat means *Sanatana*, the Eternal, *Brahma* called *Hiranyagarbha*; from that Eternal *Brahma*'s mind is born excellently, with knowledge and dispassion etc., the blessed *Sanat-kumāra*, who is therefore called *Sanatsujāta*."

These lines throw light on the origin and character of *Sanat-kumāra*. We gather that *Sanat-kumāra* is called *Sanatsujāta* because of the knowledge, dispassion and other Divine qualities with which he was born; that these qualities have been there from his very birth and are natural to his being because he is an issue from *Brahman*, the Eternal; that he does not spring from *Para Brahman*, the *Parātpara*, the Absolute beyond the All, but from *Brahman*, as *Hiranya Garbha*, the Creator from the summit of the Cosmos of which our terrestrial existence is the pedestal at this end; that therefore the body of the Son of *Hiranya Garbha Brahman* is made of the Divine substance of the Creative Godhead, and

¹ सनत् इति सनातनं ब्रह्मोच्यते हिरण्यगर्भाख्यम्. तस्मात् सनातनात् ब्रह्मणो मानसात् ज्ञानवैराग्यादि समन्वितः सुष्ठु जात इति सनत्सुजात इत्युक्तो भगवान् सनत्कुमारः ॥

his natural abode is an abode in a plane of existence whence he can carry on the functions for which he was fitted by the special features that characterised him from his very birth.

In the light of the story in the Mahabharata that Vidura made a special request to Sanatkumāra to come, and the latter responded to the call because the call reached him and was made through the force of Yoga and in the face of the statement in the Chhandogya Upanishad that Sanatkumāra shows the shore of ignorance and sorrow to one who is pure and strong and steady in his nature and substance of being, there is no difficulty in drawing the conclusion that in the scheme of this cosmic existence it is the special function of the Son of the Creator, Sanatkumāra, to dispel the darkness covering the clouded human souls and reach them to the regions of Light where is no distress, suffering or death.

We may note in passing that it will be a mistake to suppose that Sanatkumāra or any other God or gods, mentioned in the scriptures, are nothing but different names of the One God and that in reality these gods are not distinct beings with specific purposes, but are just formulations by wise men to meet the requirements of different temperaments. This supposition is quite common among modern minds which ignore the fact that Matter, or the physical universe for that matter, is not the sole existence and that in its creation or formation it is preceded, penetrated, sustained and directed by forces subtler and higher than we can normally conceive of. It is true that these forces can be traced to the One source and support of all existences; but they do emanate from an Intelligence or intelligent Beings in the

high levels of existence, themselves behaving and functioning as limbs of the Supreme Being, *sa atma, angani anya devatah*. Ultimately, we can say that all gods are but One God; why, we do admit that all existences, manifestations, beings, men or gods and all that is and is not, *sat cha asat cha*, is the God, the Sole Reality. But that does not nullify the practical truth of the difference in created beings or gods or their functionings. We may take an instance from modern thought. Nature is a scientific unit; advanced scientific thought, let us say, the theory of relativity, has reduced a piece of matter to a system of events, so much so that it is no longer regarded as a stuff of the world; and the hypothesis that the "physical" and the "mental" are essentially similar or one is becoming possible. Well, does all this negative the practical truth of the structures and functionings of the innumerable organisms and forces, energies, heat, light, electricity and the rest?

The Gods, then, are distinct Beings with their special functions; they may bear different names in different scriptures, in different climes or ages. The Rig Veda speaks of Agni, the Divine Fire, as the youngest of the Gods; he is the Divine Child, *Kumara*: his functions vary with the planes or levels of being; in the high levels of this cosmic existence where is his own home, the Home also of the Gods, he leads the army of Gods to fight the Asuras. In the Purana he is called *Skanda*, *Kumara*, *Devasenani*, leader of the army of the Gods. When he vanquishes the chief of the Asuras, the Asura called *Shoora* is slain by his weapon called *Shakti* and changes into a peacock to become a fit vehicle, *vahana* of

his Divine slayer. We need not enter into the details of these symbolisms used in the later Puranas; nor is it necessary to reconcile every detail in the Puranas with what we find in the Rig Veda or Mahabharata. It is enough for our purpose to note the significance of identifying Skanda with Sanatkumāra. The Upanishad has not spoken of the fight that the spiritual seeker has to put against the forces of evil that obstruct his journey towards the Truth, Light, Immortality. The mention of Skanda, the Warrior-God as identical with Sanatkumara suggests the battle that the blessed Son of the Great God has to give to the Asuric beings and forces for the spiritual uplift of man, before he could bring under control and conquer and slay utterly or transform them wherever possible, as has been shown in the episode of *Shoorapadmasura* becoming the subdued and transformed cock for Kumara to ride on acclaiming the victory of the Gods.

Whatever the symbols employed to convey the idea, one fact remains: and that is the gist of the text that we have considered at some length. However high and arduous and assured the sadhana be, however steadfast and

strong and pure in mind and heart the sadhaka be, whatever notable results be found and noted on the road, however liberal, independent, self-willed and unaided by any source of strength and light the seeker be, however assured the result be, the result itself, the final goal, the consummation comes from outside the bounded sphere of the personal self of the sadhaka, from the Deliverer, apparently as the fruit of the labour, or independently of it as a matter of Grace. Or, in the spirit of Universalism of the Vedic and Vedantic seers we may state that when spiritual disciplines yield nourishment to the whole man influencing him in his conduct in the inner and outer life and as a consequence he is firm and strong and constant in his call to the Divine Being that rules over his Destiny in his sojourn on earth, then a Grace, a special Grace of the Divine responds and functions through the Commander of the fighting army of Gods, who is called variously,—Agni in his original abode, Sanatkumara a mental offspring of the creator *Hiranyagarbha*, *Brahma-manasaputra*, or Kumara the boy, an issue of the Effulgence of Shiva—and "him they call Skanda, yea, they call him Skanda."

—T. V. Kapali Sastry.

REVIEWS

Mahakavi Bharatiar—(By *Va. Ra.*), Publishers—Shakti Karyalayam: Price Rs. 3.

The author *Va. Ra.* needs no introduction to the Tamil public. The subject he has chosen this time to deal with is just after his heart. The best in *Va. Ra.* has come out in this work of his. The style is, perhaps more than usual, full of life, picturesque, captivating, simmering throughout with a subdued humour. The work is unique in more than one way in Tamil language.

Most of the events narrated here centre round Bharati's life in Pondicherry. The other periods of his life before and after Pondicherry do not take much space. The author holds up to the public without much ado how great a poet Bharati was, nay, he goes even to the extent of saying that Bharati was one of the greatest poets of the world. No one has of course anything to say with regard to the personal appreciation of the author; for it is the fullness of his heart that speaks in the book "*Mahakavi Bharatiar*".

One very important thing, however, we miss in the pages under review. The author has nowhere shown where in lies the uniqueness of Bharati, whether it is as a patriot or as a poet or as an essayist. The poet Bharati brought a new breath into the fossilised consciousness of the Tamils. This is his one genuine gift, the only important service rendered by him to his homeland and people.

Va. Ra. in his admiration for the poet ignores, however, two great influences that changed the course of Bharati's life. One was the Sister Nivedita of Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and the other Sri Aurobindo. In the early days of national awakening, the poet came in personal contact with the Sister Nivedita and became her disciple. Bharati's patriotism ceased from that time onward to be merely patriotic—it took on a religious atmos-

phere, a spiritual background came in to support his patriotic utterances and songs. Bharatvarsha was no longer to him his motherland but the land of the *Rishis*, the land where Sri Krishna was born, the land of the mighty mystics and mysteries.

The poet's leanings went naturally towards Sri Aurobindo whose influence he began to feel from 1910 onwards. Bharati told his intimate friends how he was practising the *Sadhana* of Sri Aurobindo and that he recognised Sri Aurobindo as his *Guru*. *Va. Ra.* evidently does not know wherefrom came the strength and light to Bharati when the latter criticised the theory of "Illusion of the World" or favoured the theory of "Acceptance of Life."

"Acceptance of Life", no doubt. But what life?—Life as it is? Or life reborn in a new Light? At that time Sri Aurobindo had not yet revealed the secret to any one. In Bharati we find a conflict. In his short essay "World True? Or False?" we see him suffering from want of clear vision and sound experience. He exclaims: "Here stands before you your wife golden and beautiful. How can she be an illusion or false?" Well, this may be poetry, but it is not philosophy nor yoga.

Va. Ra. protests at one place against Rajaji for saying:—"Bharati began as a patriot, blossomed as a poet and matured finally as a Vedantin."—The word *Vedantin* pricks *Va. Ra.* He does not like the epithet. To him it denoted too much of "otherworldliness". Bharati is pictured by him as one who was of "this world" and for "this world". We do not quite agree. Bharati's loyalties turned both ways—only he did not possess the reconciling knowledge, the key to the mystery of "the Divine and his World".

As to whether Bharati was a world-poet or not, the problem need not trouble us at present. Time the great critic will decide.

—K. A.

Not by Politics Alone. By Atulananda Chakrabarti. Foreword by Sir Maurice Gwyer. Thacker, Spink & Co., Price Rs. 5/-.

The unusual title of the book draws pointed attention to a great truth particularly relevant at this time that the salvation of mankind cannot come merely by politics or any other machinery of external organisation. The aim of the author is to find a practical solution of the communal problem of India and he rightly asserts that this problem has to be seen as a part of the higher problem of the unity of mankind and both must be approached from the spiritual point of view. As a background of his thesis, the author has given a brief account of the evolution of the cosmos, of the solar system, of living beings on the earth and lastly of the different races of mankind inhabiting the earth. He seems to accept the ingenious and sometimes very striking theories about these things as established truths; for example, he asserts that the civilisation of Mohenjodaro and Harappa was pre-Vedic, but this is being disputed by modern scholars. The main purpose of the author is to emphasise that all along in the long process of evolution there has been a tendency towards harmony and that it is legitimate to expect that the present conflicts in India will be solved in a harmonious cultural and national life which will serve as a model for the whole world. Of the many men in Modern India who have contributed to this great consummation he has mentioned "a few that we may remember with pride and inspiration, Tagore and Iqbal, Tata and Mookerjee, Tilak and Tyabji, Ranade and Hydari, are names to conjure with anywhere. They prove that we are not living in the midst of dead bones and withered leaves. They bring home to us the eternal aspiration of man towards a higher life, the never-failing waters of the *ab-i-Hayat*, the spring of life." We rubbed our eyes looking for the name

of Sri Aurobindo in this illustrious list, but lo! it is not there. Was the omission a mere accident? A careful perusal of the book has convinced us that it is not an accident; like many of our intellectuals Atulananda has failed to understand and appreciate Sri Aurobindo. Judged by current Western standards, Sri Aurobindo is a non-entity, at best a fanciful dreamer. These well-meaning countrymen of ours protest violently against Western ideals, but cannot shake off their Western mentality. When they speak of spirituality, they mean nothing more than a rationalistic mental and moral culture. They raise high hopes by talking of "the Indian technique of humanism and the arts of peace", but they end by adopting and championing the approved Western methods. A book like this is likely to create a gross misunderstanding of India and her ideals. Failure to understand Sri Aurobindo means failure to understand India, failure to understand spirituality, failure to understand man and his high destiny on the earth.

Here and there our author strikes a high and true note. Thus here is a prophetic passage which also illustrates his style at its best: "The great display of diversity in Indian humanity raises the question of why and wherefore. Why such a wonderfully rich pattern did the Master Weaver weave on the Indian loom? There must always be a reason for things. A splendid assemblage of so many races of men in our land, what does Providence intend by it, the mind wonders. Is India then the laboratory where the Maker is experimenting to produce by synthesis the man of the future, the man who will be His creature, His image, more than man has ever been before? We can but patiently await the result. But ever by thought and

and God in the spirit, and it is only on this spiritual basis that a true unity of all mankind can be firmly founded. The author says about the Indian States. "They are a continuation of the past both politically and culturally. They embody all that was India in the past. On an ancient age-old frame-work they are fitting new political forms to suit the age." This however is not correct historically. The ancient Indian polity broke down and well-nigh disappeared when the Muslims came from Central Asia bringing in a tradition of personal and autocratic rule. In the ancient world the political and social conditions necessitated a monarchical form of Government everywhere and India was not an exception; but it was the check and control over the monarchical power, the popular representative councils and assemblies that India evolved that were peculiar to her genius. The spiritual aim of life required that men must be given the utmost freedom to live and develop their own lives, and for this purpose India evolved a complex system of communal freedom. "In effect," says Sri Aurobindo, "the Indian polity was the system of a very complex communal freedom and self-determination, each group unit (village, township, caste, religious sect etc.) of the community having its own natural existence and administering its own proper life and business, set off from the rest by a natural demarcation of its field and limits, but connected with the whole by well understood relations, each a copartner with the others in the powers and duties of the communal existence, executing its own laws and rules, administering within its own proper limits, joining with the others in the discussion and the regulation of matters of a national or common interest and represented in some way and to the degree of its importance in the general assemblies of the kingdom or empire. The State, sovereign or supreme political authority was an instrument of co-ordination and of a general control and efficiency and exercised a supreme but not an absolute authority; for in all its rights

and powers it was limited by the Law and by the will of the people and in all its internal functions only a copartner with the other members of the socio-political body.... The State did not interfere with the religious liberty or the established economic and social life of the nation; it confined itself to the maintenance of social order and the provision of a needed supervision, support, co-ordination and facilities for the rich and powerful functioning of all the national activities." (A Defence of Indian Culture.) It is obvious that there is nothing in this system which makes a monarchical form of Government essential; indeed for many centuries republican forms of Government prevailed in many parts of India, and in their working and durability they proved far superior to the forms afterwards developed by Greece and Rome. It is not necessary that the ancient forms should now be revived, but it is by following the same line of development according to the true genius of India, and not by imitating the Western parliamentary system and democracy of the ballot box that a suitable constitution for India can be framed which will eventually dissolve the communal conflicts that now seem almost insoluble.

In his condemnation of the Muslim claim to self-determination as disrupting the unity of India, the author has attacked the very principle of national self-determination. He says in effect that nationalism is not the goal, it was a half-way house to world unity and that it is now a spent force which should not be encouraged. Now it is true that nationalism should not stand in the way of an international order, but it is also true that great organisations tend to make life mechanical and stamp out individual development; in a world organisation this mechanisation can be prevented only if there is strong and living nationalism as a constituent part or some other substitute for it. "It must be remembered" said Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya* during the last European war, "that a greater social or political unity is not necessarily a boon

in itself; it is only worth pursuing in so far as it provides a means and a frame-work for a better, richer, more happy, and capable individual and collective life. But hitherto the experience of mankind has not favoured the view that huge aggregations closely united and strictly organised are favourable to a rich and capable human life. It would seem rather that collective life is more at ease with itself, more genial, varied, fruitful when it can concentrate itself in small spaces and simpler organisms." Unity in diversity is the goal, but in a world organisation it can be perfectly achieved only when the basis is spiritual, for it is the Spirit which has become this manifold world without ever losing in the least its essential unity.

The author says; "The present war has come upon the crisis of minority problem sought to be solved by implementing national self-determination. The principle of self-determination, evolved by the Peace of 1919, has, in its application to the States of Central Europe, eventually brought about the War of 1939. Having seen it all, India cannot afford to repeat the blunders of Europe and break up her unity on the lines of the Sudeten movement." This is a quite wrong interpretation of the war and taking a very shallow (though not uncommon) view of it. This war was no more caused by the Sudeten movement than the last war was caused by the murder of the Arch-Duke of Austria. Those events were mere excuses. The present war was started by Hitler after a long and stupendous preparation with the sole object of dominating the world; and this should not be used as an argument against forming a strong nationality in India. A world order in which different countries and peoples can retain their individuality, thus creating a real unity in diversity, ought to be the goal, and this individuality, at present, is the nation unit. There must be nations before there can be a true international order. Then, our author asserts that India is already a nation as judged from any standard. Here, again, he goes to

the other extreme. India is one and indivisible, but her political or national unity has yet to be formed, and we have to take into account all the obstacles that stand in the way; the two nations theory is a myth as neither the Hindus nor the Muslims in spite of their distinctive cultures have formed themselves into nationalities. To form a national unity one must look beyond sectional interests, and when Indians are actuated by a strong nationalist spirit, the formation of a great Indian nation, one and indivisible, cannot be far delayed. Sri Aurobindo thus wrote in the *Karmayogin*: "We are at present in the first or formative stage, and in this stage the demand of Nationalism is imperative. It is only by the sacrifices of the individual, the family and the class to the supreme object of building up the nation that under such adverse circumstances Nationalism can secure the first conditions for its existence." It is not by clamouring for narrow sectarian and communal interests but by sacrificing them wherever necessary for a higher cause that a true and mighty nation will be born in India. The higher classes of the Hindus have to sacrifice their privileges and prejudices, as the Japanese Samurai did, for the raising up of the lower. The capitalist classes have to forego their claims to huge profits so that all workers and labourers can get a fair share in the national wealth created by their joint labour. Orthodoxy and medievalism in religion has to be sacrificed as has been done in Turkey, in Egypt, in Mongolia. "Sentiment of nationality... did not really become a factor of the first moment in politics till the religious passion of the 16th and 17th centuries had almost wholly subsided, and the gospel of political freedom preached by the American and French Revolutionaries had begun to fire men's minds." (Bryce, *Studies in History and Jurisprudence*.) It is these mediaeval passions that are being sought to be revived in India, but this is only a passing phase, humanity cannot and will not go back to the middle ages.

not disappear simply by shutting our eyes to it. Our author has a pathetic faith in the methods of the Press and the Platform; but these are western political methods which he himself has said are not sufficient. His remedy for communal riots is too simple: "Let all influential Dailies open out a column, say once a week, under the caption Unity Forum. Let them print under it such news as indicate goodwill on both sides." He also stresses the ugliness of communal bloodshed and appeals to the aesthetic sense of people. But does he not know that there are still men in the world who regard murder as a fine art? There is a Bengal saying, *corā n'hi sune kabhu dharmar k'hini*, the goonda never cares for your moral lectures; the only thing he understands is force, and the only way of meeting goondaism is the use of disciplined force; all talk of non-violence and moral values in this connection is not only pure moonshine but positively dangerous. But his main suggestion seems to be the establishment of an academy, an Institute of Cultural Fellowship in India, where different communities may freely meet to correct, compare and exchange cultural values. But are not the existing Universities already doing the same work? As we have already said, the education of the head and heart in that way alone is not sufficient. To take only one instance of a highly cultured and educated man, at the Id Reunion held in Calcutta on December 20, 1942, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, the chief guest said: "In my opinion, true service to humanity can only be rendered when the reins of Government are in Muslim hands. That is the reason why the Muslims of India consider it their Islamic duty to secure what is called Pakistan."

As long as the Hindus and the Muslims of India cling obstinately to outworn creeds and dogmas and to the letter of the Shashtra and the Shariat ignoring the spirit and the eternal values, there cannot be any synthesis and true unity. Both communities must be ready to disregard the dress and

body and accept the essence, the soul, the Spirit of their respective religions, and for this is needed a great spiritual movement in the country, a movement greater and deeper than was possible for Kabir or Nanak, or even for Buddha in ancient times, a spiritual movement which will be based on a profound philosophy which will be in harmony with the most advanced modern knowledge and will combine in it the essential elements and principles of all the great religions of the world and evolve a technique of changing and perfecting human nature suitable to the needs and possibilities of mankind of today. "The goal marked out for us," says Sri Aurobindo, "is not to speculate about these things, but to experience them. The call upon us is to grow into the image of God, to dwell in Him and with Him and be a channel of His joy and might and an instrument of His works. Purified from all that is *asubha*, transfigured in soul by His touch we have to act in the world as dynamos of that divine electricity and send it thrilling and radiating through mankind, so that wherever one of us stands, hundreds around may become full of His light and force, full of God and full of *ananda*. Churches, orders, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have busied themselves with intellectual creeds, dogmas, rites and institutions, with *teara*, *suddhi*, *darsana*, as if these could save mankind, and have neglected the one thing needful, the power and purification of the soul. We must go back to the one thing needful, take up again Christ's gospel of the purity and perfection of mankind, Mahomed's gospel of perfect submission, self-surrender and servitude to God, Chaitanya's gospel of the perfect love and joy of God in man, Ramakrishna's gospel of the unity of all religions and the divinity of God in man, and gathering all these streams into one mighty river, one purifying and redeeming Ganges, pour it over the death-in-life of a materialistic humanity as Bhagiratha led down the Ganges and flooded with it the ashes of his fathers, so that there may be a resurrection of

the soul in mankind and the Satyayuga for a while return to the world." (*The Yoga and its objects*).

Coming back to the question of the basis of Nationality, we may observe that it is not constituted by any of the standards so far considered, not even by culture, though any or all of them may serve as objective support. The essence of Nationality is subjective, it is a soul, a spirit which is a portion of the Divine and incarnates in a suitable body on the earth to manifest some special aspect of God, to fulfil some divine mission. This conception of nationality has been very well expressed by Polish thinkers. "God is manifesting Himself in Nations as His highest creation on earth. Every nation as every individual, is a fragmentary incarnation, a partial realisation of the primordial Logos." (Mickiewicz) "Every nation coming into being brings as her inmost core, a creative Noumenon, which has to be gradually revealed and expressed in her history and culture." (Gorski). "The spirit of a nation is not a complex of conceptions, opinions, beliefs; rather it is the very essence, the principle and the source from which they all spring forth. The Holy Scriptures speak of the Spirits of the peoples and Religions—called Angels by St. John; in the same sense the Spirit of a Nation is a real Entity, and constitutes the eternal Individuality of the Nation; for every one is a different revelation of God. Hence the difference of their missions, and the absolute necessity of being true to them however difficult or painful it may be." (Mickiewicz).

So India has a soul, a personality to which we give the great name MOTHER INDIA. She has found in the Geographical constitution of India a suitable body for the fulfilment of her great mission, the divinisation of human life on the earth. Her whole history, through all its ups and downs, has been a long and wonderful preparation for this divine work. The Indian Shakti creates a sort of 'mandal', a circle, and all those who come under the circle acquire the same fundamental

characteristics and the same central nature. The Mahomedan kings and nobles who came to live in India "became almost immediately wholly Indian in mind, life and interest." This phenomenon has been repeated even in the British people who in recent times have made India their home. Lately a tragic event happened in Calcutta when an Anglo-Indian girl committed suicide as she was deserted by her lover, an American soldier stationed in India. In her last letter sent to the Press, she paid a tribute to the high Indian ideal of womanhood of which she claimed herself to be a member. She prized her British heritage, her white skin and blue eyes, but in character and virtue she considered herself far superior to the American and even British women; These are some of her last words: "Yes, the women out here are steps higher, far higher even than those that roamed London's famed clubs...Look up, Anglo-India, there is a sun that will rise with a dawn, the misery of these few years will lift and soon we shall disinfect our city and make it like new, we shall try to erase the scars. Oh, India, I am waiting for that day, when we can be left to ourselves and...What is the use, I shall not see it, but wherever I go I shall be happy knowing that my countrymen and women have proved so golden and loyal. Goodbye Anglo-India, all over India, especially Calcutta, my city, my home, the place where I reaped a bitter harvest...Goodbye, good luck to a speedy victory and a peaceful India." (The Statesman).

That is the basis on which we must firmly stand, one and indivisible India with a divine Soul; all obstacles, all difficulties have to be confronted and solved on that basis. "Even the pressed communal troubles are due to a sent communal pressing down of the Indian formative pressing down of the Indian Shakti, a pressure that is bringing the difficulties of her task to the surface, so that she may compose differences, manifest and refound on new lines in the diverse peoples who have made this land their home the essential spiritual and cultural unity of India, blend

them into a harmonious outward whole and offer to the world an ideal of human unity diverse in oneness." (*Mother India* by Anilbaran Roy.)

It is a great spiritual movement which alone can bring Indian unity to a consummation; in the meantime everything should be done to prepare the ground for such a movement and to deepen the sense of unity and brotherhood, and in this books like the one under review can be helpful. But more than "clearing the mental background" by preaching and propaganda what is needed is the bringing together all the people on one platform where

they can work together for a common cause. In the freedom movement of 1921, the two communities came so close together that it seemed for a time that the communal problem was solved; but that movement was side-tracked into pseudo-spirituality and again aggravated the situation. In constructive work, in organising the villages for the improvement of their sanitary, economic, educational condition there is a great field where the two communities can meet and work together. But in spite of all talk this work has never yet been taken up earnestly and with a true vision.

—A. B.



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