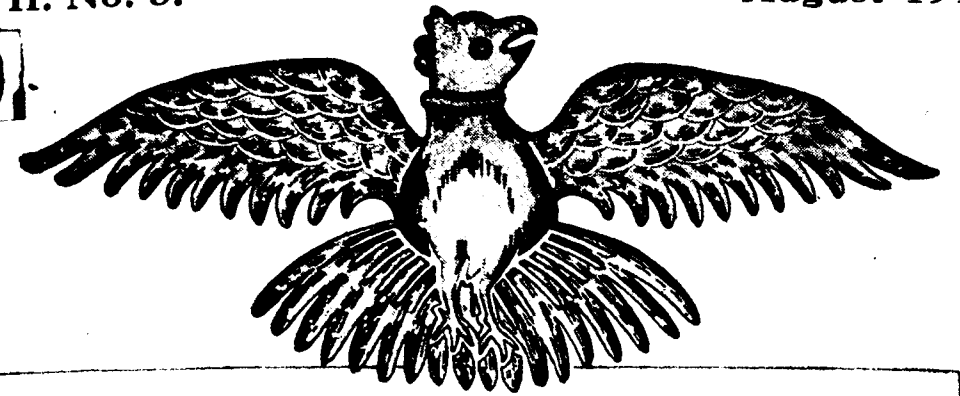


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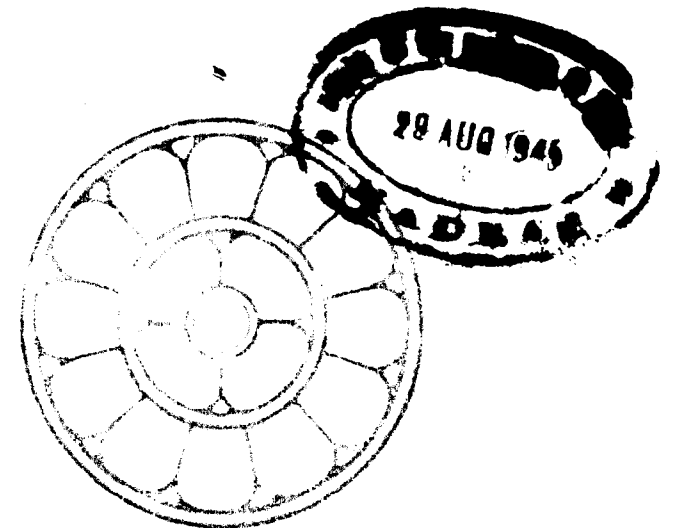
August 1945.

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The **ADVENT**

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



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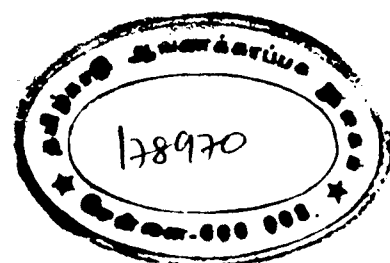
THE ADVENT

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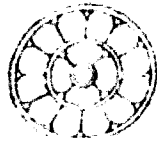


THE ADVENT

August 1945

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PRAYERS OF THE MOTHER

I

O my sweet Master, enter in among all these thoughts in confusion, all these anguished hearts; light in them the fire of Thy divine Presence. The shadow cast by the earth has fallen back on her and she has been utterly shaken by it; but her shadow hid thy changeless sun and now that it has collapsed upon this poor world making it tremble to its foundations and transforming it into a formidable chaos, wilt Thou not move once more upon the chaos with the will that there should be Light?

O Thou wonderful Unknown, Thou who hast not yet manifested thyself, Thou who awaitest the auspicious hour and who hast sent us on earth to prepare thy ways, all the elements of this being cry to Thee, "May Thy Will be done" and give themselves to Thee in a supreme and unconquerable elan...

Enfold this sorrowful earth with thy puissant arms of mercy, impregnate her with the beneficent outflowings of Thy infinite love.

I am Thy puissant arms of mercy. I am the vast bosom of Thy limitless love The arms have enfolded the sorrowful earth and tenderly press it to the generous heart: and slowly a kiss of supreme benediction settles on this atom in conflict: the kiss of the Mother that consoles and heals.

August 11, 1914.

II

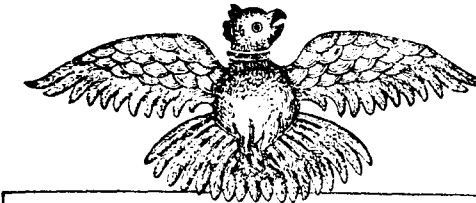
The being stands before Thee, its arms lifted, its palms open in an ardent aspiration.

O Sweet Master, it is a Love more wonderful and formidable than any that has manifested up till this day, of which the earth has need, it is for this Love that she implores Who will be able or worthy to be its intermediary with her? Who? It matters little; but it must be done. O Lord, answer my call, accept this being as an offering however modest its worth and whatever its limitations: Come.

More, always more; let the regenerating floods roll over the earth in beneficent waves. Transform and illumine. Accomplish this supreme miracle, so long looked for, of breaking these ignorant egoisms; awaken Thy sublime flame in each heart. Let us not become inert in a tranquil serenity. We must not take any rest till Thy new and sovereign Love is manifested.

Listen to our prayer, answer our call: Come

August 13, 1914.



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.

SINCERITY

The first condition of the spiritual life, and the last condition as well, is sincerity. One must sincerely want the spiritual life in order to have it. The soul—the psychic being—is always sincere: it is made of the very stuff of sincerity, for it is a part, or a spark, of the divine Consciousness itself. When one feels the call, turns one's back to the worldly life, moves towards the life spiritual, one follows then the urge of one's true being, the psychic being: one is then naturally sincere, firmly and spontaneously devoted to the Divine, unequivocally loyal and faithful to the Beloved and the Master.

This central sincerity, however, has to be worked out in actual life. For, one may be true in the spirit, but false—weak, that is to say—in the flesh. The light of

the central being usually finds its way first into the mind. One becomes then mentally sincere: in other words, one has the idea, the thought that the Divine is the goal and nothing else can or shall satisfy. With the light in the mind, one sees also in oneself more and more the dark spots, the weaknesses, the obstacles—one becomes conscious of one's failings, discovers elements that have to be corrected or purged. But this mental sincerity, this recognition in the understanding is not enough: it remains mostly ineffective and barren with regard to life and character. One appears in this stage to lead a double life: one knows and understands, to some extent at least, but one is unable to act up even to that much knowledge and understanding. It is only when the power

of sincerity descends still further and assumes a concreter form, when the vital becomes sincere and is converted, then the urge is there not only to see and understand, but to do and achieve. Without the vital's sincerity, its will to be transformed, one remains at best a witness, one has an inner perception or consciousness of the Divine, but in actual living one lets the old ordinary nature to go its own way. It is the sincerity in the vital, its will to possess the Divine and the Divine alone, its ardour to collaborate with the Divine that brings about the crucial, the most dynamic change. Sadhana instead of being a mere mental occupation, an intellectual pursuit, acquires the urgency of living and doing and achieving. Finally, the vital sincerity, when it reaches its climax, calls for the ultimate

sincerity—sincerity in the body. When the body consciousness becomes sincere then we cannot but be and act as decided and guided by the divine consciousness; we live and move and have our being wholly in the divine manner. Then what the inmost being, the psychic, envisages in the divine light, the body inevitably and automatically executes. There is no gap between the two. The spirit and the flesh—soul and body—are soldered, fused together in one single compact entity. One starts with the central sincerity in the psychic being and progress of sadhana means the extension of this sincerity gradually to all the outlying parts and levels of the being till, when the body is reached, the whole consciousness becomes as it were a massive pyramid of loyalty.

THE TRAGIC SPIRIT IN NATURE

The wages of sin, it is said, is death. Well, it can, with equal if not greater truth, be said that the wages of virtue too is death! It seems as though on this mortal earth nothing great or glorious can be achieved which is not marred somehow or other, sometime or other. The blazon of virtue goes very rarely without a bar sinister branded across. Some

kind of degradation, ignominy or frustration always attends or rounds off the spectacle of wonder. In the moral world too there seems to exist an inexorable law that action and reaction are equal in degree and opposite in kind.

The glorious First Consul and Emperor did not end in a blaze of glory: he had to live and die as the commonest of prisoners. Even

his great prototype, the mighty Cæsar, did not meet a different fate—he too fell—

O what a fall was there, my countrymen!

Then I and you and all of us fell down—

A Jeanne Darc, another glorious creature, Deliverer of France, the sweetest thing that ever put on a human body, was burnt as a witch. Socrates had to drink the hemlock for having brought down heavenly knowledge upon earth. The Christ, God's own son and beloved, perished on the Cross. Krishna, the Avatar, was killed by a chance arrow; and Arjuna, the peerless hero of Kurukshetra, Krishna's favourite, had to see days when he could not even lift his own bow with which he once played havoc. And in our own days, a Ramakrishna, who could cure souls could not cure his own cancer. This is the "tears of things"—spoken of by a great poet—the tragedy that is lodged in the hearts of things.

There runs a pessimistic vein in Nature's movement. Due to the original Inconscience out of which she is built and also because of a habit formed through millenniums it is not possible for her to expect or envisage anything else than decay, death and frustration in the end or on the whole. To every rise there must be a fall, a crest must end in a trough. Nature has not the courage nor

the faculty to look for any kind of perfection upon earth. Not that within her realm one cannot or should not try for the good, the noble, even the perfect, but one must be ready to pay the price. Good there is and may be, but it is suffered only on payment of its Danegeld to Evil. That is the law of sacrifice that seems to be fundamental to Nature's governance.

The Evil, we have said, is nothing else than the basis of unconsciousness or Inconscience in Nature. It is this which pulls the being—whatever structure of consciousness can be reared upon it—down to decay and frustration. It is the force of gravitation, of inertia. Matter is unconsciousness; the body, formed basically of matter, is unconsciousness too. The natural tendency of Matter is towards disintegration and dissolution; the body therefore is mortal—*bhashmantamidam sariram*. The scope and range of mortality is measured by the scope and range of unconsciousness. Matter is the most concrete and solid form of unconsciousness; but it casts its shadow upon the higher levels too—life and mind always lie in the penumbra of this original evil.

A great personality means a great rise in consciousness; therefore it means also a strain upon

the normal consciousness and hence a snap or scission sometime and somewhere. As the poet describes the tragic phenomenon—

.....Poised on the unreachable abrupt
snow-solitary ascent,
Earth aspiring lifts to the illimitable light, then
ceases broken and spent—

The tragedy can happen in either of two ways. The individual's own unconsciousness can reach and overthrow and spoil his higher poise, or the collective unconsciousness too can invade and overwhelm the individual in his high status, who is declared not unoften the high-brow, an enemy of the people—although atonement is sometimes attempted at a late period (as in the case of the Christ or Jeanne Darc, for example). A way however was discovered in India by which one could avoid this life's inevitable tragic denouement. It was very simple, viz., to rise up from the inert ignorant unconsciousness, rise sufficiently high and fly or shoot into the orbits of other suns from where there is no more downfall, being totally free from all earthly downpull.

But this need not be the only solution. Matter (the basic unconsciousness) was the master in this material world because, it was not properly faced and negotiated. One sought to avoid and by-pass it. It was there Sphinx-like and none stopped to answer its riddle. The mystery is this. Matter, material Nature that is dubbed unconsciousness is not really so. That is only an appearance. Matter is truly *inconscient*, that is to say, it has an inner core of consciousness which is its true reality. This hidden flame of consciousness should be brought out from its cave and made manifest, dynamic on the surface. Then it will easily and naturally agree to submit to the higher law of Immortality. This would mean a reconditioning, a transmutation of the very basis of mind and life. The material foundation, the body conditions thus changed will bring about that status of the wholeness of consciousness which holds and stabilises the Divine in the human frame, which never suffers from any scar or diminution even in its terrestrial embodiment.

DYNAMIC FATALISM

“The supramental change is a thing decreed and inevitable’. If it is so, then what is the necessity at all of work and labour and travail—this difficult process of sadhana? The question is rather naive, but it is very often asked. The answer also could be very

simple. The change decreed is precisely worked out through the travail: one is the end, the other is the means; the goal and the process, both are decreed and inevitable. If it is argued, supposing none made the effort, even then would the change come about, in spite of man's inaction? Well, first of all, this is an impossible supposition. Man cannot remain idle even for a moment: not only the inferior Nature, but the higher Nature too is always active in him—remember the words of the Gita—though behind the veil, in the inner consciousness. Secondly, if it is really so, if man is not labouring and working and making the attempt, then it must be understood that the time has not yet come for him to undergo the change, he has still to wait: one of the signs of the imminence of the change is this very intensity and extensiveness of the labour among mankind. If, however, a particular person chooses to do nothing, prefers to wait and see and hopes in the end to jump at the fruit all at once and possess it or hopes the fruit to drop quietly into his mouth—well, this does not seem to be a likely happening. If one wishes to enjoy the fruit, one must share in the effort to sow and grow. Indeed, the process itself of reaching the higher conscious-

ness involves a gradual heightening of the consciousness. The means is really part of the end. The joy of victory is the consummation of the joy of battle.

Man can help or retard the process of Nature, in a sense. If his force of consciousness acts in line with Nature's secret movement, then that movement is accelerated: through the soul or self that is man, it is the Divine, Nature's lord and master who drives and helps Nature forward. If, on the contrary, man follows his lesser self, his lower ego, rajasic and tamasic, then he throws up obstacles and barriers which hamper and slow down Nature's march.

In a higher sense, from a transcendental standpoint, however, this too is only an appearance. In reality man neither helps nor hinders Prakriti. For in that sphere the two are not separate entities. What is viewed as the helping hand of man is really Nature helping herself: man is the conscious movement of Nature. In that transcendent status the past and the future are rolled together in the eternal present and all exist there as an accomplished fact: there is nothing there to be worked out and achieved. But lower down there is a play of forces, of conflicting possibilities and the resultant is a

balance of these divergent lines. When one identifies oneself with the higher static consciousness one finds nothing to be done, all is realised—"the eternal play of the eternal child in the eternal garden". But when one lives in the Kurukshetra of forces, one cannot throw away one's Gandiva and say, "I will not fight".

THE RIGHT OF ABSOLUTE FREEDOM

A nation cannot claim the right, even in the name of freedom, to do as it pleases. An individual has not that right, the nation too has not. A nation is a member of humanity, there are other members and there is the common welfare of all. A nation by choosing a particular line of action, in asserting its absolute freedom, may go against other nations, or against the general good. Such freedom has to be curbed and controlled. Collective life—if one does not propose to live the life of the solitary—the animal or the saint—is nothing if not such a system of controls. "The whole of politics is an interference with personal liberty. Law is such an interference; protection is such an interference; the rule which makes the will of the majority prevail is such an interference. The right to prevent such use of personal liberty as will injure the interests of the race is the fundamental law of society. From this point of view the nation is only using its primary rights when it restrains the individual from buying or selling foreign goods". Thus spoke a great Nationalist leader in the days of Boycott and Swadeshi. What is said here of the individual can be said of the nation too in relation to the greater good of humanity. The ideal of a nation or state supreme all by itself, with rights that none can challenge, inevitably leads to the cult of the Superstate, the Master-race. If such a monster is not to be tolerated, the only way left is to limit the absolute value of nationhood, to view a nation only as a member in a comity of nations forming the humanity at large.

A nation not free, still in bondage, cannot likewise justify its claim to absolute freedom by all or any means, at all times, in all circumstances. There are times and circumstances when even an enslaved nation has to bide its time. Man, in order to assert his freedom and individuality, cannot sign a pact with Mephistopheles; if he does so he must be prepared for the consequences. The same

truth holds with regard to the nation. A greater danger may attend a nation than the loss of freedom—the life and soul of humanity itself may be in imminent peril. Such a cataclysmic danger mankind has just passed through or is still passing through. All nations, however circumstanced in the old world, who have stood and fought on the side of humanity, by that very gesture, have acquired the right,—and the might too,—to gain freedom and greatness and all good things which would not be possible otherwise.

take and settle down amicably. Within humanity too all nations must live the same principle. The days of free competition must be considered as gone for good; instead the rule of collaboration and co-operation has to be adopted (even between past enemies and rivals). In mutual aid and self-limitation lie also the growth and fulfilment of each collective individuality. That is the great Law of Sacrifice enunciated ages ago by Sri Krishna in the Gita — By increasing each other all will attain the *Summum Bonum*.

Within the nation all communities must be ready to give and

As a national ego formed which, identifying itself with the geographical body of the nation, developed the psychological instinct of national unity and the need of its satisfaction, so a collective human ego will develop in the international body and will evolve the psychological instinct of human unity and the need of its

satisfaction. That will be the guarantee of duration. And that possibly is how the thing will happen, man being what he is: indeed, if we cannot do better, it will so happen, since happen somehow it must, whether in the worse way or the better.

Sri Aurobindo.

The Ideal of Human unity Chap. XXXIII. p. 626.

A SON OF GOD

From heaven you came
 Your soul a word
 Of airy flame,
 As though the white
 Wings of a bird
 No man had seen brought rumour of strange light

Mortal you went;
 Your passage grew
 Within life's veil a rent
 Where suddenly broke
 The gold sun through—
 And out of every heart a god awoke!

Amalkiran.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

LOVE FOR THE DIVINE

I

Let us first put aside the quite foreign consideration of what we would do if the union with the Divine brought eternal joylessness, Nirananda or torture. Such a thing does not exist and to drag it in only clouds the issue. The Divine is Anandamaya and one can seek him for the Ananda he gives; but he has also in him many other things and one may seek him for any of them, for peace, for liberation, for knowledge, for power, for anything else of which one may feel the pull or the impulse. It is quite possible for someone to say: "Let me have Power from the Divine and do His work or His Will and I am satisfied, even if the use of Power entails suffering also." It is possible to shun bliss as a thing too tremendous or ecstatic and ask only or rather for peace, for liberation, for Nirvana. You speak of self-fulfilment,—one may regard the Supreme not as the Divine but as one's highest Self and seek fulfilment of one's being in that highest Self; but one need not envisage it as a self of bliss, ecstasy, Ananda—one may envisage it as a self of freedom, vast-

ness, knowledge, tranquillity, strength, calm, perfection—perhaps too calm for a ripple of anything so disturbing as joy to enter. So even if it is for something to be gained that one approaches the Divine, it is not a fact that one can approach him or seek union only for the sake of Ananda and nothing else.

That involves something which throws all your reasoning out of gear. For these are aspects of the Divine Nature, powers of it, states of his being,—but the Divine Himself is something absolute, someone self-existent, not limited by his aspects,—wonderful and ineffable, not existing by them, but they existing because of Him. It follows that if he attracts by his aspects, all the more he can attract by his very absolute selfness which is sweeter, mightier, profounder than any aspect. His peace, rapture, light, freedom, beauty are marvellous and ineffable, because he is himself magically, mysteriously, transcendently marvellous and ineffable. He can then be sought after for his wonderful and ineffable self and not only for the sake of one aspect or another of his. The only thing

needed for that is, first, to arrive at a point when the psychic being feels this pull of the Divine in himself and, secondly, to arrive at the point when the mind, vital and each thing else begins to feel too that that was what it was wanting and the surface hunt after Ananda or what else was only an excuse for drawing the nature towards that supreme magnet.

Your argument that because we know the union with the Divine will bring Ananda, therefore it must be for the Ananda that we seek the union, is not true and has no force. One who loves a queen may know that if she returns his love it will bring him power, position, riches and yet it need not be for the power, position, riches that he seeks her love. He may love her for herself and could love her equally if she were not a queen; he might have no hope of any return whatever and yet love her, adore her, live for her, die for her simply because she is she. That has happened and men have loved women without any hope of enjoyment or result, loved steadily, passionately after age has come and beauty has gone. Patriots do not love their country only when she is rich, powerful, great and has much to give them; love for

country has been most ardent, passionate, absolute when the country was poor, degraded, miserable, having nothing to give but loss, wounds, torture, imprisonment, death as the wages of her service; yet even knowing that they would never see her free, men have lived, served and died for her—for her own sake, not for what she could give. Men have loved Truth for her own sake and for what they could seek or find of her, accepted poverty, persecution, death itself; they have been content even to seek for her always, not finding, and yet never given up the search. That means what? That man, country, Truth and other things beside can be loved for their own sake and not for anything else, not for any circumstance or attendant quality or resulting enjoyment, but for something absolute that is either in them or behind their appearance and circumstance. The Divine is more than a man or woman, a stretch of land or a creed, opinion, discovery or principle. He is the Person beyond all persons, the Home and Country of all souls, the Truth of which truths are only imperfect figures. And can He then not be loved and sought for his own sake, as and more than these have been by men even in their lesser selves and nature?

What your reasoning ignores is that which is absolute or tends towards the absolute in man and his seeking as well as in the Divine—something not to be explained by mental reasoning or vital motive. A motive, but a motive of the soul, not of vital desire; a reason not of the mind, but of the self and spirit. An asking too, but the asking that is the soul's inherent aspiration, not a vital longing. That is what comes up when there is the sheer self-giving, when "I seek you for this, I seek you for that" changes to a sheer "I seek you for you". It is that marvellous and ineffable absolute in the Divine that X means when he says "Not knowledge nor this nor that, but Krishna". The pull of that is indeed a categorical imperative, the self in us drawn to the Divine because of the imperative call of the greater Self, the soul ineffably drawn towards the object of its adoration, because it cannot be otherwise, because it is it and He is He. That is all about it.

I have written all that only to explain what we mean when we speak of seeking the Divine for himself and not for anything else — so far as it is explicable. Explicable or not, it is one of the most dominant facts of spiritual experience. The will to self-giving is only an expression of

this fact. But this does not mean that I object to your asking for Ananda. Ask for that by all means, so long as to ask for it is a need of any part of your being — for these are the things that lead towards the Divine so long as the absolute inner call that is there all the time does not push itself to the surface. But it was really that that draws from the beginning and is there behind—it is the categorical spiritual imperative, the absolute need of the soul for the Divine.

I am not saying that there is to be no Ananda. The self-giving itself is a profound Ananda and what it brings, carries in its wake an inexpressible Ananda — and it is brought by this method sooner than by any other, so that one can say almost: "A self-less self-giving is the best policy". Only one does not do it out of policy. Ananda is the result, but it is done not for the result, but for the self-giving itself and for the Divine himself — a subtle distinction, it may seem to the mind, but very real.

II

The love which is turned towards the Divine ought not to be the usual vital feeling which men call by that name; for that is not love, but only a vital desire, an

instinct of appropriation, the impulse to possess and monopolise. Not only is this not the divine Love, but it ought not to be allowed to mix in the least degree in the Yoga. The true love for the Divine is a self-giving, free of demand, full of submission and surrender; it makes no claim, imposes no condition, strikes no bargain, indulges in no violences of jealousy or pride or anger—for these things are not in its composition. In return the Divine Mother also gives herself, but freely—and this represents itself in an inner giving—her presence in your mind, your vital, your physical consciousness, her power re-creating you in the divine nature, taking up all the movements of your being and directing them towards perfection and fulfilment, her love enveloping you and carrying you in its arms Godwards. It is this that you must aspire to feel and possess in all your parts down to the very material, and here there is no limitation either of time or of completeness. If one truly aspires and gets it—there ought to be no room for any other claim or for any disappointed desire. And if one truly aspires, one does unfailingly get it, more and more as the purification proceeds and the nature undergoes its needed change.

Keep your love pure of all selfish claim and desire; you will find that you are getting all the love that you can bear and absorb in answer.

Realise also that the Realisation must come first, the work to be done, not the satisfaction of claim and desire. It is only when the Divine Consciousness in its supramental Light and Power has descended and transformed the physical that other things can be given a prominent place—and then too it will not be the satisfaction of desire, but the fulfilment of the Divine Truth in each and all and in the new life that is to express it. In the divine life all is for the sake of the Divine and not for the sake of the ego.

I should perhaps add one or two things to avoid misapprehensions. First, the love for the Divine of which I speak is not a psychic love only; it is the love of all the being, the vital and vital-physical included,—all are capable of the same self-giving. It is a mistake to believe that if the vital loves, it must be a love that demands and imposes the satisfaction of its desire; it is a mistake to think that it must be either that or else the vital, in order to escape from its "attachment", must draw away altogether from the object of its love. The vital

can be as absolute in its unquestioning self-giving as any other part of the nature; nothing can be more generous than its movement when it forgets self for the Beloved. The vital and physical should both give themselves in the true way—the way of true love, not of ego desire.

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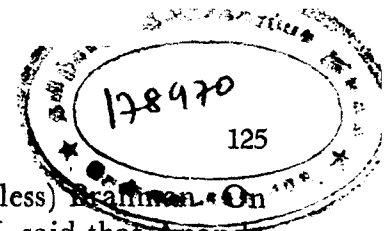
It was not my intention to say that it was wrong to aspire for the Ananda. What I wanted to point out was the condition for the permanent possession of the Ananda (intimations, visits, down-rushes of it one can have before); the essential condition for it is a change of consciousness, the coming of peace, light, etc., all that brings about the transition from the normal to the spiritualised nature. And that being so, it is better to make this change of consciousness the first object of the sadhana. On the other hand, to press for the constant Ananda immediately in a consciousness which is not yet able to retain it, still more to substitute for it lesser (vital) joys and pleasures may very well stop the flow of these spiritualised experiences which make the continuous ecstasy essentially possible. But I certainly never intended to say that the Ananda was not to be attained or to insist on your moving towards

a *nirānanda* (joyless) ~~state~~. On the contrary, I said that Ananda was the crown of the Yoga, which surely means that it was a part of the highest *siddhi*.

Whatever one wants sincerely and persistently from the Divine, the Divine is sure to give. If then you want Ananda and go on wanting, you will surely have it in the end. The only question is what is to be the chief power in your seeking, a vital demand or a psychic aspiration manifesting through the heart and communicating itself to the mental and vital and physical consciousness. The latter is the greatest power and makes the shortest way—and besides one has to come that way sooner or later.

* * * *

To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole crown and essence of our Yoga. But it has always seemed to me impossible unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth—what I call the Supramental—and its Divine Power. Otherwise Love itself blinded by the confusions of this present consciousness may stumble in its human receptacles and, even otherwise, may find itself unrecognised, rejected or rapidly degenerating and lost in the frailty



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of man's inferior nature. But when it comes in the Divine Truth and Power, Divine Love descends first as something transcendent and universal and out of that transcendence and universality it applies itself to persons (creating a vaster, greater, purer personal love than any the human mind or heart can now imagine) according to the Divine Truth and Will. It is when one has felt this descent that one can be really an instrument for the birth and action of the Divine Love in the world.

III

The spiritual union must begin from within and spread out from there; it cannot be based on anything exterior—for, if so based, the union cannot be spiritual or real. That is the great mistake which so many make here: they put the whole emphasis on the external vital or physical relation with the Mother, insist on a vital interchange or else physical contact and when they do not get it to their satisfaction, enter into all kinds of disturbances, revolt, doubt, depression. This is a wrong view-point altogether and has caused much obstruction and trouble. The mind, vital, physical can participate and are intended to participate in the union, but for that they must be

submitted to the psychic, themselves psychecised; the union must be an essentially psychic and spiritual union spreading out to the mind, vital and physical. Even the physical must be able to feel invisibly the Mother's closeness, her concrete presence—then alone can the union be truly based and completed and then alone can any physical closeness or contact find its true value and fulfil its spiritual purpose. Till then any physical contact is of value only so far as it helps the inner sadhana, but how much can be given and what will help or hinder, the Mother only can judge, the sadhak cannot be the judge—he will be led away by the desires and lower vital ego, as so many have been in fact. Such means of help by physical contact as the Mother had established have been largely spoilt by the sadhaks' misuse of them, the wrong attitude of which I have spoken. When the vital demand is there with its claims and revolts and takes the desire for the exterior contact or closeness as a cause or occasion for these things, then it becomes a serious hindrance to the development of the inner union, it does not help at all. The sadhakas always imagine in their ignorance that when the Mother sees more of one person than of another, it is because of

personal preference and that she is giving more love and help to that person. That is altogether a mistake. Physical closeness and contact can be a severe ordeal for the sadhak; it may raise the vital demands, claims, jealousies etc. to a high pitch, it may, on the other hand, leave him satisfied with an outer relation without making any serious effort for the inner union; or it becomes for him something mechanical, because ordinary and familiar, and for any inner purpose quite ineffective these things are not only possible but have happened in many cases. The Mother knows that and her arrangements in this matter are therefore dictated by quite other reasons than those which are attributed to her.

The only safe thing is to concentrate on the inner union foremost and altogether, to make that the one thing to be achieved and to leave aside all claims and demands for anything external, remaining satisfied with what the Mother gives and relying wholly on her wisdom and solicitude. It ought to be quite evident that a desire which raises revolt, doubt, depression, desperate struggles cannot be a true part of the spiritual movement. If your mind tells you that it is the right thing, then surely you must distrust the mind's suggestions. Concentrate

entirely on the one thing needful and put away, if they come, all ideas and forces that want to disturb it or make you deviate. The vital assent to these things has to be overcome, but for that the first thing is to refuse all mental assent, for the mental support gives them a greater force than they would otherwise have. Fix the right attitude in the mind and the deeper emotional being—clinging to that when contrary forces arise and by your firmness in that psychic attitude repel them.

IV

This Yoga is certainly difficult, but is any Yoga really easy? You speak of the lure of liberation into the extracosmic Absolute, but how many who set out on the Path of Nirvana attain to it in this life or without a long strenuous and difficult endeavour? Which of the paths has not to pass through the dry desert in order to reach the promised land? Even the path of Bhakti which is said to be the easiest is full of the lamentations of the bhaktas complaining that they call but the Beloved eludes their grasp, the place of meeting is prepared but even now Krishna does not come? Even if there is the joy of a brief glimpse or the passion of *milan*, it is followed by long periods of

viraha. It is a mistake to think that any path of Yoga is facile, that any is a royal road or short-cut to the Divine, or that there can be, like a system of "French made easy" or "French without tears", also a system of "Yoga made easy" or "Yoga without tears". A few great souls prepared by past lives or otherwise lifted beyond the ordinary spiritual capacity may attain realisation more swiftly; some may have uplifting experiences at an early stage, but for most the *siddhi* of the path, whatever it is, must be the end of a long, difficult and persevering endeavour. One cannot have the crown of spiritual victory without the struggle or reach the heights without the ascent and its labour. Of all it can be said "Difficult is that road hard to tread like the edge of a razor".

You find the path dry precisely because you have not yet touched the fringe of it. But all paths have their dry periods and for most though not for all it is at the beginning. There is a long stage of preparation necessary in order to arrive at the inner psychological condition in which the doors of experience can open and one can walk from vista to vista—though even then new gates may present themselves and refuse to open until all is ready. This

period can be dry and desert-like unless one has the ardour of self-introspection and self-conquest and finds every step of the effort and struggle interesting or unless one has or gets the secret of trust and self-giving which sees the hand of the Divine in every step of the path and even in the difficulty the grace or the guidance. The description of Yoga as "bitter like poison in the beginning" because of the difficulty and struggle, "but in the end sweet as nectar" because of the joy of realisation, the peace of liberation or the divine Ananda and the frequent description by sadhaks and bhaktas of the periods of dryness shows sufficiently that it is no unique peculiarity of this Yoga. All the old disciplines recognised this and it is why the Gita says that Yoga should be practised patiently and steadily with a heart that refuses to be overcome by despondency. It is a recommendation applicable to this path, but also to the way of the Gita and to the hard "razor" path of the Vedanta, to every other. It is quite natural that the higher the Ananda to come down, the more difficult may be the beginning, the drier the deserts that have to be crossed on the way.

Certainly, the supramental manifestation does not bring

peace, purity, force, power of knowledge only; these give the necessary conditions for the final realisation, are part of it, but Love, Beauty and Ananda are the essence of its fulfilment. And although the supreme Ananda comes with the supreme fulfilment, there is no real reason why there should not be the Love and Ananda and beauty of the way also. Some have found that even at an early stage before there was any other experience. But the secret of it is in the heart, not the mind—the heart that opens its inner door and through it the radiance of the soul looks out in a blaze of trust and self-giving. Before that inner fire the debates of the mind and its difficulties wither away and the path however long or arduous becomes a sunlit road not only towards but through love and Ananda.

Nevertheless, even if that does not come at first, one can arrive

at it by a patient perseverance—the psychic change is indeed the indispensable preliminary of any approach to the supramental path and this change has for its very core the blossoming of the inner love, joy, bhakti. Some may find a mental opening first and the mental opening may bring peace, light, a beginning of knowledge first, but this opening from above is incomplete unless it is followed by an opening inward of the heart. To suppose that the Yoga is dry and joyless because the struggles of your mind and vital have made your first approach to it dry is a misunderstanding and an error. The hidden springs of sweetness will reveal themselves if you persevere, even if now they are guarded by the dragons of doubt and unsatisfied longing. Grumble, if your nature compels you to it, but persevere.

THOUGHTS ON CURRENT EVENTS

LESSONS OF THE BENGAL FAMINE

A comparison has been made between the atrocities of the Nazi concentration camps and the deaths due to starvation during the recent famine in Bengal. Thus John Mc Cromick, Durham correspondent of the "Tribune" (England) writes in that paper: "After seeing the news-reels of skeleton frames

of Buchanwald prisoners I could not help thinking of the conditions of many Indians. As far as the victims are concerned, these sufferings are none the less real, because they have been starved indirectly by British Imperialism, than if they had been starved by the Nazi brutality. As long as this

state of affairs exists it is sheer hypocrisy to condemn the Germans for their acquiescence in Nazi persecutions." This statement has been given wide publicity in India and some Indian journals have written editorials on it with such captions as "Bengal and Belsen". Such comparisons, however, are most misleading and harmful as they tend to prevent people from seeing grim truths in their proper perspective and also add to the volume of prejudice and bitterness which have already done great harm. In the Nazi concentration camps slow starvation was deliberately used as a means of mass murder; there was no such deliberate design behind the Bengal famine which was due to the operation of physical, moral and psychological causes some of which were well nigh beyond human control. That is the impression one gets from the excellent report of the Famine Enquiry Commission, constituted by Sir John Woodhead and three other distinguished Indians. It is strange that the report has not received in the Indian Press the attention it deserves; as a matter of fact, it has not even been reported in full in any paper except in the 'Amrita Bazar Patrika,' so far as we know. The general comment is that it is a final indictment on British rule in India—when that is said, nothing else, it is supposed, has to be said or thought about the matter. But it will even be a greater tragedy than the famine itself if the true causes are not clearly perceived and radical steps are not taken to remedy them. British rule in India is a foreign rule which is an evil in itself and needs no indictment initial or final. But it would be obvious to all impartial and unprejudiced students of the report that it is an indictment—

terrible indictment indeed—much more on the people themselves and their chosen leaders and representatives than on anything else. There is an idea in our country that it is our patriotic duty only to throw all blame on the British people and the British government, but not to show our own faults as that would lower us in the estimation of the world. But if our own defects and shortcomings are not clearly recognised, how shall we remedy them and grow to our full stature as a great nation? The "Red Star" correspondent put the following question to Dr. Benes who has now returned to his country: "What are the first measures of the Czecho-Slovak Government and what do people think of them?" Dr. Benes replied, "The Czecho-Slovak people now know very well what their mistakes were in the past and what handicapped their state. It is important to recognise mistakes of the past so as not to repeat them." He said again, "Our people condemn mistakes of the past and do not want them repeated." The distorted conception of patriotism in India rises from the inferiority complex of the Indians. That the British people are free from such a complex is evident from the fact that statements like that of the Durham correspondent, quoted above, could appear in a British paper. Indeed the British people have shown no reluctance to admit their share of the responsibility for the Bengal famine and a typical comment is that of the "Glasgow Herald" which remarked that the Bengal tragedy was an unparalleled instance of the breakdown of British administration.

There is no doubt that the calamity could have been averted if the Government had taken energetic measures at the proper time and in the proper way.

But we should not forget that at that time the administration of Bengal was in the hands of popular ministers like Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, Mr. Fazlul Huq and Sir Nazimuddin. It had been alleged that the Governor did not give a free hand to the ministers. The Commission examined this charge and found from the papers that it was not true; all decisions of the Bengal Government were taken in the ordinary way in consultation with the ministers and there was no overriding of the cabinet. That does not absolve the Governor of his responsibility. He has statutory power to intervene in the interests of the people and if the ministers failed in their duty he ought to have done so. There were other quarters from which pressure could have been exerted on the ministers for a better administration. Thus there was the Bengal Assembly consisting of representatives from all parts of the province. What were they doing when such a disaster was growing under their nose? If they had visited their constituencies, ascertained the true facts and brought them to the notice of the Government and impressed upon them the necessity of taking immediate and urgent measures, the calamity could have been averted, as the Commission has expressed the view that the Government made mistakes as they were not fully appraised of the real gravity of the situation. The organs of public opinion, the newspapers also failed in their duty in this respect. Of course it was known to all that there was scarcity in the country and wide-spread suffering. But there was no definite information coming from any source and no enlightened suggestion of measures by which things could have been better organised. It was the

"Statesman" which really proved to be "the friend of India" by brushing aside all other considerations and publishing some ghastly pictures of the tragedy that was being enacted in the streets of Calcutta. That at once awakened the conscience not only of the people and the Government but of the whole world and help was rushed in which saved the lives of innumerable unfortunate men, women and children.

Let us briefly recapitulate here the main facts as found by the Famine Enquiry Commission. In the summer of 1942, a situation had arisen in the rice markets of India, including those of Bengal, in which the normal trade machinery was beginning to fail to distribute supplies at reasonable prices. This was due to the stoppage of imports of rice from Burma and the consequent transfer of the demands of Ceylon, Travancore, Cochin and Western India, formerly met from Burma, to the markets in the main rice producing areas in India. Other circumstances arising out of the war also accentuated the disturbances to normal trade. In Bengal, owing to the proximity to the fighting zone and its position as a base for military operations in Burma, the material and psychological repercussions of the war on the life of the people were more pronounced in 1942, and also in 1943 than elsewhere in India. The failure of the 'aman' crop in Bengal at the end of 1942 in combination with the whole set of circumstances, made it inevitable that, in absence of control the price of rice would rise to a level at which the poor would be unable to obtain their needs. When the price of rice rose steeply in May and June, 1942, the Government of Bengal endeavoured to bring the situation under control by the prohi-

bition of exports and fixing statutory maximum prices. But the result of this attempted control of price was that all rice disappeared from the market, the sellers withdrew their stocks seeking to compel the Government to change their policy and there was a clamour from the public. At this point the proper course would have been to requisition all stocks and compel the hoarders to bring out their stores. The Government hesitated to take this bold step as that might cause wide-spread disturbances which would hamper war efforts. The control was withdrawn, and the traders were convinced that the Government would not be able to control prices and the situation began to grow worse. But by the middle of September four factors helped to steady the prices. First, a decrease in exports, secondly, the judicious use of "denial" stocks, thirdly, good rain in September which gave the promise of a good 'aman' crop, and fourthly, the decision not to enforce price control. Would prices begin moving up again or not? No one knew for certain—neither those who feared that prices would rise nor those who hoped that they would. Exports, though on a reduced scale, were taking place. Perhaps the needs of other areas might compel Government to allow larger exports, and in that case surely prices must rise. Markets in the province generally, and Calcutta markets in particular, were in a state of suspense about the future when the cyclone struck the province and within a few weeks it became generally known that the 'aman' crop would be a poor one. The suspense was ended. It was clear that prices must rise again and no one believed that Government could control them. Prices rose rapidly and by January,

1943, had reached levels never before known in Bengal. The rise in prices continued unchecked and converted a shortage of supply into a famine.

What happened was that producers sold their rice as they thought fit at the best price they could obtain, or held it in the hope of still higher prices. Traders bought, held and sold with the object of obtaining maximum profits and consumers who could afford it bought as much as they could and not as they needed. The results were on the one hand unprecedented profiteering and the enrichment of those on the right side of the fence; on the other, the rise of prices to fantastic heights and the death of perhaps one and a half million people.

The Commission regards the shortage of supply and the rise of prices as the two basic causes of the famine. But we think it would be more correct and appropriate to regard the political situation prevailing in the country as the basic cause which made the development of other contributory factors possible and even under the circumstances inevitable. The partial failure of the 'aman' crop is nothing unusual in Bengal and it has been estimated that the shortage was only for three weeks for the whole population. The rise of prices was out of all proportion to the shortage. The consumers feared that the Government would not be able to meet the needs of the people, and the traders were convinced that the Government would not be able to exercise control. All this could have been remedied if the Bengal Government had undertaken measures for controlling supplies and ensuring their distribution at prices at which the poor could afford to buy their requirements and if the Government of India had

established a system of planned movement of supplies from surplus to deficit provinces. But such measures depended for their complete success on full popular co-operation and support. Unfortunately all this was lacking and co-operation was not obtained. In the first place, there was the Congress policy of non-co-operation with the Government; secondly, the different political groups could not agree with each other. The Commission observes: "We are convinced that political strife in Bengal was a serious obstacle to an effective attack on the problems created by high prices and food shortage. Ministers who were subjected to bitter assaults by their political opponents must have been hampered in their endeavour to take decisive action . . . We have been informed that a series of attempts were made to form an "all-party Government" before and after the change of Ministry in March-April, 1943. They all failed. We understand that the main reasons for the failure were, first, the refusal of the Muslim League party in accordance with its All-India political policy to join a Government which included any Muslim who did not belong to the party, and secondly, the refusal of other principal parties either to join or support a Government from which Muslim leaders who did not belong to the Muslim League party were excluded." Thus it would seem that the different parties were more interested in seizing power for themselves than in relieving the distress of the people. If the opposition parties had a better grasp of the situation and were more efficient, why did they not go to the villages and organise voluntary rationing there, thus inducing the villagers to share with all the food that was available? Indeed

greed for political power and position is as much a social evil as greed for profiteering. Under the circumstances, the Governor, the ministers, the Hindus, the Muslims, the people in general all distrusted each other, there was all-round friction and lack of unity and it would have been a miracle if all these had not caused a breakdown of the administration.

The British people with their practical sense realised all this very well in their country and had merged all their party conflicts forming a coalition ministry and uniting the country to meet the great danger of Nazism. They clearly perceived the dangers of the situation in India and sent Cripps with proposals for a settlement. Whatever the defects of those proposals, it would, if accepted, have united all the parties on a common platform and insured the co-operation of the people with the Government, and that was the most urgent need of the time. Men like Nehru and Azad would have been in the Central Government, coalition ministries would have been formed in the provinces, the Congress workers would have got every facility to organise constructive work in the villages; and in the atmosphere of unity and good will all serious problems rising out of the unprecedented situation could have been tackled satisfactorily. But the proposals were rejected and a situation arose in the country which in the words of Pandit Nehru was an "open rebellion." Referring to the disturbances which started in August 1942, the Commission remarks; "Apart from the fact that they claimed the attention of Government at a time when the development of the food situation required all their special attention, they added to the difficulties

of securing public co-operation and maintaining public confidence." So the conclusion cannot be escaped that one million and a half men, women and children would not have met with a most cruel death by starvation but for the conditions created in the country by the rejection of the proposals which Cripps had brought from the British Government at a most critical moment in the history of India and the world.

As a heroic recipe against famine, it has been suggested that all the big profiteers concerned should be hung by the neck till they were dead. But as we have seen above, they were not the only culprits. The individual trader sold at the prevailing market prices, for if he contented himself with a small profit, he merely helped another trader to make more profit. "The fact", says the Commission, "is that a large section of the community, including producers, traders and consumers, contributed in varying degrees to the tragic outcome. The movement of prices which started in 1942 did not originate in the villages but by the end of the year producers as well as traders were infected by the unhealthy atmosphere of fear, greed and speculation." If we are carried away by slogans we shall never find the truth. Another such slogan is that the Bengal famine is the final indictment on the existing economic order and that socialism or communism is the proper remedy. Now capitalism has its evils and all progressive capitalist countries are taking various steps to remedy them, one being the imposition of heavy taxes on excess profits. But how does the Bengal famine serve as an argument in favour of socialism? It is admitted on all hands that the Government bungled and mismanaged, otherwise

many lives could have been saved. Socialism will place all affairs of the society in the hands of the state, that is in the hands of ministers and officials. By merely socialising the means of production and distribution men will not change into supermen and those men who will run the Government machinery will have the same failings and incapacities as the bureaucracy in a capitalist state; only their scope of mischief will be greater as they will wield far greater powers. Indeed it is not the outer structure of society but the nature of man which ultimately shapes the course of events in society. If greed for profit and for power is not uprooted from human nature, men will find ingenious means of satisfying it at the expense of others, whatever be the machinery of society. It is not generally appreciated what an important work is done by the traders in a society. They are experts in collecting supplies of necessary articles and distributing them to the whole population. The general idea is that trade or business is a mere matter of making profit or earning money. But that is a gross misunderstanding of the function of the trader. They are servants of society, and their motive should be self-development through service and not making profit. That is the ancient Indian ideal of Chaturvarnya as we find it delineated in the Gita. Thus the Gita says: "Agriculture, cattle keeping, trade inclusive of the labour of the craftsman and the artisan are the natural work of the Vaishya. A man who is intent on his own natural work attains perfection. He from whom all beings originate, by whom all this universe is pervaded, by worshipping Him by his own work, a man reacheth perfection." (Gita

XVIII-44-46). Thus a trader is to do his natural work as an worship, as a sacrifice to the Divine; the motive is not profit but self-perfection; whatever profit comes has to be accepted as the grace of God, *prasāda*. "Fostered by sacrifice the gods shall give you desired enjoyments . . . The good who eat what is left from the sacrifice, are released from all sin; but evil are they and enjoy sin who cook (the food) for their own sake." (Gita III-12-13). That ideal is now lost: people do business with profit as their motive and that is at the root of all economic troubles in society. The remedy lies in recovering the Gita's ideal of service and sacrifice.

There is another aspect of the Bengal famine which deserves special notice as it goes to the very root of the national problem as a whole—it is the indifference and callousness of the people in general to the sufferings which they saw around them. This has been testified by many observers, and the Commission observes: "A large part of the community lived in plenty while others starved, and there was much indifference in face of suffering. Corruption was widespread throughout the province and in many classes of society." "In theory it should have been possible to distribute the total supply, even if it fell short of normal requirements, in such a way that everyone got an equal share of it and none need have starved merely as a result of foregoing a small fraction of his normal food requirements." This theory could have been put into practice if only there had been some sort of organisation in the villages, as the people of Bengal are not really heartless. The fact is that the villages in Bengal, as indeed in all parts of India, are still in an utterly disorganised condition in spite of all tall talk and big

expenditure on village organisation which has been going on for the last twenty-five years. But what happened to the volunteer organisations in Bengal? Since the Swadeshi days they have been showing splendid capacity for organising relief works of all kinds, but in Bengal's greatest hour of need nothing of that was evident. We shall find the explanation if we read the party organs of the different political groups in Bengal of the present day. One group welcomed the famine as it would discredit the British Government and thus pave the way to Swaraj; another group of the leftist camp quoted Lenin's saying that in a bourgeois society all relief works are counter-revolutionary. An obsession with these party slogans blinded the youth of Bengal to the sufferings of the starving millions as also to the great cause for which the world war was being fought. In one of his letters written to Lord Linlithgow, Mahatma Gandhi made bold to say that if the Congress workers had been outside prison, there would have been no death by starvation, and he was quite right. When Dr. Shyamaprasad Mookerji, as a minister of Bengal, visited some Congress workers in jail, they showed their eagerness to take up relief work if they were released from prison. But even then the August resolution was not withdrawn and the political deadlock continued. The Commission pathetically observes: "It has been for us a sad task to inquire into the course and causes of the Bengal famine. We have been haunted by a deep sense of tragedy. A million and a half of the poor of Bengal fell victim to circumstances for which they themselves were not responsible. Society together with its organs, failed to

protect its weaker members. Indeed there was a moral and social breakdown, as well as an administrative breakdown."

The Commission has made certain recommendations for guidance in the future. They may be of great practical help, but we must remember that the ultimate remedy does not lie in that direction. The Famine Code which took shape during the last quarter of the last century was such a body of recommendations based on past experience, but it failed to give right guidance in the Bengal famine which was unique. That Code deals with the usual famine which is caused by the failure of crop because of drought. There was no such failure in Bengal, where the rise of prices due to the unique political situation was the real cause of the famine. That again shows that though past experience can be helpful, it may also be misleading; thus free trade as recommended by the Famine Code actually proved harmful in Bengal. The Code presupposes free flow of supplies from other parts of the country and also facilities of transportation. These were wanting in the case of Bengal. What should be our guide in such unprecedented circumstances which can always rise? The forces operating, not only political and economic but psychological and moral, are too vast and complex for the mere human intellect to adjudge them properly. What the Commission now sees in retrospect after the event was not so obvious at the time of the occurrence. Thus in one place the Commission observes: "We have described the dilemma with which the Bengal Government was faced early in March, 1943. They had to decide between two courses of action, both of

which involved serious risks. Their decision in favour of decontrol was in accordance with the policy of the Government of India and indeed was taken with their approval. We appreciate the care with which the Bengal Government weighed the 'pros' and 'cons' before reaching their decision. But it was in our opinion a wrong choice." It is only a higher intuition which can hit at the proper remedial measures under such circumstances and the Bengal famine is a pointed reminder that in the increasing vastness and complexities of human affairs—the whole world becoming one country, even one family, events on one part immediately affecting all other parts—those who would be at the helm of human affairs must be men who have not only high qualities, of head and heart, but have higher faculties of vision and activity which can only be developed by Yoga and spiritual discipline. India with her most intricate and colossal problems and her unique position in international affairs must have the leadership of men who have not only the readiness to undergo suffering and sacrifice for the sake of the country but men who have purified their hearts of all egoistic ambition and greed for power and position and acquired a higher spiritual vision and a driving power to take the people with them in the right path, *loka-sangrahāya*. And it is India which can give to the whole world the true lead in the acquirement of superhuman vision and faculties and rising to the status of the true superman who alone can be the true leader.

"The command is now. God always keeps for himself a chosen country in which the higher knowledge is through all chances and dangers, by the few or

the many, continually preserved, and for the present, in this *caturyuca* at least, that country is India. Whenever He chooses to take the full pleasure of Ignorance, of the dualities of strife and wrath, and tears and weakness and selfishness, the *tamasic* and *rajasic* pleasures, of the play of the Kali in short, He dims the knowledge in India and puts her down into weakness and degradation so that she may retire into herself and not interfere with the movements of His *lila*. When He wants to rise up from the mud and Narayana in man to become once again mighty and wise and blissful, then He once more pours out the knowledge on India and raises her up so that she may give the

knowledge with its necessary consequences of might, wisdom and bliss to the whole world. When there is the contracted movement of knowledge, the yogins in India withdraw from the world and practise yoga for their own liberation and delight or for the liberation of a few disciples; but when the movement of knowledge again expands and the soul of India expands with it, they come forth once more and work in the world and for the world. Yogins like Janaka, Ajatashatru and Kartavirya once more sit on the thrones of the world and govern the nations." (*The Yoga and its Objects* by Sri Aurobindo.)

—Critic.

POETIC VALUES AND POWERS

(A LETTER)

You have defined the poet as a bringer of joy—and, since the joy of the mystical consciousness is the highest, you arrive at the conclusion that the highest type of poet is the mystical. Your conclusion is valid from a certain standpoint, but not as a judgment on art. Is art to be judged by its explicit nearness to or farness from the mystical realisation? The joy which art brings us is not always explicitly the mystical *ananda*: it is mostly that *ananda* in a specific disguise and it is not required to be more: hence our judgments on art have to be within the realm of that disguise. A poet is great not by speaking solely of God in a perfect way: he is great by speaking of anything in a way that is perfect. Nothing except perfection of manner embodying a significant substance constitutes the

highest poetry. And this perfection does not depend openly on one's belief in or awareness of God. The mysticity or non-mysticity of the theme makes no difference to the status of a poet as a poet. Shakespeare's

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well" which has no definite spiritual significance is not less high poetry than a mystical phrase like Frederic Myers'

"Leap from the universe and plunge in Thee."

Nor is the poetry of either of these lines less high than Sri Aurobindo's

"Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,"

a line which derives in manner as well as matter from a plane of inspiration beyond the mind—an "overhead

plane", to use an Aurobindonian label—and comes suffused with a fathomlessness of suggestion and harmony absent in the mystical snatch from Myers, the vigour and wideness of which derive from a mental plane, imaginatively and not abstractly so, yet mental all the same. The manner, the form, of the "overhead" line may be described as directly mystical, while that of the non-"overhead" is indirect in its mysticism. Such a difference counts in a mystical consideration: it does not count in the least in the artistic—and the artistic is all that is of moment when a poet's rank is in question. Neither the theme nor the plane of consciousness from which the perfect manner is born introduces any difference in poetic merit.

Even an atheist can be as high a poet as a mystic if there is active in him an inspired fashioner of perfect form. Of course the ultimate source and support of all poetry is the activity by which the Eternal shapes Himself into the archetypal world of perfect truth-forms that are being evolutionarily manifested here in the world of phenomena. But we need have no conscious acknowledgement of that source and support in order to be poets (though I dare say that for a sustained poetic flight over a lifetime some sense of hidden superhuman presences inspiring us is necessary). Nor will conscious acceptance of God make us poets if the fashioner of perfect form is not somehow active in us. Without that fashioner coming into play, "a mystical idea pouring down from above" will not produce poetry. Unless that fashioner receives and embodies it, no poetry will crystallise. God is joy and art too is joy, but God's joy becomes art's only when that fashioner is the

medium. Mystical ideas pour down from above into many people, but all don't write a *Rose of God*, that poem of Sri Aurobindo's which both of us regard as a *ne plus ultra* of spiritual incantation. I don't aver that a man who has so far given no sign of being a poet will not blossom into one under the impact of a down-pouring mystical idea: some inmates of Sri Aurobindo's Asram have become poets almost overnight—but that is because the poet, the artist, in them has been awakened. Since the Divine, the fashioner of the archetypal world of perfect truth-forms, is Himself a supreme artist, the chances are frequent that an intense impact of a mystical idea will awaken the artist in us—and the chances are increased a hundredfold in our Asram because of Sri Aurobindo's being a master-artist—but it may so happen that the artist in us does not awaken and only the philosopher does or the man of action: then we have a different type of divine manifestation. The mystical idea by itself is not sufficient for poetry to take birth, though it may bring with it, as you say, emotion and vision and rhythm; the artistic or aesthetic transmitting faculty in us has to be at work, the faculty of fashioning flawless form has to be the medium in us of that idea.

A natural corollary to this is that in our appreciation of poetry the perception of flawless form is essential. Without flawless form, no poetry. By "flawless" I don't mean outward technical perfection alone. I mean an outward technical perfection that is an embodiment of the living thrill of the inward afflatus. Without that living thrill we shall have the mechanism of form instead of the organism. The organic form is the *sine qua non* of poetry and if we don't respond to it we

may be getting out of poetry a lot of pleasure or profit but not the whole poetic profit or pleasure. I believe your failure to rate properly the organic form is responsible for your statement that a spiritual truth expressed in prose can be as successful as in poetry. Successful in what? In giving the intellect a notion easy for it to hold and turn to practical ends? For such success, prose is as good as poetry, perhaps even better. Not, however, for giving us a vivid concrete intimacy with the being of that truth, an enrapturing concrete vision of the body of that truth. Spiritual truths are not abstractions or bare ideas: they are presences and entities, they are faces and forms of the Divine and the intellect can by itself take hold of them as little as it can of human faces and forms, presences and entities. The intellect is a valuable faculty; it is always there, I suppose, in some mode or other in all self-aware experience, a human mode on our plane and a divine mode on higher planes, but its function is not successful in giving us the being and the body of anything: it has to join with other faculties, other modes of consciousness. To these modes prose cannot make as successful an appeal as does poetry and for the simple reason that the poetic expression is intenser in rhythm no less than in word; it appeals more keenly than prose to our senses and our imagination, to our heart and our intuitive self: it carries home to us better, therefore, a spiritual truth's stuff of body and stuff of being. Prose succeeds in communicating these stuffs as it approaches more and more the form of poetry. Yet inasmuch as it stops short of the full form it misses the last degree of the intensity with which they can be communicated.

In fact, prose is not meant for that extreme communication, and if it forgets this by interspersing its harmony with a marked poetic element like metre it achieves an objectionable hybrid. Leave aside spiritual truths, even non-spiritual communication in prose is spoiled by the intrusion of metre in a regular poetic way. Dickens is notoriously guilty of metricising his prose when aiming at pathos: sentence after sentence in the description of Little Nell's death is iambic blank verse not cut up in lines, and to the true artist ear the passages are jarring. Ruskin also indulges in the same device now and again: he jars less because his vision is poetic and his words too have a poetic turn. Still, his metricised prose in the midst of genuine prose writing is not very pleasant and seems somewhat cheap, as if he were avoiding the true discipline of prose art. Poetic prose should keep regular marked metre at arm's length: what it should have is a subtle subdued play of certain recurrences of beat, a play even more subtle and subdued than a skilful poet's who desires to eschew a monotonous base. After all, the base in poetry has to assert itself, on the whole, in spite of the various modulations: in prose there must be no such assertion, only a general euphony emerging from many bases briefly appearing and changing before their appearance can be distinctly noticed. Metre in the strictly poetic sense must be taboo if prose is to be good. A few typically poetic motions of the mind may also be said to be out of place—a certain super-audacity, or super-picturesqueness or super-ornamentation or super-compactness. The spell-binding power of metre lends these motions a naturalness and an easy effectivity which are hard

to produce in the looser and more pedestrian pace of prose. Prose, therefore, by its very *swabhava* is debarred from the highest expressive office—the top note of revelation, spiritual or secular. Its excellence, its integrity, depends on its being true to its *swabhava* and on its not trying to ape in patches the last and crowning perfections of speech belonging to the *swabhava* of poetry.

It is because form is bound up with those last and crowning perfections that as sensitive a knowledge as possible of the sound-values and the metrical laws of the tongue in which a poem is written is most helpful. Those values and laws go to constitute a good deal of form. Not to be able to distinguish between the long vowels and the short, or to pronounce correctly the combinations of vowels and consonants, or to know where exactly words are accented is to miss the musical significance of English poetry. I say "significance" on purpose, for sounds and beats have not just a quality of fineness and crudeness, concord and discord. More than through anything else, the thrill of the poetic afflatus is transmitted through the rhythm they combine to build. This rhythm bears both the nature of the emotion behind a burst of poetry and the nature of the plane on which the emotion finds tongue. Each emotion has its own vibration, and this vibration is within a larger vibration which characterises the living stuff of a plane of consciousness. For an example take the compactly emotioned descriptive line about wintry boughs in Shakespeare:

"Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang,"

and put it beside Wordsworth's less compact but equally keen-emotioned

"...more desolate, more dreary cold
Than a forsaken bird's-nest filled
with snow
'Mid its own bush of leafless eglantine."

They have a kindred heart-thrill which communicates itself to the language, but the language shapes itself on dissimilar planes in them, and the dissimilarity is felt even more in the movement and sonance of the words than in their turn and order. In the Shakespeare it is as if our bowels of pity were exquisitely stirred together with our heart, whereas in the Wordsworth the heart seems to set up with delicate piercingness a mournful tremor in our grey cells. To the one the life-force in us, where sensation throws up thought, directly answers; to the other the mind-force in which thought throws up sensation gives a direct echo: the emotion finds voice in the two lines on two different planes because the two poets do not draw their inspiration through the same plane. Nor is the emotional vibration within the larger one of the predominant plane the only thrill in rhythm: there is a vibration too of the consciousness-stuff becoming a vision, becoming an idea, becoming an intuition of realities that cannot wholly be caught in idea or vision. To hold and communicate all these thrills with all their deep and far-reaching suggestions, sounds and beats are prime factors in poetry. (I mean, English poetry, where beats are concerned; other languages have other metrical determinants.) Poetry, and to a lesser degree all imaginative writing, is wholly appreciated, wholly absorbed, wholly lived with and lived in, when the

musical significance is felt side by side with the verbal, the former reinforcing and filling out the latter.

As we go poetically to higher and higher levels of spiritual consciousness—or rather, as higher and higher levels of spiritual consciousness get expressed in poetry—the musical significance keeps increasing and gets more and more important. The *mantra*, as the Rig Veda and the Upanishads understand it, is characterised chiefly by the unfathomable hints borne on the rhythm. Alter the rhythm, however slightly, and the mantric potency is diluted: the words may remain the same and the alteration of rhythm caused by altering their order may let the sense be also the same, and yet the sheer Godhead will depart because, though the verbal sense is the same, the musical sense is different and has not the suggestion of a profoundly penetrating massive infinity and endlessness.

If, for instance, that superb line of Dilip Kumar Roy's—

"His sentinal love broods o'er the universe."

is slightly rewritten—

"Broods o'er the universe His sentinal love,"

the meaning is unmodified by the inversion, the poetic quality too is as perfect and yet the two lines do not hold the identical vibrancy of the watchful enfolding vastness they connote. I believe the rhythm of the one creates mantric waves in the hidden layers of our consciousness, that of the other somehow falls short of this extreme mystical effect. A mystically-minded reader may not lose the sense of the sheer Godhead despite the rhythm being altered; but then it is he and not the

line that supplies the sense. People have drawn that sense from the most unlikely poetic phrases because their own sensitivity to the Eternal could contact a spiritual magnitude looming behind secular symbols and rhythms. Since the magnitude was looming behind instead of emerging to the front, it would be wrong to trace their experience directly to the quality of the phrases. Judged in themselves, the phrases could not be credited with mantric might.

To feel the mantric might we must allow the rhythm to get realised by us and this is most satisfactorily done when poetry is read aloud. If we do not read aloud we are prone to pay attention to the verbal sense rather than the musical. Loud reading presses the latter into us more easily; by keeping the outer ear engaged we stop the sound-values from escaping—a concrete holding of them is accomplished by the air-undulations we start. Our sensational being is put in action, our very body commences to respond, the nerves grow attentive, the heart follows the rise and fall of the air-undulations, the blood begins singing the poem within our veins. All this stirs the mind that is using the body as its medium and that has become by too much identification with it dependant on bodily means for getting impressed and influenced. I am convinced that if a poem is never read aloud it will not ever yield its finest magic. Only by repeated loud reading the subtle overtones and undertones spring to life within us. But I do not imply that a poem is always to be read loudly. Once we have gathered its "soul of secret sound" there is no need to hear it each time with the outer ear. In fact, for turning a poem into a meditation

we should slowly dispense with the outer ears' ministry. But we must not jump into an utterly soundless commerce with the poem: though not employing that ear we should still hear the sounds, an inner ear giving us service and bearing to us the full rhythmico-metrical significance. With mouth shut we should yet carry on articulation: the eye, or the visual memory when the book is not with us, must be accompanied by the ear in a subtle form: the auditory phenomenon, however inner must be there. So the distinction between loud reading and silent is not radical: it boils down really to articulating sounds in an outward way or an inward. The inward way may be the goal of effective reading, especially for purposes of meditation, but the outward has to precede it sufficiently and make the inward seizing of the "soul of secret sound" possible before that soul can be borne to deeper and deeper levels of our consciousness.

From what you write, I infer that you believe the process of going deeper and deeper in the consciousness ends with a Great Silence which is the ultimate depth. No doubt, there is a Great Silence—all mystics testify to it. Yet I wonder if in the integral Divine any Great Silence drowns and annuls all speech. A divine silence incompatible with even divine speech strikes me as a partial experience—an experience due to our inability to reconcile or hold together seeming opposites of the divine Existence. The Personal and the Impersonal, the Multiple and the Unitary, the Active and the Passive, the Voiceful and the Silent—these are some of the contraries in which God has been conceived and realised—and the tendency is to regard the second

term of each pair as the more truly Godlike, as having more of the essence of the Ultimate. The cause of this tendency lies in the lagging of our Nature-parts behind our pure self. The self soars up to the Eternal, but our nature of mind, life and matter remains untransformed. As long as no key to their absolute transformation is found, it is logical to conclude that they labour under a basic undivinity and hence must be finally dropped and escaped from: one step further is to look on them as some incomprehensible illusion that has got attached to the sheer self: all that is personal, multiple, active and voiceful is deemed of less and less worth—secondary, subsidiary, superfluous, phantasmal. Sri Aurobindo, however, has found the key of Nature's transformation: past masters had sometimes dimly glimpsed it and groped for it in a hazy manner, none had clearly seen it and sought for it in the right way and grasped it for good: Sri Aurobindo alone has, and now at last the cry of travailing ages for the plenary Godhead here below and not only there above will be answered: our matter itself will live in the light and the law of the Immortal. Our Nature-parts have their archetypes of truth in a Divine Nature that is inalienable from the Divine Self and, by the descent of that truth without which indeed everything in Nature would be a supportless *Maya*, our mind and life and body will put on divinity. That is the Aurobindonian revelation. Its bearing on the point we began with is that the final depth of our consciousness is no solitary Great Silence but a great silence for ever accompanied with a Great Voice.

Though there is in God a positive ever-present hush which no amount of

utterance will abrogate. He is no annulment of all utterance nor is the being of Him such that it can never be uttered. He is not exclusively a hush and His being is beyond utterance in only this respect that no speech falling short of the Voicefulness proper to the plane of the supreme Divine is entirely adequate to the Existence, Consciousness, Beatitude and Archetypal Creativity of that plane. In brief, God cannot be truly spoken except by God Himself! To fasten on God an incapacity to utter Himself would be to cast a slur on His Godhead. It is speech taking shape on the level of the human consciousness or even on any level below the highest divine, that to a more or less extent may be said to come a cropper. On the highest divine level an everlasting Song that is God goes on simultaneous with God the everlasting Quiet. No inadequacy to capture the very secrets of the Eternal in language mars that interminable Harmony.

Can poetry give us this celestial music? The ancient Indian rishis held that it could, and it is precisely the type of poetry possessing the power to do so that they termed the *Mantra*. The *Mantra*, they said, is not anything born of the human consciousness or, rather, anything garbed in the shape and colour of the consciousness that is human. The values and figures of it come from the divine Consciousness straight and sheer: the life-throb and rhythm of it spring from the very heart of the Eternal and the Infinite. It is the direct epiphany in words, the sovereign scripture. Apart from the fact that God's song-aspect is not the one and only He has, there is no Unutterable for it in the essential sense: the sole sense in which it faces the

Unutterable is in relation to us, for we can derive in our poetry not His whole Harmony at once but snatches and portions and masses of it. The conditions of the time-state under which alone we are obliged to manifest His Song and Harmony preclude the endless *totum simul*, the boundless Totality all in an *ensemble* and in one miraculous illimitable Now. Inasmuch as the *totum simul* is beyond poetry as we know it, even the *Mantra* as manifested by us labours always under an impotence and is dogged by the Unutterable. But in itself it is "the Word that was in the Beginning," the *Logos*, the *Shabda-Brahman*, and when it manifests under our time-conditions it still brings us in essence the flame-tongue of the original Fire that, in the Upanishadic phrase, has gone forth everywhere and become all things.

In view of the *Mantra's* divine nature I am inclined to make a few remarks as to how exactly your beautiful statement about poetry's shortcoming as well as service should be interpreted. You write *apropos* of spiritual art of the Aurobindonian character: "the inner journey that one makes with the poet acting as the charioteer becomes a pilgrimage to the spaces beyond in the mystical wideness, but the poet stops at a point and, as if with a finger, points out something far away and seems to say, 'Now the rest of the journey has to be made all alone. The chariot would not go any further. I have been there and I have tried to tell you what it is all. You have to develop your own wings to reach the foot of the Himalaya of the Unknown.'" What happens has been finely and correctly described here—it is true that we have to pass beyond poetry, acknowledging its high aid, yet also recognising its insuffici-

ency for us. Personal sadhana, personal Yoga is needed—a profound meditative passage to the in-world and the over-world, a passage of stillness in which poetry is left behind. Yes, we have to still everything that we know in our ordinary waking life, the to-and-fro of the consciousness has to end. One-pointed, we have to shoot ourselves into the Eternal as into a target—arrows of silence speeding to the Unseen. But two queries arise: first, have we to do this because the Unseen is the opposite of all speech? and, second, is our procedure due to the defect of poetry or to our inability to get from poetry its full substance of heavenward help? Without depreciating the need of silencing our ordinary consciousness and leaving poetry behind, we can affirm that the Unseen is not incompatible with every kind of speech: it is speech that is not mantric that has to be abandoned as helpless after a particular stage. Even mantric utterance has to be abandoned—but that is because we cannot get out of it what is really inside it. Do not blame the *Mantra* for this. The blame should fall on us, obscured mortals, who cannot get God-realisation even through God's own word. The *Mantra* is indeed God's own word, a wide door opened into His magnificence and His mystery. That door is the Divine Himself, in one aspect, drawing us.

And if we were apt to mystical experience, we would fuse with the Divine as soon as the *Mantra* swept across our being. Mantric poetry chariots us only to a certain distance not because poetry cannot carry us right into the Divine but because we are incapable of being charioted by it to the very end. Lack of direct power can be charged to poetry if shape and colour have been given it by the poet on a human level. A varying approximately direct power can be attributed to poetry that is above that level yet still below the sheer divine plane—a power not enough to take us to the grand goal though it may make us neighbour it. But how can we accuse the *Mantra* of any defect? The inspiration of lines like Sri Aurobindo's *Rose of God* in which the mantric breath plays all over in different degrees fails by our defect, and not by any fault of its own, to lift us clean across the boundaries of Beatitude: its chariot is not compelled by any internal limitation of power to roll up to a certain mark and there stand still: if no rolling further is possible it can change its luminous locomotion and fly instead of rolling: it has wings as well as wheels and on its pinions it can bear us, if only we let it, to "the foot of the Himalaya of the Unknown"—nay, even to the crest of the Sacred Mountain!

—K. D. Sethna.

SRI AUROBINDO

ON THE IDEAL OF WORK

We feel the work kills us, even though some say that it is the worry that kills and not the work. But is it any particular work or 'doing' in itself that is 'killing'? No? A student finds it hard to read a prescribed book which has been the cause of his displeasure in the class-room, time and again, at the hands of the teacher. But he reads with joy much more difficult books, which he takes out of the library of his own choice. The question that challenges our attention is, what makes one 'doing' a disagreeable 'work' and another a matter of pleasure? 'Our attitude'—that is the answer we get whichever way we might approach the question.

But if that is true then the merit of the doer lies not in the action done, physical or intellectual, but in his attitude of doing it. And therefore the Gita says that everybody, whatever his station in life, while doing his duty, attains to the same fulfilment and perfection of life. No work by itself is high or low, our doing it, the attitude of our mind, honest or dishonest, makes it so.

Sri Aurobindo, in our own day, carries work even a step further. According to him some manual work is necessary for the inner growth of everybody. The reason of it lies in the character of the goal of human life towards which mankind is generally heading forward and which some, who make such progress a special aim of their life, more powerfully pursue and swiftly realise. This goal is the perfection of life, meaning thereby not the

enjoyment of the *Samādhi* state nor the attainment of individual salvation, but a spiritualisation of the total life on earth itself. It means really a transformation, a complete change of our mind, life and body. It is difficult to conceive the change contemplated and pursued by Sri Aurobindo. But it really means a heaven on earth, a *Satyayuga*, the age of Truth. This goal is according to Sri Aurobindo perfectly realisable.

We often get discouraged by a high ideal since it is difficult to realise and because it will take a long time to realise. But if we know that joy and security lie in a particular way and view of life and not in another, then it will be relatively easy for us to resist the wrong alternatives. When we set out on a journey, we want the right road. We have hardly much difficulty in rejecting short cuts, which seem to lead astray. These short-cuts, we realise through unhappy results, often prove long ways and with experience we learn to appreciate more and more that *the right way is always the shortest way*. But to know the right way we need to know our destination.

Thus the first thing to know about our life is its proper goal. Now Sri Aurobindo is right in telling us on the basis of his yogic experience as much as on the basis of understandable reasons that the progress of evolution has been from the unconscious stone to the self-conscious man through the intermediate stages of the plant and the animal. And man is surely not a perfect and fully conscious being

yet. There are so many conflicts and contradictions in him. Therefore, the evolutionally determined goal for us must be more harmony in life and ever more self-consciousness and self-control. The whole universe then becomes an evolving purpose of a Supreme Consciousness, which we designate as God. This world is in each part a creative process, each moment bringing forth new fact and new value. Religions are ordinarily at one in regarding the world as God's creation. They also regard the world as an expression and fulfilment of His purpose.

Man thus stands at the crest of the evolutionary urge through which Universal Consciousness manifests itself and which while creating recreates itself. If we can appreciate this image of the whole as an Infinite Consciousness with man standing at the peak of evolution, ever going forward for a more perfect expression, the goal of man's life as of evolution generally becomes evident. Now all that is here urged is that we may try to bear this goal in mind more and more and shape our life and activities with reference to this goal. That itself would mean a very great advantage, and which, as time passes will ever grow greater. It is with reference to such a life that Krishna's words hold good that no effort put in this direction ever goes wasted. Even a little of this Dharma saves one from great fear and danger. Because it is all put in the right direction.

Let us awake to our true goal and the meaning of life and then so intelligently guide our life that wasteful effort ever becomes less and all activity turns more and more to our lasting good and benefit.

From the point of view of general

evolution we are all steadily progressing to greater and greater perfection of our total being, even when we are not consciously working to accelerate and speed it up; and each act, bodily or mental, is a contribution to our growth. But if we realise that it is so, then the process acquires its full meaning for us. Otherwise, by grumbling and fretting and fuming about things we unnecessarily create resistances and conflicts. Our one supreme duty under these circumstances becomes really to keep conscious of the great goal towards which we are moving, always to reject distracting influences of petty likes and dislikes, so that incidental considerations do not crowd out the consciousness of the goal and we do not lose ourselves in the sideway inns and houses and forget the true home and destination. Doing so, in perfect confidence, we go ahead with life rising from fulfilment to fulfilment.

If this true frame of mind is once appreciated it will be relatively easy to get it progressively established in consciousness. And then, each act will mean progress, inner growth. It will become a creative movement. However simple an act may be, and even when it takes place for the nth time, it will yet be an original and a creative act. Virtually in this unique universe each part and each movement is each time unique and original. But our practical and generalising mind abstracts and begins to see uniformities and mechanical repetitions. Only if we can recognise the reason and the necessity for the existence of the ordinary poise of our consciousness—the practical and generalising—and try to get into a proper orientation with Reality, all work will acquire a beautiful new meaning. Direct ex-

perience itself will reveal a new joy in each act and movement. These acts always carry with them a deep inner touch, an inexpressible joy and quality of experience.

Such is the vision and possibility of work, which Sri Aurobindo opens out. Such work will always give joy and recreate the doer. It will never kill. The work becomes killing when we become attached to the action and its results. If we can remain awake to the Supreme Consciousness, the Divine, realise Its purposes and seek a constant inner guidance from It, we will ever feel free in our action. Actions done in a spirit of freedom, without attachment, are always more

perfect even as actions. And then they cause much less fatigue. Such actions progressively spiritualise our mind, life and body and in order that each one of these members be transformed in its spirit and mode of action it is necessary that each one of them be exercised in the right way i.e. under the guidance of the proper poise and frame of consciousness. Some manual work becomes necessary for everybody, as also some intellectual and mental work. Each such act is a real good of life, is an effort that will always, for eternity, stand to our advantage and be a source of joy.

This is the ideal of work to which we must aspire to rise.

—Indra Sen.

SUMMARY OF SRI DILIP KUMAR ROY'S LECTURES AT ERNAKULAM, CALICUT AND TELLICHERRY (APRIL 1945)

I am not a professional speaker nor an orator—whatever capacities I may have in music—but since it has been put down in the programme, I would just say what comes uppermost in my mind about Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual mission. To talk on Sri Aurobindo is by no means easy: in fact, difficulty grows as one proceeds because he is such a unique personality and an unfathomable seer who is miles ahead of our age. There is also another thing: Sri Aurobindo is against all propaganda. Even in his political days he used to avoid publicity and wanted to remain in the background, directing and guiding, though the British Government forced him to come to the forefront and made him a limelight figure by arresting him. If he wanted

no publicity then, surely he wants it even less now. But such men of destiny like Sri Aurobindo cannot hide their light behind a bushel. As Sri Ramakrishna said, a rose may bloom in a trackless desert, yet the bees will flock thither compelled by its fragrance. It is more or less in this way that the Asram in Pondicherry has grown. At the time when I first met Sri Aurobindo (1924) there were hardly a dozen people round about him. Vivekananda used to say that if he had 20 unselfish men he could regenerate the whole world. Sri Aurobindo wrote once that he wanted a hundred. But the number is much more already and in the Asram the foundation is laid for a higher ascent of human consciousness in its divine journey.

According to Sri Aurobindo what is required for mankind now is a complete transformation of our human nature. As long as man continues to remain in the little ego's Ignorance and acts from his lower nature, so long there is bound to be strife and evil and suffering. You have an example in the Europe of today: the terrible holocaust we are witnessing is the direct result of an exaggerated development of the unregenerate and egoistic human nature. Europe believes in institutions and organisations; but now this has become absolutely clear, that no amount of "institutional civilisation" is going to save it from war and its inescapable horrors. Sri Aurobindo pointed out long ago in his *Ideal of Human Unity*, as also in his *Psychology of Social Development*, that society cannot be improved by merely outward institutions and organisations or change of environment. If we do not turn to inner remedies, the human community will always remain imperfect and will be constantly exposed to danger. No mere tinkering will serve. A sound social evolution is possible only when the change comes from *within outward*, and the essential condition for this would be a transformation of our ordinary human nature. Wars could only be eliminated by a radical transfiguration of human nature. Of course there were people in Europe (e.g. Georges Duhamel or Lowes Dickinson) who sensed the danger threatening the Western civilisation. But only Sri Aurobindo had the integral vision to point out the correct remedy. Westerners like Gerald Heard are today emphasising the dire need of guidance of spiritual men and of an inner change through Yoga. But they do not yet know what kind of yoga will be adequate.

In India, unlike Europe, the spiritual tradition as taught by the Sages and Seers (people who have the vision, of whom Sri Aurobindo is one of the greatest) has always been that any change to be lasting and effective must come from within. The outer change must come if the inner evolution from the lower to the higher consciousness is first achieved, and this is one of the chief panaceas advocated by Sri Aurobindo's yoga. I remember a most pregnant saying of his: "A man is to be judged by not what he is nor even by what he does but by what he *becomes*." You remember Kavi's saying: "What does it matter whether or no I give away millions in charity if I am filled with divine compassion for all?" which also amounts to this, that the change that is of the last importance is a change of nature, a change of consciousness. If this is achieved, the rest will come in due course. The West will have to realise first the necessity for the inner change if it is to be saved from such mad orgies of destruction as afflict our unhappy planet today. And then only she will recognise in India the prospective Leader and Teacher of the world, the Teacher of the way of the Spirit. We may now think that we are in a bad way and politically subject and what not, but there need be no excessive pessimism when Rishis like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo still visit our hallowed continent, which is a pledge of the Divine that it is India who will be the Spiritual Guru of the world.

But on one condition, namely, that we, Indians, remain true to our spiritual tradition, our country and its Dharma. In fact the whole world, has always been protected, held together, and supported by the *tapasya* of the great

Rishis who have had the vision of God and hence the correct vision of the future. One of such outstanding Seers was Sri Ramakrishna. You remember the story how Vivekananda went about asking all the intellectuals of his time, Keshub Chandra Sen, Debendranath Tagore etc. whether they had seen God and none of them could answer in the affirmative; but when he came to Sri Ramakrishna, the latter was able to say: "I have not only seen Him, but I can show Him to you." When such giants of spiritual vision are still born in India, we need not despair. It has always been one of my regrets that I had not met Sri Ramakrishna and that regret only vanished when I saw Sri Aurobindo. (Similarly some people later on may have cause to regret that they were not among the blessed ones who had seen and known Sri Aurobindo.) For then I at once felt that of those great living Seers who are influencing and moulding the destinies of the world today, Sri Aurobindo was the greatest. The great saint Ramadas was telling me the other day that Sages influence people in three ways—by their thought, by their touch, and even by a mere look. There is also a fourth way by which they guide the world and influence the world events, and that is by the directive vision and force of their *tapasya*. It is by the force of *tapasya* that the worlds are held together and constantly redeemed.

It is therefore our urgent and positive duty to support, foster and cherish the institutions where real *tapasya* is done for the redemption of the world. The

great kings of India, Janaka and others, had always deemed it obligatory on the part of kings to support the Rishis in their work, and in the present age it should now be the duty of every one of us to follow their example and lend the spiritual leaders all our inner and outer adhesion. The men of wealth should realise that their wealth would be of little use except in an orderly society where love and not hate is the motive power of its members and that this could not be ensured except by the *tapasya* of the Sages and Seers. There is in the Mahabharata a profound legend of which you have probably heard. When Britra, the King of demons, was done to death by Indra, his adherents, the Kalakeya Asuras, took refuge in the bottom of the deeps (where Indra's thunder could not pursue them) and decided that they would emerge daily at the dead of night when people were off their guard in order to exterminate *first the race of the sages, seers and prophets*, for, they argued:

"Those who are dowered with
immortal wings
And soar in realms of Truth and
Harmony,
We, Hell's own henchmen, pawns
and underlings,
Shall decimate for ever sleeplessly.
Yea, we will seek out those who,
though unseen,
Still the earth uphold: for Seers
are saviours,
Sole heirs in darkness to God's
light serene:
The worlds shall perish once we
quench the stars."*

* Ye santi vidyā-tapasopannā steshām vinashah prathamamtu kāryah.
Lokāḥ hi sarve tapasā dhriyante tasmāt tardhwam tapasah kshayāya.
Ye santi kechichcha Vasundharāyam tapaswino dharmavidaschatajnāḥ.
Teshām badhah kriyatām kshiprameva, teshu pranashteshu jagat pranashtam.

(Quoted from the Mahabharata)

So this is the spirit in which we should regard the Asrams of India, namely, as the cherished nuclei of the spritual force which upholds our phenomenal worlds as also the seeds of all future growth of the spirit. Aldous Huxley is surely right in his recent orientation towards the way of the spirit as against the ways of mere social and political organisations however vast and impressive for the nonce. For, he says (in his latest book, *Grey*

Eminence, which we should all attend to as a masterly analysis of the present trend of affairs) "...where there is no vision, the people perish...if those who are the salt of the earth lose their savour, there is nothing to keep that earth disinfected, nothing to prevent it from falling into decay."

Reported by
K. Krishnan Nambiar, B.A., B.L.
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CASSIOPEA

How can the immortal gods and Nature change?

PERSEUS

All alters in a world that is the same.
Man most must change who is a soul of Time;
His gods too change and live in larger light.

CEPHEUS

Then man too may arise to greater heights,
His being draw nearer to the gods?

PERSEUS

Perhaps,

But the blind neither forces still have power
And the ascent is slow and long is time.
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:
The day shall come when men feel close and one.
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,
Since little by little earth must open to heaven
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.

"Perseus The Deliverer"
Sri Aurobindo.

REVIEWS

Philosophical Essays: By Surendranath Das Gupta, C.I.E., M.A., Ph.D., (Cal et Cantab), D.Litt. (Hony. Rome), I.E.S. Published by the University of Calcutta.

There is everywhere now a keen desire to understand and appreciate Indian philosophy and the spiritual ideals of India, and any one who can speak with some authority on the subject is listened to with great interest. Of those Indian Professors of Philosophy who have acquired international reputation as eminent interpreters of Indian Philosophy, Prof. S. N. Das Gupta is one of the foremost. His voluminous work, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, the first of its kind, has been published by the Cambridge University; he has also other books on Yoga and Philosophy published in England and America as well as in India. He held the highest philosophical post in India, the King George V Chair of Philosophy in the Calcutta University. His various papers read before International gatherings have been published in book form by the Calcutta University and they give us a clear idea of his methods and ideals. He has himself laid down the qualifications which one must possess in order to be fit to be a correct interpreter of Indian Philosophy; he must know so much Sanskrit as to be able to read the original Sanskrit texts, he must be a man who has made philosophy the chief interest of his life and, besides, he must have sympathy with the Indian tradition. His contention is that, as few European scholars have had all these qualifications, Indian philosophy has not had fair treatment at their hands. Judged by this standard, Mr. Dasgupta is eminently fitted for his work. Besides being a great Sanskrit scholar and a distinguished Professor of Philosophy, he was, as he himself says, brought up in the Punditic tradition.

But in spite of all this, what strikes us after a careful study of all these papers is that though he has touched most of the important topics in Indian philosophy, he has misunderstood and misinterpreted every one of them.

As the matter is of great importance, we propose to deal in some detail with Mr. Dasgupta's interpretations; but it may be well to note in the beginning the real cause of his catastrophic failure in spite of his undoubted Punditic tradition and vast Western scholarship. Indian philosophy differs from Western philosophy in this that it is not wholly based like the latter on intellectual reasoning, it has its roots in Yogic spiritual experiences and it has for its aim not a mere satisfaction of the intellect, but a practical moulding of life in the light of spiritual truths. So no one is fit to be an interpreter of Indian philosophy who has not made Yoga his chief business and has not some of the spiritual vision which inspired the ancient Indian philosophers. Mr. Dasgupta on his own admission has never practised Yoga; he has even his doubts whether the mental processes can ever be silenced as claimed by Yoga, and he finds no reason why, if any knowledge can be gained by such Yogic process, it should be regarded as superior to intellectual knowledge. Thus referring to Yogic intuitive knowledge he says, "Indian philosophy not only admitted the claims of this supra-conscious experience in philosophy, but also accorded a superior validity to it.But its superiority cannot be logically proved, and hence any proposition that affirms it can only be taken as a dogma". His phrase "supra-conscious experience" is a con-

tradition in terms and betrays that he is quite innocent of this kind of experience. There can be no experience beyond consciousness, the Yogins rise to a higher consciousness where the deepest truths are directly revealed to them. The proper term should be supra-mental experience, but Mr. Dasgupta cannot conceive of any consciousness beyond mind. But though he has no experience of this kind of knowledge, he has to write about it on account of his self-imposed task of interpreting Indian philosophy, and thus he writes just like a blind man writing on the glories and defects of colour: "This kind of knowledge will not of course be knowledge in the familiar sense; for all *samādhi*-knowledge is said to be non-conceptual knowledge and so of a different order. We can never recall the knowledge gained by *prajñā* in our normal consciousness, for it is opposed to the latter, and the former can never be translated in terms of the latter. ... This new dimension of knowledge is thus said to be there to supersede scientific knowledge and not to supplement it... If we do not believe the testimony of the Yogin, there is probably no way for us either to prove or disprove its reality". The suggestion here is that Yogic knowledge is something unnatural and abnormal and is not meant for all and it can be of no worldly use. This is a gross misrepresentation of Yoga. Yoga is nothing but the heightening of our natural powers and the development of our latent faculties. The proper way to prove the validity of Yogic knowledge is to practise Yoga and see for oneself. Yoga is not something away from life, though some extreme forms of it have had that tendency; it is the true skill in work, as the Gita says. Yoga, as something meant only for a few eccentric people, is the Western idea about Yoga and there it goes by the name of Mysticism and this is also the view of Dr. Dasgupta. But on a proper understanding of the Indian idea of Yoga, all life is Yoga. "All life", says Sri Aurobindo, "when we look behind its appearances, is a vast Yoga of

Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever-increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her divine reality. Yoga is a selection or compression into narrower but more energetic forms of intensity of the general methods which are already used by the great Mother in her vast upward labour."

We cannot emphasise it too strongly that no one can enter into the spirit of Indian philosophy sufficiently to be able to interpret it to the modern mind, unless he has at least some of the vision and Yogic experience of the ancient sages. That a mere knowledge of Sanskrit is not sufficient for this purpose is shown by the failure of our Pandits to bring out anything inspiring and life-giving from these perennial sources of Indian spirituality. Where there is Yogic experience, the knowledge of Sanskrit is not indispensable. This we find very well illustrated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna who knew neither Sanskrit nor English, yet it was he who really opened the lock-gates of ancient Indian Philosophy and spirituality to the modern mind.

Not only has Dr. Dasgupta studied Indian philosophy admittedly without any Yogic experience and depending solely on his intellect and reason, but he has thoroughly saturated his mind with the ideas and concepts of European philosophy. The inevitable consequence is that everywhere he has read European and Western thoughts and ideals into Indian philosophy. he may not have done it deliberately or even consciously, but all the same that is what his interpretation of Indian philosophy amounts to—it is nothing but Western wine put into Indian bottles; that is perhaps why he has been so readily appreciated in the West.

How Dr. Dasgupta has read the concepts of European philosophy into Indian philosophy is very well illustrated in his account of the three *gunas*, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Thus explaining the Psychology of the Yoga System of Patanjali he observes: "It holds that both matter and mind are developed by the combination of an infinite

number of ultimate reals (*gunas*). These reals are of three different classes; forming the intelligence stuff (*sattva*), the energy stuff (*rajas*) and the mass-stuff (*tamas*). As space does not allow of entering into any detailed account of them, it may briefly be noted that the combination of these three different modes is said to produce both mind and senses on the one hand and the objective world on the other" (p. 181). One feels staggered at this gross misrepresentation of the well-known *gunas* of Indian philosophy. The very word *gunas* shows that these are not reals or substances but qualities, attributes, phenomenal modes and manifestations. One Upanishadic text says, "There is one unborn of three colours, the eternal feminine principle of Prakriti with its three *gunas*, ever creating." Ancient Indians regarded quality as more important than quantity in giving an account of the structure and operations of Nature. It is the predominance of physical Science that has accustomed the modern mind to a different view of Nature, "because there the first thing that strikes us is the importance of the quantitative combinations and dispositions". But even here already a change has come: the so-called reals, the protons and electrons, are now reduced to sources of energy which somehow affect our sense organs, and Science can give only formulas of the modes of these operations of the energy. Thus there is a tendency towards the revival of the older reading of universal Nature, in terms of qualities and modes and not of "reals". As the concept of the *gunas* is one of the most important concepts in ancient Indian philosophy, let us quote here in some length what Sri Aurobindo says about it in his *Essays on the Gita*.

"The whole qualitative action of Nature, so infinitely intricate in its detail and variety, is figured as cast into the mould of three general modes of quality everywhere present, interwined, almost inextricable, *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. These modes are described in the Gita only by their psychological

action in man, or incidentally in things such as food as they produce a psychological or vital effect on human beings. If we look for a more general definition, we shall perhaps catch a glimpse of it in the symbolic idea of Indian religion which attributes each of these qualities respectively to one movement of the cosmic Trinity, *sattva* to the preserver Vishnu, *rajas* to the creator Brahma, *tamas* to the destroyer Rudra. Looking behind this idea for the rationale of the triple ascription, we might define the three modes or qualities in terms of the motion of the universal Energy as Nature's three concomitant and inseparable powers of equilibrium, kinesis and inertia. But that is only their appearance in terms of the external action of Force. It is otherwise if we regard consciousness and force as twin terms of the one Existence, always co-existent in the reality of being, however in the primal outward phenomenon of the material Nature light of consciousness may seem to disappear in a vast action of nescient unilluminated energy, while at an opposite pole of spiritual quiescence action of force may seem to disappear in the stillness of the observing or witness consciousness. These two conditions are the two extremes of an apparently separated Purusha and Prakriti, but each at its extreme point does not abolish but at the most only conceals its eternal mate in the depths of its own characteristic of being. Therefore, since consciousness is always there even in an apparently inconscient Force, we must find a corresponding psychological power of these three modes which informs their more outward executive action. On their psychological side the three qualities may be defined, *tamas* as Nature's power of nescience, *rajas* as her power of active seeking ignorance enlightened by desire and impulsion, *sattva* as her power of possessing and harmonising knowledge." (2nd series, pp. 247-49).

Dr. Dasgupta regards the *gunas* as Reals or substances with their own inherent qualities. Obviously he got his idea of the Reals from European philosophers like Leibnitz, Herbert and

Lotze who seem to have had a special influence on him. Thus according to Herbert there are many self-existent Reals which by their action and interaction on each other create all subjective as well as objective phenomena. But as we have seen above the *gunas* of Indian philosophy are not such self-existent substances or realities. The nearest approach to the Reals in Indian philosophy would be the multiplicity of Purushas as conceived by Sankhya and Patanjali; but then the Purushas do not interact with each other; all their relations are with Prakriti which is one and not many. Then again Purusha of Sankhya is *cit* or pure consciousness in its essential nature, while the absolute qualities of the Reals of Herbert are unknowable.

The European mentality of Dr. Dasgupta is further shown in his dismissal of some of the fundamental doctrines of Indian philosophy as mere dogmas. Thus he writes about the doctrine of rebirth: "We do not know how this doctrine originally crept into Indian thought, but once it was there, it was accepted almost universally without a discussion. . . it was a philosophical dogma or creed, which might safely be regarded as unproved." The doctrine of Karma is another dogma, and an Indian explanation of the operation of the law of Karma has been dubbed by Dr. Dasgupta as a "clever dodge". So also the doctrine of *Moksha* or *Mukti* is another unproved dogma of Indian philosophy. "In this case," says Dr. Dasgupta, "direct testimony from personal experience could not be available, for he who attained salvation could not be expected to return back to normal life to record his experience." Dr. Dasgupta thinks that these things had their origin in the crude beliefs and magical practices of primitive people and somehow they crept into Indian philosophy. Such explanations of the fundamental doctrines of Indian philosophy we are used to hear from purblind European scholars, but certainly did not expect them from an Indian Professor of philosophy brought up in the Punditic tradi-

tion. His suggestion is that as these things have not been logically proved, and no serious attempt has anywhere been made to prove them, they should no longer be allowed to dominate Indian thought, as they have done for centuries. May we ask what would remain of Indian philosophy after such a purging? Dr. Dasgupta has, of course, his answer ready. He says that these beliefs were grounded on the robust optimism of the Indian people about the high destiny of man, but as they have not been logically proved they can no longer serve any useful purpose. Here are his own words: "This ultimate optimism may in some sense be regarded as a bed-rock of Indian philosophical culture. All these dogmas have sprung out of the necessity of this optimistic nature of the Indian temperament. But how far these dogmas may be regarded as indispensable corollaries is open to doubt." So Dr. Dasgupta's synthesis is that we should retain our optimistic temperament and on that solid bed-rock of our ancient culture we should superimpose the Western view and mode of life based on science and logic. That, in a nutshell, is the message of Dr. Dasgupta.

He has not, however, made any attempt to explain wherefrom this optimism came to the Indians. It has no doubt come from their faith in God, Soul, Freedom, unmixed Bliss, Immortality. But this faith is inherent in human nature and common to all mankind. The Indians developed a Yogic method of verifying and proving these universal beliefs of humanity. If the validity of this method and the vision it gives are questioned—as in fact they are questioned by Dr. Dasgupta—the whole edifice falls to the ground. Indeed Dr. Dasgupta seems to be feeling this himself. Thus he says, "The bed-rock of old Indian culture and civilisation which formed the basis of our philosophy is fast slipping off our feet" (p. 214). The situation does not seem so hopeless to us. Rebirth, Karma, *Moksha* and such other doctrines are not mere dogmas, though the popular notions about these things are often very crude and have to

be corrected by the rationalistic methods of philosophy. Dr. Dasgupta regards them as dogmas since no serious attempt has ever been made to prove them logically. But has not Kant shown once for all that these things can never be proved by logical reasoning, which can deal only with objects of sense-perception? The Indian philosophers knew this long before Kant and they did not waste their time in a fruitless task. They accepted these things without discussion because they were attested by direct spiritual experience as recorded in the Vedas and the Upanishads. Thus it is not a fact that these doctrines are not proved, but they are proved in the only way in which such supersensuous things can be proved. And this cannot be brushed aside as mere mysticism, for every one who cares to do so can follow the requisite discipline and find the proof himself. Even Science cannot give any proof better than this. Dr. Dasgupta has made a special study of the system of Patanjali as is shown by several books written by him on this subject. It is strange he did not notice the definite methods outlined by Patanjali by which these things can be and have been proved. Thus one of the Sūtras lays down, "By concentrating on the impressions stored up in the subconscious one can have knowledge of his past births." (3.18.) Dr. Dasgupta has no experience of this kind of knowledge himself, but he cannot deny the possibility of it altogether as it has been made their basis by all Indian philosophers. Dr. Dasgupta does not want to admit that this kind of knowledge can be placed above logical reasoning. Thus he argues: "Its superiority cannot be logically proved, and hence any proposition that affirms it can only be taken as a dogma." (p. 231). So, whether anything is superior to logical reasoning must be proved by logical reasoning—that is his position. With all his subtle logic and Punditic tradition he fails to see that his insistence on logical proof is itself a dogma. On what evidence does he hold that logical reasoning is the highest standard of truth? As a matter of fact,

logic was not unknown to the ancient Indian philosophers, but they saw clearly its insufficiency and for final proof always referred to the only unimpeachable knowledge,—that is, knowledge by identity. We can truly know a thing not through the medium of reason or even of the senses, but by entering into a relation of identity with the object of knowledge. The way in which I know myself is the only valid method of knowledge and on ultimate analysis all knowledge will be found to have at its base this knowledge by identity. The Yoga system of Patanjali regards the *Pramanas* including logical reasoning as an indirect and inferior source of knowledge. These are the typical mental processes or *vrittis* which have to be silenced so that one can enter into a relation of identity with the object of knowledge. In *Samadhi* or trance the meditator becomes identified with the object of meditation, so *Samadhi* is the highest means of knowledge. The place of reason in Indian philosophy has been clearly explained by Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine*. "Always mental experience and the concepts of the reason have been held by it to be even at their highest a reflection in mental identifications and not the supreme self-existent identity. We have to go beyond the mind and the reason. The reason active in our waking consciousness is only a mediator between the subconscious All that we come from in our evolution upwards and the superconscious All towards which we are impelled by that evolution. The subconscious and the superconscious are two different formulations of the same All. The master-word of the subconscious is Life, the master-word of the superconscious is Light. In the subconscious knowledge or consciousness is involved in action, for action is the essence of life. In the superconscious action re-enters into Light and no longer contains involved knowledge but is itself contained in a supreme consciousness. Intuitional knowledge is that which is common between them and the foundation of intuitional knowledge is conscious or

effective identity between that which knows and that which is known; it is the state of common self-existence in which the knower and the known are one through knowledge. But in the subconscious the intuition manifests itself in the action, in effectivity, and the knowledge or conscious identity is either entirely or more or less concealed in the action. In the superconscious, on the contrary, Light being the law and the principle, the intuition manifests itself in its true nature as knowledge emerging out of conscious identity, and effectivity of action is rather the accompaniment or necessary consequence and no longer masks as the primary fact. Between these two states reason and mind act as intermediaries which enable the being to liberate knowledge out of its imprisonment in the act and prepare it to resume its essential primacy. When the self-awareness in the mind applied, both to content and content, to own-self and other-self, exalts itself into the luminous self-manifest identity, the reason also converts itself into the form of the self-luminous intuitional knowledge. This is the highest possible state of our knowledge when mind fulfils itself in the supramental. Such is the scheme of the human understanding upon which the conclusions of the most ancient Vedanta were built." (Vol. I pp. 99-100)

Dr. Dasgupta pins his faith on logical reasoning, but here also he would not allow reason to go its own way, reason must confine itself to the limits of sense-experience. Thus he says: "Logic is the language with which we interpret our diverse experiences to one another. It can work upon facts and give us the clue to many new relations of facts, but it does not create new facts, nor does it stand a guarantee for the validity of the result, if the validity of the facts supplied to it cannot be certified beforehand. Whatever Spinoza's opinion may have been, metaphysics, I think, is not geometry. . . . A metaphysician surely misses his vocation if he considers himself to be Moses, the law-giver. He cannot

claim to dictate to us what Reality is; but his business is to seek and find what people imply when they speak of Reality. He should seek to find out by an analysis of experience, as well as by the synthetic implications of experience, the validity of the range and scope of our craving after finding the Reality." In holding this view about the limited scope of Metaphysics and reason, Dr. Dasgupta has shown himself to be a true follower of Herbert and Lotze according to whom the true task of philosophy is a "working over of the conceptions of experience", which are given and which must be reshaped according to the rules of formal logic, until we know the reality that has no internal contradictions. Indian philosophy, however, gave a greater scope to reason. Thus the Gita speaks of truths that are beyond perception by the sense but seizable by the perceptions of the reason, *buddhiḥ hyam atindriyam*, "Human reason" says Sri Aurobindo, "has a double action, mixed or dependent, pure or sovereign. Reason accepts a mixed action when it confines itself to the circle of our sensible experience. . . . But the perceptions of pure reason may also—and this is their more characteristic action—use the experience from which they start as a mere excuse and leave it far behind before they arrive at their result, so far that the result may seem the direct contrary of that which our sensible experience wishes to dictate to us. This movement is legitimate and indispensable, because our normal experience not only covers only a small part of universal fact, but even in the limits of its own field uses instruments that are defective and gives us false weights and measures. It must be exceeded, put away to a distance and its insistences often denied if we are to arrive at some adequate conceptions of the truth of things. To correct the errors of the sense-mind by the use of reason is one of the most valuable powers developed by man and the chief cause of his superiority among terrestrial beings. The complete use of pure reason brings us finally from physical to meta-

physical knowledge." (*The Life Divine* Vol. I, 92-93). But Indian philosophy never accepted reason as the ultimate arbiter of truth, and the concepts of metaphysics were found entirely satisfying only when they agreed with the findings of direct spiritual experience. That is why so much importance is given to the *Śruti*. This again is regarded by Dr. Dasgupta as "another dogma that found currency with all systems of Hindu philosophy." But certainly they gave sufficient reason why they accepted the authority of the *Śruti* as the record of intuitional knowledge, it was not an article of blind faith. The situation in this respect has been clearly put by Sri Aurobindo: "Nowhere in the Upanishads do we find any trace of logical reasoning urged in support of the truth of Vedanta. Intuition, the sages seem to have held, must be corrected by a more perfect intuition. Logical reasoning cannot be its judge. And yet the human reason demands its own method of satisfaction. Therefore when the age of rationalistic speculation began, Indian philosophers, respectful of the heritage of the past, adopted a double attitude towards the Truth they sought. They recognised in the *Śruti*, the earlier results of Intuition or, as they preferred to call it, of inspired Revelation, an authority superior to Reason. But at the same time they started from reason and tested the results it gave them, holding only those conclusions to be valid which were supported by the supreme authority. In this way, they avoided to a certain extent the besetting sin of metaphysics, the tendency to battle in the clouds because it deals with words as if they were imperative facts instead of symbols which have always to be carefully scrutinised and brought back constantly to the sense of that which they represent." (*The Life Divine*, p. 105).

Though Dr. Dasgupta concedes theoretically the possibility of some kind of intuitional knowledge, he has discarded it for all practical purposes. Thus he states the opposition between Religion and Science, following in this,

as in other things, the trend of Western thought: "Religion proceeds largely from our faith in the prophets or books of revelation or from the *a priori* inclination of our hearts which influences our powers of reason. The scientific culture may thus be regarded as greatly antagonistic to religion in its accepted sense. The former is not satisfied with the optimistic inclination of the heart and the articles of faith deduced therefrom but insists on accurate and tangible proof and pins its faith on their results or on suppositions which are consistent with them." This is true enough if one understands by the term "religion" the ritualistic and dogmatic religions of the world. But Dr. Dasgupta includes under religion all spirituality and Yogic practices, and this confusion between religion and spirituality is very common amongst European thinkers. Spirituality is not blind faith in dogmas and creeds and scriptures; it is the realisation of the Spirit by Yogic process and the building up of our life in direct communion with the spirit. The Gita says, "Even the seeker after the knowledge of Yoga goes beyond the ranges of the Vedas and Upanishads." According to Dr. Dasgupta, the Self or Spirit can never be known directly. He says, "The existence of the Self (Purusha) is a matter of implication and not an object of direct apprehension in consciousness. The existence of the self is held to be implied on teleological grounds of moral responsibility and moral endeavour." (p. 185). Thus for him there is no spiritual life, but moral life and moral endeavour. The distinction between spirituality and morality is not clearly understood in the West, and Dr. Dasgupta suffers from the same defect. Morality is the following of certain rules or principles, spirituality is going beyond all rules and principles, *sarvadharmān parityajya* and living and acting directly in the light and the power of the spirit. Patanjali says that dissociating oneself from the outer modes of nature and turning inward one can have direct knowledge of the self or Purusha, *svārthasamyamāt*

purusa-jñānam, (3/35), and this realisation and knowledge of the self through yogic practice is the basis of all spirituality. Spirituality is not a matter of belief, it is as much based on "accurate and tangible proofs" as science itself, though the methods, in the nature of things, cannot be the same as in physical science.

By spirituality the western people generally mean the finer and higher activities of the mind; indeed in most European languages the same word means both mind and spirit; no clear distinction is made between mind and spirit; and Dr. Dasgupta labours under the same confusion. Thus he almost identifies art with spirituality; the difference between them, according to him, is one of degree and not of quality. Thus he says, "In artistic creation and appreciation we have a field in which spiritual realities become awakened, we are suffused with radiant joy and beauty, and come into communion with kindred spirits." (p. 376.) But the impersonal joy and communion we have in art need not have anything spiritual in it; any one with a refined and cultured mind can have these experiences and the mind is not the spirit. Even primitive men without any touch of spirituality can have deep artistic enjoyment. "Art, poetry, music," says Sri Aurobindo, "are not Yoga, not in themselves things spiritual any more than philosophy is a thing spiritual or science. There lurks here another curious incapacity of the modern intellect—its inability to distinguish between mind and spirit, its readiness to mistake mental, moral and aesthetic idealisms for spirituality and their inferior degrees for spiritual values... Touches can come through art, music, poetry to their creator or to one who feels the shock of the word, the hidden significances of a form, a message in the sound that carries more perhaps than was consciously meant by the composer. All things in the *Lila* can turn into windows that open on the hidden Reality. Still, so long as one is satisfied with looking through windows, the gain is only initial; one day one will have

to take up the pilgrim's staff and start out to journey there where the Reality is for ever manifest and present." (*The Riddle of this World*, pp. 47-49). That taking up of the pilgrim's staff is Yoga and it is only by following the path of Yoga that we can enter into the true region of spirituality which is above the mind and intellect, *ya buddheh parastatu sah*, as the Gita says. The Gita is pre-eminently a book of Yoga; the Teacher asks the disciple to rise above the Vedas and the life in the lower nature of three gunas and be established in the Brahmic or spiritual consciousness and live and act from there. How Dr. Dasgupta has wholly missed the spirit of the teaching of the Gita is clearly shown by his statement: "The whole teaching of the Gita is devoted in urging Arjuna to follow his caste duties of fighting and not to take up the sādhanā dharma of ahimsā, and Lord Krishna spared no philosophy at his command for this purpose." That one sentence alone is sufficient to show how utterly unfit Dr. Dasgupta is for interpreting Indian thought and India's spiritual culture. The Gita is not a book for teaching moral principles or social duties; it is a Yoga Śāstra, spiritual science. Social and moral discipline can only be a preliminary aid and that is certainly not the whole teaching of the Gita, not even a considerable part of it. The Gita no doubt refers to the ancient Indian ideal of *chaturvarṇya*; but the caste system is a very different thing from that ancient ideal, "the four clear-cut orders of the Aryan community." According to the caste system one has to follow the profession of his parents and ancestors. "We can certainly fasten no such absurd idea on the words of the Gita as that it is a law of a man's nature that he should follow without regard to his personal bent and capacities the profession of his parents or his immediate or distant ancestors, the son of a milkman be a milkman, the son of a Doctor a doctor, the descendants of shoemakers remain shoemakers to the end of measurable time, still less that by doing so, by this unintelligent and mechanical repetition of the law of

another's nature without regard to his own individual call and qualities a man automatically fathens his own perfection and arrives at spiritual freedom." Even the ancient fourfold order is not taken by the Gita in the narrow sense in which it is commonly understood, nor does it regard it as an eternal and universal social order. "The fourfold order of society is merely the concrete form of a spiritual truth which is itself independent of the form; it rests on the conception of right works as a rightly ordered expression of the nature of the individual being through whom the work is done, that nature assigning him his line and scope in life according to his inborn quality and his self-expressive function." (*Essays on the Gita*). Even this is a preliminary discipline, and at the end one has to give up all dharmas, all social and moral disciplines and surrender oneself entirely to the Divine (*Gita* 18.60). By the force of that surrender the veil between the Divine within and the outer consciousness is torn away and one lives for ever in the consciousness of the Divine, united in and through him with all other beings in the world and realising even in the earthly life divine light, peace, power, love and bliss.

Dr. Dasgupta cannot grasp this spiritual ideal; that is why he builds up a high moral life as the highest ideal for man and that is why he, in this respect also following many European thinkers, has turned towards Buddhism. He says: "We have seen what Christianity has done for its Gentile and Latin disciples even after nineteen hundred years of development. We have seen how the fatherhood of God and the godliness of Christianity has failed in maintaining the normal standard of amity and friendship between neighbours. Now in the name of *dharma-yuddha*, each nation perpetrated on the others such atrocious cruelties as would have undoubtedly shocked a Chengiz Khan, for he had surely no such machinery of wholesale destruction."

Only one man in India seems to have been convinced of the truth of

Buddhism that violence cannot be stopped by violence." Thus he thinks that only non-violence and not war can bring a new world order and that this message of Buddhism is the "true idealism" of India. But non-violence was never before preached in India, not even by the Buddhists, as a means of bringing a new and better world-order. Even Buddha is reported to have clearly stated his view that it is perfectly legitimate to take up arms in just self-defence against aggressors. Dr. Dasgupta mentions Vishnu Purana and the Bhagavat Gita as the two leading gospels of Hindu faith (p. 381). Both these scriptures advocate *dharma-yuddha*. Thus the Vishnu Purana says, "When by killing one you save many lives, the killing of that person is a virtuous act" (1. 13. 73). The Manu Samhita says, "If any one comes to kill you, you would not incur sin by killing him, even if he be a Brahmin" (8. 350). Thus it is not correct to say that the doctrine of non-violence as Mahatma Gandhi is preaching is the true idealism of India. Non-injury to others was regarded by the Indians as a high moral ideal for individual self-purification, not for establishing an ideal social or international order. In another context Dr. Dasgupta himself has said that "actions according to certain set principles are sometimes more immoral than moral." Preaching non-violence against a righteous war to crush diabolical violence like that represented by Nazism is indeed not moral but immoral. "Peace" says Sri Aurobindo, "is part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come. If it is attempted on any other basis (mental principle, or gospel, Ahimsa or any other) it will fail, and even may leave things worse than before". The only attempt that now can be made to put down war is towards international force, but that would not be non-violence, "it would be a putting down of anarchic force by a legal force and one cannot be sure that it would be

* It is rather the Christian idea as interpreted by Tolstoy.

permanent." But how does Mr. Dasgupta prefer Buddhism to Christianity on the score of non-violence? Is not that also the message of Christianity? If Christianity has failed, Buddhism failed before it and no purpose would now be served merely by reviving that message. As a matter of fact, all the religions of the world have failed to achieve anything like godliness, except in so far as they have given a spiritual turn to the human mind. Now is the time to go behind creeds and dogmas, mental or moral principles and build on the solid foundations of the spirit. "Churches, orders, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have busied themselves with intellectual creeds, dogmas, rites and institutions, with *vicāra*, *suddhi* and *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*, by Sri Aurobindo).

Dr. Dasgupta does not leave any doubt that he is for the modern ways of life. The Indian spiritual ideal has had its day, now if we must live and progress we must whole-heartedly Westernise ourselves. "Modern ways of life," he says, "have their superiority over the ancient ways. For it is by the former only that all kinds of material success can be attained. The Western spirit has thus naturally possessed us and we have been almost

entirely cut asunder from the bonds of our old traditional life and culture, of philosophy and religion". And he is not at all sorry for this. He goes on: "Even in other countries not within the zone of influence of Indian culture the spirit of supremacy of religion and the supremacy of the after-life was felt almost universally. The Indian ideal, therefore, was then in consonance with the general tone of the world-ideal as a whole. We have now, therefore, a new epoch of culture, progress and ideals in which the entire civilised world is participating. Whether we will or not, we are being directed into the whirlpools of our unknown destinies of continual movement and continual change of this new age. We are thus naturally torn away from the spirit that dominated the philosophy and culture of India. It is no doubt true that here and there new thinkers are criticising the methods of this new age; but whatever may be the value of these criticisms, it is difficult to find any tendency in them to lapse back into the idea of progress in the spirit of ancient Indian thought." (pp. 211-13.)

We need not quarrel with Dr. Dasgupta for his fascination for the Western ways of life. But his remark that there is no tendency in India to live according to the ancient ideal is a gross travesty of facts. It is only a few Professors and intellectuals like him who have been torn away from the spirit of Indian culture. India is re-discovering her ancient ideal; it is not a question of going back to the ancient life: that is impossible, and no one seriously advocates it, but of taking up what is essential and most life-giving in that ideal and applying it to the conditions of modern life and modern needs. India is silently marching ahead on these lines, and when the time comes she will emerge in her true strength as the light-giver and the spiritual leader of humanity,—a mission for which she has been preparing herself for ages.

Dr. Dasgupta regards all this as the wildest fancy. He observes: "Western thought, wisdom, ways and outlook of

life, aspirations and interests are being shipped through their printed pages and fast assimilated by the youths of the country. Can we arrest this mighty inundation? Can we turn now to the old Yogi's ideal of contentment with nothing, or restrict our needs to the bare necessities of life and drive out the present civilisation which is always tending to increase our material wants? Can we remain contented with being only a religious and spiritual people, and cease taking interest in politics, or in the development of our industries? Can we in brief go back to the past? Such a supposition seems to me to be an impossible and wild dream, which only an idealist can weave in his wildest fancy." (p. 215). These questions only reveal the depth of the ignorance of Dr. Dasgupta about ancient Indian thought and culture in which he presents himself as a specialist. Never in their history did the Indians remain contented with being only a religious and spiritual people. They have ruled, warred, colonised, built empires, done great things in science, art and literature, in brief they have done everything that constitutes the fulness of the life of a great civilised and cultured people. Only India remained faithful to her spiritual outlook and ideal and sought with whatever success to make a synthesis between spirituality and life. That is the picture of ancient Indian life as we get it in the great epics, the poems and dramas of Kalidas and numerous scientific treatises on all the departments of active life. The bare and ascetic life was meant only for the last stage of life, and that also remained mostly as an ideal seldom followed in practice. It is curious that though Dr. Dasgupta is enamoured of the modern materialistic civilisation, he accepts Mahatma Gandhi, the declared opponent of all but the barest necessities of life, as the ideal. This only shows that he does not know his mind and has no clear ideas; in his own words he is being carried away into "the whirlpools of our unknown destinies."

Dr. Dasgupta has adopted the modern

European ideal of morality, but he wants to base it on religion; and that also is a part of the European ideal excepting the materialists who are fast dwindling in number. As we have already said, morality and religion in themselves are not sufficient, to bring about a radical change and improvement in human life. In Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras we find a systematisation of the Yogic practices in ancient India. The Raja Yoga propounded there has eight steps enumerated in the order of their importance. Of these the first *yama* is morality and the second *niyama* is religion. Ahimsa or non-violence is the first *yama*. But Raja Yoga considers all these as only preliminary or preparatory and external aids; the essence of the Yogic practice consists of the last three processes of *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇa*, and *samādhi* and it is only by a practice of these that a real change and uplift of the human consciousness is possible. Yogic practice in India has greatly developed since that time and now all life and action is taken up in Yoga. But the fundamental principle remains the same—the mental consciousness in which man is at present living—to which belong religion and morality—has to be changed and transformed and man must rise into a higher divine and spiritual consciousness the very stuff of which is light, peace, power, love, unmixed bliss.

Dr. Dasgupta says that he does not hold the brief for Indian Philosophy. Surely he does not. The boot is on the other leg. All his studies in Indian Philosophy are meant to show that ancient Indian Philosophy at its best could do nothing more than anticipate some of the salient ideas of modern European Philosophy. And, as we have already shown, he has established his point of view by ignoring or missing the true spirit of Indian Philosophy. Referring to his *magnum opus*, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Prof. S. Kuppuswami Sastri of Madras observed: "This learned Professor of Bengal endeavours in this work to give an account of the evolution of philosophi-

cal thought, strictly in accordance with the original sources in Sanskrit and seems to hold the view that there is hardly any need for an exposition of the doctrines of Indian philosophy for the reason that they appear to him to be essentially the same as found in European Philosophy." Dr. Dasgupta has protested against this frank criticism, but we do not see any point in his reply and the above criticism seems to us to be substantially correct.

Dr. Dasgupta has tried to show how modern thought was anticipated by the ancient Indians. He has not the heart to say the truth that most of what is new and stimulating in Modern Western Philosophy has been derived from Eastern, specially Indian thought. Indeed thinkers like Schopenhauer and Max Muller foresaw this and throughout the 19th century Indian thought has infiltrated into the West. This phenomenon has happened three or four times in history; "The last attempt which is as yet only in its slow initial stage is the quiet entry of Eastern, chiefly Indian thought into Europe first through the veil of German metaphysics, more lately by its subtle influence in reawakening the Celtic, Scandinavian and Slavonic idealism, mysticism, religionism and the direct and open penetration of Buddhism, Theosophy, Vedantism, Bahaism and other Oriental influences in both Europe and America." (Sri Aurobindo in the *Arya*). "It would be a matter of deep interest," said Romain Rolland, "to know exactly how far the American spirit has been impregnated, directly or indirectly, by the infiltration of Hindu thought during the 19th century. There can be no doubt that it has contributed to the strange moral and religious mentality of the United States." Recently a Columbia University Graduate earned his doctorate with a thesis entitled, "Hinduism invades America". Referring to Tantra Philosophy Dr. Dasgupta observes, "it is very important to note to what an important measure it anticipates the philosophy of Bergson." Contrast with this the observation of Grant Duff: "Bergson's vital

urge is a clever assimilation and adaptation of the Tantric notion of Siva Sakti to European tastes", Western scholars also do not agree with the view so strongly expressed by Dr. Dasgupta that Indians are being naturally or inevitably westernised. Thus writing in Bulletin No. 28 of the American Council of Learned Societies, W. Norman Brown observes: "Westernism came to India with authority as the culture of the modern conquering world, and it shone as brilliant before the medieval political and economic organization of India, as though it were light from Heaven. . . . Many sons of India, dazzled by this burst of light from the West, would have cast away their whole cultural heritage. Uncritically they saw in western institutions the panacea for all India's social and economic ills. They forgot the greatness of their own civilization; they were blind to the blemishes of our own. But again India did not succumb. . . . The reshaping of India, now taking place, is not a process of discarding the traditional civilization for a new one imported from the West, but rather consists in adapting the inherited to meet the demands of the modern world with its improved industrial organization, means of communication, and political and social theory. The current conflicts spring from the resistance which the indigenous offers to the foreign; the resolution of the conflicts will come when India has selected from the foreign those things which she thinks necessary to perfect her destiny."

The message that the West brings to the East is a true one, that in the search for the Spirit man and his life on the earth must not be neglected, rather Spirit is to be fulfilled in man. "Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the Godhead. Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman and to deny life is to diminish the Godhead within us. This is the truth that returns to the East from the West translated into the language of the higher truth the East already possesses; and it is an ancient

knowledge" (*The Arya*). Dr. Dasgupta preaches a higher morality which "flows" from religion, that is from the "intellectual and emotional apperception of all selves as being one with one's own self" and this he regards as the true gospel of Hinduism. But the spiritual ideal of India does not regard mere intellectual and emotional apperception as sufficient. What is needed is a direct perception of one's own self as being one with God and with the self of others. According to Dr. Dasgupta this is not possible, the self is never known directly, it is more or less like an hypothesis. When a high morality has been attained this hypothesis can be discarded. Thus he says, "Morality is like a flower that blooms on the plant of religion and realises its true significance when separated from it" (p. 332). This is certainly not the Indian spiritual ideal but some pale reflection of modern European thought. The Indian ideal is, as we have already said, to rise above all mental and moral rule and attain the likeness, *sadharmya*, of the Divine through yoga or union with Him. Dr. Dasgupta founds morality on a slender basis: God, Self, Spirit, all these are mere dogmas to him, and no dogmatic religion will meet the needs of the modern mind, though it may still serve as a preparatory discipline at a certain stage of the human development. Even if our intellect and also our heart accept the fellowship of humanity and the desirability of follow-

ing certain moral rules like *Maitri*, *Karunā*, *Ahimsā*, there are dark and obscure vital and physical parts in us which will overpower our reason and cloud our hearts. What is needed is a total purification and transformation of human nature, not only of his mind and intellect and heart but also of his vital and physical parts. And this can come only by the practice of Yoga, by seeking direct contact and communion with the Divine. As man seeks the Divine, the Divine also seeks man. In response to the aspiration of man the Divine comes down even in human form and body to help Nature to take a higher step in her evolution and to show man by precept and example how he also can realise a divine life in the earthly human body. That is the essential teaching of the Gita and other religious scriptures of the Hindus; that also will be found to be the essential teaching of other religions in the world, when seen and interpreted in the light of the spiritual teaching of India. Let us conclude with the following luminous passage from the Bible:

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

(First Epistle of John 111 2-3.)

—A. B.

A Philosophy of Action—by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek—published by the Chinese Ministry of Information, Chungking.

This is a speech by the renowned General, originally delivered in Chinese, translated into English and published with a short preface and copious notes in 1940.

Chiang Kai-shek is not a man of letters. Nor is he a philosopher who passes his time in delving into the hidden causes of things and beings. Spiritual values mean nothing to him. The Buddhist ideals of non-attachment and quiescence do not attract him. He

is pre-eminently a man of action, the leader of a revolutionary nation. By his practical genius and dynamic leadership he has justified himself before the world. Whether he achieves immediate success in building up a united China or not, it is certain that his name will go down to posterity as the man who by his lofty patriotism, high idealism and indomitable energy tided his country over a terrible crisis in her history and restored her confidence in

herself. No doubt China will owe America and England, especially America, a great debt of gratitude for substantial aid in the present war. But there would hardly have been a China to aid if General Chiang had not with incredible courage and persistence held the Jap at bay for two years in spite of the scantiness of material resources and in spite of Britain's dubious conduct in temporarily closing the Burma road to mollify Japan. Moreover, it is possible that after the war against Japan has been won, China's present allies will prove to be but lukewarm friends as far as her aspiration for a free national life is concerned. That may turn out to be a crisis not one whit less serious than the one that threatened China five or six years ago. But we feel confident that if Chiang is there with his inspiring presence, mighty spirit and genius of organisation China will come out of it successfully.

In considering the political future of any Asiatic country the most interesting point that comes up is what exactly Asiatic resurgence means. Does it imply a complete scraping of old ideals, the true Asiatic spirit, and the establishment of a washed down specimen of a European state? Or does it mean a cultural assertion, a desire to resuscitate the best that there was in Asiatic life? Chiang Kai-shek, like his Master and relative, Dr. Sen, does not believe in rolling along in the old rut. Both have worked hard in bringing into being a new China,—new yet old, we are told. But we are suspicious; our mind asks, how far new and how far old? The achievement of national unity and national freedom is an excellent thing. But it is not an end in itself. If China turns out to be a powerful nation of bandits, decked out physically and mentally after the western model, and starts on a career of purloining other peoples' iron, coal and gasoline, Sun and Chiang will have lived and worked in vain. An organised nation existing on terms of perfect understanding with its own individuals, living in harmony with its neighbours and freely making its own contribution

to human culture, working steadily towards the ideal of human unity, is the only kind of national existence that we can accept. There is no room to enlarge on this theme here. Let us examine General Chiang's philosophy and see what he means by action.

The first section of the speech bears the title, "the truths we must endeavour to grasp anew." Truth is eternal. We may well ask, why should we try to grasp it anew? Every nation in the course of its history forgets the meaning of the Real-Idea that had first inspired it, and sinks into the mire of blind conventionalism. An interval of inertia and lifelessness then intervenes, from which reason alone can pull it out. This act of pulling out is not, and cannot be, very gentle and considerate, and is often accompanied by a good deal of violence. China is passing through such a period today. Her spirit has been stirred as it had never been stirred before. The ferment that is working within is bound to throw up a certain amount of froth and scum, but it is the mission of the leader to open people's eyes and help them to understand the true meaning of the urge they all feel. Men have cut off their pigtailed, and women have discarded their iron shoes. These are trivial things, but they are symbolic. The truth that China stands for has to be realised, has to be grasped again, before she can confidently take part in the onward march of humanity towards the inevitable goal.

The General rightly says, "In short, any philosophy of ours must be a philosophy of action. The consummation of the Republican revolution and the overthrow of Japanese Imperialist aggression depend upon our putting into practice Dr. Sun's principle of action as the natural product of knowledge."

Already this philosophy of positive action has sunk into the minds of the people, and a great change is visible in their outlook on life. Says General Chiang, "In the army and in schools, and political and social life generally, a gradual transformation has taken place

in the state of inert frustration, vagueness and depression formerly prevalent." In short, the urge of Rîjasic Karma is drawing China out of the rut of inertia into which she had fallen. But, it should be noted, that the action prescribed by Dr. Sun and his apt pupil has nothing to do with religion. In fact, the Chinaman's philosophy of life has never been based on any conception of the Divine. Chiang's exhortation to positive action, therefore, can have no appeal to the believer in the immanent Divine—the doer, supporter and enjoyer of all Karma. That is not to say that action as put forward by the Generalissimo is in any way selfish or egoistic. It is altruistic enough, as we shall see presently. But it is quite different in its nature from the Karma enjoined by the Lord in the Gita.

Let us examine Chiang's philosophy a little more closely. Action, he says, must never be confused with motion, though it may on occasion include motion in some form. The main distinction drawn between the two is that action is ceaseless and continuous,—in the words of Confucius, "rising on incessantly day and night"—while motion is intermittent and fitful, a response to some fortuitous external stimulus. From this it is inferred that action is an essential thing entirely good in its outcome, while motion, depending as it does on an outward impulse, may be good or evil. Thought and word are in reality processes of action, and have no independent existence. Knowledge without action is sterile; conscience, which is a sense of right and wrong, is futile unless it finds its fulfilment in positive action. Says the General "All saintly and heroic men, like the devoted revolutionaries, attain their ends and achieve their nobility of character only through their planned and determined actions." The individual takes his cue from universal Nature. "Let the superior man exert himself with the unfailing pertinacity of Nature." The most obvious thing in the phenomenal world is the unrelenting activity of the cosmic forces. So far so good. We read

herein a clear call of the leader to his individual followers to realise in action his harmony with the world. But the individual's harmony with other individuals, or with creation, is meaningless without a realisation of the all-pervading Principle, the essential Divinity whose conscious force is everlastingly manifesting itself in the universe. When, therefore, the General recognises action as Nature at work in the individual and yet does not recognise the Divine at work in the individual and in Nature, he is obviously stopping short of the ultimate Truth. His philosophy may suffice for his present purpose of successfully beating back the Japanese invader and of establishing a republic in China, but it will certainly fall short of reaching the supreme goal of human collective life. Nor do we feel sure that the revolutionary type in China represents the true Chinese spirit, the spirit of live and let live which is at the root of Chinese culture,—the culture that was the common heritage of Buddhist and Moslem and Taoist alike in old China. China is a revolutionary nation, and Chiang is its leader. No doubt in his speech he uses many old words and phrases, but we agree with the writer of the preface that they are old names for new ways of thinking. True action according to the General is prompted by the calm of mature reflection, has a definite aim and is on the one hand ordered and rhythmical, on the other straight-forward and unhesitating. Such action includes both motion and repose, and is continuous. Whether outwardly visible or impalpable, it never ceases to be action, never really even for a moment comes to a halt. This is the character of nature's processes, and human action to be effectual must have a similar character. It is bound up with life. In fact, it is the object of life. Man acts primarily to satisfy his own needs, but as his mentality broadens, the scope of his action enlarges. He works for the good of larger and yet larger groups—the family, the community, the nation, and lastly humanity. In other words, he begins by expressing himself through

his individuality but goes on to express himself through an ever expanding collective life. Man is man and not a beast, because he is naturally endowed with the disposition to will the good of others and to act in their service. The key-note of Sun Yat Sen's political philosophy was this service. He said, "The very clever and able should strive to serve ten million fellowmen; a man of lesser ability may aspire to serve ten hundred men; while a man devoid of talent may content himself with doing the best he can for a single fellowman." Chiang quotes this and calls upon each man to use his faculties to the full in positive action for the good of others. Our politicians would do well to bear in mind one thing that this soldier-leader says, "positive action penetrates to the core of matters and deals only in reality. It is free from superficial trappings and fuss." Sincerity is the root of action and good-will. It is an all-important quality, for without it a man cannot in his life-action manifest good-will, good-will that is the key-note of service.

Chiang's philosophy is a philosophy of life as a whole. The noble deeds of sacrifice that he exhorts his people to perform are to be the natural outcome of a well-ordered life—not "transitory leaps into the super-human." Positive action will flow easily and naturally from true knowledge. But there are certain laws of action that have to be observed. First, we must carefully fix upon a starting point and select a way of approach. To go up a hill one must begin from the bottom, to go out far one must start from near. If you try to run before you have learnt to walk, you are bound to come to grief; it is futile to avoid preliminaries or to be constantly on the look-out for short cuts. Next, there must be a regular planning ahead. Mere enthusiasm does not ensure success. If you take action on the spur of a passing turn of the mind, you are liable to be completely unsettled

when you meet obstacles on the way. The plans you make must be precise, and in making them you must give every attention to details. As you go on, look back and take stock from time to time of the ground covered. In this way you will be saved from failure and disappointment. The third rule of action is that you must have a clear conception of what you are aiming at, a clear view of your target. As has been already mentioned the General's idea of positive action implies both perseverance and continuity. Stick to your gun and never stop till your object is gained. Choose your starting point carefully, fix upon a regular order of procedure, have a clear object in view and go on. Do not be daunted by obstacles on the way, never let them halt you. Comrades in revolution, forward. Such is the trumpet call of this remarkable man of action to his followers in a great national crisis. But there is a deeper side to this philosophy. Something is aimed at which transcends the need of the hour. The General gives it in the words of the sage, Chu Hsi, "By long application of our powers we one day reach a point whence we see the whole scheme of things spread out before us, we perceive the realities underlying phenomena, the relation of accident to essence, and the structure and workings of the human mind." In spite of our great respect for the personality of this patriot we cannot help expressing our doubts about such a consummation. His very practical philosophy, whatever it gives man in the world of phenomena will, we are afraid, fall short of giving him realisation of the ultimate Truth. "There is a Divinity immanent in every being, moving him round as on a wheel. Take shelter with Him in every way, O Bharata!" was the advice of the Lord to Arjuna on the field of battle. The advice is still potent, though milleniums have gone by.

—C. D.

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